



Evaluating the Evaluators

Meta-Evaluation in Theory and in Practice

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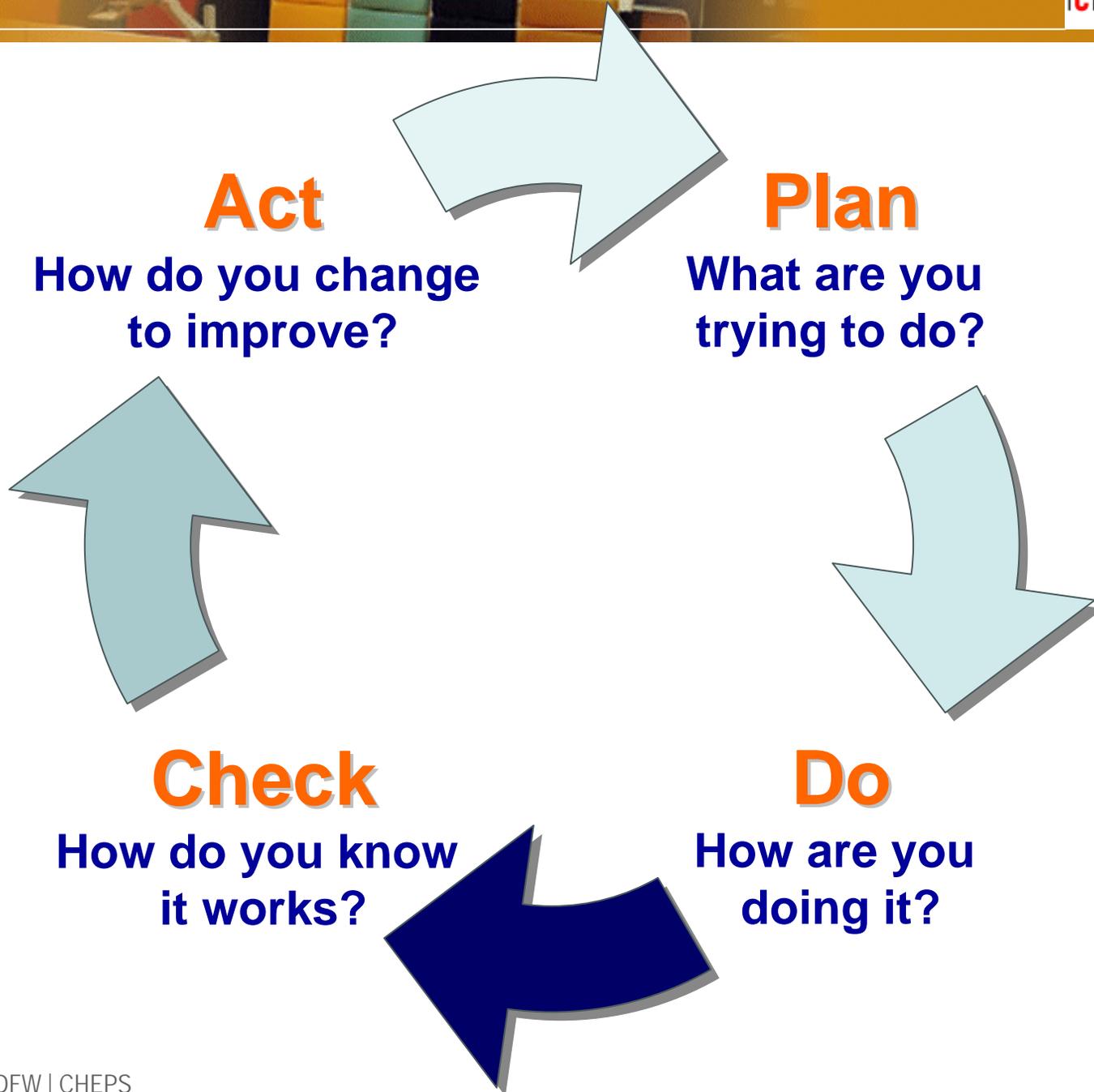
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Quality assurance is organised distrust

- Stakeholders want to see what higher education institutions are doing rather than *trust* them to do the right things.
- But distrust goes further: how do stakeholders *know* that evaluators are evaluating in the right way?
- This demands applying quality assurance principles to quality assurance itself
 - ◆ I shall use the PDCA-cycle to guide me





Quis custodiet ipsos custodes? (Who will watch the watchmen?)

- At three levels
 - ◆ Inside quality assessment schemes
 - ◆ Regulation of quality assessment schemes
 - National
 - ◆ Evaluation and recognition of quality assessment agencies
 - Social
 - International





Plan & Do: Regulation of quality assessment schemes

- How do state authorities typically regulate the quality of their quality assessment schemes?
 - ◆ Aims
 - ◆ Standards and criteria
 - ◆ Processes
 - ◆ Resources
 - ◆ 'Bureaucratic' quality assurance





Plan & Do: Regulation of quality assessment schemes

- Aims and types of quality assurance of quality assessment schemes
 - ◆ Summative/accountability/ 'bureaucratic'
 - public reporting
 - audit of quality assessment agencies
 - ◆ Formative/quality improvement
 - peer review of quality assessment agencies → move to *European Standards & Guidelines*





Plan & Do: Regulation of quality assessment schemes

- Does it apply to non-governmental quality assessment?
 - ◆ Role of professional associations next to or instead of state
 - National or international
- Evaluators on behalf of users / consumer protection
 - Can the European Register of quality assessment agencies (also) perform this function?





Do & Check: Evaluation and recognition of quality assessment agencies

- *European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*
 - ◆ Evaluators check if a quality assessment agency complies with rules for decent organisation/procedures
- **European Register**
 - ◆ Quality assessment of quality assessment agencies for recognition = accreditation of quality assessment agencies?



Check & Act: Inside quality assessment schemes

- Plan & Do are given, more or less
 - ◆ Aim, main regulation, organisational location, major processes, major posts, resources usually predetermined (→ state rules)
 - ◆ Internal regulations must operationalise this framework
 - Operationalisation always means using room for maneuver
 - So there is a reason to check (→ auditing, ESG)





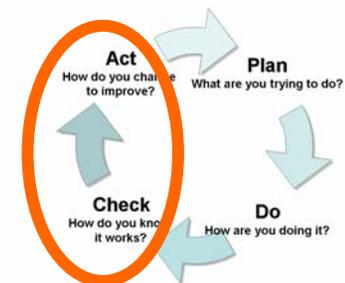
Check & Act: Inside quality assessment schemes

- Check your own evaluation processes (internal quality assurance by the quality assessment agency)
 - Monitor process & people
 - Customer satisfaction
 - Act to improve



Check & Act: Inside quality assessment schemes: Monitor process & people

- This is 'good practice' among Q.A. agencies
- Fulfillment of process regulations
 - ◆ Delivering of reports, judgements
 - Do indicators warrant the conclusions drawn?
 - Are indicators valid?
 - ✧ 'Indicators set question marks'
 - Are indicators legitimate?
 - ◆ On time?
 - ◆ Check: Is there an appeals procedure? Is it used? What are cases and outcomes?



Check & Act: Inside quality assessment schemes: Monitor process & people

- People: How do evaluation teams operate?
 - ◆ Do they follow rules (standards, criteria)? How much leeway is necessary in the rules?
 - Strengths and weaknesses of peer review
 - + Holistic, judgemental
 - Random error, bias, homogenising
 - ◆ *Incompatibilité d'humeurs* or different views on quality?
- Are evaluators legitimate?
 - ◆ Are they qualified as peers or ‘inspectors’?
 - ◆ Are they accepted as such?



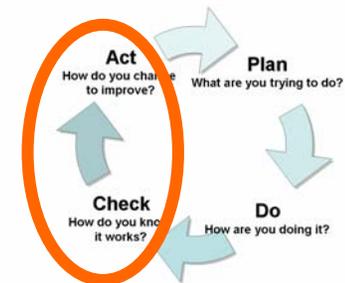
Check & Act: Inside quality assessment schemes: Customer satisfaction

- Do 'customers' accept the Q.A. agency as legitimate?
 - ◆ Because of its organisational locus, devolved authority?
 - ◆ Because of its fair operation?
 - ◆ Because of its outcomes?
 - for individual higher education institutions
 - for the higher education system as a whole



Check & Act: Inside quality assessment schemes: Customer satisfaction

- Who are customers:
 - ◆ Higher education institutions
 - ◆ Teachers/Researchers
 - ◆ Government
 - ◆ Students/Parents
 - ◆ Employers
- Leads to broader questions of how the Q.A. agency functions in society



Check & Act: Inside quality assessment schemes: Act to improve

- What is the capacity to improve the Q.A. agency?
 - ◆ Room for maneuver / autonomy / independence?
 - ◆ Leadership?





‘And where I did begin, there shall I end’

"But who watches the Watchmen?"

"Easy; I do."

"But who watches you?"

"Easy, that would be me too."

- From Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* series of novels, found in:
- Wikipedia, lemma ‘Quis custodiet ipsos custodes’
- Slide title from Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, v, iii, 23