

Success factors of quality management in higher education: are unintended impacts more important than intended ones?

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Quality management: *some good intentions*

- Quality as exceptional
- Quality as perfection or consistency
- Quality as fitness for purpose
- Quality as value for money
- Quality as transformation

Harvey and Green, 1993

Quality management: *some questions*

- Is our education/research 'good' enough?
- How 'good' is it?
- Can it be made better?
- How do 'others' see it?
- Is it the same or different from the competition?
- What do we need to change?

Quality management questions: *Who's asking them?*

- Ourselves
- Our subject peers in other institutions
- Other academics in our own institution
- Other academics outside our own institution
- Our institutional managers
- Specialist quality managers/professionals/agencies
- Our students
- Our funders
- Politicians
- Etc

(And their answers might be different)

Quality management questions

What is done with the answers?

- They are published (or not)
- They result in decisions about whether our work can/cannot continue
- They require us to make changes
- They affect our funding
- They give us new ideas
- They help us innovate (or make us conform)
- They help us improve what we do
- They affect how others see us

Quality Management: *some types of impact*

- A licence to practice
- Reputation gain or loss
- Greater autonomy or greater control
- Funding gain or loss
- Improvement or damage
- Innovation or conformity
- ***Secondary impacts*** – student applications, staff recruitment, collaborative opportunities

Quality Management

Processes of impact

An 'event'

- preparing for it
- experiencing it
- the outcomes of it

Policies and priorities

Relationships (collaborative v competitive)

Culture

Publicity

Tensions between conformity and innovation

Quality observed.....	Conformist emphasis	Innovative emphasis
They've been doing this a long time	Therefore, it's ok. No need to change	Therefore, it's time for a change
This is new	Therefore, there is need for a careful quality check	It's a welcome innovation
Students don't like it	What's the matter with them?	Therefore, it's time for a change.
Students do like it.	So, leave it alone.	But can it be improved?
It's different	That's suspicious	That's good

Quality management: *Impacts through rewards*

“..quality assessment can lead to rewards through enhanced reputation, status allocation, increased funding, and greater influence. In turn, these rewards can result in increased morale among staff and students and in higher levels of productivity. By the same token, quality assessment can also lead to the obverse of all these benefits when a bad result obtains.”

(Brennan and Shah, 2000, p99/100)

Quality management

Impact through rewards, but.....

QA has 'real' consequences -

- therefore, play a game of 'compliance'

- but benefits of learning, self-criticism and improvement may be foregone

QA has 'no' consequences –

- therefore, why bother? Why take it seriously?

Quality Management:

Impact through rewards: direct or indirect?

- Direct: changes based on decisions or recommendations
- Indirect: changes in relationships, cultures (and sometimes funding)

“Direct impacts on one part of an institution may also be indirect impacts on others. It is arguable that it is the indirect impacts of quality assessment which are the more fundamental and long lasting.”

(Brennan and Shah, 2000, p91)

Quality Management

Impact through changing policies and structures

- Quality management part of fundamental changes in institutional management and decision-making
- More information is collected
- It is used to check on the achievement of performance objectives
- It is part of a greater accountability: transparency of decision-making and evidence
- Often linked to greater marketisation and consumerism
- Part of the 'rise of managerialism'
- Academics must 'gain permission'. Who from?

Quality Management:

‘Compliance to external authority’ or ‘Part of change processes within institutions’

“Institutions need to know what they are good at, need to be able to demonstrate this knowledge convincingly to others, and need to improve efficiency without sacrifice of quality. In these circumstances, quality management becomes firmly integrated into general management processes; the outcomes of quality assessment become important parts of management information; and quality management is ‘owned’ by the administration, which accordingly devises quality systems for implementation across the whole institution.”

(Brennan and Shah, 2000, p112)

Quality management, part of.....
the changing shape of higher education

- a shift in power from academics to management within institutions
- a greater competitiveness between institutions
- greater consumerism and marketisation
- greater differentiation, both 'vertical' and 'horizontal'

Quality management: *impact through changing institutional cultures*

- A weakening of subject-based cultures?

“It has done so by weakening group boundaries between departments and other units and by supporting the imposition of increasingly explicit values and regulations from the centre of the institution. These increasingly reflect external political and economic values and are part of a wider context of reduced funding, external competition and a growing emphasis upon the needs of consumers.”

(Brennan and Shah, 2000, p127)

Impact through changing institutional cultures: *the arrival of 'quality cultures'*

“Quality Culture refers to an organisational culture that intends to enhance quality permanently and is characterised by two distinct elements: on the one hand, a cultural/psychological element of shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitments towards quality and, on the other hand, a structure/managerial element with defined processes that enhance quality and aim at co-ordinating individual efforts.”

(European Universities Association, 2012)

Quality Management – a choice

(Peter Scott, 1994)

*‘voluntaristic, flexible, collegial
and ‘academic’*

- Spread of ‘good practice’
- Encourage some ‘risk-taking’ and ‘lively experiment’
- Honest?

*‘prescribed, rigid, bureaucratic
and ‘political’*

- Greater conformity
- Discourages ‘risk’
- Teachers inhibited
- Confuses not clarifies
- Dishonest?

References

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