Quality Assurance: Its Nature and Misconceptions

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Myths

• Schooling and education are identical
• Q.A. is a matter of policing and controlling
• Quality is a fixed, monolithic entity; not flexible
• One size fits all: marginalization and exclusion
• If we have Q.A. procedures in place then quality is assured.
• Context does not matter; Q.A. is an abstraction
Success

- Relational term

- Meaning depends on the aims and criteria used to determine whether success has been reached

- Example from literacy
To determine success we need to focus on 3 aspects:

- **Aims/criteria**: what values/norms are used to determine success?
- **Performance**: does the students' performance match the aims?
- **Opportunities to learn**: What support do the students get?
• Different and competing notions of success
  – Academic success
  – Public achievement success
  – What counts as a “frill” and “distraction”? 

• Democratic perspective allows/demands a variety of notions of success to operate at the same time rather than an insistence on one set of standards (one size fits all)

• A narrow notion of success yields a narrow notion and practice of engagement
“I am dressed for success! Of course, my idea of success may not be exactly the same as yours.”
Quality Assurance: Definition

The maintenance of a desired level of quality in a service or product especially by means of attention to every stage of the process of delivery or product.
Reflective questions

• What do you mean by quality?

• Why do you strive to achieve quality?
Quality: Different meanings

• Being Exceptional (beyond minimum standards)
• Consistency
• Fitness for purpose
• Value for money
• Transformative (qualitatively or quantitatively?)
Quality Assurance vs. Quality Control

• **Quality Assurance**: the act of **giving confidence**; the planned and systematic activities implemented in a quality system

• **Quality Control**: An evaluation to indicate **needed corrective responses**; the observation techniques and activities used to fulfill requirements for quality
The following may be recorded for quality assurance purposes
Development of Q.A. and Q.C.

- **Pre-1900**: Integral part of craftsmanship
- **1900-1920**: Foreman: Q.C.
- **1920-1940**: Inspectors: Q.C.
- **1940-1960**: Statistical process control
- **1960-1980**: Total Q.C.
- **1980-1990**: Total quality management
- **1990 – present**: CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT, ORGANIZATION WIDE
What is Q.A.?

A general or overall management system of all aspects of an organization (University or Higher Education Institution):

- Governance
- Human Resources
- Administrative
- Teaching and Learning
- Research and Dissemination
- Facilities
- Supports (Library, I.T., secretaries etc)
Quality Assurance

• A framework in order to have **standard operating procedures (S.O.Ps.)** that cover all activities in an organization, and that reflect best practice in the field of that organization.

• Hence the need and necessity of a Q.A. Manual that details the S.O.Ps. of the organization.
What is needed for a proper Q.A.

- Detailing the procedures
- Audit: to ensure that procedures are followed
- Documentation of audit; annual reports
- Evaluation of actions documented
- Internal evaluation (continuous)
- External evaluation (periodically)
- Importance of a Central Office of Q.A. as a centre of document collection and control.
Complete the Loop Phenomenon

- Mission and vision, aims and objectives
- What are we doing to achieve above?
- Develop policy and procedures
- Auditing and documenting
- Annual reports: faculty, departments, university or higher education institution
- Evaluation: Internal and external

THIS IS A CONTINUOUS PROCESS: GROWTH
Quality Assurance

- Part of the ongoing reflective practice and planning
- Collaborative
- Helps us identify who we are, what we are doing, and where we want to go
- Helps us identify needs and priorities
- Take concrete action: short term and long term
45 meters of rope and you are finding fault with this little bit?
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Fairness is NOT the same as one size fits all
Fairness

A condition or state of inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Fairness does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences.
FOR A FAIR SELECTION EVERYBODY HAS TO TAKE THE SAME EXAM: PLEASE CLIMB THAT TREE
everybody is a genius. but if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.

{Albert Einstein}
On second thought, maybe I'll just do some sight-seeing...
I think you should talk to the Gillie Partnership about Step 4......
"This is our plan for the next 1,000 years."
THANK YOU

www. john-peter-portelli.com