International trends and activities in learning outcomes

Mary Catharine Lennon, PEQAB
Roger Benjamin, CAE
Tom Van Essen, ETS
International trends in learning outcomes policies in quality assurance

Dr Mary Catharine Lennon
Senior Policy Advisor
Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board
Government of Ontario

Presented to the Learning Outcomes Assessment Conference
Toronto, Ontario
October 17, 2016
Capturing quality

• Higher education systems are actively developing and implementing initiatives in order to demonstrate, or ‘prove’, the value of higher education and learning.

• Learning outcomes considered to be the ‘silver bullet’ able to capture and quantify educational quality.
Hype cycle heuristic

Gartner, 2016
Research questions and methods

• How are learning outcomes policies being used in regulatory schemes?
• What impact, if any, have the polices had?

• Mixed methods:
  1. Global survey of 330 regulatory agencies
  2. Case study analysis of 9 policy evaluations
  3. Meta-evaluation of policy evaluations
Survey participants

Survey population (N=330)  Survey respondents (N=65)
Policy impact: Goals, guesses and gains in the QAA’s

- Regional / International compatibility and comparison
- Transparency
- Student learning
- Labour market alignment
- Improved system design
- Institutional improvement
- Improved teaching
- Credit transfer/articulation
- Economic development

Targeted goal (N=29)
Perceived impact (N=22)
Research findings (N=14)
Primary results from meta-evaluation

- QAA SBS (N=10)
- NOQA Denmark (N=18)
- QAA PS (N=6)
- CINDA (N=9)
- NOQA Norway (N=12)
- QAA FHEC (N=11)
- NOQA Sweden (N=9)
- NOQA Finland (N=7)
- AIKNC (N=8)

Positive implications (n=32)  Neutral or undetermined implications (n=35)  Negative Implications (n=23)
Impact by goal choice

Teaching and learning
Institutional improvement/Quality
Transparency
International coordination (and comparison)
Labour market alignment and economic development
System design and credit transfer

Positive implications  Neutral or undetermined implications  Negative Implications
Proportionate impact by goal choice

- Teaching and learning (N=4)
- Labour market alignment and economic development (N=4)
- Institutional improvement/Quality (N=6)
- System design and credit transfer (N=5)
- Transparency (N=5)
- International coordination (and comparison) (N=3)

Positive implications
Neutral or undetermined implications
Negative Implications
Learning outcomes policies are cycles

- Misaligned
- Misapplied
- Misdirected
- Unexamined
Moving towards targeted policies

Gartner, 2016
“Access without quality is a cruel deception”

National Governors Association, 1986: 10
Thank you for your attention

marycatharine.lennon@ontario.ca