

LANQUA Toolkit

The Language Network for Quality Assurance

Introduction

The LanQua Toolkit has been developed by a network of teachers of languages and related studies across Europe. The 60 partners in the Language Network for Quality Assurance have worked together to map the current landscape for languages in higher education (described in the Frame of Reference available on the LanQua website) and to reflect on how a subject practitioner-led approach to quality assurance can inform quality assurance processes and enhance the quality of the learning experience for students.

The Toolkit consists of the following 'tools':

(1) The Quality Model

The Quality Model (see pages 2-3) has been developed to guide practice and reflection on practice in order to enhance the quality of the learning experience for those engaged in the learning and teaching of languages. It approaches quality from a teacher and learner perspective and supports a bottom-up view of quality assurance which is based in practice and which has a mainly enhancement function that can work alongside and complement other more formal internal and external quality assurance processes in higher education institutions.

(2) The Frame of Reference

The Frame of Reference constitutes an overview of languages in higher education in the areas of Language Learning, Intercultural Communication, Literature and Culture, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Language Teacher Education. It includes an indicative summary of the core content of each area together with some sample learning outcomes for each of the five subject areas listed above. It also presents some of the essential knowledge, understanding and skills (competences) that a graduate in languages and related studies would be expected to acquire alongside the main and emerging teaching, learning and assessment practices in the field. The purpose of this document is to provide a context for the Quality Model and complementary information relating to the different stages of the quality process described in the model.

(3) Examples from practice

Examples from practice are short extracts from case studies developed by the LanQua project team in the five areas of languages described in the Frame of Reference. They are intended to offer concrete examples of quality processes and approaches mainly drawn from reflective practice (informal quality enhancement) or national/institutional frameworks (formal quality assurance). Full versions of the case studies are available on the LanQua website (see below).

(4) Guidance notes

The guidance notes offer suggestions and recommendations for teachers, managers, policy makers and quality assurance bodies on the ways in which the LanQua resources can be used in practice or adapted for other subject areas/sectors.

(5) The LanQua website

The website offers further links and other documents (reports, case studies, model learning outcomes) developed by the project together with an online version of the Toolkit.

www.lanqua.eu



The LANQUA Quality Model described

Reflective practice

The Quality Model is based around the notion of reflective practice, in this case of the teacher/facilitator who is engaged in an iterative cycle of reflection for, in and on action. This notion draws on the work of Donald Schön¹ (1983) who developed the idea of the reflective practitioner which essentially relates to the ways in which practitioners think about and enhance their practice. Schön paid particular attention to the idea of reflection in action, reflection in the moment of doing or 'thinking on one's feet' which forms a key part of the quality cycle described here.

Stage 5. Adaptation: modification and revision

QA question: How will you be able to improve it?

In reality the adaptation phase of the quality process will take place at various stages in the quality cycle as a response to a number of factors as described elsewhere in the Quality Model. Thus planning will reflect the outcomes of previous instances of the planned activity or its precedents, and implementation will be informed by ongoing monitoring and evaluation and practice may be adapted 'in practice' as well as 'post-practice'.

Stage 4 Monitoring and evaluation: results and feedback

QA question: How will you know that it works?

This relates to the outcomes and impact of the learning experience. It includes (and is sometimes synonymous with) the outcomes of formative and summative assessment) but also relates to the question of whether or not a particular teaching or learning activity/module/programme etc. or CPD initiative has been successful. The monitoring process feeds into the evaluation and revision of teaching/development activities and informs larger-scale review (including formal quality assurance) which takes place after the teaching/development has been implemented and assessed.

Context

For the Quality Model described here the broad context is European higher education. However, each national context will be different with differing levels of institutional autonomy, formal quality assurance (QA) management and internal processes to support quality enhancement. Thus the engagement with and articulation of quality will vary across member states and the processes described in the Quality Model will be implemented in a variety of ways in response to these different contexts.

Stage 1 Planning: overview and process

QA question: What are you trying to do?

Effective teaching and learning reflects good planning which considers the essential questions of the purpose (aims and objectives), subject content, and practice of any learning activity in the context of the learning environment and in relation to key stakeholders including employers, parents, policy makers as well as students. Planning is an iterative process as it informs and is informed by practice and evaluation of practice thus it may undergo revisions in response to active teacher reflection and learner feedback.

Stage 2 Purpose: objectives and outcomes

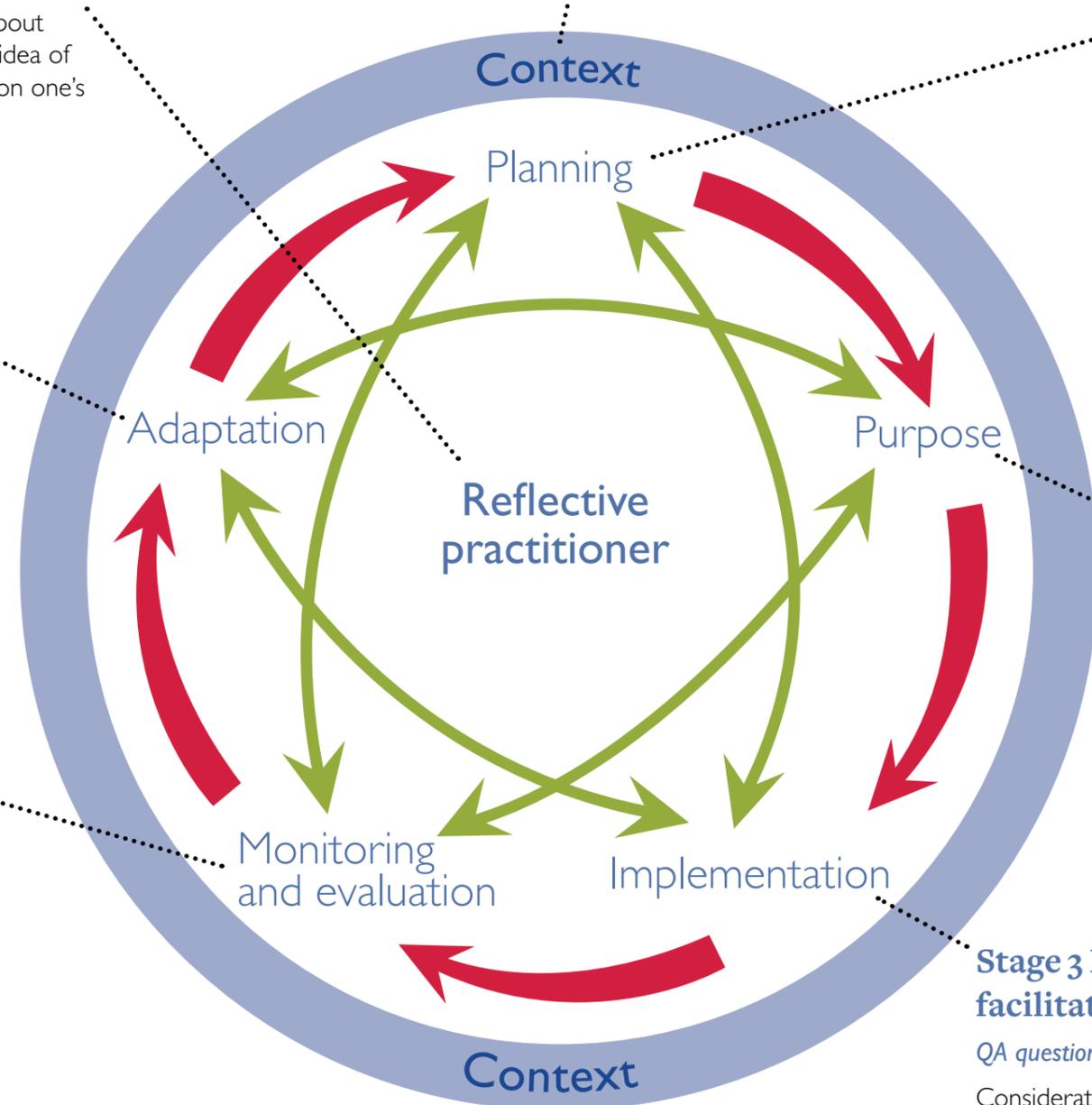
QA question: Why are you trying to do it?

This focuses on a consideration of the aims and objectives of the learning and most importantly the expected learning outcomes for the activity that has been articulated in the plan. This presupposes a mainly outcomes driven approach in which the starting point is a consideration of what the learner is expected to: "...know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning." DG Education and Culture² (2009).

Stage 3 Implementation: teaching, learning and facilitation methods

QA question: How are you going to do it and why is that the best way to do it?

Consideration of the purpose and outcomes for a learning or learning-related activity corresponds closely to a more specific consideration of implementation or methodology. This includes a number of practical issues relating to teaching and learning methods, roles and resources.



¹Schön, D.A. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner: how professionals think in action* London: Temple Smith

² DG Education and Culture (2009) *ECTS Users' Guide*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, p 11 accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ects/guide_en.pdf [10 June 2010]

Quality assurance and enhancement in Europe: LANQUA the context

The LanQua project sits within a very interesting context: the ten-year anniversary of the Bologna Process and the parallel celebration of the formal creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) took place in March 2010. Increasing mobility of students, the attempt to make the structure and outcomes of European degrees more compatible and the publication of principles which cover the internal and external quality assurance arrangements of higher education institutions (HEIs) as well as that of quality assurance agencies themselves mean that there are real efforts to create a European dimension to quality assurance and enhancement. The question is how can a discipline-focused project like LanQua take note of these developments and reflect them to its readers and practitioners? Equally, how can LanQua impact on the continuing development of quality assurance and enhancement in the EHEA?

The relationship between international, national, institutional and discipline-specific quality assurance

European debates about quality assurance and policy decisions taken at national and even institutional level can seem far removed from the day to day work of the academic practitioner. However, quality assurance and enhancement can be stripped down to a series of key reflective questions (articulated in the LanQua Quality Model).

These questions can be applied at European, national, institutional and discipline/practitioner level – of course there will be differences in the emphasis attached to each depending on the context in which it is being considered. But the questions merely describe a well-tested model

of development-action-review with which academic practitioners are familiar. The sometimes unfamiliar language (or even jargon) of quality assurance becomes less of a mystery when translated into the daily activities of departmental and academic staff that are intended to ensure they are delivering well-designed and coherent programmes of study to their students.

The key questions can also help to define the relationship between quality assurance and enhancement, with the first three looking to provide assurance of the quality of what is being done, and the remaining two focusing on review and improvement. The LanQua Toolkit aims to provide this series of questions in a way that encourages open and systematic reflection.

Of course, these key questions are not only being applied at different levels, but also within a variety of national contexts; there is a multiplicity of purposes, models and outcomes for quality assurance in European HE.

Thus, the structure of the LanQua project and the breadth of participation mean that the dissemination of its outcomes can be considered at different levels (discipline, institutional etc) and across contexts (national boundaries, through European networks and associations etc). Given the increasing numbers of mobile students, the interest in joint degrees and other similar initiatives, it has a role to play in both the quality assurance and enhancement of language programmes and also has the potential to translate its benefits into other disciplines.

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