General speech by Adam Graycar, Chief Executive Officer, Office of Tertiary Education, Adelaide, 1992

"Quality assurance in higher education"

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Adam Graycar

ORGANISATION: GENERAL SPEECH

DATE: 1992

PLACE:

TOPIC:
Stake out expands post compulsory education as one of our most precious community resources. It values the output for you in it enriches our social, scientific, cultural & economic well being. It sees it as a means to enhancing our well being, as a means for socio-economic mobility, as a key industry in our community.

As such it expects it to be a quality operation, expects quality standards to be developed & maintained, and would be distress if quality were ever to be compromised.

We are developing a stake strategic plan for NTE and this plan assumes a quality product.

The stake respects vision as autonomous institution and your does not prescribe
Standards of quality (even if it then how to set and achieve them).

Sometimes members of parliament and ministers (mine in particular) receive, from time to time, representations from constituents which, when they're looked at, are in essence, complaints about a lack of quality.

We have no way of quantifying these representations. Not all who have complained complain, and certainly those who have expertise at an experience at an. Don't write a letter to your minister to ring me up and tell me; that they had an interview/interaction, etc.

Apart from ministers, there is a lot of anecdotal material. A lot of my
Contemporaries have children at university or are themselves undertaking some course of
higher education.

Again, they occasionally tell stories of very poor practices encountered by their own
perceptions. Occasionally, their course is about the rubbish they
put up with in order to get the bit of paper they value so much. In particular,
students who are practitioners of long standing and who
are taking graduate diplomas or coursework masters can tell
many stories about some quality gaps in their courses. Rarely is the
articulated set at the A U C C quality conference in Ph
don Dec 1 9 9 7 . The post-grad.
student from Sydney who told the story that what he was
being taught was an insult to
his intelligence, was thoroughly
ignored.
We do have some problems, and we do have a lot of indifference. Students who don't want to rock the boat, academics who are comfortable doing what they've always done, leaders who assert a proclaimed quality and hope the frequent proclamation will be translated into a self-evident truth.

Your reference has specific questions but not me raise a few questions before addressing the issues.
Young students at the margin
need nurturing — support other
than lectures.
Older students need predictability
at the center.

"Available to
see students 2-3 Tues. — Don't
knock!" — Real like
adults.

* Teacher training for academics

* Completion rate / drop out

* White paper says quality maintained because non

* Proliferation of degrees — Ed, Tech,

* Acads teach what they know

* Peril arson's — what causes

* Teachers often have limited experience
  of real world — OK
• Consumerism
  - Lay out course objectives
  - Lay out assessment
  - Don’t change halfway through

• One course, change to another term or 1 week’s notice

• No results for 6 months

• No recourse

• Academic freedom / accountability

• Semi-literate Arts Graduates

• Many partners in quality - not just academics
As a former academic I believe knowledge is the true basis of Higher Education:
- its production via research
- its transmission via teaching
- its acquisition and use by students and community

The social mission of Higher Education depends on the quality of this knowledge.

FUNCTIONS OF UNIVERSITIES

(1) providing education and training
(2) seeking and creating knowledge i.e. conducting research and transmitting findings
(3) social development
  - regional
  - national, international

The challenge of co-ordination is the challenge of consensus - without consensus, systems remain fragile
  - shared vision
  - pride
  - quality

QUALITY

As the 1960's was the decade of reawakening and growth, the 1970's growth then consolidation, the 1980's the decade of efficiency, then the 1990's may well become the decade of quality. In industry, commerce, government, Higher Education, quality is on everybody's lips

- quality control
- quality circles
- total quality management
- quality assurance

I don't want to get semantic but want to focus only on quality assurance, an area in which I have worked for some time.
Quality assurance shows people where they are going and whether they're meeting goals. Good quality assurance shows problem areas and deficits in the system. Quality assurance is a way of ensuring that favourable outcomes are occurring. Quality assurance simply means that quality, a degree of excellence, is assured, that is, positively declared and guaranteed. It lays a rigorous basis for setting goals and achieving outcomes.

There are three components - structure
- process
- outcome

Clearly and unequivocally, quality outcomes result from inputs in particular from structure and process. These are part and parcel of an inclusionist activity in which all the stateholders combine and contribute to a rigorous approach to achieving the goals of the institution or university.

If only the outcomes are measured, without examining the process and the structure of the service organisation, one cannot know what caused the favourable or unfavourable outcomes.

Quality assurance is a planned and systematic approach that identifies opportunities for improvement and provides a mechanism through which action is taken to make and maintain these improvements. Many improvements can be achieved at little or no cost, though of course some may cost, and priorities need to be set.

Quality Assurance - has four components

i) everyone in the enterprise has a responsibility for maintaining the quality of the product or service;

ii) everyone in the enterprise has a responsibility for enhancing the quality of the product or service;

iii) everyone in the enterprise understands, uses and feels ownership of the systems which are in place for maintaining and enhancing quality; and
iv) the provider, the management (and sometimes the customer or client) regularly checks the validity and viability of the systems for checking quality.

A university which takes quality assurance seriously emerges as a self-critical community of students, teacher, support staff and senior managers each contributing to and striving for continued improvement.

Real and enduring quality can only come by actions of the universities themselves. The basis for these actions must be self-evaluation. Inspection and quality control imposed solely from outside would not work. Self-evaluation - seeing oneself - is never easy and we need assistance to see ourselves properly -
1. "Mirror" - external assistance - professions, the community, other universities;
2. Staff development for self-evaluation;
3. National and international comparisons of innovations and good practices of teaching learning and assessment - both general and subject specific.

Our academics should discuss at conferences, not only substantive matter related to subject, but how to communicate subject. There's a lot to be done in quality assurance:

SUMMARY

In management we often talk about doing the right thing, and about doing things right we need to blend these in a context of:

1. Greater community governmental demands for a larger Higher Education system - which obviously puts pressure on our ability to "do things right".
2. Given greater complexity, Higher Education needs to have a more general basis focus with stronger core elements and leave specialism until the postgraduate phase.

3. Interactions of sciences, politics, economics and environment are going to increase. All of the major problems require multifunctional, multinational and interdisciplinary solutions and universities are the key players.

4. Commitment to excellence and quality

(END)

We are faced with challenges that sometimes seem beyond our grasp - but they endure, and at times, there seems to be a resemblance to the life of Sisyphus.

In the Greek legend, Sisyphus was condemned to push a great stone to the top of the mountain, and just as he reached the top it would slip from his grasp and roll to the bottom and he would have to push it up again - and so on for all eternity. But one recent commentator pointed out that it was the monotony, not the futility, of the task that made it punishment. If he could have rolled a different stone each time, or the same stone up different mountains, or if he could have experimented with improved ways of rolling it, it might not have been so bad.

Now, more than ever before we do have difference stones to roll. We do have different mountains to roll them up - and with the right commitment, we have every expectation that we can get them to the top.

KEY ISSUES

1. Massification of system
   Elite ---> mass -- niche for University of Adelaide excellence and new horizons.
2. User friendly orientation - quality assurance.

3. Adaptation to change
   - change in composition of student body
   - widening in academic orientation of staff
   - change in **** / teaching
   - change in teaching technology
   - change in relations with community.

   - stronger work links
   - accountability / autonomy
   - fund raising
   - International prospectus for the Universities?
TO: Peter Shackleford FAX 226 1736
OFFICE OF TERTIARY EDUCATION

FROM: SATAC (FAX 223 6447)

1991 - Year 12 GLOBAL FIGURES - SA

POOLS

1. Total SSABSA candidates 22,349
2. (of these) Total SATAC applicants (UG) 11,927 (includes adults)
3. (of these) Total SATAC offers 5,332
4. (of these) Total SATAC acceptances 4,182
5. Total School (Form S) SATAC applicants 11,214 (excludes adults)
6. Total School (Form S) SATAC offers 4,978
7. Total School (Form S) SATAC acceptances 3,894

QUESTIONS

1 (a) Gained entry to University \[ \frac{4182}{22349} = 18.7\% \]
\[ \frac{3894}{22349} = 17.4\% \]
1.e. 18.7\% OF TOTAL SSABSA '91 CANDIDATES ACCEPTED OFFER TO UNIS
BUT 17.4\% SCHOOL CANDIDATES

(b) NOT AVAILABLE AT SATAC (yet).

2. In 1991 (we don't have 1992 yet) 2,899 of SSABSA's 22,349 candidates
repeated 1990.

3. Of the 2,899 candidates 2,495 applied to SATAC; 1,409 received offers; 1,214 accepted.
(excludes 86 applicants who had some tertiary study)


Total SATAC applicants 8,052
Offered 4,920
Accepted 3,132

5. Overseas no longer processed through SATAC - 50 applied and are
excluded from above figures.

6. 3,178 Adults applied to SATAC (No Year 12, mainly S/E)
  1,039 Offered
  1,039 Accepted

7. Current cut-offs shown on written hand-out attached.

8-13 We have our views but yours are probably better.

12 May, 1992
SATAC