Quality in work based studies not lost merely undiscovered.

The tension between the values of higher education and those of commerce have historically been different and the current focus on integration ought to problematic (the fact that is less than might be expected is, in itself, a worrying issue). This paper looks first at the phenomena of work based studies as distinction from work place learning and then discusses the quality both as an embodied notion of the values of both higher education and other forms of work and in term of external controls as forms of accountability surveillance.

The second part of the paper adopts a stakeholder view of quality and suggests ways in which the market controls might be overridden by academic intergrity.

Quality in HE

Historically, responsibility for quality management in higher education has fallen on a decentralized system of accrediting agencies, which largely monitor quality through external quality approaches (Welsh and Dey, 2002). Governments tend to address quality management issues through external quality monitoring activities (Green, 1994) such as accreditation, audits, assessment and external examination (Harvey, 2002). The objectives of those approaches are institutional and programme compliance with a series of regulations and standards, the achievement of stated institutional goals and conformity to given specifications. Yet, these external quality approaches have not gone uncontested. Gibbs and Iacovidou (2004) for example, refer to this approach as "Pedagogy of the Confined" where quality is an external measurable form of control which cannot be used to mean good education. Harvey (2002) also critiques external quality monitoring as "bureaucratic……incapable of asking the right questions…leads to directing scarce resources from the improvement of learning, the experience for students and the development of research and scholarship" (p. 5).

Nowadays however, in response to various market forces (see Sahney et al., 2004) HEI[1] shifted the emphasis from formal (external) assessments of quality to systems of quality management (Brennan and Shan, 2000 *as cited* in Srikantham and Dalrymple, 2007) that are internally developed and implemented. The emphasis of such systems is the identification of quality characteristics by the various stakeholders of HEI (see Harvey and Green,1993; Joseph and Joseph, 1997; Pariseau and McDaniel, 1997; Lagrosen *et al.,* 2004, Becket and Brooks, 2008)

If quality is "stakeholder defined" who are then the "stakeholders" of higher education? Modern quality management supports that there are many "customers" or "stakeholders" especially when dealing with service providers such as HEI (Lagrosen *et al.,* 2004). Some studies use the term "customer" and others prefer the term "stakeholder". Various authors however, such as Lagrosen *et al.* (2004) suggest the use of the term "stakeholder" instead of "customer" when discussing quality in HE as this term is less controversial, and these authors adopt this view.

Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2003) suggest that there are many stakeholders for whom the quality of higher education is vital, such as the government, the finding bodies, the students, the faculty, the employers, and society at large, just to name a few. Cheng and Tam (1997) identify both internal and external stakeholders in the quality management process .Current students and faculty are internal constituents in the quality management process whereas employers, government funding bodies, institutional management, prospective students or professional bodies are external; these stakeholders are likely to have disparate definitions of quality as well as different preferences for how quality is assessed (Cheng and Tam, 1997). This study concentrates on two stakeholders: students and faculty.

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[1] Higher Education Institution

In summary, the literature is proposing a "pragmatic approach" (*as cited* to by Harvey *et al.*, 1993, p. 6) to addressing quality: an approach that determines a set of criteria that are indicators of quality, which are stakeholder-determined and take into consideration the different views of the various stakeholders which may then be used for measuring quality

Quality amd work based learning

An essential need for clarity of definition is central to effective measurement and control of the quality in any sphere of activity. This has proven problematic for innovations that have marked the emergence of higher education within the workplace. As Williams proposed at a recent UVAC conference, WBL "frees higher education from the concept of physical borders and methods of delivery are without limit and the landscape is rich in opportunity" (2006: 191). However, he continued "these factors pose various challenges for effective quality assurance" (2006:191). He echoes the issues made more forcefully in the QAA Code of Practice relating to work-based and placement learning (2007) which highlights concerns over the responsibilities of partners, the communication roles and the management of students, employers and universities. The specific aspect of awarding credit for work based learning is noted by Nixon *et al* (2006). They claim that those practitioners engaged in delivering WBL in various guises find "anomalies exist in the functioning of institutionally or regionally driven credit-based systems. For instance, the maximum amount of credit a student can achieve through APEL varies by institution and as such a rather arbitrary system seems to have emerged" (2006: 51). This challenge is particularly well covered by Brennan (2005) and Connor (2005).

The development of work based learning programmes furthermore requires close cooperation between the parties who agree to the learning outcomes leading to the

academic award. Clearly a stakeholder relationship exists, and through this the relations have a basis both in moral and procedural terms upon which a system of controls can be put into place to give assurance of the quality of the awards. This is clearly an educational institution responsibility (QAA 2007: 7) but the very idea of combining learning derived from formal education and that derived from the workplace is problematic. Tasker and Peckham (1994), Barnett (2000), West (2006) claim that academic and industrial values are incommensurable, and that it is only by mutual respect that constructive collaboration can be fruitful. As Evans *et al* describe it, "the workplace is a site in which antagonistic relationships are expressed" (2006:6).

One approach to resolving this antagonism is the development of learning agreements or contracts. Such agreements are a real attempt to bring the two worlds together to integrate and facilitate the learning experience. Yet despite its advantages, the 'learning contract/agreement' may not offer the credibility required to give parity of esteem with traditional disciplined-based awards. There are continuing debates (in both the worlds of work and education) of *what* higher education is and *how* it should be evaluated. Pointing out such debates, Nixon *et al* claim that quality assurance procedures and codes of practice "will need to better reflect the breadth of approaches to flexible learning being adopted by HEIs so as not to stifle innovation in the future" (2006:51).

This point is critical for without a broad, and not simply an instrumental, approach to quality assurance. The development of the transdisciplinary, borderless and practical knowledge creation oriented nature of work based learning will continue to be constrained by an approach to 'knowing' and 'knowledge creation' that is academically subject-based and rigidly self-interested. Arguably such a conservative approach will remain closed to the further democratisation of education through embracing learning in and through the workplace. The quality assurance issues relate both to the *process* and to the *worth* of the knowledge being codified within work based higher qualifications. The point here is not to seek comparisons or equivalences with

propositional knowledge, but to give parity of esteem to practical knowledge and in doing so, recognise the learning that is *within* and t*hrough* individuals (often realised through workplace endeavours) in a manner that leads to greater openness and fairness.

This may be facilitated by the learning outcome and assessment regimes adopted by the higher education as a way of measuring and evaluating achievement beyond discipline defined contexts. Work based learning requires an appreciation of "forms of understanding that are sensitive to context, time, change, events, beliefs and desires and power" (Tsoukas, 2005:4). Thus while subject benchmarks are inevitably concerned with generalization from constituted bodies of (subject) knowledge, 'canon' and learning, much of work based learning is concerned with the complexity and depth of understanding of specific contexts (Garrick and Rhodes, 2000).

Furthermore, the implementation of learning outcomes enable the widening and deepening of knowledge to be assessed critically and in its full complexity, rather than in the often artificial form structured in discipline knowledge. As Garnett states, "The high level of customisation, not only to meet the needs of individual students but also their organizations, is prized within the discourse of modernism which pervades quality assurance in higher education.… In this respect work based learning and quality assurance in higher education can be seen as part of the same modernising discourse" (Garnett 2008).