

Handout by Steve Draper, 5 March 2012 on QA for universities

What is QA for?

- A. Justify HEIs (Higher Education Institutions e.g. universities) to the public
 - Inform public what the nature of HE actually is
- B. Improve learning outcomes
 - Introduce/ promote interventions
- C. Auditing (counting whatever can be counted)

The rationalist delusion which infects QA but worse, it infects academics' responses to QA. Assuming that what is well reasoned is better; that we know enough to act rationally; that because we want to, we can measure. That auditing makes sense, even though we don't know what we should measure nor how to.

The key point I want to get across is that auditing makes no sense because we do not know what the important and valuable outcomes of HE are, either as a whole or in disciplines other than our own, nor how to measure them, nor what underpins their achievement.

Some big things we don't know / realise about education in HE:

- Learners mostly don't know where or how they learned (episodic vs. semantic memory; 30 sec. of speech)
- Teachers aren't improved by training (Chingos)
 - => Teachers don't know what it is they do that's good.
- Teachers, or anyway delivery, is not the important element in HE? Mitra.

- What are the good effects (outcomes) of HE? (Brown & Duguid)
- What are the good effects of a given degree?
- And even when we do privately know these, we don't write them down for others to examine; and don't or can't design assessment to test them directly. (Computing science here)
- Piaget: there is no informed consent for learning / conceptual development
- Peer interaction may be the most important component of HE
- "Management layer": scaffolding of a learner's learning actions

Where do T improvements in fact come from?

Not from current systems of QA: Rowntree

Other Teachers; QEE (enhancement not audit)?

But dissemination is very poor (no stimulated demand or supply).

What could a radical QA do?

1. Require evidence review in all course proposals.
2. Show public plan/timetable of Learner actions.
3. Feedback: No feedback (no assessment?) can be part of a course design unless it states and measures how learners can and will use each bit of feedback given.
4. For each module/programme, spell out how it advances and assesses: a) core disciplinary programme aims; b) Graduate Attributes.

More radical , non-QA, approaches to changing things

Are national student surveys more powerful, for good or evil, than QA? UK's NSS; USA's NSSE (Kuh)

Hestenes: change via the disciplines: give Teachers in each discipline an instrument measuring quality.

My "Achieving educational change" — Draper & Nicol paper.

(Problems for the future now?):

QA for learning w/o Teachers (Mitra)

For abolishing lectures (JITT: Novak ())

Google's in-house courses: Julie Clow

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See this reference list and "Find" mentions of "Dr. Fox"
<http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/courses/cereRefs.html>
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