

The Impact of the First Audit Round in Finland – The Views of Finnish HEIs and HE-Experts

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Abstract

This paper reflects the impact of the quality assurance practices on the operations of higher education institutions in Finland. It describes experiences of the quality work from the point of view of higher education institutions and reports of a Delphi-type interaction with some higher education experts on the future of the quality work in Finland. All 49 Finnish Higher Education Institutions (universities and universities of applied sciences) audited 2005-2011. Prior to the audit, each institution developed and documented its comprehensive internal Quality Assurance (QA) system. A second audit round began 2012. Several studies have been published on the effects the first Finnish audit round: independent analyses carried out by higher education researchers (Ala-Vähälä, 2011; Haapakorpi, 2011; Ursin 2007) and two meta-analyses by the Finnish quality assurance agency (Moitus, 2010; Talvinen, 2012). This paper stresses experiences of the higher education field in Finland. It is based on the follow-up reports of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) where institutions answer the question: “How do the effects of QA system show in the activities of the institution?” In addition, the expert panel method was used. The purpose of this part of the study was to discover the views of higher education researchers on the impact of the audits, and to find out their opinions on possible future directions for the evaluation of higher education. This part of study made use of the Delphi method. The eight researchers were invited to give their visions and views anonymously. The inquiry consisted of six statements, which were formulated based on the results of the HEI’s follow-up reports. According to the Higher

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Education Institutions reports and external reviews, the audits have had an impact on the development work of Higher Education Institutions. Quality work has been integrated into activities taking place at all levels in the institutions. Management, staff and students participate in quality work and it seems that quality work has helped improve the results in HEIs too.

Keyword: Institutional Audits; Impact of the Quality Work; Finnish Higher Education Institutions