

Institutional Research, Planning, and Quality Assurance in the World Around Us

HEIR Panel discussion

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Purpose of Today's Discussion

- What is the status of IR in the UK/Ireland/EU, the US, and other regions ?
- What are the challenges ahead for IR professionals ?
- How do we move more individuals toward deeper involvement that blends information provision with involvement in strategic planning, and (perhaps) policy development?

IR is All Around Us

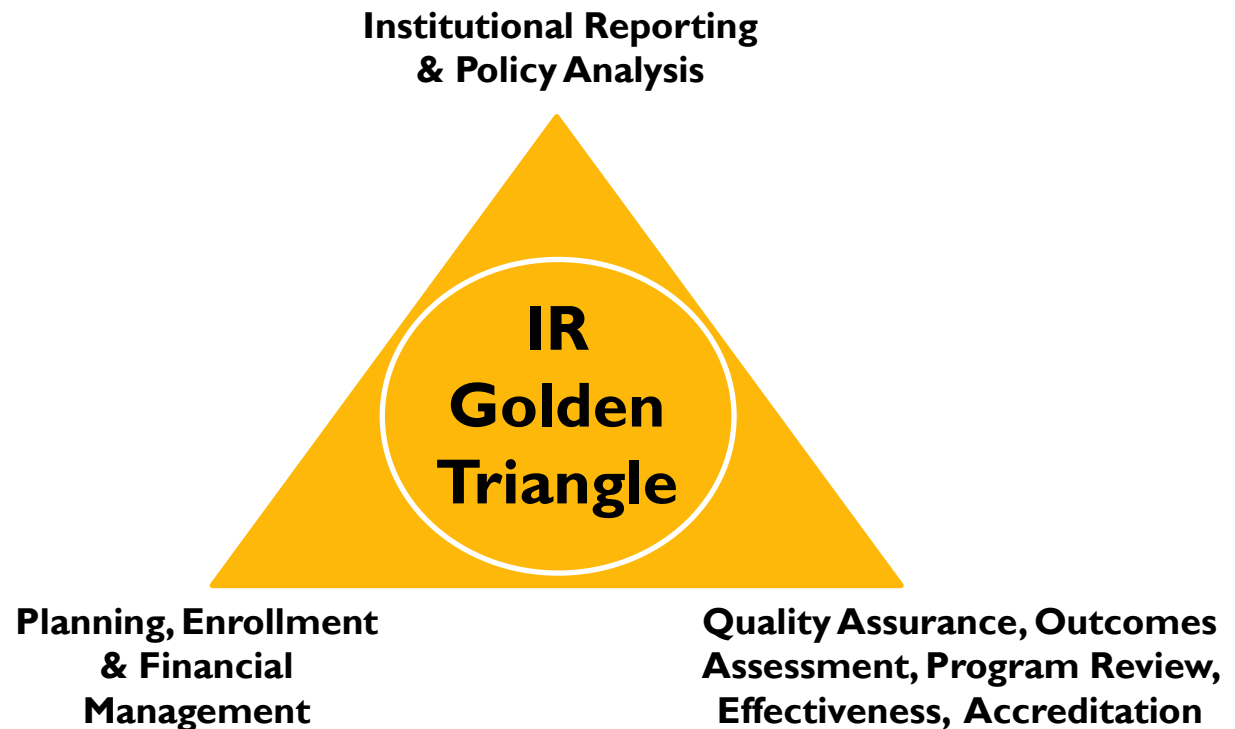
- The practice of IR has existed in HEIs for a long time
- Has a variety of names
 - Institutional Research
 - Planning
 - Quality assurance
 - Decision support

Some conceptions of IR

- Saupe (1990) – tasks for institutional planning, policy development, and decision making
- Fincher (1985) - ‘engine room’ of the university
- Assist decision makers to make well-versed or evidence-based decisions
- Decision support ranges from day-to-day operations to strategically-oriented activities that have a significant impact on an institution or HE system
- Conceptual ideas from Terenzini and Volkwein

Volkwein's Golden Triangle

The Golden Triangle of Institutional Research Analysis



Source: Volkwein, 2008

Volkwein Four/Five Faces

Five Faces of Institutional Research

Organizational Role and Culture	Purposes and Audiences	
	Formative and Internal, for Improvement	Summative and External, for Accountability
Administrative and institutional	To describe the institution; IR as information authority	To present the best case: IR as spin doctor
Academic and professional	To analyze alternatives; IR as policy analyst	To supply impartial evidence of effectiveness: IR as scholar and researcher
Technology	To gather and transform data into information and knowledge; to collaborate in creating and maintaining information repositories and to facilitate the process of knowledge creation, capture, and sharing; IR as knowledge manager	

Source: Andrea Serban (2002), "Knowledge Management: The Fifth Face of Institutional Research." In J. F. Volkwein (Ed.) *New Direction for Institutional Research*, #113, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

January 2015 Book Release

Global Perspectives of Institutional Research and Planning in Higher Education, Routledge/Taylor & Francis Press.

Karen Webber and Angel Calderon (Eds.)

Many great chapter contributors including Steve Woodfield and Professor Mantz Yorke

Global Perspectives of IR

Select topics covered in the book:

- What is IR and Decision Support?
- Institutional Research Vs Educational Research
- Uses and misuses of data in higher education
- Evolution of IR

- Status of IR and Planning in regions of the world including:

US & Canada, Europe, UK & Ireland, Australia, South Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East

IR Around the World

- Probably formed as first distinct group/profession in US in 1950s
- QA movements in Western and Northern EU, Australia, and South Africa influenced development of IR and planning roles
- Just forming - but gaining momentum - in Asia, Latin America, Central & Southern EU, and Middle East

Notable Growth in IR

- Growth and increasing complexity of HEI activities
- Establishment of Professional Groups
 - HEIR, EAIR, AAIR, SAAIR, MENA, AIR, CAIR
 - Riga Forum of 2005 - track entitled “Institutional Research and Higher Education” included as “the track that addressed the impact of Institutional Research—*the activity that gave EAIR its name*”

In small groups, discuss:

- What is your role in IR, QA and institutional planning?
- What is the breadth and scope of these three roles at your institution?
- What are the key challenges that you face when performing these roles?
- What would help you become better in providing decision support?

Terenzini's Tiers of Intelligence

- Analytic, Issues, Context
- Do IR practitioners need to move toward Terenzini's *third tier* of 'intelligence' ?
- If so, what kind of support and professional development is needed ?
- How could/should this be provided ?

Challenges Ahead

- Reporting lines, structures, relationships:
 - Are you close to decision makers ?
 - Do you wear many hats, but own none ?
 - Do you collaborate with others - if so, where
 - Within your institution, regionally, internationally?
- Data - collection, management, and possible (mis)interpretation
- Resources - too many tasks, not enough time

IR, Planning, QA

- More developed/stronger base in some locations
- Has stronger alignment with educational research in a few areas/regions
- But IR stands strong and is growing across the world
- Can IR serve as a driver of strategic change in HEIs?

IR Today and in the Future

- Calderon (2011) - IR practitioners play an active and visionary role in developing strategy and assessing the long term positioning for institutions and national systems.
- We believe that the greater awareness of issues that affect IR are critical to the strength of the profession today.



Thank you

For good discussion!

And to my colleagues

Steve Woodfield, Kingston University London

Mantz Yorke, Lancaster University

And Angel Calderon, RMIT