The Politics of Quality Assurance in Blended and Online Learning: Who are the stakeholders

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Outline

- Higher education and quality assurance
- Covid-19 and the practice of higher education
- Who are the stakeholders
Higher education and quality assurance
What is Higher Education?

- University
- Research Centre
- College
Higher Education is...

- Quest for excellence
- Creativity
- Critical inquiry
- Exploration of truth
- Discovery
- Discussion, debate and dialogue
- Development
- Scholarship
A genuine higher education is unsettling; it is not meant to be a cozy experience. It is disturbing because, ultimately, the student comes to see that things could always be other than they are. A higher education experience is not complete unless the student realizes that, no matter how much effort is put in, or how much library research, there are no final answers.

- Barnett (1990)
The idea of Quality

- Compliance (to standards)
- Collegial (a collective perspective)
- Epistemic (professional or domain centric)
- Consumerist (learner as a consumer)
- Employability (job market oriented)
- Process centred (technical)

(Barnett, 1992)
Quality may also be viewed as...

- Exceptional (exceeding high standard)
- Consistency (Uniform, zero-defect)
- Fitness for purpose (meeting customer specification and satisfaction)
- Value for money (through efficiency and effectiveness)
- Transformative (in terms of qualitative change)
Quality as continuous improvement

Inputs
- Student and teacher recruitment
- Infrastructure and budget
- Organisational culture

Processes
- Fostering inquisitive minds
- Academic freedom and autonomy
- Relevant curriculum

Technology

Outcomes
- Impact on society
- Graduate employability and earnings
- Adding value to institutional reputation

QA Models

- Internal QA
- External QA
Performance indicators and metrics

- Peer-team and validation approach
- Survey-based international rankings
- Citation-based research assessment
Peer-Team: Credibility is key

Explained: Row over NAAC’s recent university rating, proposed change in assessment method

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council was established in 1994 as an autonomous institution of the University Grants Commission (UGC) with its headquarters in Bengaluru. It assesses and accredits all the higher education institutes and universities across the country.
The fallacy of rankings

- Rural vs urban bias
- Availability of best teachers and students
- Funding support of research and innovations
- Create categories amongst institutions
- Question the parity of qualifications
Impact assessment

- Fuzziness in recruitment of quality human resources
- Focus on indexing journals and impact factors
- Measuring good teaching and research
Retraction Watch
Measuring quality of higher education

• Low employability of graduates
• Poor quality of teaching
• Weak governance
• Insufficient funding
• Complex regulatory norms

Source: https://www.brookings.edu/research/reviving-higher-education-in-india/
Covid-19 and the practice of higher education
Closure of campuses

220 million Higher Education students globally affected

Higher education transition to emergency remote teaching
Increased use of video

- Use of mobile for video development
- Use of streaming video
- Use of webinars
- Two-way interaction

Source: https://indianexpress.com/article/trending/trending-in-india/teacher-refrigerator-tray-mumbai-online-class-6555816/
Increased use of OER

Learning management system

- Integrated one stop learning platform
- Student tracking and reporting
- Create constructivist learning environment
- Less dependence on technical staff

New ways of student assessment

• Alternative assessment
• Open book examination
• Oral assessment
• Online proctored examination
• Mobile apps
A range of new online courses

- Universities started many online courses
- Increased adoption of online distance education
- Increased acceptability of online training for professional development

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Technology use in teaching and learning

Learning from Technology
- Reading a textbook
- Listening to radio
- Watching a television programme

Learning in Technology
- Integrated use of technology
- Distance learning
- Online learning
- Teleconference

Learning with Technology
- Learners work with technology to create
- Creating artifacts, programs, projects
Did quality suffer during Covid-19?

- Inadequate access to technology
- Poor teacher capacities
- Increased inequalities
Technology issues: Stanford University

- 16% undergraduates did not have access to internet for half the time
- 60% of low-income students did not have a private place to study

Source: https://www.tonybates.ca/2020/08/30/lessons-from-stanford-universities-move-to-remote-learning/
Open book examination
Sydney University looks to move exams back on campus after cheating rise

Sydney University is set to move exams back on campus after months of remote assessments led to hundreds of students being reported for using banned materials and devices during online tests.

More than 1400 online exam breaches by students were reported at the university in the past two years, prompting concerns remote test-taking had become too easy to manipulate.
University students caught paying others to do their work at record levels

By Lucy Carroll and Daniella White
November 6, 2022 – 5:00am

Serious cheating by students at the state’s two biggest universities was found at record levels last year as the tertiary sector confronts a major battle trying to clamp down on students paying to have assignments done for them.

Data obtained under freedom of information laws shows The University of Sydney had 445 contract cheating allegations last year, about double 2019 figures, and an increase from 86 in 2018.
Increased anxiety

POSTEVERYTHING

Forget distance learning. Just give every college student an automatic A.

At the very least, the coronavirus means universities should switch to pass-fail and pass everyone.

Perspective by Jenny Davidson
Jenny Davidson is a professor of English at Columbia University, where she will chair the policy and planning committee of the School of Arts and Sciences in 2020-21.

March 20, 2020 at 8:41 a.m. EDT
Academic quality and academic integrity

- Changing notion of quality in context
- Move towards authentic assessment
- Dependence on similarity checking
- Preparing students for higher education
- Teacher competence
Who are the stakeholders
International quality principles

- Quality in higher education is the responsibility of the providers and its staff
- Quality is judged by how it meets the needs of the society and sustain public trust
- Governments play a critical role in supporting quality
- Higher education providers and accreditation agencies must be accountable and provide evidence of quality
- Accreditation agencies are responsible for ensuring the implementation of quality processes and standards
- Quality higher education must be flexible, creative and innovative to meet the needs of the stakeholders
Stakeholders

- Students
- Teachers
- Parents
- Educational institutions
- Government and society
- Accreditation agencies
- Employers
Is student a consumer?

- Preparing students for academic integrity
- Student satisfaction
- Student as collaborator in higher education
- Broadening opportunities
Teachers’ perspective

• Teaching vs research expectations
• Competence related to domain and teaching
• Academic freedom
• Job security and tenure
What parents think as quality?

- Cost of education
- Perceived quality
- Graduate rate
- Placement rate
- Acceptance rate
Institutional quality perspective

- Leadership matters
- Process-based
- Quality as culture
- Human resource capacities
- Curricular issues
Government and society

- Policy for scaling GER in higher education
- Regulatory framework
- Financing to support needs of the society
Accreditation agencies

- How valid and credible the accreditation process and indicators?
- Who assures the quality of the accreditation agencies?
- Do they differentiate between different modes of teaching?
- How are they funded?
Employers

- Looking for employable workers vs talent for growth
- How do they contribute to curricular enhancement?
- Collaboration with higher education institutions to reduce cost of education
Diagnosing politics in quality assurance

- Who is certifying quality? What are their intentions?
- What are the quality indicators and measures of quality? Are they valid and fit for purpose?
- Are the measures equitable and promote social justice?
- Is quality a matter of convenience or standard?
- Are modes of delivery treated with care without bias?
A multi-stakeholder perspective

Government

HE institutions

Students

Teachers

Employers

QA agencies

Parents
Thank you