

External Quality Assurance and Higher Education Social Responsiveness

*Who controls the past, controls the future:
Who controls the present, controls the past.*

(George Orwell)

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Mark Hay



Australian Universities Quality Agency

Relevance in (or responsiveness of) higher education should be assessed in terms of the fit between what society expects of institutions and what they do.

... Higher education should reinforce its role of service to society, especially its activities aimed at eliminating poverty, intolerance, violence, illiteracy, hunger, environmental degradation and disease.

(UNESCO, World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action, 1998)

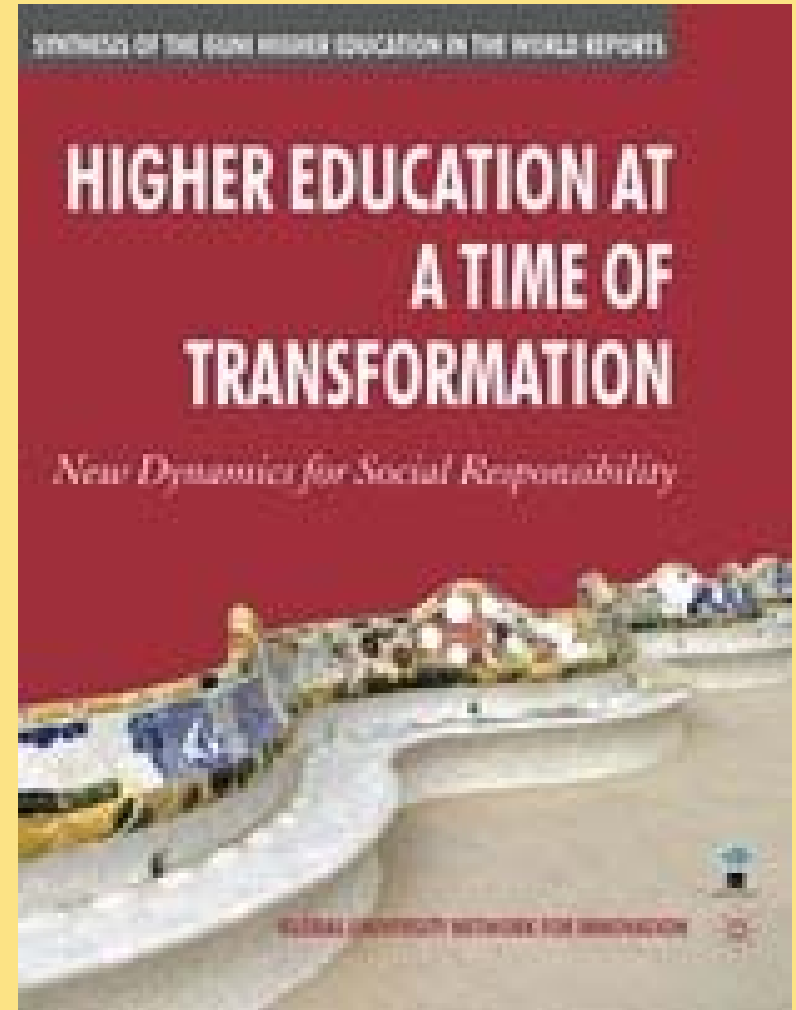
Faced with the complexity of current and future global challenges, higher education has the social responsibility to advance our understanding of multifaceted issues, which involve social, economic, scientific and cultural dimensions and our ability to respond to them.

It should lead society in generating global knowledge to address global challenges, inter alia food security, climate change, water management, intercultural dialogue, renewable energy and public health.

(UNESCO, World Conference on HE: The New Dynamics of Higher Education and Research for Societal Change and Development, July 2009)

Global scientific and social challenges

- Sustainable development
- food, water and resource security
- economic, political, cultural and social justice
- equitable access to health, education and housing.



Impact of recent influences on higher education

- Increasing student enrolments
- Reduced state funding for public higher education
- Alternate funding for higher education
- Increasing number of private higher education providers
- Internationalisation and transnational education

Changing purpose of higher education



<http://images.google.com/>

Social Responsibility in Higher Education

Tensions:

- Maintain the public good while enabling the private good.
- Balance fitness of purpose goals and fitness for purpose imperatives, in the context of institutional diversity, autonomy and academic freedom.
- Implementing equity objectives while ensuring excellence and quality.

Social Responsibility in Higher Education

<http://images.google.com/>

- Institutional
- Students
- Staff



Social Responsibility in Higher Education

Institutional level:

- Mission
- Academic programs
- Research agenda
- Community engagement



Social Responsibility in Higher Education



Student level:

- Participation
- Access with success and support
- Citizenship and life skills
- Social values

Social Responsibility in Higher Education

Staff level:

- Workload and performance
- Engagement and research activity
- Public intellectuals and social commentators



External Quality Assurance (EQA) and HE Social Responsibility



Is it the business of EQAs to evaluate higher education quality arrangements for social responsibility?

Farmer training and community outreach in Namibia

<http://images.google.com/>

Examples of EQAs that evaluate social responsibility

- South Africa
- Brazil
- Australia
- India



<http://images.google.com>

Conclusion



Discussion

1. Do you think EQAs have a role in evaluating higher education institutions' social responsibility agenda?
2. What role do EQAs have in interpreting and implementing government policies for social change, consistent with respecting the autonomy of HEIs?
3. What are the contextual opportunities and constraints (being assertive or passive) for your agency to engage on the quality assurance of HE social responsibility with national policymakers and higher education institutions?
4. Can you provide practical examples of the ways your agency evaluates HE social responsibility (positive and negative), for example through your policy framework and procedures for accreditation and evaluation?
5. How does or could your agency measure the impact of quality assuring higher education social responsibility activities?