

Studies on the impact quality  
assurance in *Quality in Higher  
Education*

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# Introduction

- 20 years of *QHE* only about 10% of papers on impact.
- One third in special issue in 1997.

# Quality assurance and quality

- Tenuous link.
- Disengagement and 'translation' to suit academics' needs.
- Hostility when the game is not clear.

# Quality assurance and academic culture

- The more compatible the greater the buy-in and the more effective QA is.
- QA impact effected by discipline culture and by organisational structure

# Accountability and improvement

- Not a continuum; different dimensions
- Also compliance and control

## Direct effect of QA

- Evidence ambiguous (therefore is this the best use of resources?)
- Countries with a history of QA less effect than those without.
- Agencies claim impact: periodic reviews show change, PIs improve, high degree of *compliance* with recommendations [at least on paper]; internal QA set up.

# External QA focus on improvement

- Evidence not clear whether this leads to more impact
- Greater impact in countries with some history
- Countries with less history of QA (and more private providers) impact strong with accountability/control models.

# Impact on learning

- More articles claiming limited impact than significant impact.
- Positive impact mainly on 'superstructure':
  - Outcome specifications
  - Compliance with NQF
  - Rigorous course approval
  - Detailed documentation
  - Team –based action planning
  - Dissemination of good practice
  - Seeking student feedback
- QA must focus on curriculum, learning and teaching and assessment



# Internal and EQA

- Internal QA has more impact on teaching and learning
- External provides legitimation for IQA
- (External legitimation for managerialism!)
- Problem of trust.
- Linking IQA and EQA needs to be worked on doesn't just happen
- EQA may replace IQA (out of convenience or because it demands attention)

# Bureaucracy, burden, peer review, self-assessment and creativity

- All an issue in the 'literature' but didn't really come up much in research.
- Burden, pedantry, legalism...
- Lack of consistency of peer review.
- Self-review unreliable (and not the main benefit that agencies think it is).
- Stifles creativity when EQA is overly prescriptive.

# Conclusion

- Not much evidence of EQA impacting directly on learning and teaching.
- So, should we forget EQA as a means to improve learning and teaching: can it not reach the transformative front line?
- Perhaps the 'climate' has changed after 20+ years of QA and we are more open to talking about teaching and learning
- [But maybe investing the same money into the innovative teaching and learning movement 25 years ago would have had far greater results much sooner?]

# Question

- Can impact evaluation contribute to resolving conflicting stakeholder expectations of quality assurance in HE?
- This review won't have helped much in answering this question positively, thus far. But maybe better impact work might?