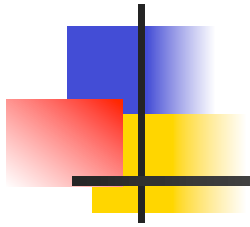


HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE: Trends and Tensions in Asia



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High Level of Interest in QA

- Conferences in Region
 - Associations of Universities of Asia and the Pacific 2006: “Towards and Asia-Pacific Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education” 200+ attendees
 - OECD 2006: “Higher Education Quality, Equity and Efficiency”
 - UNESCO Paris
 - The Street (China, France, India)



Some Fundamental Contradictions

- Context of “decentralization” in HE, but centralization in QA?
- QA greeted both with enthusiasm and cynicism?
- Broad political-economic forces and factors: neo-liberalism, managerialism, corporatization



Why QA? Why Now?

- Massification + increased diversity = demand for more information among stakeholders
- HEIs can use it for branding purposes
- Governments can use it for increased control and leverage



Some Basic Shifts

- From “bottom up” to an increase in external influences
- Shift on continuum of control from less to more
- Emphasis on accountability rather than performance?
- HE governance shift from collegial to managerial; QM seeks to spread the message
- Evaluative culture is here for better or worse



Factors, Forces & Rationales

- HE more diverse, more available, more international, less money to go around, private sector has expanded, changing governance patterns=more competition
- Accountability for public funding in context of withdrawal of central support
- Need for better information to make funding decisions w/in HEIs
- Improve quality of performance
- Inform stakeholders (parents, students, etc.)
- League tables, rankings
- Rise of private sector



Search for a General Model of QA

- National coordinating body (links to MOE)
- Institutional self evaluation
- External evaluation by peers
- Published reports
- Follow-up
- Levels: system, institutional, basic unit, individual
- Mechanisms: rewards, changing policies or structures, changing HE cultures



Reward Mechanisms

- Should QA be linked to funding?
- Region-wide concern with status-allocation, accreditation
- League tables, rankings (goal to get in the top 100)
- Much disagreement on methodology, who should conduct rankings, etc.



Policy and Structure Change

- Incremental change (w/in institution) v. fundamental change (external)--Clark
- Latter can result in mergers or termination of units
- Does policy change really matter? HEI entrenched interests very good at subverting policy directives
- Difficult to determine what causes what



The Culture of HEIs

- HE culture naturally opposes change
- Clark's notion of the "happy anarchy"
- QA is meant to change all of that
- QA seeks to change boundaries, realign landscape between HEIs and state and stakeholders
- Strengthen one factor over another
- Replace tribal culture with system-wide accountability measures



Formal QA a Relatively New Phenomenon

- Two-thirds of QA systems in A/P region have been established in last decade
- From simple to complex processes
- Multiple definitions; INQAAHE offers one:
“. . .quality assurance may be related to a program, an institution or a whole higher education system. In each case, QA is all of those attitudes, objects, actions, and procedures which through their existence and use, and together with the quality control activities , ensure that appropriate academic standards are being maintained and enhanced in and by each program.” Antony 2006

Key phrase is: “appropriate academic standards”



Discussion

- QA in Asia arises from variety of impulses and motives
- Becoming globally or regionally competitive
- Develop “world class” model institutions
- QA for locally specific purposes



Discussion

- Mechanisms are diverse
- Centralized
- C primary DC secondary
- C & DC mixed
- Problem of cross border QA--few in the region have the capacity to ensure quality of cross border efforts



Current Changes in the QA Environment

- Changes in the U.S. model from capacity indicators to performance indicators—student learning outcomes
- Accountability as a new paradigm
- Pressures for a generalized international standard
- Other changes?