

Managing diversity: sustainable QA processes

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**Guy HAUG, Expert in HE Evaluation / Development, Brussels
Valencia University of Technology, Spain**

Diversity in the functions of QA in the international context

Assuring an adequate, acceptable level of «quality»

- to generate trust, to inform and protect students/families
(including for imported / exported HE)
 - «global» quality, not only academic quality: LOs? Relevance?
→ rhetorical? superficial? vague? yet indispensable
 - qualifications/competencies, not just degrees/diplomas
 - crucial role of HEIs' internal QA systems
- Dealing with diverse types/levels of «quality», even within HEIs

Diversity in the functions of QA in the international context

Showing/demonstrating where there is «quality»

- certificate, accreditation or label of quality from external agency
 - attractiveness of national HEI and HE in other countries
 - higher quality / excellence vs. «adequate» quality
 - a programme / HEI's performance is more than LOs: efficiency?
 - QA and accreditation are very different from rankings
- Dealing with the diversity of HE, even within countries

Diversity in the functions of QA in the international context

Supporting international mobility

- access to studies and labour market abroad
 - to ease recognition for the purpose of mobility
 - recognition, yet diversity (not uniformisation)
 - compatible standards for QA/accreditation, but...
«quality» differs according to culture, country, system, missions
 - role of joint programmes and double degrees
- Dealing with diversity in cultures, systems, languages

Diversity in the functions of QA in the international context

Contributing to the *improvement* of quality / relevance

- internal QA systems of HEI, data for strategic HEI management
 - improvement of LOs: issues with definition/formulation in various languages,, relevance, measurement/assessment
 - but only if: the standards and the references are adequate
the notion of «quality» is global, not just academic
 - quality needs to refer also to relevance and to efficiency
- Dealing with diversity in socio-economic, regional environment

Managing diversity in QA in a sustainable way: 3 main avenues for future action

Need to consolidate the legitimacy and value of QA

- Issues about legitimacy
- Value of QA for users

Need to meet the challenges of internationality

- Stronger international aspects in national QA
- Quality assurance of internationalisation in HE
- Need for more international quality labels
- Challenges from international rankings

Need to anticipate revolution in LLL

- Digital revolution
- Recognition of Experiential Learning

1. Consolidate legitimacy and value of QA

QA in HE has spread to the whole world

- setting-up of new national agencies continues
- acceptance of accountability has grown in HE
- HEIs have established internal QA systems

Yet, legitimacy of QA remains fragile

- issues about evaluation bureaucracy
- alleged drive for standardisation / conformity:
right of HEIs to be different / better, to innovate
- huge differences in focus / processes
- whole areas outside scope of QA: QA where
it is easiest – not where it is most needed?
- ongoing difficulties with defining/measuring LOs
- governmental interferences?

1. Consolidate legitimacy and value of QA

Need to improve the value of QA for users

Visibility and credibility among stakeholders

- status of agencies among peers
- credibility of evaluators in HE and society
- does QA provide answers to the right questions?
- user-friendliness of information: communication of QA decisions, access, relevance/readability

Attention shift: from basic to higher quality / «excellence»

- in national policies: differential funding
- at HEI level: profiling, identity building
- in QA processes: need for more differentiated conclusions to QA procedures ?
- a better answer to students' and employers' needs?

2. Meet the challenges of internationality

NATIONAL AGENCIES for INTERNATIONAL TRUST ?

- move towards comparable yet flexible standards
- cross-recognition within regional/global networks
- strong growth of global HE and mobility
- yet, national aspects predominate - strongly

INTERNATIONALISATION OF NATIONAL QA

- more international-minded agencies: mission, evaluators / board, training/networking, activities
- effective QA for imported/exported HE
- accreditation of non-national HEIs/programmes
(a good indicator of external credibility of agencies?)
- portability of national accreditation?
(branch campuses, franchising, ...)

2. Meet the challenges of internationality

QUALITY OF INTERNATIONALISATION

Shift of paradigm in internationalisation in HE

- from cooperation → competition
- from mobility → internationalisation for all
- from academic values → commercial approaches

- Multiple roles for QA

- learning of international skills/competencies:
 - contribution of internationalisation to overall quality (and employability) for all graduates of national HEIs
- QA for joint/double degree programmes:
 - still an acid test of the QA community?
- quality seals of international programmes/strategies:
 - internationalisation labels? Ethical issues?

2. Meet the challenges of internationality

INTERNATIONAL QUALITY LABELS

- quasi-accreditation across borders, in specific areas
 - strong link with professional accreditation
 - use of strong foreign national quality seals ?
 - new truly international labels: e.g. EQUIS, EUR-ACE
 - need for more such labels (global, regional level)
- building the second pillar of sustainable QA

2. Meet the challenges of internationality

RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES FROM RANKINGS

- rankings are criticised from all sides...but highly visible
- Yet, obvious impact on HE policies, HEIs, students
- QA vs. rankings?
 - the battle for visibility
 - better QA data for better rankings?
 - new: multi-rankings (sensitive to user needs)
 - need for rankings of HE systems, not just institutions

3. Anticipate on the LLL revolution

EXPAND QA TO INCLUDE ADULT EDUCATION / LLL

- in the form of programme accreditation?
- mostly as part of institutional audits (or «system accreditation»)

ADEQUATE QA TOOLS FOR DIGITAL LEARNING

- beyond the focus on the delivery of digital education
- ability of HEIs to deal with the change in attitude and expectations of learners (« customer behaviour »)?

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR (EXPERIENTIAL) LEARNING

- usually not included in QA procedures
 - yet, essential in LLL and for non-traditional learners
- Need to develop now QA tools to evaluate HEIs' strategies for these new ways of Higher Learning

Final remarks: diversity + sustainability

Sustainability is best guaranteed if QA is geared:

- **towards a more open, dynamic vision of «quality»:**
more strategic, geared towards each HEI's profile
more emphasis on quality improvement and innovation
- **towards its real purposes:**
more geared towards learners and learning
easier access for users, legibility, user-friendliness
more focussed on LOs, performance, efficiency, regional impact
more «professionnal » processes (with better qualified actors)
more inclusive of less traditional areas of HE/LLL
- **towards a more systematic attention to differences between HEIs, countries, regions, cultures, languages –**
comparing them while carefully avoiding standardisation

Thank you for your attention

感谢您的關注

Merci de votre attention

شكرا لكم على اهتمامكم

Gracias por su atención

Благодарю вас за внимание

Guy.Haug @ gmail.com