Student Role in Quality Assurance
Case Studies and Examples
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Topics for the presentation

1. QA System in Finland
2. Auditing and its Context
3. Case Study: Course Development
4. Case Study: Students in University Audit Process
5. Case Study: Students Designing Audit
Quality Assurance System in Finland: Guided by Ministry, Audits are made by Evaluation Centre and Higher Education Institutions take part in planning
Ministry of Education

- Ministry sets standards and plans finance
- Requirements for finance are strong guiding tools
  - From the ministry funding student feedback forms 3 %
- Consensus between HEs and ministry about the standards
- Ministry ensures that every HE has a working quality system
Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

- Independent Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (KARVI) is responsible for auditing higher educational institutes
- Publishes research about good quality practises
- National Seminars, students also invited
- Evaluation criteria is functional quality system, quality of teaching is not evaluated
Higher Education Institutions

- In Finland HEs are very autonomous and therefore are responsible for the quality of their own operations
  - obliged to take part in audits

- Build their own quality system that ensures teaching/research reaches standards and good quality

- Plan their own actions based on audit result
Auditing and its context:
What is high quality education and how should it be evaluated?
Audit and its Context

• QA system is a leading tool that aims to increase quality through everyday activities
  – Auditing is focused on QA system itself; not teaching
  – Opinions on quality teaching vary but consensus on a system
• Previous problem: people talking about quality mean scores
• QA system is integrated as part of leading
• HEs use accreditation to measure quality of teaching/research
Audit System

• Failing audit produces no sanctions to HEs
  – Outside Finland lack of sanctions is seen equally odd as effort placed to take soft suggestions into account
  – HEs feel comfortable to use auditing as development tool even with their weaker aspects
• It is possible that finance guides actions now more than auditing
• Independent auditing that HEs and students can be part of valued
• Ever increasing student role in QA
Case Study 1

Student Involvement in Course development through Quality System
Student Participation through Feedback

• Mind set: students are part of the academic community
• Students are represented in every part of the administration and their opinions are frequently collected
• HEs collect feedback from every course
  – Forms the raw data used in course development
  – Completed with other data
• Also QA requires feedback
Using the Student Feedback

• Feedback is analyzed and compared to the previous feedback from the same course
  – Comparing the previous feedback reveals do we still have same/similar issues
  – QA can target reoccurring issues on courses
• Students get a summary of the feedback and teacher’s response
• At this point students are only required to give feedback
Course Development

• Direct involvement in course design
• Faculty Student representatives are members of course development work group
  – Student can have direct impact and can monitor that feedback is used
  – Teachers get a sparring companion
• QA guides to put special emphasis on issues seen in feedback such as learning targets or teaching methods
Course / Project Funding Programs

- Even with direct student participation not all ideas can be executed
- Some HEs offer students a small budget to develop their own courses / projects
  - Students are experts of studying and know best what would supplement their studies
- Students (often their local organisation) can arrange speakers or teach a topic themselves if they are very good at it
Case Study 2

Student Involvement in Audit Process of University of Turku (UTU)
Before Audit

• Local Student Union has a permanent place in QA Workgroup
• Students are constantly developing the QA system to increase good quality teaching
• Student Union was active in promoting student interests but took part in writing the self evaluation documents and QA manual etc.
  – Despite active role Student Union itself isn’t audited
• Student Union ensured that students are interviewed
During Audit

• Student union selected a representative sample from students to take part in audit interviews
• Around eight students from each faculty were interviewed
  – Students cannot fail audit or gain anything from it
  – Interviewers ask can student notice actions that are required by QA system
• Informed students what audit is and how students take part
After Audit

- UTU failed the audit
- Student got extremely positive feedback from audit team for outperforming the teachers
- Student Union continued its work in QA work group with even more practical approach aiming to write all good policies down
- New strategic goals for University and Student Union
- In one month UTU will be re-audited
Case Study 3

Student Involvement in Designing the next Audit Process
Planning the Evaluation Criteria

• National audits happen in cycles and are often themed
• Education Evaluation Centre contacted students on how to test student centered learning and QA system in practise
  – “What should we measure to ensure this happens?”
• National Student Union has permanent place in Evaluation Centre work group but this time other students were free to attend as well
Student input in evaluation criteria

• Students evaluated a list of things that make studying easier or were otherwise important to them
• They estimated what kind of QA structures would enforce / prevent them from happening
• What kind of measurements would tell if these things are present in QA system and functioning
• Suggestions in use during the next audit cycle
Student Centered Audit

- National Education Evaluation Centre checks learning targets
  - They must exist and are in line of the degree program
  - Course and teaching methods are chosen accordingly
  - Exams are evaluated based on learning targets
    - (Emphasis on hard to pass courses)
- Should all this apply, students should be aware what they need to learn during a course and how it functions as part of their degree.
  Also teachers know their target better
Recap: What is required for active student involvement?
Recap

• Quality System is Essentially a way of leading: quality is created through everyday activities
  – Structures that promote good quality teaching/research
  – Everyone must have the opportunity to develop the system

• Feedback system and proper utilisation of feedback
  – Drawback: sometimes students become tired of giving feedback

• Student members must be active and permanent part of not only QA work group but other as well
Thank you