

Internal quality assurance (iqa) in education



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Queries of quality and standards are a professional obligation to all those who work in educational establishments. Professionalism can be defined as countless pieces of proficiency joining together like a puzzle. There are many attributes of the puzzle, each one consistently being enriched over time. You cannot acquire professionalism from a core text book but you can collect various qualities through life experience and reliably develop these experiences over time to provide the best outcomes within education.

Therefore it is important to understand the methodological importance of the role of Quality Assurance (QA) and explore how it can be enhanced through curriculum design, situational factors, government policy and Continuous Professional Development (CPD). This will support the Professional Standards of teaching and support all students on a learning journey:

“ Teachers and trainers are reflective and enquiring practitioners who think critically about their own educational assumptions, values and practice in the context of a changing contemporary and educational world” (*Education and Training Foundation, 2014*).

It is important to define ‘ quality assurance’ and what exactly it means in order to evaluate the impact of it on planning and delivery of teaching contexts. *Allais (2009)*, suggests that the term quality is new to learning but has promptly become a focal point in relation to teaching. Whereas *Gravells (2015)* would define quality as a classification to monitor and assess a product or service, it ensures to uphold the status quo that all is as it should be. Within education, the product can be described as the course programme and the service identified as the teaching context and delivery of the programme. If quality assurance does not take place there are threats to

the student's progression as precision, stability and objectivity of teaching and assessment may detriment the learner's development. QA aims to continue the improvement of courses and the way they are delivered to improve outcomes for our students. However, does quality assurance really enhance education? As there are many characterisations of the term, it is imperative to reflect that one person's ideals may be in conflict to another's.

Ashcroft (1995) , acknowledged that quality and standards could be scrutinised from a number of alternative perspectives. These dissimilar perspectives exert great political difficulties and it is significant that the values of QA should not be underpinned by the methods in which quality standards are delivered in a teachers practice, for example; the role of assessment and feedback. It is clear that QA should take place within all educational establishments to ensure products and services provide the best learning experience to our students and teaching staff alike.

An essential factor related to a setting's QA is Ofsted who examine and regulate facilities that deliver care, education and skills for students. In 2007, Ofsted resumed to devising a solitary inspectorate, viewing each phase and approach of education (*Association of Colleges, 2015*) . The inspection framework measures QA products which are then factored in to the educational institution's complete grading at the end of an inspection. The inspection will review Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) and will also view feedback and recommendations from an External Quality Assurance (EQA) visit (*Ofsted. 2014*) . According to *Doyle (2018)* , many providers do not abstain sufficient QA preparations. Intelligences advocate it is not enough to have a sincere and warm environment with respectable education and

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knowledge evident to achieve grade 1 status. However, if settings were to indicate operative leaders who could create a culture of great ideals with an emphasis on original working preparation including admirable learner participation could impress Ofsted and achieve an outstanding grade.

Lecturer's need to challenge themselves on their own approaches, ideals and principles in order to generate a positive cultural atmosphere. Being pre-emptive and a positive role model to other members of the organisation can embrace equality and diversity leading to positive student experience which is linked in with the role of both IQA and EQA (*Gravells & Simpson, 2012*).

IQA and EQA are together representations of QA within FE and Higher Education (HE). They are both predominantly focused on refining the excellence of teaching and learning. Any educator should be open to critical scrutiny to form exploration of strong academic aims correlated to simple educational values (*Ashcroft, 1995*).

IQA exhibits the complete progression of a student's journey through learning from beginning to end (*Gravells, 2015*). Within college this process begins at the application method and is monitored through all stages before a student enrolls with the provider. This includes the interview procedure, acceptance offers and intended destinations. This is then revised throughout the student's time on programme. It is then reviewed whether they reach their intended destination, whether it be HE or employment, if they have not, it needs to be reflected upon in a Self-Assessment Record, also known as a SAR. Throughout the course of the students programme, the educator will carry out QA documents throughout the academic year monitoring the process of education, these documents are known as Quality Review's (QR)

and Quality Improvement Plans (QIP). These are created on the basis of student feedback through learner voice and student surveys. However, they solely rely on the honesty and reliability of student participation in these methods. Student surveys in particular can take up a lot of time and it is not guaranteed that students read the questions thoroughly before answering therefore giving inaccurate results to be reported in the QA documents.

Nevertheless EQA is operated to observe the IQA procedure and guarantee that standards are being monitored. It is the responsibility of the EQA to ensure all students are achieving the same learning objectives set by the awarding body, all students should be able to achieve these outcomes no matter who the provider is (*Allen, 2018*). Within NCD and the department of Early Years, the awarding body is NCFE. They visit the setting once a year and review the quality of IQA to ensure that their standards are being met and that qualifications are being awarded correctly. Each cohort must represent student files to evidence this. Within these files should be evidence of at least one piece of work that has been under scrutiny of the IQA. However, it is the choice of the course leader whose file be volunteered. In some cases, this could be unfair as the best files are usually laid forward, therefore questioning whether EQA has a realistic impact on our QA processes.

To ensure the success of the QA role, an IQA should be selected, this is usually a member of staff from the setting who does not teach on the subject being monitored, and this is to ensure validity and reliability. The IQA will then measure student accomplishment, measure marking decisions and highlight any difficulties and progress requirements founded on teaching,

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learning and assessment. This is attained through policies and procedures set by educational establishments (*Educating UK, 2017*). Within NCD, the aim of the QA policy is to deliver accurate and inclusive decisions founded upon curriculum pre-eminent training benchmarks on the inclusive efficiency of education, knowledge and assessment, some examples of how this is achieved are through sampling plans, observations, learner voice and standardisation (*college 2018*). Any issues identified through the role of QA will be addressed with management through appraisals and assessment boards. It is a support mechanism to highlight any flaws or situational factors within the curriculum design. Action plans and support can then be created to ensure the progression of students and their programme.

As a lecturer, it is important that you have chosen a career that you are passionate about, where integrity and capability provide positive stances for students. It is about delivering a work ethic of the highest quality. This too is an important part in the role of QA. This is so that students can enjoy their learning experience and progress to their highest ideals.

One way to encourage this is to review the curriculum. It is essential to manage curriculum strategies through current government policy as this impacts on QA, this can be achieved through CPD. It involves the lecturer reflecting upon their teaching, mainly focusing on the content and how it is organised and delivered with a student centred approach in mind. QA would identify any implications as curriculum development (*Reece and Walker, 2000*), meaning that within each curriculum area of college, courses are intended to be standardised to ensure all students are prosperous in learning the subject content and achieving the skills desired to advance in their

education (*Top Education Degrees, 2017*). Therefore lecturers need to consider course design and the modules that are intricate in the requirement of the education outcomes. However *Gravells (2017)*, proposes that the curriculum relates to everything educational, not just the values of a qualification or a scheme of learning. This includes diverse matters that will advantage the learners throughout life, not just in their education. This is also known as the Hidden Curriculum. This model refers to unrecorded and unsanctioned lessons, it embeds values, beliefs and perspectives of learners and can be based from their own experiences (*Jackson, 1990*). Looking at the role of QA, there is no way to measure progress within the hidden curriculum as it is not always embedded within schemes of learning and awarding body learning objectives, however it can be linked to Ofsted's inspection framework in setting social and cultural messages. This is something which every academic should be proactive with in their teaching as it is highlighted within the teaching standards.

Programme models originated on numerous features of the curriculum and there are various ways they can be distributed and measured. A vital aspect of curriculum design is a creative procedure which is designated as the method of managing education (*Smith, 2000*). Programme models, however also support the requirements of a qualification. Common representations of the curriculum are Product and Process models. But is one more effective than the other? *Tyler's* product curriculum (*1949*) and *Stenhouses'* process curriculum (*1975*) continue to deliver the most rational thinking in regards to current development.

Tyler (1949) , developed the product model of the curriculum. The product curriculum is a dominant model that focuses on achieving educational objectives. These objectives are set at the beginning of a session, within college they are referred to as learning intentions. The model is based upon:

Development of curriculum ☺ Delivery of curriculum ☺ Receiving the curriculum.

The product is the desirable end outcome at the end of a course programme. This can include mastery of certain abilities and experience. Within NCD, educational goals are set by the awarding body NCFE. They set the standards that the educator needs to deliver. It is the responsibility of the educator to create alternative methods to support all students to achieve the end product. Throughout the programme, students are encouraged to set their own SMART targets to support their development. These methods and SMART targets are approved through QA and support educators in ensuring they are reflecting on practice so they can and engage all students to progress.

Nevertheless there are many strengths and limitations to the product model; it ensures that students cannot fail students are able to reattempt criteria until they have achieved their desire outcome. This model links theory and practice conveying knowledge to practical experience. However, the product model relies solely on the educator and how they choose to deliver the content. The nature of knowledge is immovable, there is no scope for evolution which can de-skill an educator limiting the opportunities for student interaction.

On the other hand, *Stenhouse (1975)*, developed the process model of the curriculum. This model is more about the journey of learning and student experience rather than focusing on end point assessment. This correlates with the purpose of QA ensuring each learner is engaged within their education and progression. Within the process model, students are able to interrelate with their education to negotiate their learning. It is a humanistic approach which focuses on:

Journey € Distance Travelled € Value added.

Similarly to the product curriculum, the process model also has many strengths and limitations to its practice. Within this model, students are allowed to fail, this may sound like a negative implication, however it allows the student to experience failure and learn resilience and perseverance. However, this can make it difficult to measure progress of each student as the model is not structured with lack of clear assessment. On the other hand, it can improve attitudes, morals and problem solving skills that will certainly prove useful in later life.

Nasir (2003), would assert that curriculum development is most important and should be established with what has to be taught, looking at the most significant way to teach it and reflecting upon the outcomes at the end. The evaluation of a study programme benefits appropriate education experiences which is a recognised key factor in meeting the needs of students along with learning intentions of the course. However, an important question to ask is are lecturers keeping up to date with their practice, curriculum development and teaching standards?

One way to ensure that teaching standards and practice are kept up to date is through CPD. It refers to the method of pursuing and detailing the abilities, understanding and practice that you gain from recognised and natural work carried out. It is a record of how experiences support your job role. CPD is exceedingly essential as it certifies proficiency within an occupation. It is an on-going development which endures the course of an individual's vocation.

Mh Education (no date), believe that CPD should take place from the training of a qualification. In the case of an educator, right from the beginning of teacher training. 30 hours of CPD should be carried out every year to maintain a licence to practice in specialist subject areas. CPD is a main quality to create an excellent teacher, reflection is a main component and is key to successful learning for both teacher and student. Unfortunately, CPD can be difficult to complete with all the administrative tasks on-going within a teaching role, this prohibits time to carry out such activities which has a negative impact on teaching.

Administration and forecasting are unlikely to reduce. Variations to government policy abode cumulative stress on the FE sector. *McGregor (2017)*, calls it “*a shower of pointless paperwork pouring down from governments*” There is very little training from quality to support the completion of their paperwork and how to operate the many different programmes that run alongside, for example in NCD, ALPs and Unit E are programmes used, including the excel spreadsheets for QA purposes. The time constraints lead to missed deadlines and unnecessary stress on the educator. Whilst it is important to complete such documentation, if the role

of teaching is not met, there will be a lack of evidence to report in the QA citations.

The importance of CPD to support QA can be very complex. Curriculum planning involves more than education considerations. It is imperative to look at political and economic context of what the lecturer teaches. *Elassy (2015)*, relates to QA from a business perspective which was then introduced into the education sector within the 1980's. Nevertheless, *Kirk, (1986)*, suggested that the growth of government involvement to curriculum has been increased and can be used to measure the quality of the experience which educators offer. Changed government policy can affect the way in which a curriculum is composed.

Sainsbury (2015), was asked to chair a panel of experts to provide clear recommendations for measures that would improve education following from the *Wolf Report (2011)*. Resulting from this the Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education was published. Sainsbury's review included plans to support employability skills to meet the needs of the economy through 2 options; technical and academic (*Gravells, 2017*) also known as T-levels. Relating to QA, there would need to be a stringent set of criteria to performance manage educational establishments for the new reforms. Within NCD, the Early Years department is one of the first curriculum areas to pilot the T-levels and will begin in 2020. NCFE have been awarded the agreement to convey the CACHE established Technical qualification for the Education and Childcare T-level (*NCFE, 2019*). However the DfE have set the project and assessment requirements for the new qualifications and have the overall responsibility of the QA of the reforms. Although, as the creation of T-

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Levels goes underway, it will be equally as important for QA to review their own requirements as the *Post 16 Skills Plan (2016)* ensures that QA processes as well as recommendations to the T-levels are under review through a variety of technical experts. This may make it difficult for providers to design their QA as the T-levels are not fully accomplished yet.

Unfortunately this may result in teething problems as far as QA goes which can also lead on to affect student experience and the way teaching staff deliver the qualifications. Educators who are responsible for delivering the T-levels will need copious amounts of training to ensure the product is embedded correctly otherwise students may not be able to progress to their intended destinations.

Situational factors such as Brexit also need to be addressed in the implementation of T levels (*DfE, 2017*). This links to the European Union (EU) Workforce arrangement and funding implications. As article 50 was triggered, the UK will leave the EU whilst T-levels are piloting within the UK. Factors of success may be open to change. Reports from *The Times (Elliot 2018)* claim that the Tory declaration may be exposed to reprioritisation if a no deal Brexit were to happen as the government would spend around £500 million per year on T-level qualifications. Although, the DfE denies that the T-levels will be under threat due to the 'no deal' planning (*Tes, 2018*). Phillip Hammond has revealed extra money to the sum of £2 billion if a 'no deal' set-up were to happen this would ensure the delivery of the T levels. These situational factors could delay development with QA.

In conclusion, it is evident that QA is an important aspect in the planning and delivery of teaching contexts. Without it could result in a decrease of student

progression and success, although it is important that educators are given the appropriate time to complete the relevant documentation to support the role of QA. In July 2016, the DfE published new standards for teachers. As teachers support the younger generation it is important that a considerable amount of knowledge and skills are embedded within their practice (*Dfe, 2016*). In periods of transformation, equally curriculum design and government policy are reinforced through the role of QA certifying that learners receive the finest provision obtainable to them. Situational issues and QA need to be durable to guarantee there are no interruptions to a student's learning. It is significant for CDP to be rooted in relation to all educators who work with and support students in their academic achievements. Evaluative products from QR and QIP reports are measured to classify preparation for teaching contexts. If the eminence of the teaching is obsolete or inapt, CPD efficiency will weaken. It is key to certify quality of the product through the process of QA, it must not be compromised in order to maintain a positive student experience especially when the introduction to new government changes are presented. CPD must be embedded in relation to current government changes to policy, it will also support any situational factors by providing a comprehensive understanding warranting curriculum design be adjusted to support the accomplishments of learners. Therefore staff from awarding bodies and providers (*University of Hertfordshire, 2019*) will have a dominant partnership in working with QA to guarantee professionalism is preserved when setting out innovative guidelines for the future.

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