What a difference QA makes: Dealing with emerging and induced change

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Change Management – What can change in 13 years?

Digital Revolution

World Population:
2004: 6.46 billions
2017: 7.55 billions

Old WU Campus

Cryptocurrency

„Our understanding of the universe“

New WU Campus

Social Media

Geopolitical Change

Mars Exploration Rover
And in the world of QA?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>ESG (first edition)</td>
<td>12 years ago</td>
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<tr>
<td>EUA launches quality culture project</td>
<td>15 years ago</td>
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<td>Most cited QA publication (Harvey &amp; Green)</td>
<td>24 years ago</td>
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<td>First course evaluations in Austria</td>
<td>50 years ago</td>
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<td>Oldest European QA agency</td>
<td>ab. 80 years ago</td>
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Emerging change and induced change

**Emerging changes:**
- Complexity
- Interdependencies
- Contingencies

→ coping/dealing with change

**Induced changes:**
- Planning
- Formalisation
- Standardisation

→ managing change

Organizational dynamics
The basic model of all QA induced change

Plan

Do

Act

Check
The relativity of improvement

- What counts as an improvement, for whom and under what circumstances (cf. Lueger & Vettori 2008)?
- Does improvement mean striving towards an absolute goal? Towards a relative goal? Keeping the same standard in the light of unfavourable circumstances?
- Continuous improvement can be a rather demotivating goal, as it implies the devaluation of everything that has been done before (cf. Weick)
Our relationship with the „do“ part?
Instruments in QA

- Tendency towards normative and mimetic isomorphism (cf. Powell & DiMaggio): QA instruments resemble each other across different contexts
- Quantitative approaches (with a preference for descriptive statistics) dominate the field
- Instruments tend to be stable over a long period of time – but there is still a lack of longitudinal analyses
- Evaluations of concrete policies and activities are still rare (success of measures is difficult to determine)
Obstacles to rational decision making

- Bounded rationality (cf. Simon): An individual's rationality is limited by the information they have, the cognitive limitations of their minds, and the finite amount of time they have to make a decision.

- Prospect theory (cf. Kahnemann, Tversky): People fear losses more than they value gains. Relatedly, actors are often leaning towards acceptable solutions rather than optimal ones.

- Decision-making theories overemphasise the planning/strategy part of management; but implementing/realising changes is the much more time-consuming part (and requires a lot of quick operative decisions).
Effects are stronger on formal aspects (routines, processes, regulations, structures) than on others (cf. Stensaker et al. 2011, see also projects like WiQu, WirQung, EIQSL)

QA can lead to institutional isomorphism (cf. Dattey et al. 2014)

Impact question might need to be differently posed (cf. Newton 2012)

Studies on effects of internal QA are still rare – and often prone to epistemological weaknesses
QA and induced change: Some relationship advice

QA can learn from evaluation theory, in particular from utilization-focused evaluations.

QA staff might need to immerse themselves more in the organization, take more responsibility in the "do" part.

Information and communication management are still underestimated parts of QA.

There is a need for a clearer model of impact/change.
Emerging changes in higher education

- Digitalisation
- Social Inclusion
- Internationalisation
- Funding
- New providers
Changes that are QA specific

- The race for reputation is on: on a global level
- Strategic approaches to teaching and learning are more in demand
- Social media change student feedback habits
- QA is becoming a profession in its own right
- Data Protection regulations will make analyses more difficult
Focus on environmental analyses instead of surveying students for the umpteenth time
Social media, learning analytics and other facets of the ongoing digital development need to be taken into account in a productive way
QA staff needs training/knowledge in a variety of different areas
# Quality Management and Quality Assurance

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<tr>
<td>Roots in business (e.g. TQM)</td>
<td>Roots in political process (e.g. Bologna Declaration)</td>
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<td>Oriented at strategic goals</td>
<td>Oriented at stakeholder satisfaction</td>
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<td>surveys, course evaluations,</td>
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<td>Audits, Accreditations, Evaluations</td>
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Cf. Vettori 2015
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