

Quality assurance and global context:

Responding to diverse demands

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QA and international context

- International competition for students
- Transnational education
 - branch campuses, joint programs, etc
- International league tables / ranking
- Alternative ranking, rating and evaluation
 - AHELO, U-Multirank, etc
- Harmonization of teaching and degrees
 - Tuning, degree recognition
- Transnational, private accreditors
 - e.g. AACSB, ABET
- The rise of new (online) teaching:
 - MOOCs, modularized learning, etc



Complexity in QA

- What is quality?

Excellence, fitness for purpose, value for money, etc

- What is the purpose of quality assurance?

Enhancement, ensure minimum standards, 'consumer information', international cooperation, etc.

- The political nature of QA

QA not independent from the problem definition:
competition, employability, efficiency, etc

QA as a political tool: to offer confidence in the system

QA as blame shifting



Struggles within the system

- Burden on public budget/quality assurance agencies
(e.g. program accreditations)
- Burden on universities
(‘bureaucracy’ and ‘evaluation fatigue’)
- Declining effect of existing accreditations
- Relationship with private, transnational accreditation initiatives
- Legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders: reactions to New Public Management
Trust vs control
Return of ‘bildung’?

Attention to stakeholders

- Who are stakeholders?
- Stakeholders in Higher Education:
 - Primary stakeholders: students, employees, ...
 - Secondary stakeholders: employers, society, media ...
- Why suddenly so important?
 - Seeking 'better regulation'
- Do stakeholders differ in their opinion?
 - on higher education
 - on higher education quality
 - on higher education quality assurance



The purpose of engaging stakeholders

1. Better decisions

Expertise, information

Reduce the threat of 'regulatory capture'

2. Facilitate implementation

Increase compliance

Diminish veto power

3. Legitimacy

Bridge assumedly growing cleavage between 'citizens' and 'officials'

Two underlying views (on democracy) with respect to stakeholders:

1. Society consists of individuals with pre-determined interests.
2. Interests are shaped through debate and interaction in society.

The ways of engaging stakeholders

- The ways of engaging stakeholders:

- Include in (semi-)permanent institutions

- Supervisory boards, advisory board, working groups

- Broad-based consultation

- On-line consultation, hearings, etc.

- ‘Engage’, ‘involve’, ‘consult’ or ‘manage’ ?

Lessons from different perspectives

- Stakeholder management: ‘triple bottom line’

 - Corporate governance:

 - a strategic concern, but also ethical

 - Know your stakeholders: power, legitimacy, urgency; capacity and coalition building

 - Stakeholder management: strategizing routine

- Network management: collaborative governance

 - Interdependencies and complex decisions

 - Communicative rationale: shared understanding

 - Network management: process management

 - E.g. clearly assigned responsibility for stakeholder management

Lessons from different perspectives

- ‘Public value’ management: an integrated approach

Different demands faced by agency heads

Meeting three criteria:

- create something substantively valuable
- legitimate and politically sustainable (incl. stakeholder support)
- operationally and administratively feasible

‘Public value’ and ‘public interest’

Pluralistic society and competing values

Different perspectives on ‘public interest’

QA agencies and complex setting

Balancing and trade-offs:

- Objectives and results
- Competing and ambiguous problem definitions
- Legitimacy and trust
- Organizational goals

... where stakeholder engagement (while often costly and burdensome) is a necessary component.

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