RESISTANCE TO QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary quality assurance (QA) practices represent neoliberal managerialism in higher education institutions (HEIs). Staff resistance to managerialism in HEIs is well documented. This paper uses a qualitative approach to explore pragmatic ways of overcoming resistance to QA. The paper outlines the reasons for resistance to QA based on the historical context of academic freedom and self-governance as cornerstones of a university. A typology of discursive and behavioural forms of resistance is provided in order to enable IQA practitioners to identify overt and covert modes of resistance. Diffusion of innovation (DOI) theory is used to outline attributes of QA that can be used to enhance its adoption. The attributes considered are compatibility, relative advantage, observability, complexity and trialability (CROCT). Structural and systemic decentralisation of QA mechanisms are suggested as critical factors for adoption of QA. It is concluded that resistance to QA can be minimised by leveraging its CROCT attributes for higher education.

Keywords Higher education; quality assurance; resistance; diffusion of innovation

Introduction

Contemporary quality assurance (QA) practices in higher education are underpinned by new public management logics of accountability, transparency and performativity (Jarvis 2014; Morrissey 2013; Blackmore 2009). Morley (2003, p. 100) states that 'for both the state and at the level of the individual institution, quality assurance has become a form of governance'. Resultantly, quality has become a marker of distinction in international higher education markets (Blackmore 2009). QA is an umbrella term

that can be broken down into external quality assurance (EQA) and internal quality assurance (IQA). EQA refers to supra-institutional policies and practices whereby the quality of higher education institutions (HEIs) and academic programmes is assured (Dill 2007). The International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) defines IQA as 'the process, supported by policies and systems, used by an institution to maintain and enhance the quality of education experienced by its students and of the research undertaken by its staff' (INQAAHE 2018). IQA practitioners work within the realm of the IQA and EQA ecosystem in higher education.

Extant literature shows that QA is not a neutral practice nor a benign managerial tool (Stensaker 2008; Rowlands 2012;
Morrissey 2013; Jarvis 2014). QA has been described as a form of power within HEIs (Rowlands 2012; Jarvis 2014; Engebretsen et al. 2012). Several studies

describe power dynamics derived from the regulatory and performative logics of QA in HEIs (Morley 2003; Worthington and Hodgson 2005; Stensaker 2008; Rosa et al. 2007; Blackmore 2009; Lucas 2014; Engebretsen et al. 2012). QA has disrupted power systems in higher education in as far as they have been historically organised (Engebretsen et al. 2012; Cheng 2011; Rowlands 2012). The traditional notion of an academic is underpinned by the venerated principles of academic freedom, self-regulation and autonomy rooted on the Humboldtian model of a university (Ylijoki and Ursin 2013). This state has been disrupted by the QA (Cheng 2011; Jarvis 2014; Lust 2018).

QA subjects academics to performance targets, measurement, comparison and judgement through use of various processes and tools (Ball 2003; Worthington and Hodgson 2005; Blackmore 2009; Todd et al. 2015). Under most QA regimes, performance is measured against bespoke indicators, standards, criteria and fitness-of-purpose (Blackmore 2009). Power is seen to shift from academics to management (Engebretsen et al. 2012; Morrissey 2013; Lucas 2014). This has been resisted by the academe in various ways (Worthington and Hodgson 2005; Anderson 2006; Teelken 2012; Lucas 2014; Shahjahan 2014; Cardoso et al. 2018; Lust et al. 2018). Resistance is a major challenge to QA (Stensaker 2008; Blackmore 2009; Brown 2013; Lucas 2014; Lust et al. 2018).

The narrative on resistance to QA in literature has largely focused on the reasons and forms of resistance. Extant literature provides much less information on how to overcome resistance to QA. There is a gap in terms of a comprehensive approach to overcome resistance to QA at institutional level. Approaches to managing resistance to QA have not

leveraged much the power of innovation adoption theory and the possibilities it offers for enhancing adoption of QA. This paper seeks to fill this gap by using Rogers' (2003) diffusion of innovation (DOI) theory to propose an approach to overcome resistance to QA in higher education.

This paper seeks to make a number of contributions. The first contribution is to cumulate knowledge on resistance to QA. Secondly, the paper seeks to provide a typology of resistance that enables IQA practitioners to recognise resistance in its disparate forms. Finally, the paper suggests an approach to embolden adoption of QA. These contributions are envisaged to enhance the capacity of IQA practitioners to overcome resistance to QA.

Approach to the Study

This is a qualitative study based on review of selected literature and application of relevant theories. The study consists of three interrelated components: (1) understanding resistance; (2) mapping a typology of resistance; and (3) enhancing adoption of QA.

Understanding resistance

The study uses selected extant literature to foreground resistance to QA on the resistance theory. It uses the explanatory power of various theories such as institutional and professional theories to explore resistance to QA. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework proposed by Hyatt (2013) is also used to map possible reasons for resistance to QA.

Resistance typology

A typology of resistance to QA is drawn up based on empirical discourse in literature and Jeffress's (2008) four modes

of resistance. Various forms of resistance are identified.

Enhancing adoption of QA

Diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers 2003) is used as the main tool to provide mechanisms for enhancing adoption of QA. This is supported by institutionalisation theory (Colyvas and Powell 2006; Scott 2008), participatory theory (Pateman 2012) and stakeholder theory (Freeman 1984). QA in higher education is considered to be a form of 'governance' or 'managerial' innovation (Jarvis 2014; Alvesson and Spicer 2016). DOI approach has been used within the context of higher education in some studies on innovation adoption (Sujitparapitaya et al. 2012; Kasperavičiūtė-Černiauskienė   an dSerafinas 2018).

Theoretical Background

Neoliberal QA practices in higher education represent 'governance' or 'managerial' innovation (Jarvis 2014; Alvesson and Spicer 2016). Innovation has been conceptualised in many different ways (Rogers 2003; Damanpour and Aravind 2011; Walker et al. 2010). Innovation is defined as 'an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption' (Rogers 2003, p. 12). Adoption is the implementation of a product, service, technology or practice new to the adopting organisation (Damanpour and Aravind 2011). Rogers (2003) defines innovation adoption as a decision of 'full use of an innovation as the best course of action available' and rejection is a decision 'not to adopt an innovation' (p. 177). An innovation is implemented when users accept and use it (Walker et al. 2010). Rogers (2003) posits that an innovation provides an organisation with a new alternative and means to solve problems.

QA is a practice that has morphed from collegial to managerial modes in higher education. Managerial QA practices are 'new' to HEIs (Kasperavičiūtė-Černiauskienė and Serafinas 2018) as they are based on managerial and bureaucratic rationalities rather than collegial rationality (Luckett 2006).

Rogers (2003) identifies five attributes of innovations as compatibility, relative advantage, observability, complexity, and trialability (CROCT). Perception of the CROCT attributes by individuals explains the different rates of adoption of an innovation (Rogers 2003). Rogers (2002, p. 990) posits that 'potential adopters' perceptions of an innovation's characteristics are more important than are objective measures of them'. Rogers (2003) explains CROCT attributes as follows: 'compatibility is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters' (p. 15); 'relative advantage is defined as the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being better than the idea it supersedes' (p. 229); observability as 'the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others' (p. 16); complexity as 'the degree to which an innovation is perceived as relatively difficult to understand and use' (p. 15); and 'trialability is the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis' (p. 16).

Institutionalisation, stakeholder and participatory theories can be drawn upon to enhance adoption of QA in higher education. Institutionalisation is a process through which new, initially ambiguous, unfamiliar and resisted ways of doing things become structured, desirable, appropriate, comprehensible, commonplace and routinised (Colyvas and Powell 2006; Scott 2008). Institutionalisation is supported by

essential elements which need to be in place (Silimperi et al. 2002). As for an innovation, these essential elements pertain to its attributes (Kasperavičiūtė-Černiauskienė and Serafinas 2018). As such, institutionalisation of QA is driven by its adoption, which in turn depends on stakeholders involved.

Freeman (1984, p. 46) defines a stakeholder as 'any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the institute's objectives'. Effective stakeholder engagement is a key feature that distinguishes successful change management (Argyris 1999). Participatory theory emphasises sustained stakeholder involvement in order for HEIs to make effective decisions (Pateman 2012).

Understanding Resistance to QA

Reasons for resistance

It is prudent for IQA practitioners to understand resistance in order to manage it effectively. Resistance to managerialism in higher education is underpinned by the twin concepts of academic freedom and autonomy (Hakala 2009; Brown 2013; Jarvis 2014). Academic freedom and self-governance are venerated cornerstones of a university that have been enshrined in higher education since 1158 when the University of Bologna adopted an academic charter, the *Constitutio Habita* which was centred on the principle of academic freedom (Jarvis 2014).

Extant literature shows that tribal academic values centred on academic freedom and autonomy are persistent and cannot be changed easily (Anderson 2008; Hakala 2009; Jarvis 2014; Lucas 2014). The regulative and evaluative logics of QA leave little space for self-regulation in the academe (Worthington and Hodgson 2005; Lust et al. 2018). As noted by Worthington and Hodgson (2005, p. 96), QA is perceived as a form of 'subtle panoptic

power, control and surveillance over the academic labour force'. Extant literature proffers a range of reasons for resistance by academics to QA processes (Anderson 2006; Worthington and Hodgson 2005; Alvesson and Spicer 2016; Seyfried and Pohlenz 2018; Lust et al. 2018). These are succinctly summarised by Anderson (2006, p. 162) as: 'the distribution and exercise of power; differences in defining and understanding the notion of quality; concerns about effectiveness of quality assurance processes; doubts about the reliance on quantification often associated with quality assurance mechanisms; and time spent complying with quality requirements'.

QA is reported to increase the power of management and diminish the autonomy of academics (Worthington and Hodgson 2005; Morrissey 2013; Engebretsen et al. 2012; Lucas 2014). Resistance to QA by academics is encapsulated by Davies (2003, p. 91) who posits that 'the locus of power has shifted from the knowledge of practicing professionals to auditors, policy-makers and statisticians, none of whom need know anything about the profession in question'. This is explained using power theories. One frequently used theory is the Foucauldian theory. This theory provides power logics that can be adapted to higher education (Morrissey 2013; Engebretsen et al. 2012). Foucault (1995, 1991) distinguishes panopticon and governmentality as two forms of modern power technologies. Governmentality is a form of power that is decentralised to individuals. Panoptic power is more centralised in management. Both forms of power interplay in QA in HEIs (Engebretsen et al. 2012). Power systems affect the functionality and effectivity of QA and give rise to resistance (Engebretsen et al. 2012; Lucas 2014; Alvesson and Spicer 2016). Foucault

(1995, p. 95) famously posited that 'where there is power there is resistance'.

The terms 'quality' and 'assurance' have not been adequately conceptualised in higher education (Blackmur 2010; Jarvis 2014). As expressed by Blackmur (2010) and Jarvis (2014), dominant phrases that purport to define quality such as 'fitness for purpose', 'fitness of purpose', 'value for money' and 'achieving excellence' are without any solid conceptual framework. The use of these concepts of 'quality' is contested by academics (Anderson 2006; Blackmur 2010; Henard and Leprince-Ringuet 2008). Engebretsen et al. (2012) argue that quality is now measured by technical quality indicators and has become a quantitative concept. In addition, academics argue that with QA everything is numbered, measured and ranked. This is akin to equating quality to quantity (Engebretsen et al. 2012), giving rise to discontent in the academe.

Effectiveness of QA in general has also been questioned. It is argued that QA focuses more on inputs and processes than outcomes (Blackmur 2010; Horn and Dunagan 2018). Resistance is also driven by concerns about the impact of QA on core academic activities of teaching and learning (T&L). Arguments refer to the nature of academic teaching, which cannot be broken down into measurable units and clear cause–effect relations that indicate impact (Clark 1983; Henard and Leprince-Ringuet 2008; De Vincenzi et al. 2018). QA is also seen as burdensome, costly, and time-consuming bureaucratic work (Cardoso et al. 2013; Lodesso and Warito 2016; Stensaker 2008; Stensaker et al. 2011; Lange and Kriel 2017). This is seen as exacerbating the workload of academics, with negative impact on their core academic business (Stensaker 2008).

It should also be pointed out that staff identity issues give credence to resistance

to QA (Degn 2015; Lust et al. 2018). Academic identity is one of the main discursive resources for resistance to QA (Lust et al. 2018). It produces a repertoire of discursive means for resistance. Identity constructions affect which action patterns people deem appropriate and thereby their conduct (Degn 2015). Academic identity (full professor, associate professor, etc.) is sacrosanct in universities. As such, QA can be seen as making the professoriate ontologically insecure (Ball 2003).

Explaining resistance to QA

The reasons for resistance to QA proffered above can be explained using institutional and professional theories. Teelken (2012, p. 277) posits that 'institutionalism is a remarkable theme, as it seems more likely to explain inertia than change'. HEIs are known to be resistant to change (Brown 2013; Lucas 2014). Powell and Dimaggio (1991, p. 14) posit that 'neo-institutionalism emphasises the homogeneity of organisations, it also tends to stress the stability of the institutionalised components'. In this case, academic freedom and autonomy are institutionalised in higher education (Alvesson and Spicer 2016). As such, disruption to this status quo by managerialism is resisted (Lucas 2014). Professional theory offers more explanatory value for how an individual deals with change (Teelken 2012). Scholars have considered 'professional' and 'professionalism' as sources of resistance to managerialism in HEIs (Chandler et al. 2002; Kirkpatrick and Ackroyd 2003; Alvesson and Spicer 2016). It is claimed that professionals are difficult to manage because they are autonomous, self-governing and have stronger loyalty to their profession than their employers (Alvesson and Spicer 2016). Lust et al. (2018) cite professional autonomy and expertise for teaching

quality as some of the discursive resources for resistance to QA. This is buttressed by Alvesson and Spicer (2016, p. 2) who posit that 'if there is one group of professionals who are supposed to value autonomy very highly, it is academics'. One can posit that resistance to QA is a stereotypical power struggle between managerialism and the 'professional' academic.

The CDA framework devised by Hyatt (2013) is a useful lens to use to explain resistance to QA. This framework consists of two components; contextualisation and deconstruction of policy texts. According to Hyatt (2013), contextualisation refers to expressions of aims or goals of a policy. Elements of contextualisation are policy levers, drivers, and warrant (Hyatt 2013). Levers and drivers refer to logics of a policy and warrant is the justification established for an act, policy or course of action (Hyatt 2013). Lucas (2014) used this framework to explain academic resistance to QA. Lucas (2014) noted that drivers of QA and the warrant are not always understood by academics and are largely seen as managerial.

The second component of deconstructing policy texts uses four modes of legitimation as its analytical lenses. Legitimation is the process by which policies are justified to their audience by attachment to dominant norms and values (Hyatt 2013). The four modes are authorisation, rationalisation, moral evaluation and mythopoesis (Hyatt 2013). Lucas (2014) uses the first three modes to explain resistance to QA in higher education. According to Lucas (2014), QA is undermined and revisioned by questioning its authority, rationale and moral purpose. In terms of authorisation, the argument is that the QA process is not scientific, lacks objectivity, and fails to measure and assure quality of academic activities (Lucas 2014). It is also viewed as

lacking authority to measure and assure quality (Rowlands 2012; Blackmur 2010; Lucas 2014).

The rationality logic is that QA cannot measure change because it is difficult to ascribe causality, especially with reference to T&L (Anderson 2006; Seyfried and Pohlenz 2018). Cost of the QA process, its workload and impact on staff motivation affect its rationale (Anderson 2006; Stensaker 2008; Lucas 2014). Moral evaluation is given as the most forceful mode in undermining QA (Lucas 2014). The human cost in terms of work burden arising from the QA process is seen as devaluing staff motivation (Lucas 2014; Lange and Kriel 2017). The concern is that too much time is spent on QA processes such as evaluation and audits (Stensaker et al. 2011).

Typology of Resistance to QA

It is important to be clear on that which counts as resistance (Mumby 2005).

Resistance is generally framed as having specific properties that distinguish it from other forms of non-resistant organisational behaviour (Mumby 2005). A resistance typology is important for IQA practitioners because resistance can be managed when it has been identified.

Several scholars have described various forms of resistance to QA. They include Parker and Jary (1995), Mumby (2005), Worthington and Hodgson (2005), Jeffress (2008), Quin (2012), Teelken (2012), Ylijoki and Ursin (2013), Shahjahan, (2014), Lucas (2014) and Lust et al. (2018).These scholars provide descriptors of various forms of resistance. Foucaldian theory and post-structuralist understanding recognise resistance in quotidian terms (Anderson 2008). What is critical for QA are the mundane manifestations of resistance which occur every day. Scott (1986) buttresses the mundanity of resistance and posits that

'quiet evasion' associated with everyday forms of resistance is more widespread, and often proves more effective, than direct, confrontational modes' (p. 8). The import of this is that resistance to QA can come in multiple forms, some of which are covert.

Different forms of resistance to QA are described below (Table 1). Resistance to QA largely comes as typologies of behavioural and discursive practices. Other examples of resistance include dithering, shirking, devolving and deceit where QA work is relegated to junior staff (Worthington and Hodgson 2005).

Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) coined the term 'learned incompetence' for scenarios where academics feign that QA is beyond their understanding. Morley (2003, p. 24) coins the term 'counterfeit reflexivity' with reference to instances where academics insincerely present themselves in the language and discourse of QA. Anderson (2008) described 'qualified compliance' as a case where academics complied with managerialist demands in minimal, pragmatic, or strategic ways when they actually did not support the practices with which they complied.

Table 1 Descriptors of forms of resistance to QA

Form of resistance	Descriptors	Reference
		cooperation
Discursive tactics	- Irony, cynicism, humour and jokes, mimicry, refusal, critic - Gossip, formal complaints - Replacement of QA practices	
Behavioural tactics	- Retreatism, quietism, disengagement, evasion, avoidance - Minimal compliance - Pretension of enthusiasm - Grandiosity - Confrontation, non-	

Jeffress' (2008) four modes of resistance can be drawn upon to expand the typology in Table 1. The first mode is resistance as rewriting and undermining colonial narratives (cultural resistance). Shahjahan (2014) defines 'colonial' as anything imposing or dominating and QA can be seen as 'imposing and dominating' managerialism. Cultural resistance exposes and disrupts neoliberal narratives and logics that underpin managerialism and provide alternative narratives, logics and practices that replace QA narratives (Shahjahan 2014). The intention is to portray QA as lacking authority. The second mode is resistance as subversion (Jeffress 2008). In higher education 'it happens within the 'cracks' and 'in-between spaces' where faculty, students and administrators can contest and appropriate neoliberal authority and discourses, and refuse to buy into neoliberal personhood' (Shahjahan 2014, p. 224). This can manifest itself mostly through behavioural practices such as refusal, avoidance and confrontation.

The third mode is resistance as opposition (Jeffress 2008). In this mode,

the collegialism is contrasted with managerialism and the former is seen as better (Shahjahan 2014). Oppositional resistance seeks to challenge QA as inimical to academic freedom. The fourth mode is resistance as transformation (Jeffress 2008). This is positive resistance which seeks to make power and resistance mutually co-productive (Shahjahan 2014). It resonates with the dialectical approach to control and resistance proposed by Mumby (2005). According to Mumby (2005), in a dialectical approach the focus is more on exploring how competing forces can shape and fix resistance. Shahjahan (2014) posits that transformational resistance is the most helpful framework for thinking through the problems of neoliberal higher education.

Enhancing Adoption of QA Leveraging QA attributes

Given the discourse on reasons and types of resistance to QA, it is prudent to explore ways of enhancing adoption of QA. Rogers (2003) CROCT attributes are a useful tool that can be leveraged by IQA practitioners to enhance adoption of QA.

Compatibility of QA
Compatibility of an innovation is positively related to its rate of adoption (Rogers 2003). Sahin (2006, p. 18) contends that 'if an innovation is compatible with an individual's needs, then uncertainty will decrease and the rate of adoption of the innovation will increase.' The import is that QA needs to be compatible with needs of the academe (Kallio et al. 2016). Compatibility of QA with an institution's mission and vision, values and existing practices, satisfying the requirements of stakeholders has a positive effect on its adoption (Kasperavičiūtė-Černiauskienė and Serafinas 2018). One way to enhance compatibility is a more outcome-based conception of quality

((Horn and Dunagan 2018). Harvey and Knight (1996) promote 'transformation' as a good concept of quality as it accounts for education as a transformative and participative process in which the student is a participant as compared to consumer, customer or client.

Worthington and Hodgson's (2005) articulation of the purpose of QA provides a plausible way of enhancing compatibility QA. Worthington and Hodgson (2005, p. 98) posit that 'the primary role of quality assurance in higher education is to create a culture of continuous organisational and professional self-development and self-regulation that will provide a better value-for-money service that is compatible with the needs of the global (post)modern knowledge economy and learning society'. This broadens the scope of QA as focus is not only on accountability, but self and institutional improvement. Viewed using this lens, QA can be compatible with expectations in the academe.

It is also plausible that accountability be understood in its entirety. Vidovich and Slee (2001) identify four types of accountability in higher education. These are: professional accountability to peers; market accountability to markets and students; democratic accountability to community and society; and managerial accountability to government (Vidovich and Slee 2001). Such a broad understanding of accountability demystifies the common belief that QA represents managerial accountability only. Professional accountability is compatible with collegial accountability systems known to academics.

Relative advantage

Rogers (2003) presents relative advantage as measurability in respect to economic profitability, social prestige, satisfaction, convenience and efficiency/effectiveness

of the performance. In this case, QA has to show advantages over collegialism. Some studies show that QA has the advantage of enhancing an institution's image (Kasperavičiūtė-Černiauskienė and Serafinas 2018) and assuring external customers that a specific institution provides quality services, and this results in higher student numbers (Kasperaviciute, 2013).

EQA practices such as institutional and programme accreditation provide a label that assures students and external stakeholders about quality and standards in an institution. This has the advantage of distinguishing credible institutions from 'degree mills'. This is even more important given a plethora of regional and global networks of EQAs that promote recognition of qualifications and transfer of credit on the basis of accreditation (Jingura and Kamusoko 2018). Such advantages of QA need to be valorised and demonstrated in HEIs.

Observability
Observability is a component of result demonstrability and has a positive effect on adoption of an innovation (Rogers 2003). There are concerns about what QA actually achieves and at what cost (Brennan & Shah 2000; Stensaker 2008). Studies on impact of EQA, particularly on T&L, have been conducted by Brennan and Shah (2000), Stensaker (2003), Minelli et al., (2006), and Stensaker et al., (2011), De Vincenzi et al., 2018) amongst others. The general consensus is that not much is known about the impact of QA and available results are too variable (Stensaker 2003; Stensaker et al. 2011; Liu 2015; Lamagna et al. 2017; Daguang et al. 2017; Lange and Kriel 2017; De Vincenzi et al. 2018).

The import of variable observability is that there is need for more comprehensive studies on the impact of QA in higher

education. It should be noted that despite the variation, work continues to be done on this subject. For example, the UNESCO (2018) study shows promising results on impact of IQA on T&L, research, international cooperation, quality culture, graduate employability, community outreach, income generation, governance and management. More such work is needed in order to unequivocally show the benefits of QA.

Complexity

Complexity of an innovation is an important obstacle to its adoption (Rogers 2003). If innovation is not understood properly, it will not be properly implemented and its ability to improve organisational performance may be uncertain (Kasperavičiūtė-Černiauskienė and Serafinas 2018). There are concerns about the complexity of QA processes (Worthington and Hodgson 2005). Some resistance tactics such as

'learned incompetence' (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999) relate to perceived complexity of QA. Some quality management systems used in higher education such as the ISO 9001 standard have been reported to be complex to understand, over-technical and over-specific (Kasperaviciute 2013).

Generally, concerns about complexity of QA mechanisms include challenges in changing pedagogy (Sahin 2006), transforming an institution into auditable systems (Ball 2003), tools difficult to understand (Worthington and Hodgson 2005), and metric-laden evaluative processes (Kallio et al. 2016). It is prudent for QA to have interpretation ease, understandable terminology, and implementation ease to enhance its adoption. This presents a need for QA mechanisms that are well articulated, documented and well explained to staff, with IQA practitioners performing technical backstopping roles.

Trialability

Trialability is positively correlated with the rate of adoption of an innovation (Rogers 2003). The essence of trialability is that 'the more an innovation is tried, the faster its adoption is' (Sahin 2006, p. 16). Trialability enables reinvention, change or modification by the potential adopter (Sahin 2006). Trialability makes QA amenable to modification to suit higher education needs. QA in higher education is largely perceived to represent introduction of private sector management practices (Anderson 2008; Rosa et al. 2012). Its suitability to higher education has been questioned on the basis of perceived unique characteristics of higher education (Srikanthan and Dalrymple 2003; Kasperavičiūtė 2013).

Examples of the trialability of QA include development of quality management models designed for higher education such as Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (ENQA et al. 2015), model for quality management in HE (Srikanthan and Dalrymple 2004), ISO-based TQM model (Borahan and Ziarati 2002) and excellence model (Pires da Rosa et al. 2001). This provides evidence of attempts to develop QA systems suitable for higher education, making QA a trialable enterprise. There is need to continue adjusting QA systems to the changing environment in higher education and innovate new practices that account for contemporaneous trends.

Mechanism for Leveraging QA attributes

QA attributes described above can be operationalised by employing appropriate mechanisms that promote adoption of QA. The suggested mechanism is decentralisation of QA for effective stakeholder engagement. Academics are major stakeholders in QA (Cardoso et al.

2018). They have a key role in setting QA policies and implementing them (Tetteh 2018). Sense of ownership of QA by academics is essential for its successful implementation (Cardoso et al. 2018). Engagement must be buttressed by effective participation. Participation expands engagement by placing emphasis on contributions from stakeholders (Tetteh 2018). As such, QA systems must engender inclusive and participatory practices.

Staff participation in QA can be enhanced by inclusive QA structures and systems. Kaufmann (2009) cited by Niedermeier (2017) states that organisational structure and steering approach are the two main variables that determine implementation of QA. Organisational structure refers to QA arrangements in terms of allocation of responsibility and accountability in an institution. Steering approaches refer to systemic aspects of QA with reference to content specification. Content specification refers to regulative aspects such as quality policies, standards, criteria and guidelines. Both organisational structure and steering approach are mostly a question of centralisation versus decentralisation (Niedermeier 2017; UNESCO 2018). Centralised models are dominated by senior management in both organisational structure and steering approach. This gives power to senior management and can bolster resistance. Decentralisation of QA has the potential to embolden staff engagement and participation.

Decentralised models of QA can relate to content specification by senior management and independent implementation by departments or content autonomy by departments and independent implementation (Kaufmann 2009 cited by Neidermeier 2017). Decentralisation distributes responsibility and accountability for QA to staff at various

levels in an institution. Decentralised QA models are functioning governmentality where power, responsibility and accountability are distributed throughout an institution. With decentralisation power no longer acts as a limitation on individual freedom and the result is likely a stimulated academic heartland that feels buoyed by its contribution to QA. Concerns about QA as summarised by Anderson (2006) are resolved in an inclusive and participatory manner. This is possible given that Harvey and Knight (1996) distinguish two types of collegialism as: 'cloisterism' representing the traditional archetypal professor; and 'new collegialism' representing a professoriate amenable to change. Decentralisation can bolster 'new collegialism' given Miller and Rose's (1990) concept of 'governing at a distance' where decentralisation is more about influencing the actions and self-esteem of staff, with senior management 'controlling from a distance'.

Fitting Hyatt's (2013) model to a decentralised QA system, it means that the context, authority, rationale and moral purpose of QA are set in a participatory manner. In addition the CROCT attributes of QA can be enhanced by staff engagement. This is likely to countervail what Rowlands (2012, p. 104) described as 'academics may be inclined to see QA as something done 'to them' or at best 'by them' but not 'for them'. In this case, QA will be seen by academics as something done 'by them' and 'for them'. This is a reasonable way of minimising resistance to QA.

Conclusion

It is evident from extant literature that there is resistance to QA in HEIs. IQA practitioners in HEIs need to manage this resistance in a manner that emboldens QA as a practice. The causes and types of

resistance to QA in higher education are multiple and present a challenge to IQA practitioners. It is thus worthwhile to propose plausible ways of overcoming this challenge. There are three interrelated issues that underpin such an endeavour as presented in this paper. Firstly, understanding resistance from both theoretical and empirical perspectives is critical for IQA practitioners. This can embolden their capacity to manage resistance to QA. Secondly, there are disparate discursive and behavioural forms of resistance to QA that need to be understood by IQA practitioners. Understanding and identifying resistance to QA provide is important for IQA practitioners. Thirdly, IQA practitioners need appropriate tools to use to overcome resistance. The DOI approach provides a plausible tool for this purpose. IQA practitioners need to leverage the CROCT attributes of QA to enhance its adoption in HEIs. CROCT attributes present levers that can be used to embolden QA adoption. Decentralisation of QA is a plausible approach to adapt QA attributes to higher education through effective staff engagement.

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