WIRKUNGSANALYSE VON QUALITÄTSSICHERUNG IN HOCHSCHULEN.
Theorie, Praxis und hochschulpolitische Perspektiven in der Diskussion

evalag, Mannheim, Germany, 28. September 2016
Das von der Europäischen Kommission geförderte IMPALA-Projekt: ein kurzer Überblick

- Weshalb Wirkungsevaluation von (externer) QS in Hochschulen?
- Wie? (Methodologie)
- Das Europäische IMPALA-Projekt
  - Partner, Fallstudien und Ziele
  - Forschungsdesign
  - Ergebnisse
Why Impact Evaluation of (External) QA in HEIs?

- **Education society**: Permanent extensification and intensification of EDUCATION AND TRAINING: “Education for All” (UNESCO); knowledge-based employability; increasing complexity of education and training programs; growing diversity of learners; profiled innovative research; economic, social and ecological sustainability; permanent need for critical thinking; knowledge-based social legitimation of political decisions (cf. Anderson 2008; Innerarity 2012; Lingenfelter 2012; Välimaa & Hoffman 2008; van Weert 2006)

- **HEIs** (& primary & secondary & other education institutions) more important than ever as achievers in (global) education societies and knowledge economies

- Ergo: systematic evidence-based QM – QA and quality development – of HEI performances of central importance

- Ergo: impact evaluation of QM (as interventions) required (Deming cycle p-d-c-a)
Why Impact Evaluation of (External) QA in HEIs?

• More than two decades of (external) QA, further ex-/intensification
• (Some) HEIs complain about high evaluation workload and evaluation costs and need effective and efficient QA procedures (e.g., massification; economy measures in HE; national and global competition)
• (Some) governments complain about high evaluation costs

BUT
• Rather few ex-post impact analyses of EQA
• No simultaneous impact analyses (accompanying EQA)
• Students, teachers, QA staff not considered [focus on institutional leadership opinions (and peer assessments)]
• Need for competence development in impact analysis and meta-evaluation in QA agencies and HEIs (e.g., autonomous internal QA)

(see, e.g., Harvey & Williams 2010; Lillis 2012; Newton 2013, Shah 2012; Stensaker et al. 2011)
How Impact Evaluation of (External) QA in HEIs?

- **Before-after comparison** design (and *ex-post* analysis)
  Allows to analyse *if* and *when* and *how* an effect has been achieved

- **Causal mechanism hypotheses** (cf., e.g., Leiber et al. 2015; Little 2015; Stensaker & Leiber 2015)
  Allow to analyse how effects are achieved

- **Assessments of intervention effects** by participants, key informants, experts
  (e.g., via *standardised surveys* and *structured interviews* with *different target groups* such as academic staff, students, QA staff, leadership etc.)
  Allow to analyse goals, processes, structures, preferences, actions and institutional & programme change

- **Counterfactual self-estimation of participants** (Mueller et al. 2013)
  Allows to analyse change of personal variables (intentional states) related to preferences, decisions and actions (relevant to institutional & programme change)

- **Document analyses/observations**
  Allow to analyse goals, processes, structures, actions and institutional & programme change

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How Impact Evaluation of (External) QA in HEIs?

5 main impact areas

• Learning and teaching
• Research
• Third Mission
• Internationalisation of HE
• Inter- and transdisciplinarity of HE
• Institutional management
• Nationales HE and QA system
• Satisfaction with QA processes

Stakeholders

• Students
• Academic staff in learning and teaching
• Peers
• Employers
• QA agencies
• Study programme managers
• HEI managers
• Governments
• Society
• International community

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### IMPALA – Partners, case studies and goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11 institutional project partners</th>
<th>4 QA agencies, 4 HEIs, further (external) experts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Different EQA procedures</td>
<td>Institutional &amp; program evaluation, EUR-ACE program accreditation, program pre-accreditation, evaluation of program review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating stakeholders</td>
<td>HEI governance/staff, HEI QA, students, HEI researchers, QA agencies, (HEI policy experts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project duration</td>
<td>36 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main project events</td>
<td>5 internal project meetings; 2 European/international conferences; 4 international workshops; publications (10 papers/ QHE special issue; planned final publication)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erasmus policy priorities</td>
<td>Governance, Quality Assurance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IMPALA research design

(E)QA criteria (e.g. intended goals)

(E)QA procedure

Interventions, e.g. self-assessment, site-visit, report

causal processes for change

Change in processes, structures, preferences, actions and institutional change

Baseline study

Status quo before (E)QA

Midline study

Status quo inbetween, after some (E)QA activity

Endline study

Status quo after (E)QA

Ex-post inspection

With the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union.
**IMPALA research design**

(E)QA procedure

**Baseline study**
- Before procedure
  - Online questionnaires
  - Structured interviews
  - Document analysis/observations

**Midline studies**
- During procedure
  - Online questionnaires
  - Structured interviews
  - Document analysis/observations

**Endline study**
- After procedure
  - Online questionnaires
  - Structured interviews
  - Document analysis/observations

Comparison of base-, mid- and endline of single case study

Comparison of different baseline studies

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IMPALA online questionnaires

• **Questionnaire items – generic**
  – Course types in study programmes
  – QA instruments used in programmes
  – Alignment of examinations and learning objectives
  – Frequency of development discussions of study programmes
  – Observability of QA effects and quality improvements
  – Transparency of responsibilities
  – Attitude towards internal QA
  – Attitude towards external QA
  – Perceived attitude of leadership towards QA
  – Assessment of cost/benefit ratio of QA
  – Plans for major programme changes
  – Suggestions for QA improvement

• **Questionnaire items – individual case study**
# IMPALA project plan

With the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union.

### Baseline Study
- **Online surveys (focus groups: members & staff & academic staff of HEI)**
- **In-depth interviews (HEI leadership)**
- **Baselines for impact analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description of activity</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Timeframe and Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st project meeting (kick-off)</td>
<td>Introduction to project Assignment of tasks Work plan Discussion of conceptual frame for methodology</td>
<td>All project partners (ca. 23 persons)</td>
<td>05-06 Nov 2013 Mannheim (evalag)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EACEA project meeting</td>
<td>EACEA project meeting (obligatory)</td>
<td>evalag</td>
<td>23-24 Jan 2014 Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd project meeting</td>
<td>Finalising methodology</td>
<td>Project focus group</td>
<td>10-11 April 2014 Bucharest (ARACIS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European conference seminar</td>
<td>European conference seminar (in cooperation with ENQA) on the methodology developed</td>
<td>All project partners, International QA agencies; participants</td>
<td>19-20 May 2014 Mannheim (evalag)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAPER</td>
<td>Publication of a theoretical paper on methodology in reviewed journal (in German)</td>
<td></td>
<td>April 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAPER</td>
<td>Publication of a theoretical paper on methodology in peer reviewed journal (in English)</td>
<td></td>
<td>June 2014</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Midline Study
- **Online surveys (complete investigation: members & students of HEI)**
- **In-depth interviews**
- **Midlines for impact analysis**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<th>Participants</th>
<th>Timeframe and Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd project meeting</td>
<td>Interim meeting</td>
<td>Project focus group</td>
<td>11-12 Dec 2014 Helsinki (FINEEC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress report</td>
<td>Progress Report at the mid-point of the project life-cycle</td>
<td>4 QA Agencies</td>
<td>March – April 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDLINE STUDY</td>
<td>Online surveys (complete investigation: members &amp; students of HEI)</td>
<td>4 QA Agencies + 4 HEIs</td>
<td>April 2014 – Jan 2016 (depending on HEI) Each HEI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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IMPALA project plan

| Special Issue of “Quality in Higher Education”, Vol 21/3 (2015) | Publication of seven papers on the state of the art of impact analysis in HE in a peer reviewed journal (in English) | Jan 2016 |
| Analysis of data | Analysis of data | Project focus group | Oct 2015 – Jan 2016 |
| 4th project meeting | Interim meeting Stocktaking and discussion of previous results Impact analysis on the basis of baseline and midline data Inductive adaptation of methodology (e.g., work plan, endline study) Planning of final conference | All project partners | 25-26 Jan 2016 Barcelona (AQU Catalunya) |
| Analysis of data (continuing) | Analysis of data | Project focus group | Jan 2016 – April 2016 |
| ENLIDE STUDY | Online surveys In-depth interviews Endlines for impact analysis | Agencies + HEIs | Dez 2015 – June 2016 (depending on HEI) Each HEI |
| 5th project meeting | Interim meeting Stocktaking and discussion of previous results (e.g., implementation of work plan) Impact analysis on the basis of baseline, midline and endline data Planning and marketing of conference | Project focus group | 26-27 April 2016 Bucharest (ARACIS) |
| Analysis of data (continuing) | Analysis of data | Project focus group | February 2016 – June 2016 |
| INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE (in collaboration with ENQA) | Public conference to present and discuss project results | All project partners + keynote speakers + participants | 16-17 June 2016 Barcelona (AQU Catalunya) |
| PROJECT PUBLICATION | Publication based on project and conference “Impact analysis handbook” | All project partners + keynote speakers | (June –) Sept 2016 |
| Euro-Region training workshops | Four training workshops with QM managers, students, experts, and policy makers | evalag AQU Catalunya ARACIS FINEEC | Sept 2016 Germany Spain Romania Finland |
| Final report | Final Report (at the end of the contractual period) | Project focus group | Sept 2016 |
Published IMPALA outcomes so far


For further information see http://www.impala-qa.eu/impala/
Further IMPALA outcomes in progress or in planning

• Four Euro-region training workshops (three in Sept 2016, one in Spring 2017)

• Impact evaluation manual (Autumn 2016)

• Final (Conference) publication (2017)
References


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References


References


Sum, N.-L. & Jessop, B. (2013) Competitiveness, the Knowledge-Based Economy and Higher Education. Journal of the Knowledge Economy, 4, pp. 24-44


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Causal social mechanisms

• “That we explain not by evoking universal laws, or by identifying statistically relevant factors, but by specifying [causal] mechanisms that show how phenomena are brought about” (Hedström, 2005, p. 24).

• “Social mechanisms are complexes of interacting individuals, [bodies and institutions] usually classified into specific social categories that generate causal relationships between aggregate-level variables. A mechanism will be said to be from the variable X to the variable Y if it is a mechanism through which X influences Y” (Steel, 2004, p. 59).

• In a nutshell, a causal social mechanism is “the [social] pathway or process by which an effect is produced or a purpose is accomplished” (Gerring, 2007, p. 178).
Causal social mechanisms model
with reference to Coleman's boat (cf. Coleman 1994, p. 8)

Preferences

Actions

e.g., other QA processes; any HEI-internal & HEI-external influences (e.g., HEI policy)

Institutional & programme change (processes & structures)

1: situational mechanism
2: action-formation m.
3: transformational m.
4: statistical correlation only

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Basic model of mechanisms underlying “QA meets HEIs” inspired by (Astbury & Leeuw, 2010)

(E)QA (definition of QA task, procedure, time schedule & assessment criteria)

Institutional & programme change (processes & structures & goals)

(A): situational mechanism; (B): action-formation m.; (C): transformational m.; (D): statistical correlation only; i = 1, 2, 3)

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Advantages and challenges to causal mechanisms approaches

• “What we need is intelligent discussion of plausible causal mechanisms, which should be subjected to empirical testing to the extent that is feasible. What we should appreciate is that this objective is rarely fully achievable when one is dealing with distal causal relationships, and it is often unnecessary (in the sense of being trivial) when dealing with proximate causal relationships” (Gerring, 2010, pp. 1518-1519).

• Moreover, sometimes black-box QA (which refrains from deeper analyses of causal mechanisms) may be even necessary “when no theory [or knowledge of mechanisms] is available or needed, or when getting the relevant expertise would take resources of time or money we do not have”, since “[i]t is a very practical point to avoid doing what is expensive and not needed” (Scriven, 1998, p. 59).