EACEA Project IMPALA

EURASHE Seminar on QA – Brussels 2017

'*Managing Your Institution's Quality With the Latest Practices and Policies*'

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Breakout session 4.A 'practice':
Impact Analysis of Quality Assurance in Higher Education: The Experience of the IMPALA Project

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ARACIS Q

ENQA EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

UAB Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

AQU Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Uni de Catalunya

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09:00-09:10 (10 min.)	**Theodor Leiber** (**evalag**) *The Workshop Agenda* *Introduction to General Problems of Impact Analysis of QA (motivation; needs; basic concepts)*
09:10-09:25 (15 min.)	**Quick Working Groups** *QA and Its Impact Analysis: QA Agencies' and HEIs' Perspectives*
09:25-09:45 (20 min.)	**Theodor Leiber** *The EC-cofunded IMPALA Project and Its Methodology*
09:45-10:00 (15 min.)	**Heikki Malinen (JAMK)** *Creating Competence With a Finnish Touch.* *Evaluation of HE in Finland and Quality Management at JAMK*
10:00-10:15 (15 min.)	**Jouni Jurvelin (JAMK)** *EUR-ACE Accreditations and the IMPALA Study in JAMK School of Engineering*

Why Impact Evaluation of (External) QA in HEIs?
Education as a Human Right and Public Good

- **HEIs** (and other education institutions) **more important than ever** as high achievers in **globalized knowledge societies** and **economies**: **fundamental to permanent flow** of **people, knowledge, information, technology, products and financial capital** (cf. Marginson 2006); decisive for **competitiveness** of national states as producers of innovative research and technology

  Education for All (e.g., **critical thinking, intellectual and moral development, self-determination of quality life**; **knowledge-based employability**); profiled innovative **research**; economic, social and ecological **sustainability**; **evidence-based** organizational development and political **decision-making**
  (cf. Anderson 2008; Hamlin 2016; Innerarity 2012; Lingenfelter 2012; Välimaa & Hoffman 2008; van Weert 2006)

- Ergo: **systematic evidence-based QA of HEI performances of central importance**

- Ergo: **impact evaluation of QA** (as interventions) **required** (Deming cycle p-d-c-a)

Why Impact Evaluation of (External) QA in HEIs?

- More than two decades of (external) **QA**, further **ex-/intensification**
- (Some) HEIs complain about **high** evaluation **workload** and **evaluation costs** and **need effective and efficient QA** procedures (e.g., massification; economy measures in HE; national and global competition)
- (Some) governments complain about **high evaluation costs**

BUT

- Rather **few *ex-post* impact analyses of EQA**
- **No simultaneous impact analyses** (accompanying EQA)
- **Students, teachers, QA staff not considered** [focus on institutional leadership opinions (and peer assessments)]
- **Need for competence development** in **impact analysis** and **meta-evaluation** in **QA agencies** and **HEIs** (e.g., autonomous internal QA)

(see, e.g., Harvey & Williams 2010; Lillis 2012; Newton 2013; Shah 2012; Stensaker et al. 2011)

Impact Evaluation of QA: Basic Concepts

Working Definition of Causality

- Cause-effect (or causal) relationship: compared to the cause-event(s), the effect-event(s) occur(s) later in time; and, everything else being equal (*ceteris paribus*), the effect-event(s) would not have occured in the same way without the said cause-event(s)

- Most plausible working definition of causality:
"*C* may be considered a cause of *E* if (and only if) it raises the probability of [the occurrence of] *E* [under ceteris paribus conditions]" (Gerring, 2005, p. 169).

- Definition comprises two fundamental ideas: (1) event identified as a cause "makes a difference"; (2) causal relations of empirical world typically cannot be adequately modelled by strictly deterministic mono-causal relations – one cause determines one and only one effect – but only by multi-factorial probabilistic relationships (or causal networks) between causes and their effects (probabilistic causation)

Impact Evaluation of QA: Basic Concepts

Types of Effects: Outputs, Outcomes, Impacts

- For present purposes and in accordance with widespread usage, **short-term, mid-term and long-term effects** are differentiated; they are called **outputs, outcomes and impacts**, respectively, and are all subsumed under the umbrella term "effect".

  This is in opposition to the fact that many use "impact" as an umbrella term (as in "impact evaluation", "impact analysis" etc.), thus undermining the conceptually preferable alternative. However, this dispute about use of concepts, which ultimately is merely a matter of definition, cannot be resolved here.

Impact Evaluation of QA: Basic Concepts

Causal Social Mechanisms

- Epistemological idea of causal networks or **"causal social mechanism"** (Gross 2009; Hedström & Ylikoski, 2010; Little, 2011; Little, 2015a; Steel, 2011) is **"that we explain not by evoking universal laws, or by identifying statistically relevant factors, but by specifying [causal] mechanisms that show how phenomena are brought about"** (Hedström, 2005, p. 24).

- "complexes of interacting individuals, [bodies and institutions] usually classified into specific social categories that generate causal relationships between aggregate-level variables. A mechanism will be said to be from the variable *X* to the variable *Y* if it is a mechanism through which *X* influences *Y*" (Steel, 2004, p. 59). It is "the [social] pathway or process by which an effect is produced or a purpose is accomplished" (Gerring, 2007, p. 178).

Impact Evaluation of QA: Basic Concepts

Complexity and Indispensability of Impact Studies

- Basic and big obstacle to impact analysis (causal analysis) of QA in HEIs: shere **complexity** of the problem: QA interventions, as a rule, do have **complex and manifold cross-effects** on different subsystems on the micro-, meso- and macro-level of HEIs (e.g., sets of intentional states of individuals; sets of psychological states of groups; organizational and institutional structures and processes). In particular, QA interventions in HEIs in total have **many different aims and purposes**, and they are in **competition and interplay** with various other causes such as changing environment; other QA procedures; changes in HEI organization; policy measures; etc. (also cf. Beerkens, 2015; Stensaker & Leiber, 2015). Therefore, e.g., **non-intended and undesirable effects and long-term effects** may occur, and, normally, none of these is easily grasped at all. In summary, it is generally very difficult to adequately model the corresponding complicated (probabilistic) cause-effect, interaction, or cross-impact network.

Impact Evaluation of QA: Basic Concepts

Complexity and Indispensability of Impact Studies

- Nevertheless, organization and understanding of any educational planning and reform, and, in the end, any social life would be impossible without causal mechanisms and attendant regularities (Phillips & Burbules, 2000, p. 92).

"Causation is one of the most important and contentious issues in social science. Any aspiration for a better social world, whether they concern the allevation of inequities or the promotion of wealth, must explicitly or implicitly rely on beliefs about the causes and effects of government policies, social institutions, norms, or other phenomena that fall within the purview of social science" (Steel, 2011, p. 288).