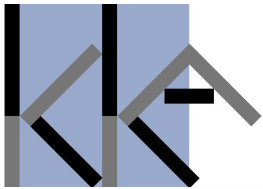


Diversity of HEIs missions in institutional audits: the FINHEEC experiences

Riitta Pyykkö

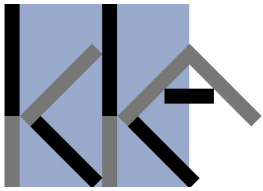
Professor, Chair, Finnish Higher Education Evaluation
Council

4th European Quality Assurance Forum
Copenhagen, 20 November 2009



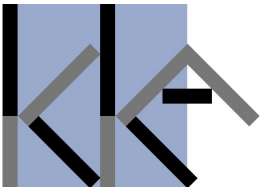
Higher Education in Finland

- Two complementary sectors: universities and universities of applied sciences / polytechnics
- Universities (more than 160 000 students) conduct scientific research and provide education based on it
- 20 universities (2009), 10 multi-disciplinary, 3 universities of technology, 3 schools of economics, 4 creative or performing arts institutions + National Defence University
- Universities of applied sciences (from 1990s, about 130 000 students) train professionals in response to labour market and conduct R&D; 26 (2009), profiles differ
- Structural development process (=mergers) going on
- Both sectors: institutions by law responsible for the quality of their operations and degrees
- All HEIs take part in quality audits



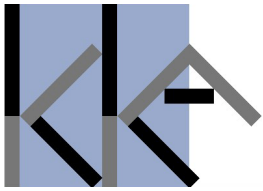
The Finnish audit model: background

- Enhancement-led evaluation as a premise for all FINHEEC operations, the purpose of evaluations is
 - to support the HEIs
 - to produce information which they can use in developing their own operations
 - to disseminate good practices among other HEIs > develop the HE as a whole
- HEIs have the ultimate responsibility to utilise and implement the information and recommendations provided



Premises of the FINHEEC audit model

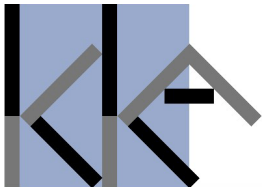
- Primary goal: to support the HEIs in the development of QA systems
- Offers a systematic method of assuring and enhancing the quality of HEIs
- Covers all the institutional activities
- Based on the enhancement-led approach but audits have also consequences (=re-audits)
- Respects the institutional autonomy
 - HEIs can develop QA systems that meet their own needs
 - Main responsibility of the quality lies with the HEIs



Audit - what is it?

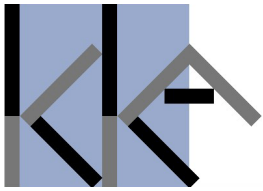
AUDIT = Independent and external evaluation of the institutional QA system

- QA system is evaluated against the objectives set in the HEI's strategy
- Does not evaluate institutional objectives or operative results as such
- Fitness for purpose principle: each HEI determines the objectives, structure, operating principles, methods used in its QA system
- Practical implementation follows the FINHEEC *Audit Manual* (in line with ESG)
(http://www.kka.fi/files/147/KKA_1007.pdf)



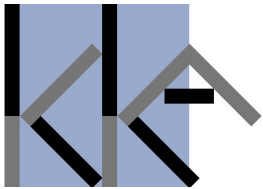
Audit process

- Preparation for the audit
 - Agreement between FINHEEC and HEI
 - The chair and secretary of the audit team visit the HEI
- HEI compiles the audit material
 - Basic material
 - Chosen evidence and samples
- FINHEEC training for the audit group
- Audit visit
- Audit report
 - Strengths, good practices, recommendations
 - FINHEEC decision: HEI passes the audit / needs a re-audit
- Concluding seminar in the HEI, feedback discussion



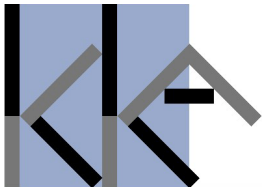
Fundamental audit questions

- **Comprehensiveness**
 - Does QA cover all the institutional units and activities?
- **Effectiveness**
 - Does the QAS produce relevant information?
 - Does this information lead to systematic and continuous improvement?
- **Transparency**
 - How is the information generated by the QA system made available to staff and students?
 - How does the HEI deliver this information to its external stakeholders?



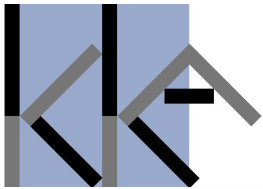
Follow-up procedures

- Re-audits (7/29)
- Mid-term seminars three years after the 1st cycle audits
- FINHEEC analysis on audit outcomes (first: 2005-2008)
- Follow-up by the Ministry of Education
 - Audits on the agenda in performance negotiations between the Ministry and the HEIs (but the audit results do not have a direct link to funding)
- Second audit cycle from 2011-
 - Planning started
 - Probably a need for a more focused audit target



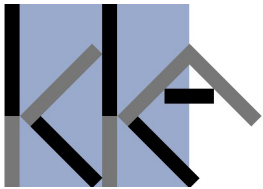
Experiences of audits 2005-2008 (1)

- Audit has been accepted as a national tool, it seems to be context sensitive enough
- Model is very comprehensive - and demanding
- Audits have promoted systematic quality enhancement
- Awareness and expertise on quality issues has increased
- Staff and student engagement, shared visions
- Sharing experiences important (public reports, concluding seminars, three-year seminars, benchmarking)



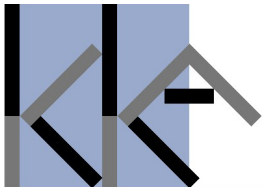
Experiences of audits 2005-2008 (2)

- Enhancement-led, BUT there is a balance between control and enhancement
- Re-audits as a supportive tool, not a punishment
- HEIs seem to have a realistic picture on their QA systems and the development needs
- Most common need: to make the institutional QA system simpler
- Many - and very different - good practices
- Participation of the staff, students and external stakeholders important in creation of a common quality culture



Experiences of audits 2005-2008 (3)

- QA work and audits as a tool in conducting change
- Audits give an opportunity to test institutional ideas together with external experts
- Brings also up new ideas
- Model allows risk taking: checks also the HEI's capability of reacting to unexpected situations
- QA work is coming a natural part of everyday work
- FINHEEC experience: audits and evaluation of centres of excellence support each other, look at the activities of the HEIs from a different angle



Audits & diversity: conclusive remarks

- Fitness for purpose: strategy, mission, goals of the HEI as a starting point > does the QA system provide relevant information?
- Each HEI decides on its QA system, no preference to any certain QA model
- Most Finnish HEIs use the Deming cycle (plan-do-check-act), also ISO, EFQM, HEI's own systems applied
- Auditing assesses if the QA procedures constitute a whole, does the system cover all activities of the HEI
>
does this restrain creativity and innovativeness?
OR
does it, on the contrary, create opportunities for them?