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Bar raising or navel-gazing? The effectiveness of self-study programmes in leading to improvements in institutional performance

Deirdre Lillis

Abstract

Higher Education Institutes worldwide are investing significant resources in self study programmes to improve institutional performance, to enhance quality and to meet external stakeholder demands. The institutional impacts of both internally and externally mandated self study programmes is an area where little empirical research exists. A key question is whether self study programmes are effective (or otherwise) in leading to improvements in institutional performance and the reasons why. Covering an eight year period, from 1997–2006, this paper reports on the use of systematic evaluation methodology (Rossi *et al.*, 2003) to evaluate the effectiveness of three self study programmes in leading to improvements in institutional performance. The impact of the programmes was assessed in two ways: (i) the degree to which the programme met its stated goals and objectives (including peer review panel recommendations) and (ii) other impacts (intended or otherwise). The methods of inquiry used were primarily qualitative and the main data sources were proceedings of the main decision making fora in the Institute, Institute publications and interviews with n=17 key informants.

Introduction and context

National quality assurance agencies, almost unheard of 20 years ago, are now in place in almost all OECD countries (OECD, 2003). Stensaker notes that while there are a growing number of studies on quality assurance, there is a lack of research on the impact of quality assurance at institutional level (Stensaker, 2007). Stensaker cites methodological issues surrounding assessing the impact of quality assurance processes as a major challenge (Stensaker, 2007). Harvey and Newton note that establishing definitive causal links and isolating their effects from other factors is a difficult task (Harvey and Newton, 2004). In the broader public service arena Pollitt and Bouckaert note the dearth of empirical studies which tackle the issue of *evidence* of improvements in effectiveness as a result of management reforms (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004). Birnbaum states that there are ‘few published examples in the academic sector of attempts to assess the institutional consequences of a management fad through data that provide evidence either of organizational outcomes or of the satisfaction of users’ (Birnbaum 2000).

The fourteen Irish Institutes of Technology are part of a binary system in Ireland and account for slightly more than half of all enrolments to third level. Although an identical model to the IOTs does not exist elsewhere they exhibit some similarities with the Finnish Polytechnics, Dutch HBOs, French IUTs, German FHS and the Institutes of Technology in New Zealand. The Institutes operate under the auspices of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council of Ireland (HETAC) for quality assurance

purposes. In the past quality assurance processes in the Institutes had strong external drivers- for example the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) were responsible for any and all new course approvals in the Institutes. In addition Institutes were required to undertake quinquennial institutional and School (Faculty) reviews which entailed comprehensive self studies with external peer review. In recent years the Institutes have moved to a position of relative autonomy through the Delegation of Authority process which grants authority to each Institute to make its own awards and manage its internal quality assurance processes according to overarching criteria set by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (2004a).

Using a systematic programme evaluation methodology this paper investigates the institutional impacts of three self study programmes undertaken during the 1997-2006 timeframe in one Institute. It charts the institutional impacts as the Institute took greater responsibility for its quality assurance processes. The paper also provides a commentary on the use of a systematic programme evaluation research methodology (Rossi *et al.*, 2003) and its applicability to evaluating the effectiveness of self study programmes in a higher education setting. A key feature of this research methodology is its focus on separating the net from gross outcomes of a programme *i.e.* isolating the impacts that can be directly ascribed to the self study programme from what would have happened anyway. The paper therefore contributes to the methodological debate on this issue.

The self study programmes

The Institute of Technology Tralee (ITT) is a university-level institution in the southwest of Ireland with courses in Business Studies, Engineering and Science & Computing, with progression paths from Higher Certificate qualifications to Masters and Ph.D level. ITT has approximately 3,500 students and 300 academic staff. The study investigates three self study programmes undertaken in ITT during the 1997-2006 time period. The first self study programme was called “Programmatic Review” (PR1) and was undertaken during the 2000/01 academic year at faculty level in the School of Science & Computing. The second self study programme was called “Delegated Authority” (DA1) and was undertaken between 2002-2004 at Institutional level review for the purposes of gaining authority to make awards within the National Qualifications Framework of Ireland. The third self study programme was a second programmatic review (PR2) undertaken in the School of Science & Computing. The external peer review panels commended the thoroughness of all three self study programmes, indicating that they are likely to provide good examples of self study in higher education and will provide an information rich case study. This meets the criteria of an “intensity case” – a case which is not unusual but from which much can be learned (Patton 2002).

It is important from the outset to clarify the author’s role in the programmes. She was a member of the Institute’s management team throughout the lifetime of the programmes and as such every effort was made to eliminate potential bias by ensuring that both data sources and collection methods were triangulated. Where deemed necessary, a reminder of the author’s involvement with the programmes will be included in the sections that follow to highlight any areas where potential bias may occur and to enable the reader to draw his/her own conclusions.

Literature Review

Van Vught and Westerheijden found that the predominant model for quality improvement in higher education in Europe has five features: a meta-level agency to coordinate the national system; regular self evaluations by the Higher Education Institute; external peer review; a published report and no direct links to funding (Van Vught and Westerheijden 1995). All of the self study programmes of this study fit within this model. Brennan and Shah note that there is considerable diversity between national systems in the finer points of this model, specifically in relation to the scope (Institute or discipline level), the balance between formative and summative evaluation and the relative power of the national body *viz a viz* institutional management (Brennan and Shah 1997). As a form of quality assurance in higher education, self study programmes can take context into account, can straddle academic disciplines and are generally accepted by the academic community. Self study is often cited as being most suited to the “professional bureaucracy” type of organisation (Mintzberg 1983) as it gives ownership for quality to the Institution concerned. Kells notes that the external driver for self study programmes usually relates to accreditation status (Kells 1992). Davies contends that many Higher Education Institutes would not have moved towards a quality culture without an external stimulus of some kind and notes the impact that meeting external requirements has on the internal quality culture (Davies 2004). Kells notes that self study programmes generally have three internal aims: to help the Institute and its courses improve; to incorporate ongoing research and self-analysis; and to be the foundation for planning efforts (Kells 1992). Sallinen *et al.* describe a pilot self study carried out at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland in 1992/93, the impacts of which included improving transparency, communication, organisational learning, effectiveness and readiness for change (Sallinen *et al.* 1994). Thorn undertook research on whether an institutional level self study programme had actually led to organisational learning and improvement at another Irish Institute of Technology (Galway-Mayo) in 2002. He noted that the self study led to an increased awareness of strategic planning, gave staff a forum for input to decision making and noted the failure in some instances to face up to weaknesses (Thorn 2003). El-Khawas notes that most policy research has focussed on Institutional level effects even though the impact of self study programmes often depends on the reaction of departments and individuals (El-Khawas 1998). This paper affords the opportunity to explore the impact of an Institutional level self study and two School/Department level self study in the same setting. It aims to add the experiences of another Higher Education Institute to this empirical research base.

Research Methodology

This paper reports on part-findings from a broader study into the effectiveness of strategic planning and self-study programmes in higher education in leading to improvements in institutional performance and organisational learning. A distinctive contribution of this study to the literature is a methodological framework for the systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of self study programmes in a higher education context. A reality-oriented post-positivist standpoint was adopted which means the results can be viewed in terms of probable causal effects and in which the reader has discretion

to draw his/her own conclusions on the basis of the evidence presented. Some elements of the phenomenological philosophy have also been included to capture the complexities of the issues involved. The research design was influenced by its ability to answer the research questions posed in a reliable, valid and generalisable fashion (Patton 2002). The author acknowledges that it is difficult to generalise from a limited number of cases but generalisability was strengthened by relating results to previous findings in the literature. The results are generalisable to the network of 14 Irish Institutes of Technology and (within stated limits) to other Higher Education Institutes that operate self study programmes which fit within the Van Vught and Westerheijden model (Van Vught and Westerheijden 1995).

In the broader study, a mixed mode approach was used by mixing hypo-deductive reasoning with primarily qualitative methods of inquiry. The main data sources used were Institute documents including the reports of the self study programmes, proceedings of the Governing Body, the Academic Council, the Senior Management Team, School boards and Course boards. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants who had a major involvement with the programmes. Triangulation of data sources and methods were used wherever possible to minimise potential bias and substantiate results. This paper reports on the findings from analysis of documents, feedback from participants in the self study process and the outcomes of semi-structured interviews with n=17 members of the ITT management team that had the closest involvement with the programmes. The hypothesis that ‘the programme was effective in leading to improvements in institutional performance’ was tested in DA1, PR1 and PR2. Rossi *et al*’s methodology for systematic evaluation of social programmes was used to evaluate the programme in terms of the underlying need it addressed, the appropriateness of its design and the degree to which it was implemented ‘as-intended’ (Rossi et al. 2003). The impact of both programmes was assessed in three ways: (i) the degree to which the programme met its stated goals and objectives including external peer review panel recommendations and (ii) other impacts (intended or otherwise).

An assessment of the need for the self study programmes

The driving force for self-study programmes is a key theme in the literature with several authors believing that self studies undertaken in response to external requirements have less impact than those which are initiated for internal purposes. Although the driving force for all three programmes was ultimately to meet external requirements linked to the accreditation status of courses of study (Table 1), they were also seen as opportunities to progress internal objectives. Given the scope of the three programmes it is likely that meeting the external requirements would by default bring many internal improvements also. In relation to DA1 the self study report states that “above all we believed that self study simply for the sake of it would be a futile exercise” (ITT 2004b). The goal of the Delegated Authority programme (DA1) was essentially to achieve self-awarding status following an Institute-wide review of all activities but four additional internal objectives were also set. These included the implementation of a strategic management and continuous improvement framework. PR1 had internal objectives which related to specific objectives from the Institute’s strategic plan for implementation in the School (including modularisation of courses and the development of flexible modes of delivery).

Table 1 - The driving forces behind the programmes			
Driving force	DA1	PR1	PR2
<i>External</i>	<i>Accreditation Status</i> DA1 was required as part of submission to HETAC for Delegated Authority to make awards	<i>Accreditation Status</i> PR1 was required under HETAC's quality assurance procedures to maintain accreditation status	<i>Accreditation Status</i> PR2 was required under the Institute's internal quality assurance procedures to maintain accreditation status
<i>Internal</i>	<i>Planning/Quality</i> DA1 had 4 additional internal objectives identified including strategic management and continuous improvement	<i>Planning</i> PR1 had 2 additional internal objectives relating to strategic planning in academic departments and strategic plan objectives	<i>Planning/Quality</i> PR2 had 1 additional internal objective to further develop integrated planning and evaluation framework

Approximately two thirds of informants stated that an aim of self study was reviewing activities with a view to identifying improvements (n=11) and to provide evidence of meeting a quality standard (n=10) (Table 2). None of the informants explicitly stated that an aim of the self study programmes was to meet an external requirement which was interesting in its omission. It suggests that informants viewed the self study programmes as having an internal focus primarily. One informant stated that “it’s a case of (reviewing) what are we doing, what context are we doing it in, can we do it better and how can we do it better”.

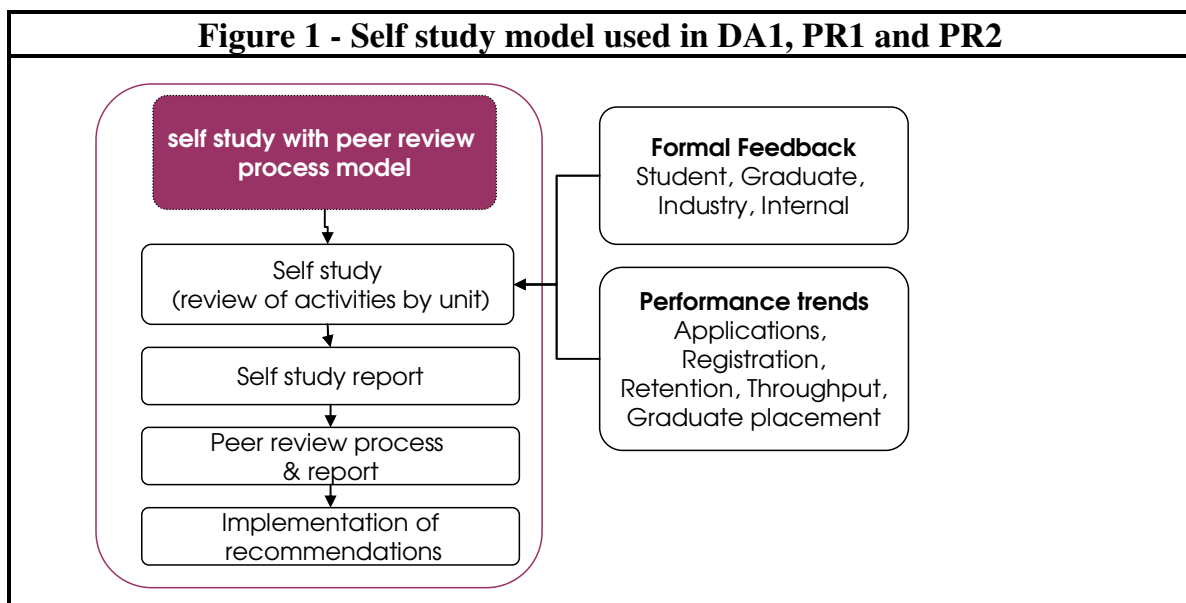
Table 2 - Informants views of the aims of the self study programmes	
Response category	Self study
Build shared vision	2
Process management	5
Review current activity	11
Achieve quality standard	10

The self study process

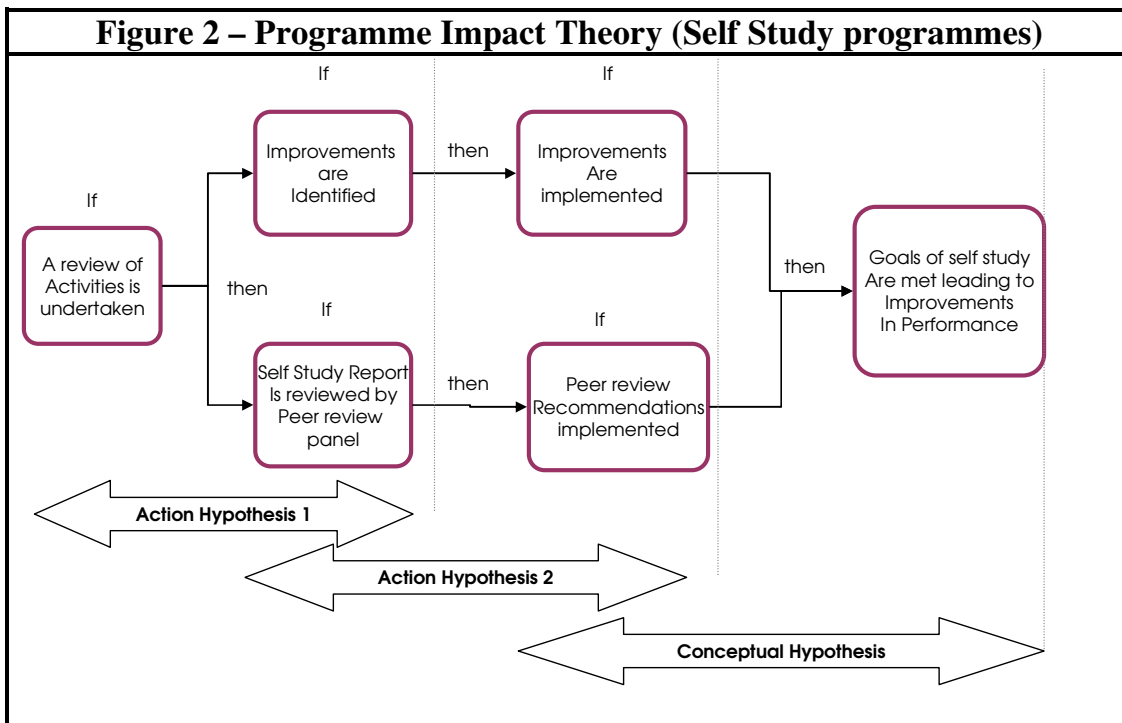
An assessment of programme process was undertaken to determine the extent to which the programme theory as-intended was actually implemented as it is difficult to assess the impact of programmes which have been partially or incorrectly implemented. A generic self study process model was used in DA1, PR1 and PR2 (Figure 1). The process assessment concentrates on the main process activities identified as follows: (i) review of activities (ii) self study report (iii) peer review process and (iv) implementation of peer review recommendations and other improvements identified. In summary all

components of DA1, PR1 and PR2 were completed largely ‘as-intended’. It is worth noting that the external peer review panels for both programmes were impressed with the thoroughness of the processes undertaken (PR1 2001a; HETAC 2004b). The peer review report stated that they were “satisfied that a thorough review had been carried out and commended the contribution of staff to the review”. The external peer review group made the following comment in relation to the DA1 self study

“The Evaluation Group was impressed with the energy, enthusiasm and commitment of the Institute’s governors, management, staff, learners and stakeholders and with the level of communication between staff and students. The Evaluation Group also felt that there was a high degree of understanding of institutional issues at all levels throughout the Institute and that there was a sense of ownership and commitment”.



To systematically evaluate the impact of the self study programmes a programme ‘impact theory’ must be developed. The purpose of clarifying impact theory is to determine in what way do programme activities effect changes. To enhance clarity a generic impact theory was developed for the three self study programmes to better facilitate comparison and analysis. The logic diagram for the programme impact theory is given in Figure 2. Programme impact theory is developed from the perspective of capturing the programme ‘as-intended’. Rossi *et al.*’s model for articulating programme theory is based on the contention that outcomes which are a direct result of the programme (proximal outcomes) must be evaluated if longer term outcomes (distal outcomes) are to lead to improvements (Rossi *et al.* 2003). Distal outcomes are dependent on the attainment of proximal outcomes – in other words the attainment of the goals of the programmes are dependent on the attainment of intermediate outcomes such as the implementation of peer review recommendations *etc.*.



Although not part of the programme impact theory it is worth noting that a regular formal progress review of the implementation of the recommendations arising from the self study programmes was not in place. There is evidence to suggest a lack of follow through on implementation of recommendations. This points to the need to either add a fifth component to the self study model (*e.g.* a post-implementation audit) or to formally integrate the outcomes of the self study with the Institute’s strategic planning process to ensure that the implementation of the outcomes is reviewed on a regular basis. Notwithstanding the above both programmes were implemented largely as-intended and therefore a degree of confidence can be placed on the impact assessment.

Impact Assessment

To be considered effective the self study programmes (i) must meet their goals and objectives and (ii) may lead to other (possibly unintended) improvements. The ‘goals-based’ impact assessment concentrates on whether the goals and objectives of the self study were achieved. The ‘goals-free’ impact assessment draws on the views of informants and allows for the possibility of unintended impacts occurring.

Goals based impact assessment

The classic ‘goals-based’ impact assessment is used to evaluate the extent to which the self study programmes met their stated goals and objectives. Table A1 in the Appendix outlines the basis for the impact assessment for DA1, PR1 and PR2 and describes the rationale behind the selection of points for the time series analysis, the data sources used for the impact assessment and any issues which should be taken into account when interpreting the outcomes. It could be argued that the completion of a self study process and the acknowledgement of same by the external peer review panel and accreditation body is evidence that the external goals and objectives of the self study programme were met (to the satisfaction of the panel at least). In addition evidence of completion was sought in the document record or from informants where necessary.

The programme impact theory states that outcomes which are a direct result of the programme (proximal outcomes) must be evaluated if longer term outcomes (distal outcomes) are to lead to improvements *i.e.* the goals of the self study are dependent on the implementation of the improvements identified and the external peer review recommendations.

>= 33%	4 of 4 (100%)	7 of 7 (100%)	10 of 10 (100%)
>= 50%	4 of 4 (100%)	7 of 7 (100%)	10 of 10 (100%)
>= 66%	4 of 4 (100%)	5 of 7 (71%)	9 of 10 (90%)

When the goals of a programme are complex a key question that arises is what percentage of the goal must be complete for the overall goal to be considered complete. For example, if 80% of the courses in the School have been reviewed as part of a programmatic review, can it be said that the goal of the Programmatic Review has been met? The threshold set for the percentage complete is a key consideration and the determination of this threshold is not a straightforward exercise. The views of programme stakeholders, the literature base available for comparative purposes and the specific context of the programme are all important factors. The author acknowledges that an element of subjective judgment is unavoidable here and for this reason a number of possible threshold values are illustrated in Table 3 to allow the reader to draw his/her own conclusions. At the 50% threshold value all objectives of all the self study programmes were met (Table 3). The only deviation is at the 66% threshold for PR1 and PR2. At the 50% threshold value Table 3 shows that all objectives of all the self study programmes were met.

Peer review panel recommendations

Peer review has both its advocates and critics in the literature and one of the criticisms cited is that experts participating in peer review panels are immune to the consequences of their recommendations. By way of example, recommendations made by the external peer review panel for PR1 included : the appointment of a quality officer, the introduction of a student feedback system, improved co-ordination of adult education activities, formalisation of industry liaison activities *etc.*. This section investigates the impact of the peer review recommendations arising from the self study programmes in leading to improvements (Table 4).

Ref	DA1	PR1	PR2
<i>Type</i>	Summative	Formative	Formative
<i>Recommendations</i>	0	12	13
<i>Completed</i>	n/a	9 of 12 (75%)	4 of 13 (30%)

DA1 was in essence a summative evaluation in that it made a judgment as to whether the Institute met the criteria for Delegated Authority or not (Table 4). No specific recommendations for improvement were made by the panel and given the comprehensive nature of peer review process one might argue this was a lost opportunity. 75% of the peer review recommendations for PR1 were completed and 30% for PR2 were implemented (the shorter timeframe of the impact assessment should be taken into account when interpreting the PR2 results). Almost all recommendations made to courses of study were implemented within a short time period after the review. Revisions to courses took effect for the next intake of students to the courses. It should be noted also that a relatively high percentage of the recommendations made by the external peer review panel in PR1 and PR2 related to Institute level policies, structures or resource issues. As the scope of the Programmatic Review was School level this raises some questions in relation to the relevance of these peer review recommendations as a mechanism for change within the School. There is good evidence that the recommendations arising from both PR1 and PR2 were captured in the School of Science management team meetings for action and referred to relevant fora throughout the Institute. Although the institute-level recommendations may have influenced thinking and decision making there is no evidence to suggest they were formally captured by the Institute's strategic planning process or quality assurance framework for implementation.

It was established in the programme impact theory earlier that the proximal outcomes for the self study programmes are the objectives of the self study including the peer review panel recommendations. At the 50% threshold, DA1 met 100% of its objectives, PR1 met 84% and PR2 met 61% (noting the shorter timeframe for PR2) (Table 5). The author argues that, in gross terms, the self studies were effective in leading to improvements.

Table 5 - Meeting goals and objectives – self study programmes			
Ref	Delegated Authority (DA1)	Programmatic Review 2000/01 (PR1)	Programmatic Review 2004/05 (PR2)
<i>Objectives</i>	4	19	23
<i>Objectives completed</i>	4 of 4 (100%)	16 of 19 (84%)	14 of 23 (61%)

Goals-free impact assessment

The views of informants in relation to the aim of the self study programmes were largely consistent with the literature on self study programmes (Table 2). They included reviewing activities, meeting a quality standard and improving process management. Informants were asked “Did the self study process achieve its aims?”. The question was deliberately designed to engender a direct ‘yes/no’ type of response initially which the interviewer could then follow up on. The responses to this question showed that all of the informants believed that self study had achieved some or all of its aims (Table 6). Some informants went on to qualify their answers but in general the self study programmes were viewed in a predominantly positive light.

Response category	Self study
Programme achieves all of its aims	13
Programme achieves some of its aims	4
Unsure	0
Programme achieves none of its aims	0
Total	17

Self study programmes – separating net from gross outcomes

The difficulties of isolating the impacts of quality assurance programmes from other factors was highlighted in the literature (Stensaker, 2007; Harvey and Newton, 2004)). The previous sections have evaluated, in gross terms, the effectiveness of the self study programmes. It is important to distinguish between outcomes which can be directly attributed to the programmes and those which would have arisen regardless. The results for the three self study programmes were categorised by the origin of the objectives as either originating within the programme or outside of it (Table 7). Extensive document analysis was used to trace the origin of the objectives and they were analysed from the perspective of whether they would have happened regardless of the programmes. By way of example one objective of the programmatic review programme (PR1) was to “To review the development of the courses over the previous five years with particular regard to the achievement and improvement of quality”. The PR1 process was the only mechanism by which substantive changes to courses of study could be made and therefore it can be clearly stated that this objective would not have been achieved without PR1. On the other hand one of the objectives of PR2 was to “To review the plans (of the School) for future development”. At the time of PR2 each department had produced a strategic plan which was subject to an annual review and it is possible therefore this objective could have happened without PR2.

Table 7 Summary of origin of objectives including peer review recommendations of self study programmes			
	DA1	PR1	PR2
Total Objectives	4	19	23
Completed/ongoing objectives originating within the programme	3 of 4 (75%)	7 of 19 (37%)	7 of 23 (30%)

In summary

- 75% (n=3 of 4) of the objectives of DA1 originated in the DA1 programme of which n=3 were completed. Therefore 75% of the completed objectives of DA1 can be ascribed to the programme (net outcomes) (Table 7)
- 47% (n=9 of 19) of the objectives of PR1 originated in the PR1 programme of which n=7 were completed. Therefore 37% of the completed objectives of PR1 can be ascribed to the programme (net outcomes) (Table 7)
- 43% (n=10 of 23) of the objectives of PR2 originated in the PR2 programme of which n=7 were completed. Therefore 30% of the completed objectives of PR2 can be ascribed to the programme (net outcomes) (Table 7)

It is interesting to note that for both programmatic reviews the majority of the recommendations made by the peer review panel had been mentioned in document record prior to the programmes (PR1:59%, PR2:77%). This suggests that the peer review recommendations were reflections of ideas for improvement that the internal teams were already aware of and had perhaps articulated in the self-evaluation report. This concurs with Valimaa's findings with respect to quality assessment in Finnish Higher Education Institutes where the report of the peer review panel seldom provided new information to the Institution (Valimaa, 1994). In DA1 three quarters of the outcomes can be ascribed to the programmes (net outcomes). In the programmatic reviews approximately one third of the outcomes are net outcomes. At least a third of the improvements would not have happened without the programmes.

To triangulate this result informants were asked "Can you think of an example of something which wouldn't have happened without the self study process?". As expected many informants stated that it was a difficult question to answer or took more time before answering the question. Notwithstanding this over two thirds of the informants (n=13) could think of a specific example of something they felt would not have happened without the self study process. These included ideas for new course development (n=4) and the documentation of procedures (n=3). Other examples cited by more than one informant were as follows: Strategic Research Areas/research (n=2), cross-departmental teamworking (n=2) and collaboration with other Higher Education Institutes/professional bodies (n=2). Other specific examples cited once included: the integrated planning and evaluation framework, online services, marketing and alternative delivery modes. Two informants that could not think of a specific example but still thought that certain things would not have happened without the self study process. One stated that without self study "everything just stagnates, there's no fresh thinking".

The relationship between external/internal driving forces and effectiveness

A relationship between the effectiveness of the self study programmes and external/internal drivers was established by the author in earlier work which compared strategic planning and self study programmes in the same Higher Education Institute. Strategic planning programmes, whose driving forces were internal and more ambiguous were found to be less effective than self study programmes (This is explained fully in (Lillis, 2007)).

Ranking	Programme	External driver	Internal driver
Most effective ↓	DA1	Accreditation status – Delegated Authority to Make Awards under the NQF	Planning and Quality Framework
	PR1	Accreditation status – Approval status of courses under HETAC	Implement Strategic Plan objectives
	PR2	Accreditation status – Approval status of courses under Institute’s QA procedures, ultimately linked to DA status	Integrated Planning and Evaluation Framework
	SP3	No external driver	Extend strategic planning methodology into School of Science
	Least effective	SP1	Accreditation status – Linked to approval status of Institute/courses under HETAC (Institutional Review)
SP2		PPF requirement but likely to have been undertaken regardless	Mid-term review of SP1, outcomes of DA1

The ranking of the most effective to least effective programme and their corresponding driving force (including the strategic planning programmes) shows that in general self study was more effective than strategic planning. Triangulating the views of informants this result suggests that the combination of (i) the internal desire to improve which was strong in all programmes and (ii) the additional impetus provided by an external driving force were key factors in programme effectiveness. The finding echoes Valimaa’s findings in Finnish Higher Education Institutes (Valimaa, 1994) and Thorn’s findings in relation to the necessity to include external peer review in self study programmes following experiences in Galway-Mayo IT (Thorn, 2003). Informants in IT Tralee were generally very positively disposed toward the self study programmes and one possible explanation is that the bottom up process model used by the self studies may have mitigated against the trends found by Davies (Davies, 2004) and Brennan and Shah (Brennan & Shah, 1997) in relation to resistance to externally imposed quality assessments. The finding does not contradict El-Khawas’s conclusions when she found that internal changes were most often initiated in response to broader environmental

pressures such as changing demographics etc. and not to mandates by funding or accreditation agencies (El-Khawas, 2000). With reference to the Australian experience, Scott and Hawke noted that staff will not engage in something new unless they see the extrinsic and intrinsic benefits (Scott and Hawke, 2003). It appears therefore that in this context a mix of both internal and external drivers are needed for effectiveness.

Findings and conclusions

It has been established that there was a need for the self study programmes and that the programmes were implemented largely 'as-intended' and reflected self study models in the literature. The programmes were effective as the substantial majority of their objectives and peer review recommendations were completed. Informants also perceived the programmes to be effective. Three quarters of the outcomes of DA1 and approximately one third of the outcomes of PR1 and PR2 could be ascribed to the programme (net outcomes). Ownership of some of the recommendations arising out of the external peer review panel was somewhat ambiguous however and no formal mechanism existed to capture issues for Institute-level consideration out of the programmatic review process. The main negative impacts were the overhead and work involved and the lack of integration between the quality assurance and strategic planning programmes in the Institute. The combination of (i) the internal desire to improve which was strong in all programmes and (ii) the additional impetus provided by an external driving force were key factors in programme effectiveness

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Appendix A1 - Scope, goals and objectives of the self study programmes

[Data source : (ITT 2000; PR1 2001b; ITT 2004d)]

Programme	Delegated Authority Self Study (DA1)	Programmatic Review 2000/01 (PR1)	Programmatic Review 2004/05 (PR2)
<i>Scope</i>	Comprehensive review of all operations in the Institute to include governance, management and planning processes; quality assurance processes; educational and training programmes; research activities; support services and others; conditions attached to Delegated Authority & Qualifications Act.	School/Department activities including quality assurance; performance indicators; employment of graduates; national and international transfers; courses of study and syllabi; facilities; staff development; links with stakeholders; research and consultancy; delivery methodologies; adult education.	School/Department activities including quality assurance; performance indicators; employment of graduates; national and international transfers; courses of study and syllabi; facilities; staff development; links with stakeholders; research and consultancy; delivery methodologies; adult education.
<i>Goal</i>	<p>The Qualifications Act 1999 provided the legislative framework by which Institutes could purpose Delegated Authority by adhering to criteria established by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council(HETAC 2004a).</p> <p>The goal of DA1 was stated by the Institute as to ensure <i>“the Institute is granted authority to make awards, at particular levels, across all three Schools”</i>. (ITT 2004a)</p>	<p>Stated by HETAC as ensuring <i>“(a) quality improvements are made to programmes of higher education and training and (b) programmes remain relevant to learner needs, including academic and labour market needs”</i>. (HETAC 2002)</p>	<p>Stated by the Institutes Quality Assurance procedure (A7) as ensuring that each programme/suite of programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contributes to the achieving of the Institutes aims ... • offers a valuable educational experience to learners • are benchmarked against similar programmes • takes cognisance of the NQF • complies with all the requirements of the approved external validating body • ...are assessed in terms of the resources required to deliver same. (ITT 2004c)
<i>Objectives</i>	<p>The objectives as set by the Institute were</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To review the effectiveness of the work undertaken since 2000 in preparation for Delegated Authority and to internally assess our state of readiness for same..... 2. To ensure the activities of each individual department were aligned to the overall Strategic Plan and to complete the implementation of the Strategic Management Framework..... 3. To identify areas for improvement in terms of concrete actions 4. To design and implement a pan-Institute framework for continuous improvement 	<p>The objectives as set by HETAC were</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To review the development of the courses over the previous five years with particular regard to the achievement and improvement of quality 2. To evaluate the flexibility of the School to the changing needs of students, employers and to all stakeholders in the process 3. To review the range and mix of assessment procedures experienced by participants on the various programmes 4. To review the plans for future development and assess the viability of same (HETAC 2002) <p>Internal : Two strategic plan objectives</p>	<p>PR2 retained the original four HETAC and five additional objectives were set as part of the Institute’s own procedure:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to analyse the effectiveness and the efficiency of each of the courses approved 2. to evaluate the physical facilities provided by the Institute ... 3. to review the School’s/Department’s research activities and projections in the area of study under review 4. to evaluate the formal links the School and Institute have established with industry/business 5. the School’s plan for the succeeding five years... <p>(ITT 2004c)</p>

Appendix A2 - Basis for impact assessment for DA1, PR1 and PR2

	DA1 Delegated Authority Self Study 2003-2004	PR1 School of Science and Computing Programmatic Review 2001	PR2 School of Science and Computing Programmatic Review 2005
<i>Time series selection</i>	<p>🕒 May 2005 : covers the period May 2004 to May 2005 (12 months)</p> <p>🕒 June 2006 : covers the period June 2005 – June 2006 (24 months)</p>	<p>🕒 March 2003 : covers the period September 2001 – March 2003 (18 months)</p> <p>🕒 May 2005 : covers the period April 2003 – May 2005 (31 months since start of PR1)</p>	<p>🕒 Jan 2006 : covers the period June 2005 to January 2006 (6 months)</p> <p>🕒 June 2006: covers the period January 2006 – June 2006 (12 months)</p>
<i>Rationale behind time series selection</i>	<p>May 2005 was chosen as the Programmatic Reviews in the School of Science and School of Engineering provided an opportunity to review progress on DA1.</p> <p>June 2006 was chosen as the last available time point before the submission of this thesis.</p>	<p>March 2003 was chosen as progress was reviewed as part of the self study undertaken as part of the Delegated Authority process(DA1_CP 2003).</p> <p>May 2005 was chosen as the second Programmatic Review Process in the School of Science was completed then (PR2 2005).</p>	<p>January 2006 was chosen as the School of Science management team reviewed the programmatic review recommendations following approval of the report at the Academic Council in November 2005. The plan for implementing the recommendations was presented to the School of Science School Board in January 2006. June 2006 was chosen as the last available time point before the submission of this thesis.</p>
<i>Data Source</i>	<p>Programmatic Review reports : School of Science & Computing and School of Engineering & Construction Studies Programmatic Review self study reports. Reports of the external peer review panels for these programs.</p> <p>Log of Issues : evidence of progress on objectives and strategies was sought in the document record.</p>	<p>DA self study reports : Departments progress reports for DA self study reports and reports of the internal and external peer review panels.</p> <p>Programmatic Review self study report: School self study report on strategic plans for Programmatic Review in 2005 and reports of the internal and external peer review panels.</p> <p>Log of Issues : evidence of progress on</p>	<p>School board presentation : January 2006 – update on status of programmatic review recommendations made to School of Science School board by Head of School. Minutes of meeting of school of science management team where action on programmatic review recommendations was decided.</p> <p>Programmatic Review self study report: Reports of the internal and</p>

		objectives and strategies was sought in the document record.	external peer review panels. Log of Issues : evidence of progress on objectives and strategies was sought in the document record.
<i>Notes</i>			The shorter timeframe for the impact assessment of PR2 (12 months) needs to be taken into consideration.