

Trust and understanding in transnational quality assurance

**Perspectives and findings from the TEEP
and QCS projects in Europe**

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A little bit of history.....INQAAHE.....Jamaica 2002

Obstacles and barriers to mobility and the recognition of qualifications

- **Not enough (good) information on the specificities of higher education systems and qualifications (credentials)**
- **Difficulties in accessing information on the status and quality of higher education institutions, their programmes and qualifications**

Responses.....in Europe

- **Major re-organisation of the structure of higher education – three cycles B-M-D**
- **Search for common instruments to**
 - improve understanding of the achievements, attributes and competences represented by main qualification titles
 - describe standards and guidelines for quality assurance of higher education in Europe
- **Transnational projects to explore the use and effectiveness of these a development and improvement agenda for QA agencies individually and collectively?**

Transnational European Evaluation

Project (TEEP I): coordinated by ENQA: 2002-2004

involved:

3 subject areas and 14 universities:

History- Bologna, Grenoble, Coimbra, Aberdeen, Riga

Physics- Vienna, Toulouse, Warsaw, Rome, Copenhagen

VET Science- Barcelona, Budapest, Glasgow, Ljubljana

3 Agencies: Denmark (EVA), Catalunya (AQU), UK (QAA)

19 experts

4 students

4 reports (3 subject + 'methodological reflections')

TEEP I: the background

Was built on

- range of earlier transnational pilot projects
- elements of the Bologna Process
- the emerging 'Dublin descriptors' for degrees
- the outcomes of the 'Tuning' project

The objectives

- to help develop a method
- to identify strategies to overcome obstacles
- to raise 'awareness'..

TEEP I: the process

project planning group

management group + project group

project manual + call for institutions and experts

launch seminar + training for experts

self evaluation at institutions

site visit

subject reports

closing seminar

methodological report



TEEP I the method .. who was involved

	agencies	institutions	experts
the design / (criteria)	x		(x)
self evaluation process		x	
self evaluation report		x	
site visit	x	x	x
draft subject report	x		
finalised subject report	x	x	x
draft methodological report	x		
closing conference	x	x	x
final methodological report	x	x	x

TEEP I: the findings

‘Bologna style’ (Bachelor) programmes

- a transition process .. importance of government policy

Competences and learning outcomes

- a ‘new language’ for many
- constructive engagement

The ‘more-general’ criteria

- importance of finding a shared understanding
- making the implicit explicit ..
- importance of recognising different contexts
- acknowledged value in ‘improving’

The specific criteria (Dublin descriptors, Tuning)

- limited exposure / impact

TEEP I : the conclusions

The criteria ..

for all: importance of 'language' / understanding

for some (but only some): problem around 'fitness *for purpose*' (not of)

(no criteria for educational context)

The process

too rushed in places .. but generally ok

Worth taking part?

generally 'yes!' .. but .. (amount of work / 'agendas')

Impact?

yes but .. initial scepticism that it might be limited

but .. the Bologna Process continues apace .. and....

TEEP II and other projects are underway



TEEP I closing seminar:
.. there's no such thing as a free lunch



The Quality Convergence Study (QCS) (coordinated by ENQA: 2003- 4)

involved :

- 6 agencies: France, Hungary, Lithuania, Sweden, Norway, UK
- asking agencies to consider:
why are we doing what we are doing?
- through a self analysis document explaining the national dynamics of and constraints on QA in HE
- a final report (www.enqa.net)

QCS - the findings

'no such thing as a 'context-free reader'
(we all have 'baggage')

understanding national contexts is essential
(to success of trans-national collaborations)

the objective of convergence cannot rely simply on
a search for similarities

a systematic approach leads to:
emphasis on interactions of 'partners'
reformulation of questions about quality

importance of recognising process of transition ..

QCS the conclusions

need to recognise the importance of 'confidence'

confidence needs more than 'knowledge and understanding' .. importance of:

- the cultural dimension

- the way systems function

- different 'actors' have different perspectives

a 'guarantee is not enough' .. for trust

- a means of providing confidence is also essential

(real) confidence (and trust) follows a process of
'cultural transformation'

provides the basis for a .. 'quality map'

TEEP II: coordinated by ENQA: 2004-2006

involves

3 interdisciplinary, transnational 'joint' masters

- **COMUNDUS** (media): universities of Kassel, Dijon +Grenoble, Florence, London, Roskilde +Aarhus
- **Euro-Aquae** (hydro-informatics): Nice, Cottbus, Newcastle, Budapest, PU Catalunya
- **EMLE** (law and economics): Rotterdam, Ghent, Hamburg, Aiz-Marseille, Bologna, Vienna, Manchester

3 agency pairs: Hungary+UK, Catalonia+France, Sweden+Flanders/Belgium

15 experts; 6 postgraduate students

- **a single report**



TEEP II the background

built on

The Bologna Process

- 2nd cycle (masters level); Quality assurance
- Programme development and standards;

TEEP I + range of earlier trans-national projects

European University Association 'golden rules' for joint masters

The ERASMUS MUNDUS programme

the aim

to contribute to the development of:

- i) a method for evaluation of joint programmes
- ii) (sustainable) joint programmes within a European (+) context

TEEP II the findings should cover ..

'Bologna style' programmes

what is a 'master's' degree?

what criteria are used for:

setting and assuring academic standards

securing quality of provision?

in particular looking at:

organisation and management

(especially integration within the programme I.e. between 'sites')

academic level and content of (integrated) programme

(use of which explicit 'reference points'? e.g. Dublin descriptors)

parameters for/of quality assurance

TEEP II the process

~~project planning group~~

management group + ~~project group~~

project manuals + call for institutions and experts

launch seminar + training for experts and students

self evaluation at institutions ... *now*

site visit *June to October 2005*

draft report

closing seminar ... *Spring 2006*

final report ... *to be published on ENQA web site*



TEEP II launch .. and they're all smiling



some conclusions

QA and use of the criteria ..

- a shared 'language' isn't enough
- shared understanding is essential
- this requires recognition of 'context' where QA taking place
- important to agree on what is .. *and isn't* .. to be included
- increasing emphasis on identifying 'good practice'

all important in single programme / single country evaluation

are increasingly important in single programme / transnational evaluation

and *essential* in trans-national joint programmes / evaluation

- where developing shared and explicit criteria is ...
'transformational' (if done properly)

some further conclusions

(most) academics are committed to quality assurance

- all of these projects / people are volunteers ..
- the experts in these projects are not paid
- the travel arrangements are certainly not 'lavish'
- a lot of work/time is involved (yet the groups include many 'research-active' staff)
- despite all of this ..

(almost!) all want to be involved in 'more' / 'follow up'

QAA and TNE – other dimensions and activities

The quality assurance of UK higher education delivered abroad

- Section 2 Code of Practice (2004): new ‘standard’ on joint and dual degree awards
- Collaborative provision audit (CPA), from 2005-6
- Overseas audit (since 1997); 2005 in Gulf States, 2006 in China
- Participation in networks and international projects
- Memoranda of cooperation with partner agencies

Further information and details

[Http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no)

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