

Zeitschrift: IABSE bulletin = Bulletin AIPC = IVBH Bulletin
Band: 8 (1984)
Heft: B-30: IABSE bulletin

Vorwort

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1. Engineering Forum

Quality Assurance – a perverted Concept?

IABSE organized a successful Workshop on «Quality Assurance within the Building Process» (see Proceedings IABSE Report No. 47) and is planning a Symposium in 1986 in Tokyo, Japan, with the title «Safety and Quality Assurance of Civil Engineering Structures». It was and still is felt among engineers that the notion «Quality Assurance» stands for the application of a comprehensive set of *measures and activities aimed at assuring desired qualities* of the product in design, execution, manufacturing, installation, maintenance, repair, etc.

Listening to a lecture given by an eminent expert in the planning and execution of Nuclear Power Plants I learned that Quality Assurance in this field of application has been understood for a longtime to mean *only those planned and systematic actions necessary to provide adequate confidence that the product will have desired*

qualities. The difference between these two concepts is obvious. And, in the event of the latter application, Quality Assurance is perverted to a mere *paper chase for quality* and in all likelihood quality itself will be impaired by an impressive but senseless sequence of signatures.

What is the issue? Certainly, the struggle for quality and not just for confidence! But do we need, in order not to be misunderstood, a new label for the above mentioned application of adequate measures and activities in all phases of the design and construction process? If yes, what could it be? If no, what strategies should be adopted to clarify the situation? I would very much like to have answers to these questions from IABSE members.

Jörg Schneider

Secretary IABSE Technical Committee

Table of Contents – Table des matières – Inhaltsverzeichnis

	Page
1. Engineering Forum	9
2. Most important problems in the future, from a Dutch point of view	
Three questions of great importance for the construction industry	10
3. Database on ship collision accidents	11
4. Structural Engineering Today and Tomorrow	12
Vancouver BC Canada, September 3–7, 1984	
5. Membership Statement on January 1, 1984	15
6. List of Publications	16
7. Publications	21
8. Calendar of Events	24