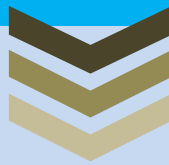




Development Status and Trends of HE Quality Assurance in Asia-Pacific Region: An Empirical Study Based on APQN- INQAAHE Survey



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ABSTRACT: APQN and IQAAHE jointly conducted a survey on the status of both internal and external higher education quality assurance in the Asia-Pacific Region by means of questionnaires and interviews, which aimed at exploring status and trends of HE quality assurance in Asia-Pacific region...

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APQN Mission Statement: to enhance the quality of higher education in the Asia-Pacific Region through strengthening quality assurance work of both internal and external organizations and extending the cooperation

ABSTRACT

In the global accreditation era of quality assurance of higher education, the Asia-Pacific Region with the largest demand for higher education in the world, has made rapid progress after more than 20-year development in quality assurance. However, the existing regional quality assurance research is mainly based in Europe, and there are few documents in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Therefore, in August 2017, APQN and IQAAHE jointly conducted a survey on the status of both internal and external HE quality assurance in the Asia-Pacific Region by means of questionnaires and interviews, which aimed at exploring status and trends of HE quality assurance in Asia-Pacific region

In the aspect of internal quality assurance (IQA), 5 main problems rose: (1) feeble initiatives; (2) imperfect policies and systems; (3) Insufficient human and financial resources; (4) inactive participation of relative stakeholders; (5) weak awareness of quality. The possible improvements are: (1) enhancing initiative; (2) committing to continuously improve the quality of students; (3) attaching importance to capacity building; (4) strengthening cooperation with stakeholders; and (5) continuing to cultivate quality culture.

In the aspect of external quality assurance (EQA), 5 main problems also rose: (1) imperfect QA systems and policies; (2) few independent third-party agencies; (3) insufficient attention toward parts of relative stakeholders; (4) low level of internationalization; (5) diminished quality accountability. The possible improvements are: (1) changing the government-dominated role; (2) forming a market-chosen mechanism; (3) establishing an external QA accountability system with 4-level supervisions; (4) raising the level of internationalization; and (5) revising the principle of quality assurance in this region.

We must admit that it is not easy for Asia-Pacific region to get the achievement at present. But as the HEIs and society gradually understand of the importance of QA and achieve the overall progresses in the region, there will form a quality culture meeting the international level and with unique characteristics in Asia-Pacific region. Then the HEIs, society and government will cooperate well to seek to the forming of Regional quality assurance community.

Key words: Asia-Pacific Region; Asia-Pacific quality network (APQN); IQA; EQA; quality culture

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1. Introduction

Most countries in the Asia-Pacific Region are developing countries with a large population. *“At the end of the 20th Century, with the development of the global economy, the world's manufacturing industry moved toward developing countries, especially Asian countries”*^①, where a more refined and specialized division of labor needs higher level of education for labors. The slogan of *“Education goes first before economic development”* has become a universally recognized concept in the Asia-Pacific Region. This ideal has aroused the surge in the demand for higher education in the Asia-Pacific Region and the continuous increase and expansion of higher education institutions (HEIs) and prompted the Asia-Pacific Region to rapidly enter the stage of higher education (HE) massification. However it led to declining quality of talents and graduates’ employment rate; which raised doubt on quality of the HEIs from the public

In order to be responsible to the public accountability and gain reputation and initiative in the competition market for international advanced education, the countries in the Asia-Pacific Region have continuously learned good practices and experience of HE quality assurance in Europe and the United States, beginning its “leapfrog-development path”. After South Korea first experimented with institutional evaluation in 1982(John Hawkins, 2009), Japan (1991), Australia (1992), New Zealand (1993), India (1994), Malaysia (1996), Thailand (1999) and other countries also began the exploration on HE quality assurance (Zheng Xiaqi, et al. 2007).

At the beginning of the 21st Century, under the promotion of UNESCO, the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the European Bologna Process for HE quality assurance, the era of global accreditation for HE quality assurance has arrived. The development of HE quality assurance in the Asia-Pacific Region has made significant progress. It is in this context that the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) was founded in Hong Kong, China, in January, 2003. By the end of 2018, APQN already has 222 members from 41 countries/territories.

However, from a global perspective, regional researches on HE quality assurance are mainly focused on Europe, and less attention are drawn to the Asia-Pacific Region. Therefore, in order to better understand the development status and trends of HE quality assurance in the Asia-Pacific Region from the regional level, in August 2017, INQAAHE and APQN jointly conducted online survey of both IQA and EQA to HEIs and external quality assurance agencies (EQAAs) in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Survey was conducted in free website- Wenjuanxin (<https://www.wenjuan.in>), which can be downloaded free of charge from the web, was utilized for the dissemination of questionnaires and collection of data. On March 20, 2018, the

survey completed. It took 130 days to e-mail a total of 1,341 questionnaires. Because the survey is in English, the contents are too much and the concepts are somewhat professional, we just got 79 valid samples.

2. Development Status of Survey Analysis

2.1 The Survey of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)

A total of 49 IQA samples were collected, of which 42 from 42 different higher education institutions (HEIs) were valid. The IQA samples mentioned below in this research refer to 42 copies, unless otherwise stated.

2.1.1 Country Coverage. Of the 42 samples, 5 HEIs did not fill out their country, and the remaining 37 HEIs were from 24 countries/territories. Among them, the largest samples are from China, Russia, Japan and Bhutan. (Figure 1)

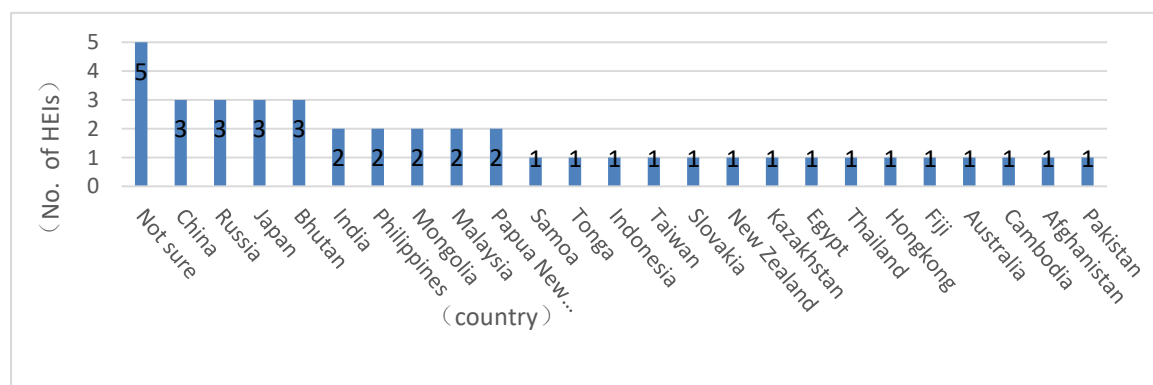


Figure 1: Country Coverage in the IQA Survey

2.1.2 IQA content. 41 HEIs carry out quality assurance on Bachelor's level programmes, accounting for 97.6% of the total. 34 HEIs carry out quality assurance on Institution as a whole (governance and administration; physical resources; human resources; student services; information systems), accounting for 80.9% of the total. Fewer HEIs carry out quality assurance on distance education, online learning and postgraduate programmes / doctoral programmes, no more than 10, less than 24% of the total.

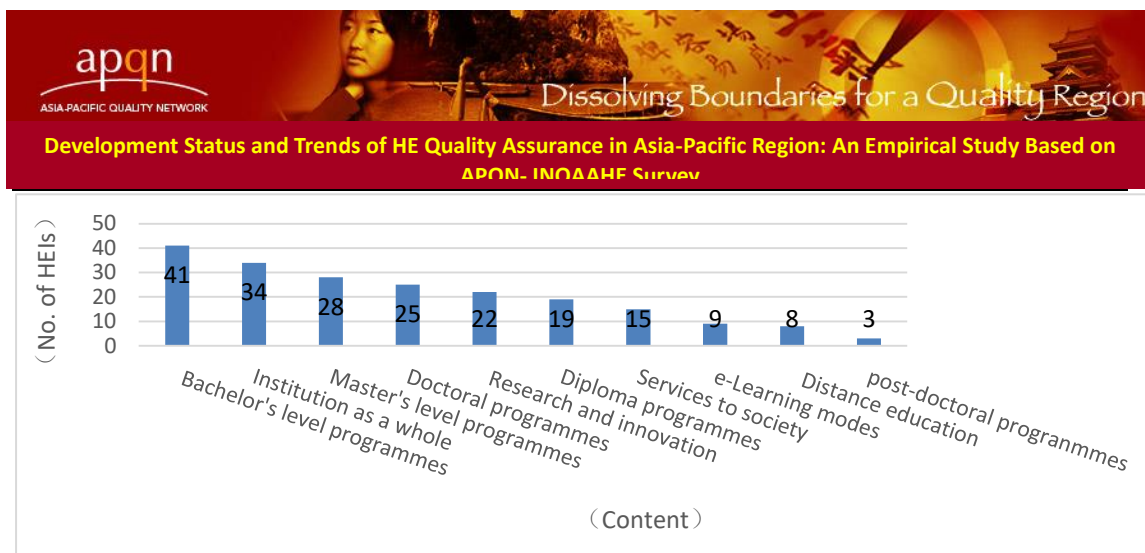


Figure 2: The Contents of IQA

2.2. The Survey of External Quality Assurance (EQA)

A total of 42 EQA samples were collected, of which 37 from 37 different EQAAs were valid. The EQA samples mentioned below in this research refer to 37 copies, unless otherwise stated.

2.2.1 Country coverage. 37 EQA samples come from 24 countries/territories. Among them, the largest numbers of samples are from Japan, Russia, China and India.

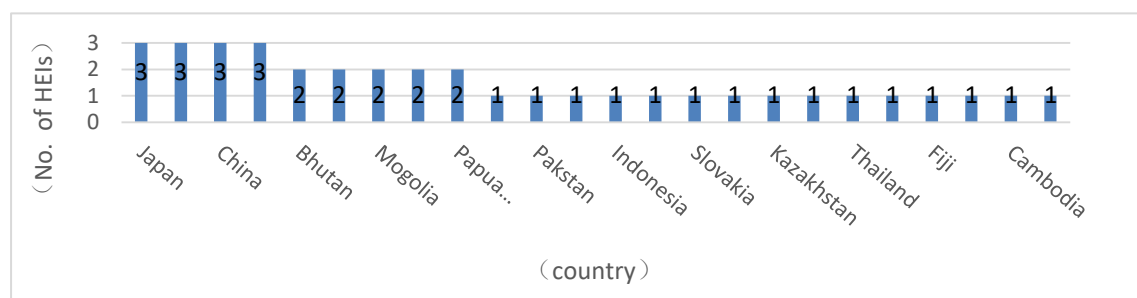


Figure 3: Country Coverage in the EQA Survey

2.2.2 Established time. 9 EQAAs were established before the year of 2000, accounting for 24.3% of the total. The remaining 28 were established after 2000, accounting for 75.7% of the total. Among them, 14 EQAAs were established between 2000 and 2010, accounting for 37% of the total. 11 EQAAs were established between 2011 and 2017, accounting for 29.7% of the total. This shows in the early 21st Century, driven by regional and international trends of quality assurance with a large number of QA forums and conferences, the governments in this region promulgated quality assurance policies, increased financial investment in quality assurance, and established a batch of EQAAs.

3. Development Status of IQA

3.1 70% HEIs have carried out IQA activities

Among the 42 HEIs, 5 HEIs are not sure about the number of IQA activities. Within the other 37 HEIs, 6 do not carry out IQA activities, accounting for 14.3% of the total. 11 only carried out one-cycle IQA activities, accounting for 26.1% of the total. 20 HEIs have conducted IQA activities more than one cycle, accounting for 47.6% of the total.

In most countries and regions in the Asia-Pacific Region (especially in developing countries), HE quality assurance was originally initiated by the governments. Many HEIs do not have the tradition of carrying out IQA activities all by themselves. In order to quickly popularize the understanding of the importance of quality assurance in the HEIs, The governments link quality evaluation of the HEIs with the funds investment as well as authority permission of the HEI and mainly manage education quality of HEIs by way of external evaluation. Although it works, there are deviations between the real understanding of quality assurance in HEIs and the true purpose of IQA, to promote the continuous improvement of quality of the HEIs. Some HEIs just regard quality assurance as a way to obtain funds, obtain the qualifications and complete the requirements from the public and the governments. They confuse EQA with IQA, and do not pay attention to IQA activities. Therefore, few HEIs carried out IQA activities more than one cycle.

3.2 40% HEIs do not release their self-evaluation reports.

The open source of the self-evaluation reports is beneficial for the stakeholders to understand quality assurance of the HEIs. APQN's "Principles of Quality Assurance in Higher Education in the Asia-Pacific Region" clearly stipulates that open self-evaluation report is the responsibility of the HEIs. The survey showed that 22 HEIs have released their self-evaluation reports, accounting for 52.4% of the total. 20 HEIs do not release their self-evaluation reports, accounting for 47.6% of the total. Some HEIs explain the reason why the self-evaluation reports are not open to the public, is that there must be all kinds of quality problems existing in the HEIs, but in the Asia-Pacific Region, the public and the media have not yet formed a positive guide to such quality problems in the HEIs. Negative criticism and accusation is more than the improvement of the HEIs, which will affect the reputation of the HEIs and combat the confidence of the HEIs quality. So keep the reports private but not to open to the public is the choice of some HEIs.

3.3 IQA Policy System

3.3.1 70% HEIs have made IQA policies and procedures. 30 HEIs have made the IQA policies and procedures in the past years, accounting for 71.4% of the total. However, the IQA policies of 12 HEIs are under construction, accounting for 28.6% of the total.

3.3.2 60% HEIs regularly revise IQA policies and procedures. 2 HEIs are not sure whether their IQA policies have been revised. 27 HEIs regularly revise IQA policies, accounting for 64.3% of the total. 4 HEIs revise the policies from time to time, accounting for 9.5% of the total. 9 HEIs have never revised their IQA policies and procedures, accounting for 22.5% of the total.

3.3.3 90% HEIs establish quality assurance units (QAUs). 38 HEIs have established specialized QAUs, accounting for 90% of the total. 2 HEIs are establishing their QAUs, accounting for 5% of the total. Still 2 HEIs do not have QAUs, accounting for 5% of the total.

The establishment of IQA policies can make the QA activities of the HEIs follow procedures and regulations. The revision will help the HEIs improve the QA system according to new development status and planning. Establishing special QAUs can coordinate various departments in QA activities. In recent years, in order to promote the initiative of IQA, some countries shift their focus on quality assurance of the HEIs from the outside to the inside, from the top to the bottom, beginning to guide the HEIs to improve IQA policies and establish specialized QAUs. The governments' guidance may speed up the establishment of QA policies and QAUs in the HEIs. However, in order to make the IQA not just in the appearance, the real improvement of the HEIs' quality requires the HEIs to promote the awareness of the importance of quality assurance.

3.4 Resources

3.4.1 50% HEIs lack human resources. 19 HEIs have sufficient human resources to carry out QA activities, accounting for 45.2% of the total. 23 HEIs lack human resources to carry out QA activities, accounting for 56.8% of the total.

3.4.2 50% HEIs lack financial resources. 21 HEIs have sufficient financial resources to carry out QA activities, accounting for 50% of the total. 21 HEIs lack the financial resources to carry out QA activities, accounting for 50% of the total.

From the survey data, nearly 50% HEIs lack both human and financial resources for IQA activities, which are related to the insufficient attention of the HEIs to IQA. The current acquisition of human and financial resources in the HEIs depends on the number of IQA projects. The more the projects are, the more investments the HEIs

will make, and vice versa. The QA activities of most HEIs in the Asia-Pacific Region are mainly based on external evaluation. Their IQA activities are only used to maintain the normal development of teaching activities in the HEIs. Therefore, it is nature for them to get less investment in QA **human** and financial resources. No doubt that the IQA activities lacking human and financial resources are difficult to improve the quality of the HEIs, which tends easily to cause the HEIs to pay less attention to IQA. Thus a vicious circle will be formed.

3.5 Stakeholders

“The implementation of HE quality assurance is not a purely academic evaluation, but also includes the opinion of the public. Each stakeholder has its own quality standards.”(Jianxin Zhang, 2011) Only when more voices of the relative stakeholders in the QA process are heard, can HEIs improve the quality of the HEIs as a whole, meet the needs of most stakeholders and gain social trust.

3.5.1 Some internal stakeholders are not sufficiently involved. Among the five types of the internal stakeholders: top level managers, administrative staff, faculty members, students and alumni, 40 HEIs have administrative staff, faculty members in participating in IQA activities, accounting for 92.5% of the total. 36 HEIs have the top level managers participated in IQA activities, accounting for 85.7% of the total. 33 HEIs have administrative staff and students participated in IQA activities, accounting for 78.6% of the total. Only 17 HEIs are involved in alumni in IQA activities, accounting for 40.4% of the total. Students are the recipients of university education while alumni are products of the HEIs. They are more aware of how to promote the quality of the HEIs. Therefore, their participation in IQA activities must be taken very seriously in the future.

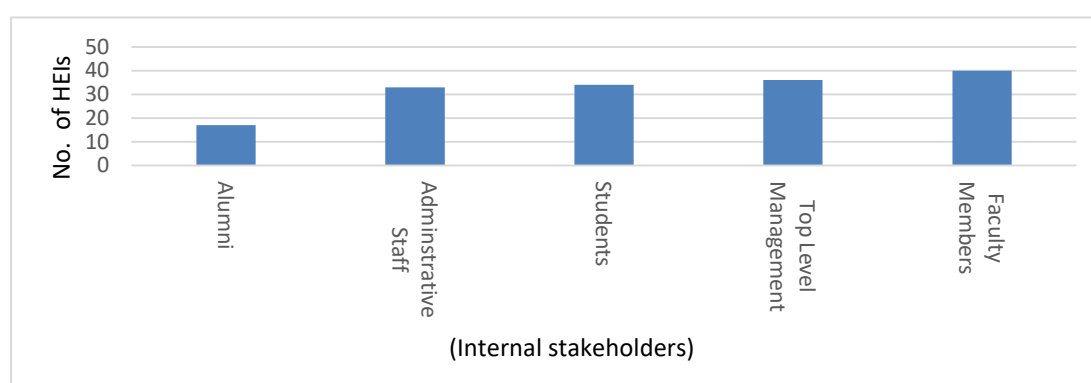


Figure 4: Internal stakeholders of the HEIs

3.5.2 The participation of some external stakeholders is insufficient. Among the 6 types of external stakeholders: the government, employers, professional associations (in the respective fields of study), private sector representatives (in the

respective fields of study), labor market representatives and international experts, the government participated in the IQA activities of 27 HEIs, accounting for 64.3% of the total; professional associations participate in the IQA activities of 26 HEIs, accounted for 61.9% of the total; labor market representatives only participate in the IQA activities of 8 HEIs, accounting for 19% of the total.

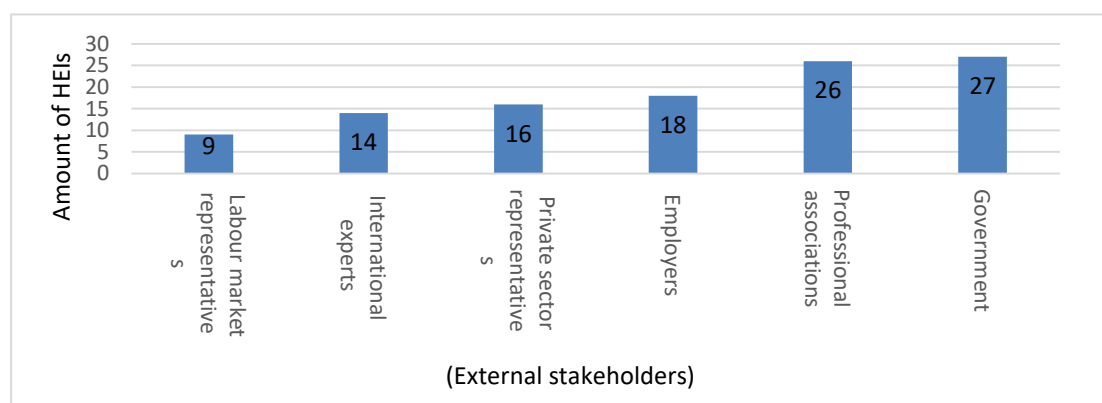


Figure 5: External stakeholders of HEIs

The main reason that stakeholders have insufficient participation in the IQA activities of the HEIs, should be responsible by 2 parties: both the HEIs and stakeholders. As for the HEIs, they are used to be pushed by the EQAAs and IQA are always in passive way, so that they do not attach importance to stakeholders' participation in IQA activities. As for the stakeholders, participating in IQA activities requires professional knowledge. But because of short development of QA in the Asia-Pacific region, some stakeholders lack professional QA knowledge and do not know how to participate. This needs further cultivation and promotion. Thus, it is important to enhance the positive role of stakeholder participation in the HEIs' quality assurance, and to popularize relevant QA knowledge among the stakeholders.

3.6 Quality culture

The establishment of quality culture contributes to the substantial improvement of the quality of the HEIs. At present, there is no international consensus on the definition of "quality culture". The European University Association (EUA) defines "quality culture" in a more comprehensively way.

"Quality culture refers to an organizational culture that intends to enhance quality permanently and is characterized by two distinct elements: on the one hand, a cultural/psychological element of shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitment towards quality and, on the other hand, a structural/ managerial element with defined processes that enhance quality and aim at coordinating

individual efforts (Oliver Vettori, 2016). Therefore, Quality culture is not the same as the establishment of quality assurance policies and procedures in the HEIs. It is more of a kind: on the basis of the perfect quality assurance system of the HEIs, each stakeholder is constantly improving and pursuing quality of the HEIs from cognition to action.

3.6.1 70% HEIs recognize the necessity of quality culture. 40 HEIs recognize the necessity of establishing quality culture in the HEIs, accounting for 95.2% of the total. 2 HEIs are not sure about it, accounting for 4.8% of the total.

3.6.2 The awareness of quality culture from 90% HEIs has emerged. 30 HEIs believe that their awareness of quality culture has been formed, accounting for 71.4% of the total. 19% HEIs are not sure about it, while 9.5% HEIs firmly believe they do have the awareness of quality culture.

As we can see from the above, in the Asia-Pacific Region there exist many problems: (1) some HEIs haven't sufficient initiative to carry out IQA activities; (2) QA policies and procedures are still imperfect; (3) the HEIs still face the dilemma of insufficient human and financial resources; (4) the cooperation with both internal and external stakeholders are not reached yet; (5) the HEIs affiliated to the government lack independence; (6) The awareness of Quality Culture is weak, etc. This shows that quality culture in the Asia-Pacific Region needs to be continuously developed at both structural/management level and cultural/psychological level. However, this is an inevitable problem in the initial stage of the IQA development in the Asia-Pacific Region. Nowadays, the awareness of quality culture of the HEIs is sprouting. With common struggle of all the persons in the HEIs, the IQA of the HEIs in the Asia-Pacific Region will surely make great progress.

4. Development Status of EQA

Traditionally, the HEIs have always believed that they can be self-responsible for quality. However, with the expansion of the HEIs and the decline in quality, as a consequent, external accountability for the HEIs' quality goes with it. "In 1997, the UK established quality assurance Agency (QAA) by integrating the functions of the University Grants Committee (UGC) and the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) to audit or review the QA system within the HEIs. It became the first landmark of external quality assurance agency (EQAA) in the world, which means that the EQAA in higher education was empowered to have formal power to manage and supervise the quality of the HEIs by the government or relevant authorities." (Fan Zengguang, 2014)

4.1 Independence and Legitimacy

Both legitimacy and independence of the EQAAs are the cornerstone and

foundation to ensure that they have the evaluation capacity and will not be affected by any external factors (such as the government) to objectively evaluate the quality of HEIs.

1.1 40% EQAAs are independent third-party agencies. 17 EQAAs are independent third-party agencies, accounting for 46% of the total. 10 EQAAs are education departments of the governments, accounting for 27% of the total. 8 EQAAs are quasi-third-party government agencies, accounting for 22% of the total. The private EQAAs and domestic EQAAs cover only 2.5%.

In most countries in the Asia-Pacific Region, the HEIs are affiliated with the governments. In order to ensure the possibility and effectiveness of the EQA implementation, many countries have also established the EQAAs that are also affiliated with the governments or the education departments, giving them the right to evaluate the quality of the HEIs. This practice undermines the independence of the EQAAs, but in order to cope with the fierce international competition in the HE market, popularize the understanding of quality assurance in the EQAAs and the public, standardize and improve the quality of regional education, government-led EQAAs are also a necessary stage for the development of HE quality assurance in the Asia-Pacific Region. In general, its advantages outweigh the disadvantages. With the continuous development and improvement of EQA, the governments will gradually decentralize and authorize more power to the EQAAs, and independent third-party EQAAs in the region will increase in the near future, which is an international trend at this quality era.

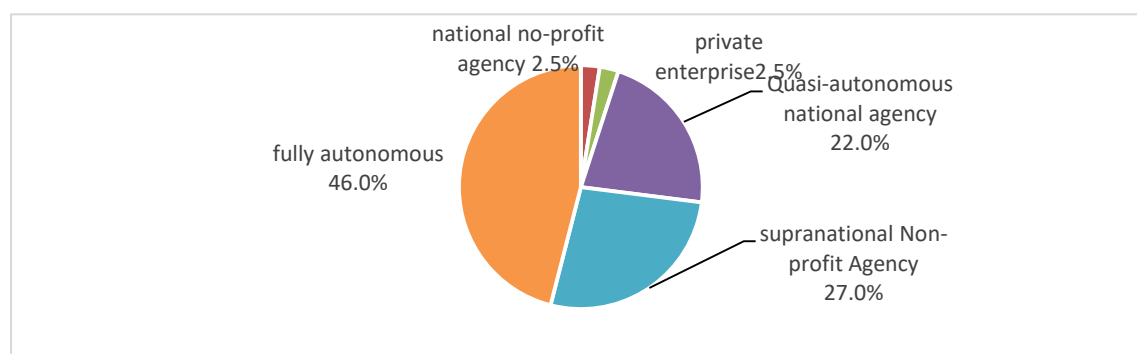


Figure 6: The nature of the EQAAs

4.1.2 70% EQAAs have been recognized as having responsibility for EQA in the jurisdiction. 25 EQAAs have been recognized by the legislation, accounting for 67.6% of the total. 9 EQAAs have been recognized by the state authorities and the HEIs but not by law, accounting for 24.3% of the total. 8.1% EQAAs have not been recognized.

At present, some countries in the Asia-Pacific Region lack the supervision and management of the EQAAs, in addition more and more private EQAAs are gradually emerging like mushrooms. It is urgent to formulate policies and principles to regulate the market of the EQAAs.

4.2 Level of Internationalization

At the end of the 20th Century and the beginning of the 21st Century, regional and international networks such as INQAAHE, APQN, European Network of Quality Assurance (ENQA) and the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA) were established. These networks often guide the QA development by holding conferences, seminars and fora, releasing publications and conducting special researches. They help different countries to continuously develop quality assurance, which made them gain international and regional recognition. In order to ensure its advancement and competitiveness, the HEIs and the EQAAs often promote internationalization level by joining regional and international networks and apply for international accreditation.

4.2.1 80% EQAAs have become members of regional and international networks. 31 EQAAs are APQN members, accounting for 84% of the total. 28 EQAAs are INQAAHE members, accounting for 76% of the total. One reason is that this survey was sent from APQN, so most respondents were APQN members. In addition, 13 EQAAs have joined other networks such as Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG), CEENQA and ENQA.

4.2.2 50% EQAAs have obtained international accreditation. 11 EQAAs have been accredited by international accreditation organizations, accounting for 29.7% of the total. 7 EQAAs have obtained international accreditation but need to apply for accreditation again, accounting for 18.9% of the total. 15 EQAAs plan to apply for international accreditation, accounting for 40.5% of the total. 4 EQAAs do not plan to apply for international accreditation, accounting for 10.9% of the total.

4.3 Implementation of EQA

4.3.1 90% EQAAs follow the international external evaluation procedures. In the “Guidelines of Good Practice” (GGP) issued by INQAAHE, it is clearly required that the basic external evaluation process should consist of four steps: (1) self-evaluation of the HEIs; (2) Site Visit; (3) Evaluation Report and decisions, and (4) Follow-Up Action on Recommendations. These four steps are an evaluation process that is consistent with global quality assurance. According to the survey, 37 EQAAs conduct site visits to the HEIs, accounting for 100% of the total. Some EQAAs did not conduct self-evaluation of the HEIs and follow-up action on recommendations. But in general, 90% EQAAs can fully comply with the four steps of external quality evaluation.

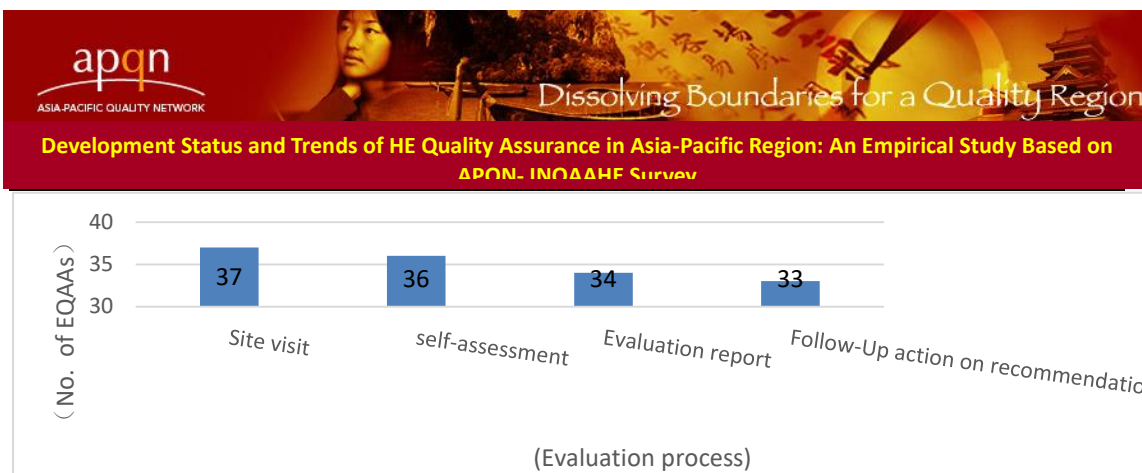


Figure 7: Evaluation Process

4.3.2 The composition of the external evaluation team(EET). Among 7 types of composition of the EET (EQAA staff members, representatives of professional associations, administrators and faculty members from local institutions/local experts, administrators and faculty members from overseas, institutions/international experts, students, professional practitioners and employers), 24 EQAAs have representatives of professional associations and administrators and faculty members from local institutions/local experts, accounting for 64.9% of the total. 12 EQAAs have students as well as administrators and faculty members from overseas, accounting for 32.4% of the total.

Some EQAAs explained, there were many reasons for restricting the participation of international experts in evaluation implementation, for example, misunderstandings will be caused because of language difficulties. International evaluations are not acceptable in local context because of the differences of cultures and education. What's more, the expenses are much higher. The reason why fewer students' participation is that the students do not have professional training in quality assurance, it is very difficult for them to play an important role in the evaluation process.

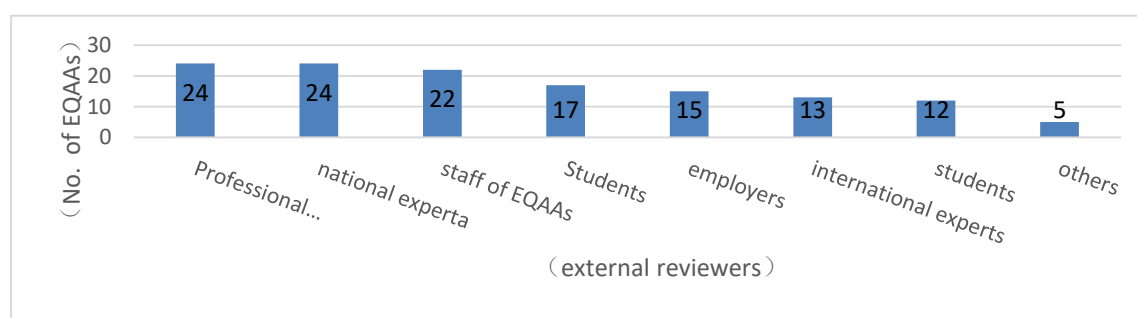


Figure8: Composition of external evaluation team

4.3.3 All EQAAs conduct external reviewers training activities. 31 EQAAs conduct orientation/induction sessions before launching an institutional or program evaluation procedure, accounting for 83.8% of the total. 30 EQAAs train the reviewers, accounting for 81% of the total. 17 EQAAs carry out targeted professional

development activities for reviewers, accounting for 45.9% of the total.

4.4 Resources

Except the fact that the EQAAs evaluate the HEIs and make the HEIs fulfill their accountability, the responsibility of the EQAAs should play important role in promoting the improvement the QA capacity of the HEIs through evaluation, and make them independently carry out IQA activities on their own. Therefore, the sufficient human and financial resources of the EQAAs are crucial in the evaluation of the EQAAs and in the construction of QA capacity of the HEIs.

4.4.1 Nearly 40% EQAAs lack financial resources to carry out evaluation work. 23 EQAAs have sufficient financial resources to carry out evaluations, accounting for 62.2% of the total. 14 EQAAs lack financial resources, accounting for 37.8% of the total.

As we can see from Figure 9, 21 EQAAs are mainly funded by the governments, accounting for 56.6% of the total. A small number of the EQAAs get financial resources mainly by way of evaluation services, accounted for 43.4% of the total. It is because the HEIs in most countries in the Asia-Pacific Region are established by the governments and they work in the form of state-led EQA. Quality assurance of the HEIs is still passively accepted without awareness of applying for external evaluation. However, as the EQA is getting mature, the governments' investment gradually decrease, and evaluation service fees will become the main income for the EQAAs to obtain financial resources. The capacity and reputation of the EQAAs will be an important factor in determining whether an EQAA can obtain financial resources or not. The EQAAs with good capacity and reputation will naturally receive more projects, and thus obtain financial resources in conducting evaluations. Conversely, the financial resources of the EQAAs will be scarce.

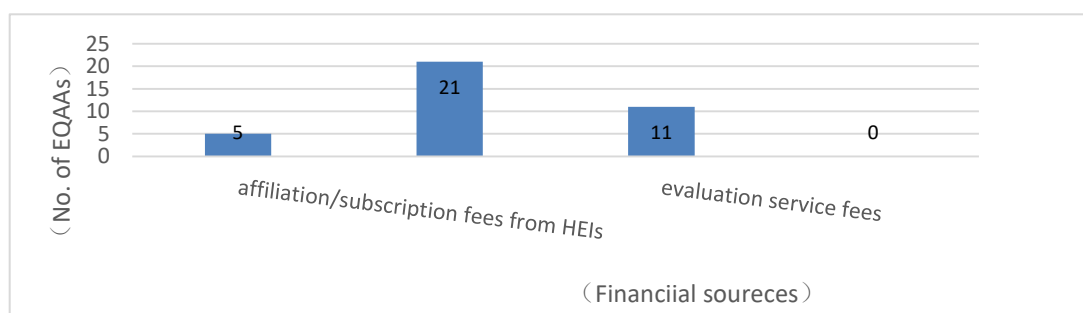


Figure 9: The sources of most part of financial resources

4.4.2 Nearly 40% EQAAs lack human resources to conduct evaluations. 23 EQAAs have sufficient human resources to conduct evaluations, accounting for 62.2% of the total. 14 EQAAs lack human resources to conduct evaluations, accounting for

37.8% of the total.

On insufficient human resource acquisition, there are two main reasons. One is that agencies cannot employ a sufficient number of staffs without sufficient funding. The other is that Professional quality assurance personnel training and professional quality assurance talents are insufficient in the Asia-Pacific region of short development time.

4.5 Accountability of the EQAAs

Accountability of the EQAAs can promote the upgrading their professional capabilities, management, operation and standardization of evaluation activities. The EQAAs establishing their own QA accountability mechanism and accepting external evaluation is the main way for the EQAAs to complete accountability.

4.5.1 60% EQAAs establish an accountability mechanism for their own QA system. 22 EQAAs have established their own QA accountability mechanisms, accounting for 59.5% of the total. 11 EQAAs are establishing their own QA accountability mechanisms, accounting for 29.7% of the total. 4 EQAAs did nothing, accounting for 10.8% of the total.

4.5.2 70% EQAAs have reviewed and have a recognition status awarded by external bodies. 9 EQAAs have not received any external review. The remaining 28 EQAAs have received external evaluations, accounting for 75.7% of the total. Among them, 17 EQAAs have been evaluated and have recognition status awarded by national bodies, 6 EQAAs have received APQN evaluations, 4 EQAAs have received INQAAHE evaluations, and 9 have received evaluations from other regional or international EQAAs, such as ENQA, ENAEE, etc.

At present, most countries in the Asia-Pacific Region lack supervision over the EQAAs. At the same time, most of the EQAAs are funded by government, and lack inter-institutional competitiveness, which leads to insufficient initiative of the EQAAs to guarantee their own quality.

4.6 Stakeholders

Among 8 types of the stakeholders (government representatives, private HEIs, public HEIs, professional associations, labor organization representatives, industry/business representatives, national training agency representative and students), 27 EQAAs have public HEIs as their own stakeholders, accounting for the total number of 72.9%. 26 EQAAs have government representatives and professional associations as their own stakeholders, accounting for 70% of the total. Less than 50% EQAAs have private HEIs, labor organization representatives, industry/business representatives, national training agency representative and students. At the same

time, a small number of the EQAAs have their stakeholders who are not in the above choices, such as international experts, national research committees, international academic committees, etc.



Figure 10: Stakeholders represented by the EQAAs

As we can see from the above, in the Asia-Pacific Region there exist many problems: (1) half of EQAAs affiliated to the governments are not independent; (2) some EQAAs haven't been recognized by the legislation; (3) the internationalization level of EQAAs is low; (4) the external evaluation team hasn't representatives of students; (5) the EQAAs lack both human and finance resource; (6) the accountability mechanism is not complete, etc. But luckily, the survey also shows great progress have been made in the past 20 years.

5. Development Trend of HE Quality Assurance in

Asia-Pacific Region

As a leading region for the QA development, Europe has always been the pioneer in the development of global quality assurance in higher education. Roughly considered “the 1991 European Pilot Project for Evaluation Quality in Higher Education” as the starting point, the signing of “the Bologna Declaration” in 1999, the promulgation of the 2010 Budapest and Vienna Declarations as the crucial stages, the QA development process in Europe can be divided into 3 stages: (1) embryonic stage (1970-1998); (2) the construction of quality assurance system (1999-2009); and (3) devotion to real improvement of quality(2010-).

Compared with the European QA process, the Asia-Pacific Region has entered the construction stage of quality assurance system and leaped towards a real improvement in quality. In the future development process, as long as the EQAAs can take the initiative to take responsibility for quality assurance, the Asia-Pacific Region will gradually form a pattern of regional quality assurance dominated by universities,

supervised and supported by the public and the government

5.1 Development Trend of IQA

5.1.1 To improve the initiative of IQA. In Asia-Pacific region, the development of IQA in the HEIs is relatively late than EQA, so the IQA is mainly promoted by EQA. The policies and systems of IQA are immature, and even quality assurance is defined as a way to deal with external inspections. The capacity and motivation to spontaneously carry out IQA activities are insufficient. However, with the emergence of more and more global and regional university rankings, encouragement of quality assurance capacity building of the HEIs by international organizations greatly, the higher public requirements for the quality of HEIs and the active pushing in QA construction of the HEIs by government, both internal and external pressure will eventually will make HEIs recognize the positive role of quality assurance. The HEIs will change from the passive recipient of the fact that “I was asked to conduct evaluation” to the initiator of the fact “I ask to conduct evaluation”, take the responsibility of quality assurance, develop an IQA monitoring system, and actively explore more effective IQA methods.

5.1.2 To emphasize quality assurance capacity-building. Capacity building is an important way to promote the sustainable development of quality assurance in the HEIs. QA talents with rich experience and leadership can guide the successful development, and promote the QA practice and innovation in the HEIs. Since 2008, APQN has launched “the Training Project of Staff Capacity-Building in Quality Assurance”, which annually train QA personnel from different countries in the Asia-Pacific region. So far, more than 100 people have been trained. However, there are only a few people who can participate in this kind of international training program. In order to cultivate a big batch of QA professionals, it is expected that the quality assurance major will be established in the HEIs. At the same time, the emphasis of HEIs capacity building will be to achieve a synchronous understanding from the management level to the implementation level in the quality assurance practice, improve the quality-assurance quality of stakeholders, strengthen the leadership of university managers in quality assurance, and popularize quality assurance knowledge for internal and external stakeholders of education quality.

5.1.3 To commit to the continuous improvement of students’ quality. In recent years, the HE quality assurance in the whole world has shifted from the recognition of the institutions, degree programmes to the attention of students’ learning outcomes (SLOs) and teachers’ teaching ability. For example, in the latest revised “Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015)”, “Since 2005, considerable progress has been made in quality assurance as well as in other Bologna action lines such as qualifications frameworks, recognition and the promotion of the use of learning outcomes, all these contributing to a paradigm shift towards student-centered learning and teaching. ”

(ENQA, 2015), specially added the "student-centered internal quality assurance standard". In 2015, for the first time CIQG in the U.S.A launched the "Review on the SLOs" in China, which brought new ideas and concepts to Asia-Pacific Region. Beyond all question, the focus of quality assurance in the HEIs in the Asia-Pacific region will gradually shift from the macro-level quality of management and resources to the core elements in the teaching process, namely, the improvement of students physical and mental quality, the SLOs and the improvement of teachers' capacity in teaching and research.

5.1.4 To strengthen cooperation with stakeholders. The participation of internal and external stakeholders in quality assurance of HEIs can reach a consensus with HEIs on quality assurance, change the mentality of negative criticism, work together in the same direction, and condense into the power of quality assurance of HEIs. At the same time, the HEIs can also recognize the diversity of quality requirements from different stakeholders' participation and comprehensively improve the quality of the HEIs from multiple perspectives. Thereby developing a harmonious, positive and cooperative relationship between the HEIs and stakeholders is double-win strategy. However, nowadays HE quality assurance is only a topic in the quality assurance circle in the Asia-Pacific region. With the increasing attention of the public and media to the HE quality, QA of HE will become a topic of public concern and more and more people will be involved in the quality assurance process of HE. Thus supporting and cooperative quality assurance culture will form in the region.

5.1.5 To cultivate quality culture. The cultivation of quality culture means that quality assurance system of the HEIs tends to be excellent, and the relative stakeholders have formed a concept of continuously promoting the quality improvement from both understanding and actions. Since the launch of "the European Quality Culture Project" in 2002, quality culture has become a topic of global discussion. Even some countries have issued the policy on how to improve it in the HEIs. For example, on January 27, 2017, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research released a white paper entitled "Quality Culture of Higher Education", systematically summarizes the process of quality assurance and management reform in HEIs and put forward many goals and measures to promote the cultivation of quality culture in the HEIs.(Ministry of Education and Research, 2017) there are also some popular and heated discussions on quality culture in Asia-Pacific Region. "2016 Global Quality Assurance Summit", "2017 Quality Assurance Conference" organized by the Association of Asian Universities and quality culture is always the main core of the discussion in the regional activities of APQN since 2016. Cultivating quality culture of the HEIs is the key point of the future development of global trend in higher education.

5.2 Development trend of EQA

5.2.1 To Change the government-dominated role. An ecological QA pattern should be: the HEIs take the initiative to undertake the responsibility of quality assurance, the EQAAs guarantee quality assurance of the HEIs from the outside to verify and catalyze the quality of the HEIs. However, the QA in HE in the Asia-Pacific region has the status of "putting the cart before the horse". The QA of HE is led by EQA (especially the government) but passively accepted by HEIs. The identity dislocation of QA leader and the facilitator has brought many negative impacts on the quality of HEIs. In order to change this situation, some countries in the Asia-Pacific Region began to reduce external control over the HEIs, guide the development of IQA systems, and encourage the spontaneous QA practices. The governments and the EQAAs should rethink their roles, respect the subjectivity of the HEIs, and gradually change from the role of QA leaders to the facilitators.

5.2.2 The market elimination mechanism will gradually form. In the Asia-Pacific Region, many EQAAs affiliated with the governments or education departments mainly get the funds from the governments, so there is no market competition mechanism. However, with the gradual maturity of the EQA system, the government will gradually transfer the input of QA from EQAAs to HEIs. Then, Evaluation service fees will become a major component of the EQAAs' funding. Whether an EQAA can survive or not will depend on its own choice. An EQAA with good capability and reputation will receive more projects and thus have sufficient funds to support its development while the EQAAs with poor capability and reputation will gradually be eliminated by the market and will not survive. A market elimination mechanism will gradually take shape.

5.2.3 To establish an external QA accountability system with 4-level supervisions. At present, the competitiveness of the external quality assurance market in the Asia-Pacific region is insufficient. The state and HEIs lack supervision over quality of EQAAs, so unqualified external quality assurance institutions still exist. The question who will guarantee the quality of external quality assurance institutions is questioned by the government, HEIs and the public. We believe, that there are four kind-level supervisions that can guarantee and monitor EQA: 1) the national education administrative departments; 2) the quasi-governmental agencies established in "legislative and independent administrative agencies"; 3) the third party such as professional associations (guilds); and 4) regional and global register such as the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and Asia Pacific Quality Register (APQR) by APQN. (Jianxin Zhang, 2017). From a global and regional perspective, this new mechanism is proposed to strengthen the quality control of the EQAAs and eliminate the possibility of false evaluation. In the near future, an external QA accountability system with 4-level supervisions from global, regional, national and professional association is expected to truly fulfill its accountabilities and responsibilities.

5.2.4 To improve the level of internationalization. Generally speaking, the international and regional networks and EQAAs have advanced QA ideals and good practice to be used for reference through years of explorations and researches. They bring together professional QA talents, and play a guiding role in the QA development in the whole world. In the near future, more and more EQAAs will increase their internationalization level, update their ideals, share international experiences, enhance their capacity building, and gain market competitiveness through applying for international accreditation, joining international EQAAs, and participating in international conferences.

5.2.5 To revise the principles of regional quality assurance. In 2008, APQN released “Higher Education Quality Assurance Principles for the Asia Pacific Region” (Chiba Principles). It aims to provide guidance to both higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies interested in enhancing policies and practices within region. They are intended to complement national quality assurance approaches and frameworks relating to recognition of qualifications (both domestic and international), institutions, courses and programmes and national registers of institutions, courses, HEIs and QAAs. Ten years has passed and many changes have taken place during the decade: the prosperity of lifelong learning, the development of online learning (MOOCs), and the students’ learning methods and others have laid new demands on education quality. Therefore, the Chiba Principles should also keep pace with the changes in higher education and make new revisions.

Concluding Words

The Asia-Pacific Region with the largest demand for higher education in the world, has made rapid progress after more than 20-year development in quality assurance. However, there still exist many problems both in IQA and EQA, such as weak awareness of quality culture, lack of human and financial resources, low participation of relative stakeholders and others. Quality assurance in most countries in the Asia-Pacific region is still at a “government-led” stage, and the importance of quality assurance is still not be taken very seriously by the HEIs. The developmental gap among different countries is large and the overall QA development needs to be improved. This entire problem is related to the fact that the development of higher education is still in the initial stage, the economic level is low, and the developmental ages of quality assurance is relatively short. However, we believe that with the continuous guidance and promotion of international and regional networks/organizations and the strong influence of the governments, the QA awareness of the HEIs will be constantly aware by the appeal of public and the society, the investment of professionals and funding will constantly be promoted, the quality of the HEIs will be gradually improved and the internationalization of quality assurance will be surely developed. Then “the trinity model of government-leading, social-supervising and university-conducting” of quality assurance will be made and

gradually establish quality culture that meets national, regional and international requirements with unique characteristics. Eventually, quality assurance in higher education will reach the final goal of “the trinity of the government, the society and the HEI” pursuing the mature quality culture. All stakeholders are in their respective responsibilities, take their own duties, actively pursue the mature stage of quality culture, and eventually establish a regional QA community widely recognized by the HEIs and the EQAAs.

We must recognize that it is not easy for the Asia-Pacific region to achieve such development of quality assurance in such a short period of time. This depends on the active guidance and promotion of international and regional QA networks/organizations, the proactive policy measures taken by governments and the hard-working of the HEIs, the EQAAs and the society. What’s more, the QA development in the Asia-Pacific region is thriving. The HEIs, the EQAAs and all the counties are awakening. Under the drive of the times and social requirements, quality assurance in the Asia-Pacific region will move toward a newer and better development.

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