**A page of thoughts on ‘quality’** (Phil Race)

The word ‘quality’, on its own is meaningless. Everything has quality – good quality, bad quality, variable quality, increasing quality, declining quality, astounding quality, appalling quality, quality improvement, quality enhancement, quality assurance and so on. The word ‘quality’ is, however, useful in a series of questions, which can be a basis for planning, discussion, analysis and evaluation. Some of these questions are listed, in a completely unsorted order, below.

**Quality: of what?**

Teaching, learning, learning environment, curriculum, assessment, feedback, resources, on the page, on the screen, in speech, in actions, in questions, in responses to questions, in communications, ….?

**Quality: of whom?**

Teachers, learners, supporters, administrators, employers, supervisors, directors, vice-chancellors, deans, lecturers, assistants …?

**Quality: for whom?**

All of the above, but with a different way of looking at it: teachers, learners, supporters, administrators, employers, supervisors, directors, vice-chancellors, deans, lecturers, assistants …?

**Why ‘quality’?**

Why should we care about it? What would happen if we didn’t?

**Quality: when?**

All the time, in the past, from time to time, 24/7/366 (in leap years like 2016), tomorrow, next week, next year, last year, in olden days, etc…

**Quality: where?**

Everywhere? Just here? Just there? Here and there? Only in a few places? Only where being measured?

**Quality: how?**

How can it be recognised? How can it be measured? How can it be quantified? How can it be found lacking? How can it be increased? How can it be enhanced? How can it be damaged? How can it be described? How can it be defined? …

**Quality: so what?**

What if no-one cares? What if things are just left to themselves? What if attitudes are hostile? Would the sky fall in if nothing was done about it? What happened before we started talking about it?

**Quality: which?**

Which particular quality is important? Why this one? Why exactly this one?

**Quality: wow?**

What’s the ‘wow’ factor for astoundingly good quality? What is excellent quality, and why is this excellent? How can we recognise the wow factor? Can we define some metrics – and would this destroy the ‘wow’?

**Quality: what is missing?**

What else is missing? Why is this important? Who does this matter to? Who doesn’t it matter to?

**Quality: what else?**

What else is important? Why else is this important? Who else is concerned with this? Who else is affected by this? Who else can do something about this? How else can this be measured? (and a whole series of ‘else’ questions deepening the thinking about all of the above families of question).