Towards a Taxonomy of Quality Assurance Systems

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and

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Outline

• Rationale
• Background/literature review/existing frameworks
• Approach
• Initial taxonomy
• Implications, limitations and further work
Rationale

• Two external quality assurance systems in New Zealand
• Limited interaction and debate
• Limited theoretical literature
• Opportunities to learn from one another
Existing Frameworks

• Principles
  – INQAAHE
  – ESG

• Comparative studies
  – Campbell et al.,
  – ENQA reports
  – Internal reports

• Lack of consistent framework or terminology
  – Taxonomy: a classification into ordered categories (dictionary.com)

• Relatively little emphasis on why differences exist or when particular features are more or less appropriate/effective

• Little ‘design/configuration’ guidance
Approach: New Zealand Case Study

- Two systems
  - Universities: Academic Audit (5 cycles)
  - Other providers: External Evaluation and Review (2\textsuperscript{nd} cycle)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Universities</th>
<th>Other institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of institutions</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>~ 570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Population enrolled in tertiary study in 2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total enrolments 2015</td>
<td>172,055</td>
<td>247,680</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full-time equivalent enrolments (EFTS) 2015</td>
<td>131,770</td>
<td>144,560</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree and above EFTS</td>
<td>126,250</td>
<td>23,155</td>
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<tr>
<td>8-year Qualification completion rate (2008-2015)</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>58%*</td>
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Universities

- Academic Audit conducted by Academic Quality Agency (AQA)
  - AQA established by universities as independent, arms-length QAB
  - AQA undergoes external review
- Cycle 5 Academic Audit
  - 40 Guideline Statements across 7 academic activity themes
  - Panel makes Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations
  - All reports publicly available at www.aqa.ac.nz
Other tertiary providers

- Much more diverse sector
  - Public, private, industry, Māori (Wānanga), large, small
- External Evaluation and Review (EER) conducted by New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)
  - EER addresses 6 outcomes-oriented ‘Key Evaluation Questions’
  - EER also looks at focus areas – programmes and themes
  - Panels make summative judgements of educational performance and self-assessment capability
  - Reports also make recommendations
  - Reports publicly available on NZQA website
- NZQA has wider remit and regulatory role
  - Ex ante and ex post quality assurance
Research Questions

- Both systems would meet INQAAHE GGP and/or ESG
  - AQA External Reviews consider GGP

- The systems are different

- How can we usefully compare these two systems and understand the reasons for their differences?
Method

• Compare and contrast NZ QA systems
• Informed by and embedded in ‘literature’
• Initial taxonomy
  – Distinguish between system characteristics and contextual drivers and/or boundary conditions
• Comparisons with international systems
  – UK-QAA, Scotland, Ireland, Australia-TEQSA, Ontario, Finland
## Initial Taxonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Sub-dimensions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overarching approach</strong></td>
<td>Role of self-review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluative or assessment oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment framework or evaluative questions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Outcomes orientation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enhancement orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Substantive coverage</strong></td>
<td>Common framework or focus elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method</strong></td>
<td>Length of cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pattern of engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Variation/flexibility of treatment</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Nature of reviewers</td>
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Drivers and Boundary Conditions

• Size and diversity of the sectors
• Actor roles and inter-relationships

• Smaller, less diverse systems, non-regulatory \( \rightarrow \) greater enhancement orientation, use of peer reviewers

• Larger, more diverse systems \( \rightarrow \) differential approaches, use of professional evaluators
International Comparisons

• 3 components (approach, coverage, method)
  – Campbell et al. (2015) suggest who, what and how as characteristics of quality assurance systems

• Overarching approach
  – Broadly reflective of international commentary
  – Less explicit emphasis on standards in NZ systems
  – NZQA’s strongly evaluative approach is uncommon

• Substantive coverage
  – Both approaches seen internationally

• Method
  – Reflect international practice

• Drivers and boundary conditions
  – 2 NZ systems reflect international differences
Findings and Implications

• A taxonomy provides a common language and set of descriptors

• Differentiate between system characteristics and drivers and boundary conditions

• New Zealand quality assurance systems reflect international practice

• Opportunities for learning
  – AQA consider greater outcomes orientation
  – NZQA consider follow-ups
  – Bother systems consider student auditors/reviewers
Limitations and Further Work

• Limitations
  – NZ ‘tertiary’ sector not typical
  – Small set of comparator jurisdictions
  – Dynamism and change in systems

• Further work
  – Test taxonomy against a wider range of systems
  – Draw on body of practice to reconceptualise quality assurance in higher education
THANK-YOU!

QUESTIONS?

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