Evaluation in tertiary education: How does evaluation contribute to organisational self-assessment

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In Aotearoa New Zealand, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) has an evaluative quality-assurance framework for all non-university tertiary education organisations. NZQA expects organisations to engage in their own self-assessment to maintain and improve quality and achieve outcomes. However, NZQA allows each organisation to decide its own methods, so long as self-assessment is systematic and planned, and improvement activities and decisions are evidence based. In 2015, our organisation decided to undertake a programme of evaluation as part of organisational self-assessment. The programme focused mostly on carrying out small-scale formal evaluations of new initiatives, activities, and programmes that were achieving good learner outcomes. This article describes three case-study examples to illustrate the range of evaluation activities completed to date. In our experience, evaluation provides a strong mechanism for education providers to define what quality is, taking into account the outcomes students, communities, and employers are seeking, as well as the external benchmarks and output measures government agencies use. Our

experiences of evaluation have implications for evaluators. We have demonstrated that evaluation capability can be enhanced by teaming novice evaluators with those who are more experienced. We have also noted that organisational culture and leadership are crucial in ensuring evaluation findings are implemented. Multiple lenses on quality allow institutions to develop and demonstrate their ability to respond to the changing needs of students and stakeholders and enable students' skill development to be recognised. We have found that evaluation builds confidence: in teachers to innovate and do things differently; in communities to work closely with providers to ensure their needs are met; in quality-assurance agencies that education standards meet required national and international benchmarks; and in funders who want to know public funding is being used wisely.

Introduction

Evaluation adds both depth and a strong evidential base to quality assurance within tertiary education. This article describes how one regional tertiary education institution has incorporated formal evaluations of some key aspects of its business into its regular quality-assurance cycle. We begin by briefly reviewing the literature on the implementation of quality-assurance processes in tertiary education worldwide, followed by an overview of quality-assurance processes in Aotearoa New Zealand. Three case studies of completed evaluations are described, together with discussion of the actual and potential implementation of recommendations from each evaluation as part of institutional self-assessment and quality-improvement processes. Implications of our findings for evaluation practice are provided.

From the early 1990s, quality-assurance mechanisms and regimes based on evaluative methodology as opposed to audit have become more common within tertiary education internationally. While an

audit approach within tertiary education tended to focus on ensuring that the organisation had policies and procedures in place and was following those effectively, an evaluative approach has focused much more on whether the organisation is achieving valued outcomes for students and how well its processes are aligned with achieving these outcomes. To this end, within Aotearoa New Zealand evaluative quality assurance has focused on gathering outcome and process information from a diverse range of stakeholders (e.g., students, staff, and employers).

Internationally, researchers have found that quality-assurance systems in the tertiary education sector have many common features. It is common for countries to have a national agency to co-ordinate quality-assurance activities (Billing, 2004; Francis & Taylor, 2016; Kis, 2005; Thune, 2001). As part of quality assurance, many encourage self-evaluation and/or self-reflection within organisations (El-Khawas, 2014; Francis & Taylor, 2016; Jarvis, 2014; Lodge & Bonsanquet, 2014). Very often the self-evaluation carried out internally is validated through external peer review (Billing, 2004; El-Khawas, 2014; Francis & Taylor, 2016; Smidt, 2014). Quality-assurance outcomes are usually publicly reported (Kis, 2005) but may not be directly linked to funding (Billing, 2004).

In 2004, Billing reviewed quality-assurance systems in tertiary education, looking mostly at European countries. Although at that time he identified some commonalities described above, the purpose of quality assurance differed across countries. In some countries, the information was used to assist the organisation to make improvements in quality. In others, accountability to stakeholders was more of a focus. In some instances, outcomes contributed to higher-education planning processes. In others, they were used to inform potential students or employers about standards, or to assist government in making accreditation or funding decisions.

Over time, an emphasis on organisational self-evaluation has evolved. For example, Thune (2001) studied the evolution of quality assurance in Danish higher education institutions from 1992 when a national evaluation centre was set up. From the beginning, organisational self-assessment was an integral part of the process, with organisations responsible for their own self-assessment processes. Over time, self-assessment became a central part of the Danish system. Thune also noted that evaluations were considered credible because of the quality of the evidence provided.

A recent US study of 49 higher education institutions (El-Khawas, 2014) noted that the national push for quality and the development of standards and guidelines has meant institutions are increasingly working to improve their self-evaluation processes by making both structural and programme changes, and by reviewing evidence from multiple sources. The focus on student outcomes was reportedly "transformative" as it required institutions to focus not only on the outcomes themselves, but also on the broad range of contextual factors that influenced student outcomes.

The United Kingdom has a quality-assurance system similar to that of Aotearoa New Zealand, one important difference being the inclusion of students on institutional review teams (Francis & Taylor, 2016). Institutions are expected to engage in continuous improvement, making self-evaluation an integral aspect of quality assurance.

Some researchers have called for system-wide evaluation of quality learning and teaching (Lodge & Bonsanquet, 2014). They note that many academics rely on their own mechanisms for evaluating teaching effectiveness, and institutional performance measures are not always helpful for improving the quality of the learning experience for students. System-wide evaluation would ensure the use of objective measures so that findings would be comparable across institutions.

Jarvis (2014) has estimated that almost half of the countries in the world have quality-assurance systems or regulatory bodies. He argues that in many countries in recent times there has been a shift away from self-evaluation to increasing state surveillance. This means that quality assurance has become a regulatory process, with a proliferation of tools, processes, and measures. He identifies a need to ensure that decision-making based on state-imposed quality-assurance regimes is based on sound evidence of benefit and a clear understanding of the value of outcomes for students and communities.

Maguire and Gibbs (2013), in a more philosophical reflection on "the essence of quality" (p. 41), discuss various definitions of quality and the ways in which judgements of quality can be made, noting it is essential to have clear and well-articulated criteria. In exploring different theories of quality in tertiary education, they confirm the importance of robust evidence sitting behind judgements of quality. They stress the importance of "evidence-of" something, rather than simply evidence. Because formal evaluation is not linear and, if done well, measures a combination of factors usually from different perspectives, it can provide a greater depth of evidence of quality than what is found in a simple reflective self-evaluation.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) has an evaluative quality-assurance framework that covers quality assurance for all non-university tertiary education organisations, and which "uses evaluation theory and practice to reach well-informed, consistent and reliable evidence-based judgements about all aspects of organisational performance and capability" (NZQA, n.d.-a). NZQA expects organisations to engage in their own self-assessment or self-evaluation to maintain and improve quality and achieve outcomes through identifying and responding to the needs of their stakeholders, evaluating the effectiveness of their processes, and using this information to improve outcomes for learners (NZQA, n.d.-b).

NZQA does not prescribe how organisations should carry out their self-assessment, leaving it to each organisation to decide its own methods. However, NZQA does expect self-assessment to be systematic and planned, and improvement activities and decisions to be evidence based. To this end, NZQA provides evaluation indicators to be used as a guide in organisational self-assessment (NZQA, n.d.-c).

As part of the guidance around self-assessment, NZQA has also provided guidelines for the use of evaluation in self-assessment (NZQA, 2009). These guidelines encourage organisations to gather data from multiple sources when evaluating a particular programme or area, in order to provide triangulation of evidence. Of particular importance in such evaluation is using the evidence gathered through evaluation to plan and carry out improvements, and to continue to monitor whether these improvements do, in fact, lead to improved processes and outcomes.

What is clear from a review of the literature is that evaluation is an approach to quality assurance that enables quality to be described from a range of viewpoints, including those of students, teachers, communities, employers, and quality-assurance agencies. Its strength is in its emergent character which means that evaluation can evolve as environments change, and can reflect how institutions respond to those changes. It shifts quality from a prescribed target to be reached to a process that education providers use to describe what quality means for them in terms of responsive ways of working to achieve agreed outputs and outcomes. It supports self-determination, accountability, institutional learning, and continuous improvement.

Organisational approach

Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology, a regional tertiary education organisation based in the Bay of Plenty and South Waikato regions, was established in 2016 from a merger of Bay of Plenty Polytechnic

and Waiariki Institute of Technology. The evaluation programme started at Bay of Plenty Polytechnic in 2015. At this time, the organisation decided to undertake a programme of evaluation that focused mostly on carrying out small-scale formal evaluations of new initiatives, and also activities and programmes that learner outcomes indicated were working well. The goals were to:

i. (a) find out quickly whether new initiatives were achieving the desired outcomes, in order to make improvements as required, and

ii. (b) document good practice in programmes that were achieving good outcomes for students, in order to share good practice across the institution.

Since 2015, there have been eleven comprehensive formal evaluations of programmes and activities, with another three in progress as at 12 December 2019. In this article, we provide three case-study examples to illustrate the range of evaluation activities completed to date. In the next section, each of the three case-study evaluations will be briefly described, followed by discussion of the impact of these evaluations on the organisation's continued quality-assurance activities.

Case study 1. Evaluating the delivery of programmes in Ōpōtiki

The institutional programme of evaluation began in 2015 with the evaluation of programmes being taught in Ōpōtiki in the Eastern Bay of Plenty (Hamerton & Henare, 2016, 2017). Bay of Plenty Polytechnic had been offering programmes in Ōpōtiki for many years in partnership with several community stakeholders. Because of the broad range of programmes that had been taught in Ōpōtiki and the way in which offerings had expanded over time, it was timely to evaluate the impact that Bay of Plenty Polytechnic's presence

and programmes were having on students and on the community, and to consider how this delivery had impacted on the institution. Anecdotally, the organisation was receiving feedback about the value of the programmes to the Ōpōtiki community, but a need for more formal evaluation was identified, in order to adjust the programmes being offered to meet community needs.

Interviews and focus groups were conducted with current students, tutors, community stakeholders, and industry. Statistical information about the outcomes of the programmes offered in 2015 was extracted from the institution's database. The information gathered from interviews and focus groups was qualitative. Information gathered from all data sources was triangulated and key themes identified in the qualitative data.

The information gathered from course and qualification completion statistics, students, tutors, and community stakeholders demonstrated the success of the 2015 programmes (Hamerton & Henare, 2016, 2017). Completion rates were high across all programmes, exceeding organisational benchmarks for both Māori and non-Māori students. Students, tutors, community partners, and other stakeholders viewed the programmes as successful beyond the completion of courses and qualifications. They saw success in students achieving qualifications that would lead them to further study and employment, or in some cases self-employment. However, success was also measured in other ways. All reported that study had positive impacts on the students themselves, and often also on their whānau and community. Students reported that their studies provided them with "soft skills", such as self-confidence and self-esteem, personal presentation, and motivation to make changes in their lives. The evaluators heard many detailed stories of how being involved in study had changed students' lives. Course evaluations contained many comments from students about how much they enjoyed learning new skills, even

though many of the students said they had earlier dropped out of school disillusioned with education.

Stakeholders also made recommendations for improving programmes offered in Ōpōtiki. Suggestions were made for future development of programmes, and many people wanted Bay of Plenty Polytechnic to have its own venue/campus or be part of a shared tertiary precinct to encourage all education providers to work together. Working together was considered essential for ensuring that programmes offered in future would meet the evolving needs of the region.

A comprehensive report of the findings of this evaluation, which contained 12 recommendations, was provided to Bay of Plenty Polytechnic (Hamerton & Henare, 2016). The recommendations were monitored throughout 2016. It was reported that by the end of that year all had been actioned, some in a slightly different form from how they were first proposed. For example, a liaison person was appointed to provide a single contact to work with Ōpōtiki programmes and stakeholder organisations, and decisions about future programme offerings were made in collaboration with key community stakeholder organisations to ensure programmes met the specific needs of the community. Bay of Plenty Polytechnic staff also began to liaise more with other tertiary education providers in the region to avoid duplication and ensure skill gaps were filled. With the merger of Bay of Plenty Polytechnic in 2016, and more recent changes in Ōpōtiki, the programme offerings in Ōpōtiki have changed somewhat, although the same overarching principles of working in partnership with community stakeholders and meeting community needs remain. More recent developments have demonstrated again the importance of these principles.

Case study 2. Evaluation of the Certificate in Fitness (Level 4)

In 2016, a team of evaluators undertook an evaluation of the Certificate in Fitness (Level 4) in order to investigate what made the programme so successful for both Māori and non-Māori students (Hamerton, Lemon, Chapman, Pender, & Cooper, 2017). It was already known that this programme attracted high numbers of Māori students each year, and that student outcomes were consistently high, but it was not known what led to this success. The programme was targeted at people who wanted to pursue a career in the sport, fitness, and recreation industries and it had been high performing for many years. The aim of the evaluation was to identify the factors that made the Certificate in Fitness so successful, as reported by programme staff, students, graduates, and other stakeholders, with the goal of transferring some of this good practice to other programmes.

A mixed-method evaluation approach was taken, and interviews or focus groups conducted with current students, graduates, other teaching staff, and employers. Evaluators spent time in class observing how tutors engaged with students, noting particular activities that contributed to student learning and engagement. Completion data was analysed to identify any trends, with results reported for all students and for Māori students. Teaching portfolios were analysed to identify key features of the programme that the tutors believed contributed to its success.

Qualitative data were analysed to identify key themes. Data from the different sources were compared in order to triangulate findings.

The evaluators found that both course and programme completion rates had consistently exceeded the institution's benchmarks: course completions were between 88% and 94%, and programme completions between 86% and 94%. In addition, the programme

had sustained high rates of success for Māori students over time, with at least 80% completions for each year for which data were available. Programme evaluations were also very positive: 100% of students either agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the programme.

What made this programme so successful? It was marked by its strong philosophy of "fitness for life". The "you versus you" philosophy encouraged students to work to better themselves, rather than to compete with one another. Māori values and principles of whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and kotahitanga underpinned the way the programme was designed and taught. Whanaungatanga began on the very first day, when students introduced themselves to every other student in the class, and was reinforced by class activities that created connectedness and a sense of belonging. For example, in the second week, each student shared one page of photos of people and things that were important to them; the photos were then used to create a "whānau board" that remained in the classroom for the rest of the year. Students reported that the relationships they had established with one another and with their tutors would continue once they graduated. Not only were students encouraged to connect with one another, but they also felt they were part of a much larger whānau of students across the years. At the beginning of each year, students watched a video of the previous year's students performing a haka. This haka laid down a challenge to the new group, who then wanted to perform well in order to live up to the expectations of those who had gone before them.

The evaluation team drew out from the data some useful points that could be noted and used by tutors in other programmes.

· Students want their tutors to be "real" people with real feelings, and to share of themselves in the same way they ask students to share their lives.

- Students are responsive to tutors who are willing to establish authentic and caring relationships with them, and who take a genuine interest in their lives.
- It is important for tutors to understand students' preferred learning styles and ensure that they provide a range of different learning opportunities that cater to diverse student needs.
- Māori values provide an excellent foundation for ensuring that Māori students feel comfortable and able to express their culture; these values work well for all students—not just Māori.
- Incorporating kinesthetic experiences into teaching and learning takes students out of their "comfort zone" and encourages them to take risks, so long as they know they are in a safe environment. It also reinforces theoretical learning.
- Creating a community of learning is important and can be achieved through ensuring that both the physical and social environments reflect students' culture and provide them with a safe and supportive space for learning.

Many of these strategies could be transferred to other programmes. For example, field trips and practical activities are already a part of many Toi Ohomai programmes, and many programmes incorporate a similar set of values into their classroom practice. The above points are also well aligned with the institution's pastoral care philosophy. This programme, with its careful responsiveness to students' needs, is an excellent example of how pastoral care can and should be provided. It also demonstrates well how the institution's values of whanaungatanga and manaakitanga can be implemented in practice.

Following this evaluation, in 2017 one of the class tutors presented the learnings to other Toi Ohomai staff in a teaching and learning symposium (Pender, 2017). He also presented the findings at the

World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education in Toronto, Canada. Articulating the features and approaches that led to success has enabled this and other programmes to be offered in a range of environments.

Case study 3. Evaluation of the International Foundation Pathway (IPF)

In 2015, Bay of Plenty Polytechnic gained approval from NZQA for a new foundation pathway so that some groups of international students could complete a 12- or 17-week foundation programme prior to their diploma-level studies, to prepare them for entry into the diploma. The evaluation of this pilot programme compared the transition, success, and outcomes of international students who completed the International Foundation Pathway (IFP) entry with IELTS 5.5 with those of international students who gained direct entry into the diploma programmes with a higher IELTS score (Crombie et al., 2017; Crombie & Fraser, 2018). All students who participated in the IFP programmes were from India. Data were collected from programme completion figures, interviews and focus groups with students, interviews with key staff, and course evaluations.

Course outcomes for the direct-entry students were compared with outcomes for students who entered the IFP and with outcomes for domestic students. While numbers were low and therefore results could not claim to offer a model for wider population prediction, the analysis of outcome data indicated that in two-thirds of the IFP programmes, students with a lower IELTS on entry were able to achieve success alongside their more qualified peers after completing the foundation pathway. This finding correlated with the feedback from the diploma tutors, where three out of four saw no discernible difference in progress between the two groups of international students in their class.

Students appreciated the opportunities for study-skill development offered by the IFP, including strategies for reading text, paraphrasing, and constructing reports and essays. The IFP raised students' awareness of different cultural norms and the need to "find their voice" and participate actively. They valued being on campus, mingling with domestic students, and identifying support service locations and personnel. Some staff interviewed observed IFP students as more outgoing and confident than their direct-entry peers. Challenges and issues for the IFP students included understanding plagiarism, the need to develop independent thinking, work commitments outside class, difficulty with mathematics, and the length of the IFP component. Most found the work harder than anticipated, and the mix of theory and practical application challenging.

In spite of these challenges, every participant was enthusiastic about the value of the IFP programme in preparing students for study in Aotearoa New Zealand. They were very aware of the cultural differences in approaches to teaching and learning between India and New Zealand, and they appreciated the opportunity to address these in a safe and stair-cased setting. They also offered observations on issues that had not originally been a focus for the evaluation, such as the tension of work/life balance, the effect of seasonal employment, the common post-graduate intention of remaining in this country, the often misleading representations made by international agents about life on and off campus, and the importance of having the right people in the foundation and learning facilitation roles.

The authors concluded that a good foundation pathway programme can offer considerable value, both in preparing international students for higher-level study in Aotearoa New Zealand and for education providers (Crombie et al., 2017). Several recommendations were made that, if implemented, could ease international students' transition to studying in Aotearoa New Zealand. Transition pathway

programmes have potential to be of value to international students regardless of their IELTS level.

In spite of the promising outcomes and findings from this evaluation, the IFP pilot was discontinued as it did not fit with current immigration requirements for international students. Nonetheless, the recommendations provide valuable information for teachers of international students, because the evaluation identified the factors that students found helpful for them in entering Aotearoa New Zealand to study. Recent development of programmes for international students has incorporated some of the recommendations. In particular, the information regarding the importance of preparing international students for study in Aotearoa New Zealand has led to changes in how these students are inducted into their studies.

Summary

All the case studies described in this article provided opportunities for the institution to define quality in relation to the students and stakeholders served. They provided valuable information to the institution about what aspects of the various programmes were working well from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders. Participants' perspectives were able to be compared with student outcomes. The evaluations also identified challenges and weaknesses, either in the programmes themselves or in the organisation's systems and processes, that could be improved. A good start has been made in implementing changes and improvements based on the evaluation findings.

In May, 2016, Bay of Plenty Polytechnic merged with Waiariki Institute of Technology to become a new, much larger, institution: Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology. While two of the evaluations described here were carried out in 2016 during the merger period, evaluators were nevertheless able to continue their work and produce final reports. However, uptake and use of the evaluations has been

more difficult than anticipated because of the structural changes occurring through this period.

Each evaluation involved a different group of staff and provided good opportunities for staff to build their evaluation capability. One of the evaluators reported that initially, she had felt apprehensive because she had no experience in formal evaluation. However, after having the experience of being in an evaluative team, she now felt confident to be able to lead an evaluation next time round.

Although in the most recent formal external evaluation and review (EER) carried out by NZQA for Toi Ohomai in 2018 none of the programmes that had been evaluated were chosen as focus areas, across the institute some of us noticed a growing confidence in, and understanding of, evaluation.

Discussion

The growing culture of evaluation at the institute has seen several new evaluations proposed and these are now getting under way. Each new project has potential to raise capability in evaluation, as more staff get involved in evaluation teams. We would like to see evaluation embedded by the organisation as an important component of organisational self-assessment, particularly for new programmes or approaches to delivery. It will never be possible for the organisation to conduct formal evaluations of every aspect of its work, or of every programme offered. NZQA (2009) suggest a planned approach to self-assessment that identifies priorities and ensures that the organisation's goals are used as a guide in measuring successful outcomes. It is also important to monitor any action plans arising from evaluations, something that was done well for the Ōpōtiki evaluation.

In asking the questions "What is the essence of quality and how can it be judged?" Maguire and Gibbs (2013) concluded that judgements of quality need to be based on evidence and can be made by

experts according to agreed criteria. That would suggest that a fairly standard evaluation methodology could be applied across a range of settings. However, other evaluators see evaluation as more of a developing process that needs to be tailored to specific groups and locations, and a form of action research that results in ideas for future projects rather than conclusions (Bognar & Bungić, 2014). The cycle of action evaluation then continues the process of change, with outcomes of evaluation serving as examples for others.

The evaluation studies described in this article all used straightforward and simple evaluation methods, gathering qualitative information from a range of stakeholders and comparing that with student outcomes. However, each one was tailored to suit the programme being evaluated, and each one had input from teaching and/or managerial staff involved in the programme. For instance, in the second study, students developed the questions to be used in the focus groups, whereas in the third, it was staff involved with supporting the students who designed the questions. The evaluations described here fit well into the cyclic evaluation framework described by Bognar and Bungić (2014), since the intention is to utilise evaluation outcomes as a basis for continuous improvement of the institution's programmes and delivery.

It has also been argued that quality of education depends very much on organisational culture (Paraschivescu, 2017). Within Toi Ohomai, one of the intentions of undertaking a planned programme of evaluation has been to enhance a culture of evaluation through raising staff capability.

Implications for evaluators

Since evaluative self-assessment is required for all non-university tertiary education organisations in New Zealand, we thought it would be useful to reflect on the implications of our experiences both for

other tertiary organisations and for evaluators more broadly. Our case studies were all participatory, in that teaching staff were involved alongside the evaluators in all aspects of the evaluation design and execution. In the Certificate in Fitness evaluation, students were also involved in the study design. Student and stakeholder voices were also an important feature of all of the evaluations; students commented on the value of being asked to provide in-depth feedback that went far beyond their usual course evaluations.

Although it would be difficult to claim that any of the evaluations were truly transformative, they all contained elements of transformative practice as described by Donna Mertens (1999, 2007, 2010). For example, the development of programmes in Ōpōtiki was aimed at improving equity in access to tertiary education within that community, and the evaluation provided a mechanism for measuring the value of those programmes in this regard. Our approach to evaluation is participatory, involving teaching staff, and in one case students, in evaluation design. Like Worthen, Veale, McKay and Wessells (2019), we believe that participatory evaluation has potential to be both emancipatory and transformative.

Involving teaching staff alongside more experienced evaluators assisted with evaluation capacity-building. Because they were teaching on the programmes being evaluated, teaching staff's ownership and buy-in was enhanced, similar to what other evaluators have found (Dyson, 2018; Taut, 2007; White, Percy, & Small, 2018). We found that teaching staff readily engaged in evaluation once they recognised its value in enhancing their understanding of student achievement. Several of the less-experienced team members have demonstrated their growing evaluation capability by going on to lead their own inquiries.

The culture of an organisation undoubtedly influences both staff willingness to engage in evaluation and the likelihood that

they will use the evaluation findings (Dyson, 2018; Taut, 2007). Organisational culture is closely linked to leadership (White, Percy, & Small, 2018); within Toi Ohomai buy-in and support of senior management was crucial for implementation of recommendations. Early evaluation of new initiatives was valuable in informing ongoing programme development and we would recommend this to anyone designing and planning new initiatives. Even more valuable would be process evaluation in the very early stages of programme development, to enable changes to be implemented quickly as required. Evaluation of programmes known to be successful enabled greater understanding of the factors leading to success, which could then be shared with others. There is much that can learnt from evaluating long-standing and successful programmes. This learning, however, depends on senior management understanding the value of the evidence and supporting dissemination.

Undoubtedly, external pressure to self-assess influenced staff willingness to engage in evaluation of their programmes. However, we found that the culture of self-assessment cultivated over several years created a positive environment for evaluation, which has come to be viewed as a useful quality-assurance tool. The involvement of students in evaluation design was something we considered valuable and wish to include in future evaluations. We found that students understood even better than the teaching staff what were the most important aspects to focus on, and what questions needed to be asked. Because of our experience, we intend to ensure that future evaluations are even more participatory, and also involve students in reporting of outcomes.

The way forward

Evaluation provides a strong mechanism for education providers to define for themselves what quality is, taking into account the

outcomes students, communities, and employers are seeking as well as external benchmarks and output measures government agencies use. Where quality is owned and understood by the people engaged in the activities covered by the provider, a greater understanding of the impact of education on all those who participate can be developed.

Evaluation provides a mechanism to undertake a "deep dive" into an aspect of education delivery that complements other institutional self-assessment practices. The complementary approaches give both breadth and depth of understanding of how the institution understands and reflects the quality of its education provision.

Implementing an approach to evaluation that includes multiple lenses on quality allows institutions to develop and demonstrate their capacity to respond to the changing needs of students and stakeholders. The process enables students' skills development to be recognised, and builds confidence: in teachers to innovate and do things differently, in communities to work closely with providers to ensure their needs are met, in quality-assurance agencies that education standards meet required national and international benchmarks, and in funders who want to know that public funding is being used wisely.

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