

**Quality Assurance in Hong Kong's Tertiary education –
'Managing what cannot be defined'**

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Abstract:

Quality Assurance in Hong Kong's Tertiary education is but one example of a global experience of Governmental 'steering at a distance', an experience that though well intentioned reduces middle-line educational management to 'manage what cannot be defined'. Two case studies of Tertiary education in Hong Kong highlight this management crisis and the resultant momentous organisational adjustments. A literature review imbedded in the first case study explains such momentous organisational adjustments by reference to current understandings of the 'change' process. Where Government organisations - such as the UGC - appear adept at utilising the 'change' process, Tertiary institutions that ignore such knowledge are at risk.

Quality Assurance in Hong Kong's Tertiary education – 'Managing what cannot be defined'

Overview:

Within Hong Kong's Tertiary education, quality assurance is 'driven' by the University Grants Committee(UGC) a non-statutory advisory committee responsible for advising the Government of the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China on the development and funding needs of higher education institutions in the SAR (www.ugc.edu.hk).

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For example:

“The UGC panel has fixed the site visit to your University _____. During the 2-day visit the Panel will be split into several groups for meetings with a number of selected units. Each unit should prepare an outline Paper covering the design of:

- Curricula
- Teaching & Learning Processes
- Student assessment & use of assessment results

and

- Implementation quality
- Commitment of resources.

In making its assessment, the Panel will consider:

- Efforts to improve
- Orientation of processes to the process of student learning
- Coherence
- Collaborative responsibility
- Appropriate benchmarks
- Seriousness of purpose

The Panel requests in no more than four pages:

Identification of:

- exemplary Quality Assurance accomplishments
- policies/areas that are most in need of improvement.”

Source: abridged from UGC July, 2002.

As indicated above, the UGC inspection is mandatory, extensive, probing and designed to generate an institutional culture of self-improvement.

This Paper explores the generation of an institutional culture of self-improvement within the context of Hong Kong’s Tertiary education. Two consecutive case studies are presented – the first from 1997 of the Hong Kong Institute of Education, the second from 2002 of the Hong Kong Baptist University. The evidence of these two case studies indicates the impact of the UGC

quality assurance inspections is to induce momentous organisational adjustments. The Paper concludes by relating these adjustments to current explanations of the ‘change’ process.

Generating an institutional culture of self-improvement

Inherent in the University Grant Committee’s drive to induce Tertiary institutions in Hong Kong with a culture of self-improvement is the assumption that there is only one constant – ‘change’. Regardless of the contextual situation of a Tertiary institution, the emphasis throughout the UGC mandatory inspection is to empower neither defined standards, nor cultural values but simply ‘change’.

This is most clearly voiced in the following *‘Framework for Quality Assurance’*:

Quality assurance is not about specifying standards against which to measure quality. It is about ensuring that mechanisms, procedures and processes are in place to ensure the desired standards

The above appears in Baptist University’s handbook “*As we mature in quality assurance*” (B.U. Press 2001) a title that itself resonates with the generation of an institutional culture of self-improvement. This ‘new’ culture has at its heart the essential transience of constant growth, of constant ‘change’.

Why in Hong Kong Government – who directs its policy through the offices of its University Grants Committee – should choose to prioritise ‘change’ excites a plethora of speculation. For example, perhaps Tertiary standards are ‘moribund’- why impose quality assurance if it already exists? Perhaps shifting politics at play with ‘change’ easing the

replacement of pre-1997 academic management with those more attuned to the post-1997 return of Hong Kong to China? Perhaps local economics are responsible - constant 'change' facilitates necessary budget reductions in line with Hong Kong's (2000-2002) economic 'down-turn'?

Such speculations however are essentially a defensive reaction to the mandatory nature of the UGC inspections. Further, such speculations prove fruitless in terms of offering middle-management coping strategies to deal with the UGC.

In the 'real-politics' of Hong Kong's Tertiary education, the priority of middle-management is not one of understanding but simply of coping. Consider the following two examples:

1997: Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd)

“(Directive from HKIEd Admin) by the Summer of 1997 produce a Report which outlines the implementation of Quality Assurance to the teaching and learning of your Department”

“(Head of Department's response) this is the structure; now you (i.e. the QAC) come up with the ideas”

2002: Baptist University

“(Directive from Dean) comply with UGC Panel requirements”

“(Head of Department to newly established Quality Assurance Committee) you can read the UGC requirements, how can these be met?”

Whether in 1997 or in 2002, the response to UGC initiatives is not one of speculating but rather of coping.

Where middle-line-management strive simply to ‘cope’ with UGC initiatives, their ‘coping’ creates an inherent tension. This tension arises where – as in Hong Kong – middle-line-management are placed in the position of being judged against criteria announced post-event. Both in 1997 and again in 2002, the UGC inspected Quality Assurance practice of the preceding academic year. However the criteria for judging the preceding year’s practices is made known only after the event - the criteria for judging QA practice in AY 2000-01 was announced in AY 2002-3. Within this context, for middle-line-management ‘coping’ means being ‘defensive’. Clearly the UGC drive for ‘change’ is inherently at odds with ‘defensive’ middle-line-management - in both the HKIEd and Baptist University at their Departmental-level, Quality Assurance Committees are active pre-UGC visits yet passive post-UGC visits.

The inherent tension between ‘defensive coping’ and ‘the drive for change’ however need not imply a Tertiary stalemate. For Tertiary management the human-resources involved in ‘coping’ with a UGC inspection, brings into the organisation’s collective-mind a temporary focus on quality assurance issues - both the HKIEd and Baptist University management assign quality assurance to the sub-committee level. Although only temporary this focus can induce momentous organisational adjustments.

To illustrate how a temporary focus on quality assurance initiates momentous organisational adjustments we now turn to review two case studies.

1st case study: Hong Kong Institute of Education - 1997

The case study is of five members (Fullan's "individual" agencies) of a committee charged with introducing "Quality Assurance to the Teaching and Learning of the Department". The "societal" agencies in this case study include the (English) Department, the organisation (The HK Institute of Education) and the immediate society (of Hong Kong). Drawing from this case study serves to illustrate how a temporary focus on quality assurance initiates momentous organisational adjustments.

When reviewing the change process, Mintzberg (1987) points to the key role of context. The context of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) case study includes at the macro level, developments in Hong Kong, at the meso-level, developments within the "change" organisation and, at the micro-level, affective developments on the people directly involved. These three levels will now be explored.

At the macro level, from 1996, developments in Hong Kong include political change of sovereignty to the People's Republic of China; change of titular leadership from a career politician (Chris Patten) to a commercial titan (Tung Chee Hwa); changes in education including the introduction of whole day Primary schooling and the restriction of English as a the means of instruction within Secondary schools (see: Tung, Policy Address 1997) and changes in the economy involving the collapse of regional currencies, dramatic downturns in Hong Kong's tourist and service industries and unemployment of new graduates to the HK labour market (see: South China Morning Post, Nov. 7, 1997, Jan. 11, 1998 and Sept. 24, 1997 respectively). The rapidity of such events, both in terms of implementation and sequencing is conveyed in the HK tourism jingle, "Hong Kong: where wonders never cease."

At the meso level, from 1996 developments are no less breathtaking. Organisational

changes involved a physical move to a new purpose-built site: combination of disparate “colleges” into one cohesive Institute: academic upgrading for the introduction of degree-level courses: a change in management with a new Director; replacement of a Divisional Director, a re-organisation towards a “flatter” management structure and the introduction of Cantonese as an equal with English as mediums of “change discussions”.

At the micro-level, staff within the Department have evidence both of professional growth and insecurity - funding for academic upgrading is available while employment tenure is not. Changes in the role of English within Secondary education suggest both a decline in demand for Secondary teacher training and an increase in the provision of “bench-marking” support for existing Secondary teachers. Change of physical location breaks former inter-personal networks and allows for new ones. Advanced studies offer a change in perspective and increased work-load pressure. Changed fortunes in the local economy offer the potential for personal fortunes to grow and equally to decline in value - a major factor for staff entering the final quarter of their working-life and for a society accustomed to pensions being solely a matter of individual responsibility.

The descriptions above of the macro, meso and micro contexts are not exhaustive. Their function is as indicators of change operating through a complex of inter-related, multi-level factors. Although Fullan’s synthesis perhaps does less than justice to this complexity, his stress on the “combination . . . of agencies” does allow an echo of the view held by Clarke(1994) and Burnes (1996) that each context evolves its own change solutions. What the context of this case study illustrates is the challenge of setting such contextual limits for here, change operates at more than one level, has more than one agenda and strikingly, constitutes the only true constant.

In this case study, the people involved are the 52 members of the English Department and a sub-group of five comprising the Departmental Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). The Department and the QAC mirror each other in several key areas: both have a ratio of 3:1 females to males; both represent the Departmental functions of providing Pre-service, Primary, Secondary

and in-service teacher training and in both the Departmental structure is present (comprising Head of Department, both Deputy Heads and two “rank and file”). The selection of QAC members and the appointment of the female Deputy Head as QAC chairperson was the executive decision of the Departmental Head. It has been strongly argued that plans for change stand or fall on the people involved (Hoyle, 1975;1976 and Dalin et al, 1993). How the ‘players’ in this case study were influenced by this top-down form of representation will now be explored.

Team working attracts a complex array of factors. For example: Hargreaves(1994) notes the potential for manipulation, suggesting that it is through change that powerful social groups are able to mask their own agency. In terms of manipulation consider the following: the QAC membership, chairperson selection and the initiative for action were all made by the Department Head. Consider further that throughout the year of observation: agenda items; “suggestions”, information flow and the “informal casting vote” were all made by the Department Head. Whether such manipulation is prejudicial to effective change is debatable: Pugh (1993:109-110) recognises that successful change is likely when participants experience both success and also some tension while Pettigrew (1985) shows it is the interaction of personnel, organization and structure which matters. The QA case study suggests that all such complexities play a part. Consider the following:

“by the Summer of 1997 produce a Report which outlines the implementation of Quality Assurance to the teaching and learning of your Department”

(source: internal Administrative memo.)

This memo formed the impetus for the QA initiative which at the first QAC meeting, the Department Head summarised as follows:

“this is the structure; now you (i.e. the QAC) come up with the ideas.”

The above words point to a view of “manipulation” which is here synonymous with effective management. Jaques(1990) points to the ability of hierarchies to harness and develop the creativity and energy of participants. From the perspective of the Department Head, he had in

harness the ‘right’ team. However Belbin (1981) and Katzenbach and Smith, (1993) are clear of the low correlation between successful teams and an exact make-up of ‘types’ of members. Indeed Adair, (1987) signals the dangers of stereotyping and categorising people and the problems of the self-fulfilling prophecy that ensues. Whether the Department Head’s view of his ‘right’ team was shared by the members of that ‘team’ will now be explored.

Belbin (1981) shows that individuals in teams can adopt and also inter-change various roles:

1. Company worker
- 2 Chair
- 3 Chair
- 4 Innovator
5. Resource Investigator
6. Monitor Evaluator
7. Team worker
8. Completer, finisher.

From the case study, such role-changing proves complex in the extreme. For example, consider the results within one sample meeting of sequential observations of the titular QAC chairperson’s perceived role logged against Belbin’s eight categories:

Chair, Team worker, Company worker, Monitor/Evaluator, Innovator/Resource, Investigator, combined Shaper and Completer/Finisher (in the role of Secretary) and Chair/company worker.

A subsequent informal interview with the same QAC chairperson help to unpack these complex role-changes in terms of personality, gender, culture and shifting motivation. Compare the above roles with the following extracts from a subsequent informal interview with the same QAC chairperson:

“I didn’t choose to be chair (shy smile) . . .

I wish to support/be supported by my colleagues . . .

I have so many meetings these days it’s difficult to recall which is which . . .

it is my duty . . .”.

Such complex interactions of role and individuality are compounded within the context of team interactions. While the QAC chairperson exhibited the sequence of role changes noted above, my own response-log recorded the following:

Changing roles of QAC chairperson	Responses to chairperson's changing roles:
Chair,	She's being Formal
Teamworker,	she's a friend
Company worker,	I'm wary
Monitor/Evaluator,	She's being judgmental,
Innovator/Resource,	She's smart
Investigator,	I'm suspicious
Combined Shaper and Completer/Finisher (in the role of Secretary)	She's manipulating the agenda!
Chair/company worker.	Who is she?

The responses to the QAC chairperson's changing roles, listed above, serve to illustrate that within a team situation there is taking place a continuous action and re-action. Complicating these actions and re-actions is the degree to which we show our reactions, the degree to which others accurately perceive such reactions and the number of people interacting together. The implications here are that change is beyond control, that the role of Management is as a mid-wife to change, easing this fundamentally natural process by helping to solve its emergent problems (See "Where change is beyond control" in Appendix 2: "Stages in the Change Process").

The work of Hastings, Bixby & Chaudry-Lawton,(1986) on "super-teams" points to a tension between the persistent and obsessive pursuit of their goals and the need to be creative and flexible in their strategies for getting there. In the case study, several tensions were identified which find expression in unresolved issues. Consider for example the following quotation from the QA Annual Report:

“While it is understandable that some sort of commendation does have its place in showing recognition . . . many colleagues work hard not because of any awards, and presenting an award to one person may be demoralizing to the many others who do not receive such an honour. Accordingly the QAC decided to keep the idea floating . . .” 5.1.1

In this example, there is the tension of resistance to adopting “creative and flexible . . . strategies” (Hastings, et al) expressed in the QAC Report above as:

“While it is understandable that some sort of commendation does have its place. . . an award to one person may be demoralizing to . . . others”

A second tension can be noted in response to “*the persistent and obsessive pursuit of . . . goals*” (Hastings, et al) expressed above in the phrase “*the QAC decided to keep the idea floating*”. This phrase was a late amendment, replacing the original phrase which read, “*the QAC decided to introduce the idea on a trial basis*” (source: original QAC Minutes). The amendment to the QAC Minutes serves to illustrate that tensions do not function in isolation. To fully appreciate the import of this late insertion it may be recalled the Chairperson’s quote: “*I wish to support/be supported by my colleagues*”. Her amendment here incorporates both a resistance to “*creative . . . strategies*”, a “*persistent . . . pursuit of . . . goals*” and the need to and for support from her ‘constituency’ within the English Department: as such, this amendment forms one clear instance of multi-layered and interacting tensions, of micro-politics, at work.

Hall, George and Rutherford (1986) show that people have different concerns during the process and unfolding of an innovation. At an individual level, consider the following comments noted over the period of this year-long case study:

*“At last a chance to make a change . . .
this is a powerful committee . . .
here we go again, my ideas . . . his glory. . .
what can be salvaged from this?”*

The above reflect the changing concerns of one member of the QAC during its first year. The shift from optimism tinged with conceit shifts to cynicism and finally to a form of pragmatism. Contrast this unfolding pattern with the Department’s response to QA - as reflected in the Departmental Meetings - which show another “unfolding”: initially an awed (wary?) silence in early 1997 for lecturer implementation of QA was to be monitored; followed by a muted acquiescence in the Summer, 1997 as renewal of contracts were being announced, superseded in the Autumn, 1997, by a direct questioning of the QAC’s basic assumptions as, at an organisational level, the Institute’s decision-making process became staff-centred. These evolving individual and organisational patterns illustrate why Fullan (1993) remarks that the change process is exceedingly complex for, as is shown here, the factors affecting change are intimately interconnected.

The interaction of people and management systems is also exceedingly complex. Organisations are shown to be effective when they take seriously their ‘people’ (Nadler, 1993), and effective change results where felt needs and desires are satisfied Pugh (1993). However, as this case study demonstrates, to operationalise these two ideals is exceedingly complex. Consider the example of the Department’s response when QAC recommendations were tabled at a Departmental meeting - there the QAC’s basic assumptions were directly questioned, alterations and amendments accepted. By empowering staff to question the QAC’s basic assumptions this example points to an organisation which takes seriously their ‘people’, which is responsive to their felt needs and desires. However, taking a longer time-frame, the same example shows staff being influenced by contractual concerns: before contracts were renewed, the same staff

responded to QA with caution and muted acquiescence. The evidence is that an organisation may take their 'people' seriously but over time does not do so consistently. The evidence also shows that the felt needs and desires of staff are themselves subject to shifting priorities. Inconsistency in taking 'people' seriously and inconsistency in people's priorities makes the interaction of people and management systems, the prediction of change, exceedingly complex.

The advantages of an open organisational culture have been expressed in terms of tapping synergy (Kanter 1983; 1989, and Handy, 1994). Synergy expresses another dimension of the interconnection between individuals and an organisation - where the strengths of individualisation merge constructively into creating a greater whole. To generate synergy an "open" culture is favoured. From the case study, this concept of an "open" culture is shown to have various interpretations. Consider the following:

"I appointed her (the QAC chairperson) to bring her out more (in terms of her Departmental leadership). . . I deliberately defer to her (in QAC meetings) to build her leadership confidence."

The above quote from an informal interview with the Departmental Head (early 1997) shows "open" to be a well intentioned form of staff development. During QAC meetings however, it was the Departmental Head who set the true "agenda" - simply through being "open" with his knowledge of recent Institute "thinking" on QA. Being "open" in this instance again was well intentioned but crippling of his initial intention to encourage another individual's leadership development. These two conflicting forms of an "open" culture reduced within the QAC the potential for synergy. For example, other group members responded to the "agenda setting" by defensive strategies: in several meetings one member maintained complete silence; unable to attend a meeting one member apologised directly to the Departmental Head ending with the self-deprecating yet barbed remark, "I'm sure you can proceed well enough without me". Within an organisation, the concept of an "open culture" can include a free exchange of information, but also being "open" to surveillance, control and scrutiny (see Wickens, 1987: Garrahan and

Stewart, 1992). As such, an “open culture” is by its very nature, prone to conflicting interpretations between and also within individuals.

The darker side of power and politics in organisations has been shown by Burnes, (1996) and by Deal and Kennedy (1983) who detail change being wrought by changing recruitment and selection. From the case study, selection and recruitment to the QAC membership was in the hands of one person - the Departmental Head. The timing of his selection process was prior to staff movement to one centralised site which in effect meant the QAC team started as being professional “strangers” to each other. Trust building and personal positioning within the QAC team formed an ongoing distraction as suggested by the following “groupings”:

Observed social groupings of the QAC

- Meeting 1. two males together, two females together, one female
- Meeting 2. as above.
- Meeting 3. males separate, three females together
- Meeting 4. one male separate, one male loosely links with one female who retains stronger links with other two females
- Meeting 5. no discernible linking.
- Meeting 6 two males and one female loosely together: two females loosely together.

The above illustrates the shifting pattern of inter-QAC team working. Even in an “open” organisational culture - such as the QAC - the recruitment and selection of team members adds another dimension to the complexity of team working, a dimension involving trust building and personal positioning. At the meso-level of an organisation - here at the Departmental level - shifting relationships are also predicated by the darker side of power and politics. From the case study, the Department’s response to the QAC was initially muted changing most recently to one of challenging the QAC’s basic assumptions, a shift of response that in part can be attributed to the announcement at mid-year of contract renewals. The above examples serve to illustrate,

power, politics and the selection of team members are dimensions of influence both on the complex of team working and the complex process of change.

Organisations evolve distinct cultures rooted in distinctive norms, attitudes, evolving rites and ceremonies, formal and informal communication networks and ideology (see Barnard, 1938; Mayo, 1945; Selznick, 1957 and Ouchi, 1981). The organisational culture of this case study is currently best characterised as one in transition away from a deeply entrenched (Civil Service) value system which bred stagnation, stifled individuality and resisted change. Consider the following experience of QAC members:

Prior experience	Current experience
Six autonomous sites	Centralised site
Civil Service culture	Tertiary level culture with a “vision”
“Heads”: female/hierarchical	“Heads”: male & “democratic”
Promotion track: slow, dependable	Promotion track: rapid, uncertain
Teaching: “Certificate” level	Teaching: sub-degree level
Staff development: minimal	Staff development: mandatory

The above movement from left to right column has taken place within three years, too short a period for a new “culture” to be established, too long a time for the former “culture” to remain vibrant. In this context, the work of the QAC can be seen as contributing to a new organisational culture without the guidelines that an established culture provides. Change that impacts on an organisation’s culture produces tensions of growth and conflict that impact on the individual.

Another dimension of organisational culture is the entrenched value systems which can lead to stagnation, stifle individuality and resist change (Burnes, 1996). Within this case study, entrenched value systems contribute to conflicting perspectives on the change process. The entrenched value systems of the five QAC members, can in part be categorised as two being

European and three are Chinese. An equally significant categorisation of entrenched value systems is the divide between expatriate and local values. This second divide between expatriate and local values is perhaps the simpler to explain here: local values are predicated on survival within Hong Kong - lack of travel documents etc. make local survival a tangible need; expatriate values are predicated on riding the wave of change - their movement to Hong Kong is a positive(?) result of a local change. For an example from the QAC case study of a local and expatriate perspective to “change” consider the following:

Local staff: *“it is my duty”*

Expat. staff: *“at last a chance to make a real difference”*

The variation in the above two responses on joining the QAC serves to illustrate how entrenched value systems can add to the complexity of “change” at work.

Resistance to change has been shown to emerge as internal politics (Pfeffer, 1981). From the QAC case study, internal politics emerge most clearly at the meso-Institute level. Within the Institute, the function of QA was assigned to be implemented by Departments and not Divisions. Staff of the Primary and Secondary Divisions feel their work responsibilities are diminishing, their viability for further employment threatened. The staff are colleagues from the previous organisation’s autonomous six sites. The dimension of internal politics is here expressed in the following remark of a member on first joining the QAC:

“I wish to support/be supported by my colleagues . . .”

The above remark expresses the implicit role of internal politics, here within the context of implementing change.

When implementing change, Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991) point to the significant role played by resource management. Within this case study overtly the QAC was well resourced:

five lecturers attending ten two hour meetings, approximately thirty hours of ancillary clerical work and funding to attend three local QA Seminars. Such a list, in monetary terms, suggests adequate QAC funding. Another analysis is possible: lecture and clerical time was not specific to QAC, rather it was aggregated within “normal working duties”: attendees to the three local QA Seminars, were “flag flyers” for the Institute’s drive to claim Tertiary level status. From this second analysis, the QAC was at the meso-Institute level, under-funded for it forms a minor part within the Institute’s change-strategy. These samples illustrate that resource management is prone to individual evaluation, a point that did not escape the QAC members. Within this context, consider the following remark:

“I have so many meetings these days it’s difficult to recall which is which . . .”

This remark shows an individual reduced to feeling a mere functionary of change and serves as a snap-shot of how it is the perception not the reality of resource management that impacts on the individual’s willingness to foster “change”. Effective resource management is here displayed as requiring effective people management.

A change process can be influenced by the point of time of its initiation just as its validity can be influenced by precisely when it is “finally” judged. Timing of QA introduction spans the transition from six autonomous to one centralist organisation. It also spans a period of staff contractual renewal and an organisational restructuring. One influence of this timing has been noted above - a transition from Staff mute acceptance to most recently, Staff challenges to the basic assumptions of the QAC. The Staff challenges to the QAC have been constructive, their questioning has led to refinements and alterations to the QAC role within the Department. In this respect, the case study supports the view that yesterday’s solutions form today’s problems (Senge, 1990). The case study also supports the broader view: this broader view recognises that the influences for QA are part of a greater change process within the Institute. These influences for change at the meso-Institute level reflect changes at the macro-societal level of Hong Kong. In

recognising this broader, interconnected view of the change process, this case study serves to illustrate the truism that in a temporal world, the only constant is change.

Constant change presents management with a challenge. Whether hierarchical or organic management is preferred is at best, debatable (see Jaques, 1990 and Judson, 1991). In response to the challenge of managing change Preedy and Wallace (1993) would distinguish between leadership skills and management skills, between the articulation and sharing of a vision with its skillful implementation. This distinction proves less clear in the QAC case study. Leadership at the meso-Institute level did initiate the QA process through Departmental rather than Divisional Heads and from the same meso-Institute level flowed the funding for staff to attend local QA Forums. These two examples show leadership flowing from the meso-Institute level downwards to management at the micro-Departmental level. However at this micro-Departmental level the QAC case study records the QAC “agenda” being inadvertently controlled by the Department Head’s “open” disclosure of current Institute thinking on QA measures. This third example shows the difficulty of maintaining Preedy and Wallace’s distinction between leadership skills and management skills within a practical context. The blurring of articulation and implementation at the micro-level questions the practicality of separating leadership from management in the change process.

The realities of change management perhaps resounds through the following remark made by the Departmental Head:

“Management? What management . . . it’s all crisis management . . .”

The sentiment above certainly reflects the transitional character of this case study at both the macro-society level of Hong Kong in 1997 and at meso-Institute level with its pursuit of Tertiary status. The sentiment quoted above also finds support in Mintzberg (1994) when he argues for recognition that the realities of organisations are closer to crisis-management and adhocracies.

The QAC case study provides evidence of crisis-management in the form of “agenda setting” in response to the “latest news” from the Institute and also evidence of ad-hocracies at work in the form of QAC appointees with no prior QA expertise. These examples of management styles have also been shown to impact at the individual level (see above: People), a point which serves to illustrate that the distinction between people and management styles in reality is blurred, that the change process is essentially integrated in nature.

Fullan’s view that “*it is the combination of individual and societal agencies that make a difference*” is a helpful generalisation however; with reference to a particular case study it fails to locate and identify the interconnections within his “agencies”, fails to account for the blurring of perceptions between his “agencies” and fails to attribute a central position to the individual across his “agencies”. The evidence of this particular case study maps the change process as a complex matrix of individuals each of whom exhibits and invokes multi-level responses.

The overall impact of these multi-level responses to a temporary focus on quality assurance issues can be summarised as follows.

The HKIED case study serves to illustrate how a temporary focus on quality assurance initiates momentous organisational adjustments. Specifically, the HKIED was consciously and willingly ‘moving’ from a civil-service culture to a ‘Tertiary’ culture. Acquiescence and duty to established practice is here supplanted by concern for ‘academic’ standards and individual innovation. Effectively the temporary focus on quality assurance issues converts ‘civil servants’ into ‘free-marketeers’.

2nd case study: Baptist University - 2002

This second case study contributes a contrastive and longitudinal dimension to the above findings.

Baptist University has enjoyed UGC Tertiary status since 1983. From its established background, Baptist University has evolved a clear Tertiary identity voiced in its Mission Statement as:

To develop & sustain the integrity of the whole person

(See: www.hkbu.edu.hk/)

Such an established identity faces direct challenges from the implicit assumption of the mandatory UGC quality assurance inspections that foster ‘change’.

The initial responses to these mandatory inspections parallel those of the first case study. For brevity, one example suffices:

1997: Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd)

“(Directive from HKIEd Admin) by the Summer of 1997 produce a Report which outlines the implementation of Quality Assurance to the teaching and learning of your Department”

“(Head of Department’s response) this is the structure; now you (i.e. the QAC) come up with the ideas”

2002: Baptist University

“(Directive from Dean) comply with UGC Panel requirements”

“(Head of Department to newly established Quality Assurance Committee) *you can read the UGC requirements, how can these be met?*”

The above example illustrates that middle-line –management responses to UGC visits are essentially the same.

The impact of the UGC mandatory inspection also initiates momentous organisational adjustments. Although Baptist University continues to strive for its Mission goal of “*developing and sustaining the integrity of the whole person*” there are problems. Quality assurance requires evidence and mechanisms that this humanistic goal is being attained. However such ‘humanism’ carries high resourcing costs. Effectively, Baptist University is being ‘moved’ from the pursuit of a humanist-education to meeting the needs of a capitalist-economy. Clearly the tensions that arise between the needs of a humanist-education and those of a capitalist-economy are many, varied and operate at multi-organisational levels.

Conclusion

The impact in Hong Kong of complying with quality assurance initiatives induce momentous organisational adjustments – a cultural change from ‘civil-servant’ to ‘free marketeers’ and a conversion of ‘humanism’ to meet the needs of a capitalist economy. The literature review imbedded in the first case study explains such momentous organisational adjustments by reference to current understandings of the ‘change’ process. Where Government organisations - such as the UGC - appear adept at utilising the ‘change’ process, Tertiary institutions that ignore such knowledge are at risk.

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