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ASIA-PACIFIC QUALITY NETWORK

External Quality Assurance in the Asia-Pacific:
What has changed over a Decade?
An Anthology of Selected Papers Presented at the APQN 2012 Conference

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Foreword by-
H.E. Dr. Sok An
Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia

Edited by-
Dr. Jagannath Patil
APQN President

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Editor
Dr. Jagannath Patil
President
Asia Pacific Quality Network - APQN

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Foreword

I wish to express my satisfaction and sincere appreciation to the Board of the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) for it's initiative to launch the publication of the selected papers presented at the 2012 APQN conference, held in Cambodia's historic province of Siem Reap, the home of the World Heritage site and a Cultural City of East Asia. The conference theme "External Quality Assurance in the Asia-Pacific: What has changed over a decade?" was very timely and reflected the past and current issues of higher education and quality assurance to meet future promises and expectations with respect to quality education.

The launching of the edited volume is of considerable significance, a collection drawn from nearly twenty well-researched papers from countries with varied levels of education quality. It will contribute to the literature on higher education quality assurance in Asia and beyond, as well as to promote further scientific research in this area. It is often understood that education quality improvement is an endless journey. Our Prime Minister, Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN SEN, once said, "Development starts with human beings and ends with human beings .... Well-equipped human resources can lead our nation forward; however, our objectives of development could drag and fail if our people do not reach their full potential."

Quality education is a key to success, which requires the involvement of all - government, educational institutions, private sector, researchers, faculty and students. High quality human resources are vital for advancing the nation toward a knowledge-based economy. On the basis of this, the Royal Government of Cambodia has attached the importance and made great efforts to strengthen the quality of education, which is one of the most prioritised pillars of the National Strategic Development Plan. Quality education is an indispensible key to developing human capital and reducing poverty.

My compliments go to the APQN Board and President Dr. Jagannath Patil who has initiated the edited volume. My hearty congratulations also go to the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia team led by H.E. San Montaya for supporting this initiative for promoting research in the area of higher education quality.

Dr. SOK AN
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Office of the Council of Ministers
Chairman of Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC)
Chairman of the Organising Committee

From Editor's Desk

Context

The mission of Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) is 'to enhance the quality of higher education in Asia and the pacific regions through strengthening the work of quality assurance agencies and extending the co-operation between them'. In it's existence over a decade, APQN has taken several steps to fulfil this mission.

Annual conferences which are organised since the inception of APQN have been one of the most effective platforms available to the quality assurance stakeholders in the region.

Conferences held in Shanghai (China), Kuala lampur (Malaysia), Chiba (Japan), Hanoi (Vietnam), Bangkok (Thailand), Bangalore (India), etc. have proved to be very valuable events of sharing information about recent trends in quality assurance in higher education and exchange of good practices besides developing network of quality assurance professionals.

After getting an opportunity to serve as the President of APQN, I could launch several initiatives for the benefit of APQN membership such as APQN Exchange Programme, APQN Quality Awards, Quality Journal, Asia Pacific Quality Register and collaborations with various global QA bodies, etc.

Considering the value of papers being presented in every annual conference of APQN, I proposed that APQN can launch a series of publications based on proceedings of annual conferences. Ever supporting APQN Board endorsed the plan and we decided to publish the conference proceedings from the year 2012.

Various colleagues on APQN Board have volunteered to edit conference proceedings from 2012 to 2015 and these are in different stages of publication. In order to maintain quality and consistency, we had requested all the authors to revise the papers. Only those selected papers that are revised and submitted to APQN are included in this publication.

2012 APQN Conference held at **Siem Reap** in Cambodia's world heritage site was a very successful event thanks to the efforts made by Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) and APQN organising committee.

Editor wishes to place on record sincere thanks to Dr. Antony Stella, the then APQN President and H.E. San Montaya, CEO of ACC, Cambodia who played key roles in organisation of this conference and inviting many experts whose papers are included in this publication.

Our special thanks to **H.E. Dr. Sok An**, the Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia and Chairman of the organising committee who was kind enough to write the foreword for this important publication of APQN.

Highlights of papers:

The Conference theme "**External quality assurance in Asia-Pacific: what has changed over the decade?**" provided an opportunity to the authors to reflect on issues, achievements and challenges in the past decade and share ideas for further development in higher education quality assurance.

The papers were received from persons with different nationalities and with varied socio, economic and educational backgrounds. They represent countries from Canada to Cambodia and beyond, from Asia-Pacific to European regions and hence reflect varied higher education systems. From among several papers thus received the following 19 were selected for inclusion in the publication. A brief overview of papers is outlined below.

Chhang Rath has authored the paper - "**Implementation of a Quality Assurance System in a University:** The Case study of an University in Cambodia". The study aims to examine perceptions of the stakeholders of higher education with a view to obtain an insightful understanding of their perceptions on the effective implementation of the quality assurance system in the University. The study insists to implement a QA practice effectively to address various issues in the education system.

Chanrithy and Perry Daroesman have authored the paper - "**Quality Assurance System for Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) in Cambodia".** The paper outlines Cambodia's TVET Quality Management Manual and implementation of the quality assurance of TVET institutions. It aims to ensure to improvement of facilities, teaching and learning outcomes, by establishing, documenting, implementing and maintaining an effective and efficient Quality System to continually improve its effectiveness in producing well trained and equipped graduates from the training institutions.

Karthryn Chang Barker has authored the paper - "**eLearning Quality Standards for Consumer Protection and Consumer Confidence: The Canadian Approach to eLearning Quality Assurance".** The paper highlights the concerns about quality of eLearning products and services and to implement quality standards in learning technologies, open and distance learning and student-centric learning. The purpose is to provide consumer confidence in the eLearning enterprise and consumer protection for the investments made by individuals, agencies and entire governments. This approach, a Canadian case study in eLearning quality assurance, differs substantially from other eLearning quality initiatives, making a unique contribution to the eLearning quality assurance dialogue.

Ji Ping and Wang Wei have authored the paper- "**Development of Quality Assurance and Evaluation in Higher Education in the Past Decade-An Experience of China".** Increased demand on higher education and remarkable growth in number of institutions led to the establishment of QA bodies to regulate the quality related issued in HE. China has 2422 HEIs by the end of 2011 with 33,000,000 student enrolment in higher education institutions.

Development and increased number often pose challenges for the efficacy of institutional quality controls. Chinese government has all along showed great concern for and given support to the quality assurance and evaluation of higher education. It also introduced quality assurance framework which encompasses high national threshold standards for licensing and accreditation, building of top-notch HEIs and disciplines, national project of undergraduate teaching, quality improvement, periodic evaluation and quality monitoring mechanism and supervision and quality assurance of cross-border higher education. The paper tries to highlight the major developments in the HE sector in China over the past decade.

Angela Yung-chi Hou has authored the paper- "**Measuring International Quality Review and the Impact on AACSB Institutions and IEET Accredited Programs in Taiwan".** The author highlights the international accreditation of programmes of Taiwan universities and colleges. AACSB and IEET are the agencies involved in accreditation process of Taiwan programmes. The author says, International quality review programmes have a greater impact on Taiwan higher education and builds better relationship with other nations.

Lemalu L. Sanerivi has authored the paper- "**Qualifications Frameworks - A Pacific Preoccupation?**" The paper deals with the qualifications frameworks development and how it will contribute to the improvement of the quality of education and training in a nation's efforts to raise the skill levels of its human resources in the Pacific region. It also tries to emphasize that the growth and development of Pacific's learning curve and fine-tuning of their NQFs, agencies and systems will continue in a fairly steep path over the next decade in the region.

Yiu-Kwan Fan, Susanna Lee and Robert Fearnside, have jointly authored the paper - "**What are the quality indicators of TNE? A Reflection from Non-local Learning Programme Accreditation in Hong Kong.**" The paper explores the quality indicators observed to be important in NLP accreditation exercises in the Art and Design discipline run in 2010. This paper is part of a series of papers investigating the effect and impact of NLP accreditation since the pilot exercise of the NLP Team of the HKCAAVQ (i.e., the in-house accreditation team responsible for the NLP accreditation exercises).

WS Wong has authored the paper "**Good Practices in Quality Assurance**". Identification of good practices is now considered as one of the important measures adopted by many Quality assurance agencies. These practices are being identified and shared among the institutions for better quality improvement in the sector. It is the responsibility of both the QA bodies and the institutions to identify and promote good practices. Joint Quality Review Committee (JQRC), of Hong Kong which conducts institutional reviews indentifies such practices and also publishes the same in the handbook for promoting the practices with acknowledgement. The paper tries to emphasize on good practices in quality assurance in Hong Kong and tries to promote the spirit of professional exchange and sharing in post secondary education.

Ponmudiraj, B.S. has authored the paper- "**Building Quality Culture: Role of IQA & EQA in India".** The author tries to emphasize on the quality related issues such as EQA and IQA. EQA facilitates HEIs to establish IQA processes. EQA promotes the concept of IQA in order to assure quality. EQA promotes the concept of IQA in order to assure quality to its stakeholders. The concept propagated by NAAC in order to sustain quality culture and enhance quality among HEIs has grown by leaps and bounds. This conceptual paper clearly explains the role of EQA which has complemented the role of IQA in Universities and Colleges in India.

Susumu Shibui and Masaaki Ida have jointly authored the paper- "**An analysis of Certified Evaluation and Accreditation of universities by examining the evaluation reports".** In this paper the authors analyzed ("Good Practices" and "Needed Improvements") the relationship between self-assessment reports submitted by universities and evaluation reports reflecting the evaluators' judgment. Results showed that the number of "Good Practices" and "Needed Improvements" in the self-assessment reports was higher than those in the evaluation reports in general. The differences of the proportion of "Good Practices" to "Needed Improvements" between the self-assessment reports and evaluation reports were also revealed. Some standards showed different tendencies from the overall tendencies. The characteristics of the evaluation are discussed based on these data.

Bhola N. Pokharel and Kanhaiya B. Mathema have authored the paper - '**Capacity Building for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) in Nepal'.** The paper lists the issues of higher education development, QAA efforts and the capacity development in the country. The paper attempts to initiate a discussion in system development and to accruing feedback for the enhancement of the QAA system in Nepal at institutional and individual levels.

Heather Kirkwood has authored the paper- "**Quality in common: Reflections on findings from NZUAAU academic audits 2000 - 2011".** The New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (NZUAAU) conducted 23 academic audits of New Zealand's eight universities. Nearing the end of its fourth cycle of audit, the NZUAAU has been taking a closer look at some of the issues, successes and challenges characterising New Zealand universities during this period. The paper takes a sector-wide look at the findings of audits, exploring over 700 recommendations, commendations and affirmations made during what has been a period of change and challenge for many New Zealand universities. The paper suggests that an observed decline in the number of recommendations with each cycle of audit reflects a maturing of the university sector's approach to academic quality assurance. The paper concludes with a look ahead to a fifth cycle of academic audit in New Zealand.

Tim Fowler has authored the paper- "**Institutional ownership of quality through self-assessment".** The New Zealand Qualifications Authority's (NZQA) external evaluation and review (EER) of an individual tertiary education

institution results in two judgements of confidence. One is for educational performance and the other is for capability in 'self-assessment'. The paper discusses 'self-assessment' by educational institutions, which NZQA introduced in 2009 as a key component of its evaluative quality assurance framework for New Zealand's non-university tertiary education sector. NZQA regards institutional self-assessment as arguably the most powerful means for institutions to understand and improve their quality culture and educational performance. Through self-assessment, NZQA expects institutions to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and to show how this information is leading to actual and worthwhile improvements.

Sanaullah and Muneer have jointly authored the paper-"**Pakistan Qualification Framework: Pakistan Perspective".** One of the key elements of global market is the acceptance of the degrees awarded in varied education systems throughout the world which requires each country to develop a 'Qualification Framework' on international standards. The paper highlights the progress in terms of levels, learning outcomes and also a framework of equivalence of 'quality assured qualifications' with other countries' qualifications.

Katherine K. Esteves thruogh her paper- "**Quality Label and Quality Certification 2.0: Drawing on the Principles of Web 2.0 and Crowd sourcing in Developing and Implementing a Quality Label for e-learning in capacity building**" has tried to discuss the open and community driven framework. This framework underpins the quality label for e-learning in capacity building, called Open ECB Check (E-learning for Capacity Building Check). The paper introduces, (1) Open ECB Check process to the quality assurance community by summarizing and presenting the results of the studies made by InWent (the proponent) as written by Ulf Ehlers in his book Open ECB Check: Low Cost, Community Based Certification for E-learning in Capacity Building, and (2) Discusses how Web 2.0 and Crowd sourcing, two very important innovations brought about by technology have been used as frameworks by the certification.

Erika Soboleva has authored the paper- "**Building bridges: ESG, UNIQUe, WICHE, ACE and ISO".** The study aims to observe the European Standards Guidelines (ESG) for university internal quality assurance and the existing standards for measurement of the e-learning, namely with University Quality in E-learning (UNIQUe) program in terms of self-evaluation report and makes some recommendations for the future of these standards.

Tim Buttress through the paper- "**Challenges and Considerations for Recognition in the Asia Pacific Region: a European Perspective**" attempts to explain the challenges and considerations for Recognition in the Asia Pacific Region .UK NARIC would approach to ensure qualifications recognition, roles for providers, government ministries, competent authorities, quality assurance agencies and credential evaluation bodies in the Asia-Pacific

region. The paper also tries to mention collaboration activities between the QAA's of the region and to define good practice in these areas.

Patil. C.S, author of the paper- "**Challenges and issues of external quality assurance in higher education**" tries to describe the evaluation system of higher education institutions in India consisting of IQA (self assessment) and external assessment carried out by NAAC, NBA and AB-ICAR which assess the institutions and programmes offered by HEIs. It also addresses the challenges relevant to higher education in India.

You Virak, author of the paper "**The Case of Cambodia Higher Education System and Quality Improvement**" tries to address the current HE system of Cambodia challenges and concerns of the Quality Improvement Processes. The paper also explains the role of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) to achieve the effective Educational strategic plan (ESP) for achieving better standards.

In Conclusion

This volume of 19 papers provides a closer look at development of quality assurance in higher education and various aspects related to it. Papers from Cambodia, Nepal, Taiwan, China show how QA in these economies is now gradually maturing. It is interesting to note that good practices in QA are being identified and promoted for benefit of sector. Papers from Pakistan and South Pacific highlight how qualifications frameworks are also in the process of development in this region. Papers from Japan, Hong Kong and New Zealand throw light on recent advances in QA in more matured QA systems. Papers on Canadian approach to elearning Quality Assurance and challenges of recognition in Asia Pacific from European perspectives bring two other important aspects in this volume.

Overall, this publication is expected to provide bird's eye view on quality assurance trends in Asia Pacific in a decade of existence of Asia Pacific Quality Network. It is hoped that QA community in Asia Pacific and beyond would find this book as an useful resource of information and good practices.

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Implementation of a Quality Assurance System in a University: A Case study of an University in Cambodia

Dr. Chhang Rath*

Abstract

Quality assurance is still a relatively new concept in the Cambodian higher education context although quality assurance has been a legislative requirement in Cambodian universities since 2003. Despite some institutions having appointed dedicated quality assurance officers, there is little evidence of a quality assurance culture in Cambodian universities. In addition, the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) has conducted external assessments on the Foundation Year Program; however, a formal quality assurance framework at an institutional level does not yet exist, and a quality culture still does not exist in each academic staff's mindset.

For these above-mentioned reasons, this study aims to examine perceptions of the stakeholders of higher education with a view to obtaining an insightful understanding of their perspectives on the effective implementation of the quality assurance system in the University.

The findings of the study show that in order to implement a quality assurance system effectively in daily practice, the university should employ and address the following activities, and issues: elucidation of the system, defining clear roles and responsibilities - job descriptions, participation and less external intrusiveness, good governance - accountability and transparency, seeking funding from external funding agencies, autonomy, 'Carrot and Stick' policy, and leadership.

The study will inform higher education policies in Cambodia to ensure that universities conduct their operations effectively and can operate in a global higher education context.

Key words:

Quality assurance framework, quality culture and implementation

* Department of Accreditation of Graduate Programs, Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC), Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

1. Introduction: Context of the State University (SU)

After the establishment of the ACC, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport recommended that both public and private universities and colleges establish internal quality assurance units. The University has an office dedicated to quality assurance. Although the Quality Assurance Unit has conducted a number of quality assurance activities, a formal quality management framework does not yet exist. Data is non-existent as are information systems needed for decision making and planning, leading to ad hoc, rather than evidence-based, decisions.

According to the strategic plan, the University is ambitious, developing a sound and attractive plan with relative ease, but needing to acknowledge that the implementation of the plan may be another issue and problematic. As it stands, the University and the MoEYS are not able to supply sufficient resources to support the plan. The key question is whether the University has enough competent leaders with the political will to lead teachers and staff to achieve this plan and ensure that the leaders have sufficient ability and resources to involve all educational stakeholders in participating in the implementation of the plan. Some aspects of the goals are beyond the capacity of the University, as some decisions have to be made at the ministerial or national level. Many researchers suggested quality assurance in universities in developing countries should not be too much ambitious; some countries have introduced it, as it is fashionable, or there are some pressures from international or local donors or funding agencies (Lim 2001).

Human Resources

Like other public higher education institutions, the University's faculty members were lost and killed under the Khmer Rouge. Since then the University has begun its operations under the management of a handful of teachers, who were trained and mentored by international experts, especially experts from Vietnam. These faculty have passed their knowledge, institutional culture, management style, academic structures, and the like, to new generations of faculty members (Brook & Ly 2009).

At present, the University has 433 academic and support staff, and of the 433 faculty members, 15 academic staff (3.5%), hold a PhD degree, 132 (30.5%) hold a Master's degree, and 214 (49.4%) hold a Bachelor's degree, and the remaining 72 (16.6%) hold a high school certificate or diploma, and represent administrative and maintenance staff. Most of the faculty members graduated from Vietnam, the former Soviet Union, other Eastern-bloc nations and local universities. A small number of the faculty graduated from different countries such as the United States, Australia, Japan, and Asian countries, but the university cannot retain them because of low salaries. According to the statistics of staff qualifications, many would argue that the University is not comparable to the

Minimum Standards set by the ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance (AUN-QA).

The faculty receive their salary from the government, which is very low compared to the rate of inflation in the country. Some of the faculty can also generate other income from teaching fee-paying student classes at the University, because the University is permitted to offer fee-paying programs in parallel with scholarship programs. Some of the faculty may be employed to teach at other institutions on a part-time basis, or work for private companies and NGOs. It is hard for the University to retain experienced and qualified teaching staff, especially those who graduated from overseas, as they tend to be offered a higher rate of pay than that is available from the University.

Research and Teaching

Despite teaching, research, and community service being the core 'businesses' of the University, the research and community service activities are less likely to be undertaken for a numbers of reasons. First, teachers are poorly paid, so many teachers 'moonlight', or teach more hours, either within the institution, or outside the institution, leading to a lack of time to do research. The University and the MoEYS have no package of research funding. Second, research skills and the experience of the faculty members are limited, as there is a lack of training and research support, and time to develop their ability in research. Third, if any faculty member wants to conduct research, they have to bid for research grants from external funding agencies or donors, which is highly scrutinised and involves a bureaucratic process, causing a lack of motivation and enthusiasm. Last but not least, there is inadequate office space for teachers, so they only come to the University when teaching. These reasons have resulted in a significant lack of research by the faculty. Notwithstanding these barriers, some faculties have expressed enthusiasm for undertaking research according to the study by Brook and Ly.

2. Data collection and analysis

One-on-one interviews were conducted with key policy planners and decision makers at their office in MoEYS, ACC, and in the university. It was decided that focus group interviews were not viable with them because they were not available for the group interviews. If they were asked to participate in focus group interviews with the faculty members, the faculty members might not be able to express their views frankly.

Focus group interviews were conducted with the faculty members and staff of the university. Data collection would include participants' (current key policy planners and decision makers, academics, and staff) perceptions, opinions, and experience in quality assurance management.

Data was analysed by coding the data of the interviews into categories. Coding is the process of putting tags, names or labels against pieces of data. There are two main kinds of codes: descriptive codes (low-inference descriptive codes), and inferential (or pattern) codes (higher-inference pattern codes) (Punch 2005).

Data presentation

This section presents the results of the interviews with policy-makers at the systemic level and faculty members of the university. To implement the quality management system effectively in daily practice, the university should employ the following activities.

3.1 Elucidation of the system

Prior to the implementation of any quality management system, there was a need for the leaders of the university, in collaboration with the Internal Quality Assurance Unit, to explain the benefits of the system to all staff. In addition, the leaders must provide them with training about how to utilise it, especially department heads, because they would take the lead in conducting self-assessment or other quality activities.

There was a need for an explicit explanation of how the results of self-assessment would be used, and who could have access to the data gathered from the assessment, as it was a politically sensitive issue.

To encourage participation in the QA process, there must be a mutual cooperation between the management and IQA Unit to explain [to] the people, especially department heads, how to organise it … (interview 2009).

In addition, an information dissemination system must be established to ensure that the information concerning the quality management process was widely disseminated and publicly available to all staff. There were several methods of information dissemination such as seminars, workshops or staff meetings. However, this system did not exist at the State University, leading to poor communication and information sharing within the institution.

3.2 Clear roles and responsibilities – job descriptions

Not only an academic institution, but also other organisations needed to clarify roles and responsibilities for its leaders and staff to make the management process more effective and efficient. The participants suggested that when staff and leaders carried out the set roles and responsibilities as a norm, their routine participation and involvement would increase. As the participants observed:

When they carry out their duties and understand their responsibilities, their participation will maximise (interview 2009).

We should make it a norm or routine. We can't get them involved actively in the process of quality management, but at least they have to abide by their roles and responsibilities (interview 2009).

However, roles and responsibilities of the leaders were more likely to align with political activities, while academics and staff just did their routine jobs without there being a clear and unambiguous structure, leading to role and responsibility confusion and duplication.

3.3 Good governance – accountability and transparency

Good governance was very important to the implementation process of quality, as it was suggested that good governance could help the process move forward. The participants argued that the university had poor governance which made people lack motivation to actively participate in the quality management process of the university. As a participant argued:

Governance is very important that's why we talk about it. Within governance there is accountability, transparency, and participation and the three components are the foundation of good governance. If we deal with it properly, the process of quality management will move forward. These days in Cambodia, governance is poor and they just pay lip service to it. Even transparency does not exist, and accountability is a hard thing to do. As you can see expenditure of budget is not efficient; we are poor but we don't spend the money wisely and effectively (interview 2009).

Transparency in financial management was a sensitive issue under the current circumstances. Information about financial management was considered confidential. Budgetary plans of the university were not discussed openly, so scepticism about this has existed among teachers and staff. This culture did not only exist in the higher education sector, but also in all sectors.

3.4 Participation and less external intrusiveness

Staff participation and involvement was critical to the success of the implementation of quality assurance at the university. There was a need for management to formulate the policy and mechanism to encourage staff participation. In the Cambodian culture, people always looked to a leader as an example; if the leader was passive then so were they.

I believe that participation is a driving force of the success in any institution because all staff members are the stakeholders. A bottom-up approach is more workable than a top-down approach for the encouragement of participation in our department. Staff motivation policy plays a powerful role in encouraging their participation, so the policy and mechanism to drive participation must be in place (interview 2009).

To encourage participation by staff, their voices should be heard in the quality management process rather than the imposition of power from the top leaders. In higher education, academics preferred to use the collegial method to encourage internal participation rather than external intrusiveness from external bodies.

If people are not allowed to have their voices heard, it is a failure because the top management cannot always impose their power on their subordinates. It is necessary to involve them in developing a mission or vision of the university. If their ideas and the leaders' ideas are consistent, they are happy to work hard to achieve what we want because the success of the university is also their success… (Interview 2009).

The internal participation is critical because we are the ones who do the job and we know what we can do and what we can't do … pressure from the external quality assurance agencies is a minor thing and the more important thing is the internal participation and if we do not do it every day we will never ever develop our university … (interview 2009).

Although the internal participation played an important role in contributing to the success of the quality implementation in higher education institutions, the external quality assurance agencies also played a significant role in contributing to quality improvement of universities.

Similarly, one participant argued that involvement from external quality assurance agencies was not an imposition on the internal affairs of a university, as there was need for discussion and collaboration between an institution and the external quality authorities (interview 2009).

2

3.5 Seeking funding from external funding agencies

At present, the university is not able to stand on its own feet due to scarce resources. Therefore, there was a need for the university to seek extra funding support from external funding agencies to kick start the implementation of any quality management system; if there was no first step, there would be no second step.

We need resources to support our strategic plan, as a failure to achieve at the first time; might lead to a failure in the future. In fact, the university has no budgetary package for supporting the strategic plan so we need to seek funding from external funding agencies. If we are able to get financial support from outside bodies, our strategic plan can be achieved; if not, it will be hard to accomplish it (interview 2009).

The IQA Unit will be sustainable if we have financial support from external funding agencies, but if we completely depend on the government, sustainability cannot be guaranteed and working performance will decline. However, the question was how the university maintained the implementation of the quality assurance system in a sustainable fashion. According to the experience of some departments, when they received financial support from external funding agencies to develop and run their programs, the implementation process was good, but when the funding project was over, the quality and research activities

gradually declined, as the departments were not able to generate incomes to sustain their quality (interview 2009).

A self-assessment report was important to attract financial support from funding agencies; they made decision on funding allocation based on the results of self-assessment. To gather information for a self-assessment report, a quality tracking system and quality measurement needed to be established.

Marjorie Peace Lenn's study shows that self-assessment reports provide benefits to society, government, industries, students and funding agencies. So they will look at the self-assessment of the school before providing financial support to the school (interview 2009).

3.6 Autonomy

Autonomy allows the university to manage its resources in a flexible manner, as it had authority to make decisions in terms of financial and staff management in a less bureaucratic way, and political interference could be minimised, while professional freedom could be maximised. However, at present, the university is under the central government control, with decisions made in a bureaucratic fashion. Professional autonomy and academic freedom were limited. As a participant put it:

The university should be given autonomy in relation to financial management or internal management. When the university becomes autonomous, it has authority to make decisions. Now, before we do something, we have to wait for the decision which is made in a top-down approach from the central authority, leading to bureaucracy. Recently, I have heard that some funding agencies such as ADB, and the World Bank want to help universities, but the decision-making process is bureaucratic, so donors decided to withdraw their support (interview 2009).

In this respect, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) encouraged all public universities to transform themselves into autonomous institutions; however, the MoEYS itself was not sure of what constituted autonomy, allowing some institutions to run their programs in the same mode as being used in businesses and enterprises. As one participant explained:

The oEYS think that autonomy is a public administration institution (PAI), which is applied to enterprises and businesses. When we apply it in higher education, it is not working; that's why some universities run their institutions as business centres. I always raise this issue several times; please do not get confused between autonomy and PAI. If we do like this, it is like we train university leaders to be businessmen. When they talk about autonomy, they always think that an institution must bear its own responsibility for any loss or profit (interview 2009).

The participants saw that private universities tended to have flexibility in terms of financial and internal management, as they had more autonomy than the public universities (interview 2009).

The reason why autonomy is given to universities is because the government can't cope with a dramatic change of technology so the university must be flexible … the government does this because they want universities to be flexible so that they can keep up with an increasingly advancement of technology… (Interview 2009).

For these reasons, public universities that were able to generate more incomes through charging student fees, transfer their status to a public administration institution (PAI) and run their programs in the same way as business enterprises. Whereas institutions that offered courses less popular in the job market were reluctant to change their status to PAI, they were concerned that they were not able to support their operations by themselves. To deal with this issue, there was a need for the government to establish a 'carrot and stick' policy.

3.7 'Carrot and Stick' policy

There was a need for the establishment of a 'carrot and stick' policy, meaning that the government should develop a financial support scheme given to universities based on good performance. This measure allows for more competition among higher education institutions.

When public universities become PAI, the government should set up a supporting scheme like India. When a university passes an institutional accreditation, the government will pay the university. So when individuals see the money, they will compete for that (interview 2009).

There must be a policy on sanction; a positive sanction is used for those who perform well, while a negative sanction is used for poor performance. If we do this, there will be a dramatic progression (interview 2009).

3.8 Leadership

With respect to the question of who should take the lead in the development of the quality management framework and its implementation, five major categories emerged from the interview data, labelled as follows: top management; middle management; Quality Assurance committee/QA coordinator; all levels of staff; and external QA agencies.

The majority of the participants said that the top management should take the lead in the development of the quality management system and its implementation because politics played a significant role in the higher education sector in Cambodia. Therefore, a top-down approach to decision-making is embedded in the Cambodian culture. As participants observed:

More importantly, the question is whether the top management want it or not, and if they don't want it, we will not be able to do it no matter how hard we try … I think it will work when the initiative comes from the top management due to political interference (interview 2009).

Another participant expressed in a similar vein that the top management of an institution must take the responsibility for this as decisions were made based on the political situation rather than on any research. The university was a public institution so there was inevitably an influence and intervention from the central government agency.

A leadership role model was important in the Cambodian culture because it had an enormous impact on followers' behaviours and perceptions. In this respect, the leaders must perform their model roles in an active and decisive manner as an example for their subordinates.

However, most participants strongly argued that although the top management was the key player in this process, participation and involvement of all levels of staff were also key factors contributing to the success of the implementation. Of course, the initiative and guidance must be started from the top management, but without participation and involvement from all stakeholders, the whole system would fail. As some participants argued:

There must be an involvement from the bottom to the top, including the IQA Unit, [the] ACC and experts from each department. There must be a negotiation between them and one person should not determine a yardstick; all staff must be involved in making decisions to ensure that the yardstick is workable for their departments or not. There should not be one yardstick used for all (one size fits all) (interview 2009).

The initiative must be started from the top management with participations from all staff, allowing for consistency between the top management and staff. If the QA tools are established by the management only without engaging all staff, it won't be successful… (Interview 2009).

Although a top-down approach to quality assurance played a powerful role in keeping the ball rolling, staff empowerment also played a critical role in making the system move forward. The tension between top-down procedures and staff empowerment must be balanced, allowing for a compromise acceptable to both parties.

I think there are many stakeholders but if there is no guidance from the top management, it will be hard for the low-level management to take initiatives … the top management must take the initiative, but must open an opportunity to professional people to do their respective plan and make decisions. Without teacher empowerment, they won't be able to do anything (interview 2009).

Some participants believed that in the first place, each department must take responsibility for the development of a quality management framework for their own department, as they had an explicit idea of what they wanted to do and how to achieve it. When each individual department's framework was in place, there was a need for incorporation of the collected frameworks into an institutional framework which could be used in the university as a whole.

A few participants suggested that the IQA Unit or quality assurance committee must perform a coordinating role in liaising with all departments and sections of the university to develop a quality management system with endorsement and close scrutiny from the leaders. In addition, participation from teachers as well as other stakeholders in the university was significant in this process.

The IQA Unit must serve as a linkage between sections within the university… (Bona). The IQA Unit should play a core role in establishing quality instruments with endorsement from the leadership and involvement from teachers and librarians … The IQA Unit should play a coordinating role in the process of the development of quality management (interview 2009).

Although the MoEYS had issued a letter recommending all higher education instructions establish their IQA Units, the IQA Units were not officially registered in the ministry's registration list. Within a public university, the IQA Unit should be officially recognised by the MoEYS as an office of the university so that it had power or authority to do the work in an effective fashion.

A handful of the participants argued that there was inevitably an involvement from external quality assurance agencies, as there was a legislative requirement that the external quality assurance agencies play a coordinating role in providing technical assistance to an institution in regard to the establishment of an internal quality management system. The external agencies had a legitimate role to provide advice to the institution, as needed. As politics played an influential role in the higher education sector, so higher education institutions tended to wait for the green light from the central agencies before they decided to do anything related to educational reform.

There was a need for consistency between the internal QA system and the ACC standards, and accreditation was compulsory in Cambodia. Therefore, universities were compelled to involve the ACC and other agencies concerned in the development of their internal quality management frameworks.

IQA Units of the university claim they do this and do that, but they don't know whether they are right or wrong, so they need people from outside to check their claims … sometimes they might not know something missing and they need further instruction (interview 2009).

3. Conclusion

Establishing quality culture within the university requires policy makers at both an institutional and systemic level to address a number of major issues.

First, good governance is the basis of transparency and accountability. A lack of transparency in financial management demotivates faculty members to participate in the quality assurance process because it can lead to scepticism about the management. Second, institutional autonomy allows the university to have flexibility in managing its staff and resources in an effective manner. Third, a carrot and stick's policy means that the government should establish an incentive structure for a university that demonstrates good performance in quality assurance. It is an imperative driving force to encourage higher education institutions to actively participate in the quality assurance agenda. Last but not least, institutional leaders' initiatives acted as a very important catalyst for establishing quality assurance culture within universities. A leadership role model was important in the Cambodian culture because it had an enormous impact on followers' behaviours and perceptions. In addition, external quality assurance agencies also play an important role in establishing quality culture in universities, but should be non-punitive.

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Quality Assurance System for Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) in Cambodia

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Abstract

This paper is a summary of the first version of Cambodian's TVET Quality Management Manual for the implementation of the quality assurance of TVET. This Quality Management guideline will be used for the training centers to institutionalize a Quality Management System (QMS) in each institution to ensure quality education and training, effective client relations, sound financial planning and control, responsive systems operations and reliable records and documents management.

The main objective of the Quality Management System is to improve facilities, teaching and learning outcomes, by establishing, documenting, implementing and maintaining an effective and efficient Quality System to continually improve its effectiveness in producing excellent graduates from the training institutions.

Keywords:

Quality Management System, technical and vocational education

I. Introduction

Funded through an ADB grant, the Government of Cambodia is executing a major Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training (STVET) Project designed to improve the country's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector by improving the quality and relevance of skills development programs and increasing the accessibility, efficiency and effectiveness of training delivery systems. A reform in the TVET sector is required to address the issues of skills mismatch, youth unemployment, professional preparation of teachers of TVET, promoting equal access of women to technical education and inadequate participation of the private sector in TVET **(STVET Project., June, 2010).**

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One of the major concerns is the linking of the physical traits and facilities of TVET institutions with the teaching and learning domain. Both need qualitative improvements - the private sector is fully aware that attractive and well presented training facilities is a success factor in recruiting students as much as the quality of teaching. For public sector TVET, the issue is then about how to identify and combine all the elements of a successful and effective system, given resource and human capacity limitations. The STVET project is of the opinion that the key is a comprehensive but simple and flexible Quality Assurance framework that allows the identification of institutional, system and capacity weaknesses, but at the same time empowers institution executives to selectively and progressively improve facilities and teaching.

The principal concern is with post-basic education vocational support; that is, the equivalent of years 9 to 11 of the education system, provided through non-formal vocational short courses and a few long courses (Certificate 1-3). In future it is expected the system will be expanded for post secondary vocational training including private training providers.

The Cambodian TVET system is managed under the Directorate General Technical and Vocational Education and Training (DGTVET) of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. National Competency Centres (PPI, CIEDC, NTTI, NIB, IPI) are responsible for establishment of teaching and learning standards under the Cambodian Qualifications Framework, approved by a National Training Board, constituted as a Steering Committee for national technical and vocational training, and reflected at the Provincial Level as Provincial Training Boards. 5 Regional Training Centres have been identified and work together with the remaining 19 Provincial Training Centres.

Following consideration of various regional and international QA systems framework relevant to TVET Institutions, and with due regard to the Asia Pacific Accreditation and Certification Commission (APACC), it was the opinion of the project that many of these standards were way above the real position of TVET institutions in Cambodia. As a result, the Project decided to develop a matrix approach, remaining as consistent as possible to the APACC. The project therefore identified 6 key QA criteria: Management and governance; Physical Resources; Staff & Teacher; Students; Curriculum, Teaching and Learning; and Research and Development **(STVET Project., August, 2012).** Each of these categories is made up from a number of elements as discussed below. Additionally the system established 8 quality standards covering the 6 categories.

II. Self assessment for Quality Management

Self-Assessment is at the core of any Quality management Initiative. Institutions undertake a comprehensive assessment of all aspects of their mission, programs,

facilities and services. The training institutions self-assessment process work toward achieving the following key purposes:

- ❖ To determine compliance with established Quality Management and Quality Assurance criteria
- ❖ To prepare a Baseline Quality Profile of the Institutions/Programs
- ❖ To review alignment with stated training/performance goals and objectives
- ❖ To identify areas of strengths and weaknesses (as per the six Quality Management categories)
- ❖ To identify and schedule for improvement those areas most likely to cause the institution to fail a formal quality audit process (accreditation)

The key to the system is self realization. Self-assessment emphasizes the realization of shortcomings, weaknesses and strengths. The process assists in determining what the institution believes it can control and provides a guide on what it can or should do, thereby increasing ownership. The alternative, an external body conducting the assessment, invariably leads to some frustration and helplessness - a lack of control and ownership. The assessment tools are audited by a Quality Assurance Committee as a means of ensuring consistency across institutions. Importantly, the DGTVET QA Division collation of the assessments allows feedback to the Provincial Training Centres (PTCs) where individual institutions can contrast their results with other similar institutions.

1. Quality Management Categories

Quality Management concerns are increasingly at the core of any education and training program in the TVET sector . A robust and coherent quality management mechanisms and procedures at the training centers level seem to be one of the answers to improving development of TVET programs in Cambodia. This approach will bring a common framework - a quality framework - in which various national experiments could be developed and still be mutually recognized as they would be 'Quality Assured' with the following categories:

Institutions or programs are evaluated on the six quality management criteria in a three-phase process that consists of:

- Self-Assessment and program improvement plan development
- Improvement plan implementation
- Validation review and certification

i. Category 1: Management and Governance

Quality Criteria: TVET institution that offers vocational training should have realistic strategic plan, based on the types and resources of each TVET institute. To evaluate the mission and goal of TVET institute shall focus on level of assurances to achieve the mission and goals. Management, Administrative and financial systems should be transparent, documented, auditable and ethical.

ii. Category 2: Physical Resources

Quality Criteria: Facilities, equipment, instructional materials and supplies comply with health and safety standards (wherever applicable), reflect current technologies and applications, and are of sufficient quantity and quality to meet the instructional objectives and needs of the training program.

iii.Category 3: Staff and Teacher

Quality Criteria: All teachers are competent and qualified with appropriate occupational proficiency. Instructors, administrators, guidance/counseling staff, and instructional support staff are involved in an ongoing program for professional development designed to enhance the quality of instruction. Moreover, program quality also depends on interaction between non teaching staff and teaching staff. This would include library, laboratories, computer facilities, and student services staff.

iv. Category 4: Students

Quality Criteria: Students are the clients of institutions and services should cater for their needs. This includes transparent selection process, transition and examinations, student support facilities, career and academic counseling, appeals processes, credit system including RPL - Recognition of Prior Learning, and Student performance report (ASEAN University Network., March, 2011).

v . Category 5: Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

Quality Criteria: The learning process requires of good teaching and learning strategy. The curriculum has been also organized and sequenced around career paths with clear competencies and performance standards leading students to entry-level employment, job advancement, entrepreneurship, education and training and personal use. Instruction is performance-based and integrates knowledge and skills, which reflect current technologies and practices in business, industry and home environment.

The content of the training program has been assessed against and where necessary modified to satisfy the curriculum performance standards (wherever applicable) or other performance standards. The curriculum is in written form and includes:

- Course description(s), goals, objectives, and outlines.
- Course/program duration.
- Description of major instructional methodologies/strategies.
- Identification of instructional materials, texts, supplemental materials, equipment and facilities.
- Performance standards for program completers.
- Student evaluation procedures

vi. Category 6: Research and Development

Quality Criteria: Individuals who represent the community, business, industry, students, and parents serve on an advisory Committee to provide guidance. Staff of the training institution uses the advice and guidance of the advisory committee in the design, development, operation, evaluation, and support of any quality assurance initiatives in the institution.

The quality of the graduates should achieve the expected learning outcome and the needs of the stakeholders or Industry Advisory Group

(IAG). Research activities carried out by academic staff and students should meet the requirement of the stakeholders. This category also covers the institution's community extension or outreach programs

III. Eight Major Quality Management Standards for the Training Institutions

Management System installed in the training centers will develop institution-level quality indicators to gauge 'Quality' in the following eight areas (Shresta, January, 2011):

1. QUALITY MANAGEMENT STANDARD 1

Purpose: The training program must have clearly stated program goals, related to the needs of the students, employer, and responsive to national and provincial goals. Items to be evaluated include employment potential and program description/goals.

2. QUALITY MANAGEMENT STANDARD 2

Administration: Program administration must insure that instructional activities support and promote the goals of the training program. Items to be evaluated include student competency certification, administrative support, written policies, quality assurance advisory committee, public/community relations, and work place experience.

3. QUALITY MANAGEMENT STANDARD 3

Learning Resources: Training material consistent with both program goals and performance objectives must be available to staff and students. Elements to be evaluated include student daily assessment diary, instructional development services, books and instructional materials.

4. QUALITY MANAGEMENT STANDARD 4

Finances: Funding must be provided to meet the program and performance objectives. Items to be evaluated include program enrollment, budget, budget preparation, and status reports.

5. QUALITY MANAGEMENT STANDARD 5

Student Services: Systematic admission, counseling services and placement and follow-up procedures must be used. Elements include admission procedures, student records, placement, follow-up, and other counseling requirements.

6. QUALITY MANAGEMENT STANDARD 6

Instruction and Instructional Materials: Instruction and instructional materials must be systematic and reflect program goals and performance objectives. A task list and specific performance objectives with criterion-referenced measures must be used. Competency profiles (wherever applicable) must be kept for all trainees for referral and follow-up. Instruction elements to be evaluated include program plan, student training plan, teaching load, curriculum, student progress, performance standards, safety standards, testing and evaluation.

7. QUALITY MANAGEMENT STANDARD 7

Facilities and Equipment: Physical facilities, equipment and tools used in the training program must be of the quality and type needed to training to meet the program goals and performance objectives. Facilities and equipment shall effectively accommodate the number of students, instructors, support staff and program objectives. Elements (related to equipment) to be evaluated include safety, type and quality, consumable supplies, maintenance, replacement, inventory, part purchasing, and hand tools. Aspects (related to facilities) to be evaluated include training stations, safety, maintenance, housekeeping, office space, instructional area, storage, support facilities, ventilation and lighting, first aid and facility evaluation.

8. QUALITY MANAGEMENT STANDARD 8

Instructional Staff: The instructional staff must have technical competency and meet all requirement for certification and credentialing. Evaluation includes technical competency, instructional competency/certification, and technical updating.

a). The Assessment Matrix

The Assessment matrix lists the 6 categories and the elements within each category. A score of 0-4 is attributable to each element. Some elements have a number of sub-elements (shown blacked out) which act to define the criteria as in the sample below. New sub-elements can be added at any time according to need, which changes the raw score, but without impacting on the overall percentage and weighted score.

Overall Rating Scale				Satisfactory			
Description Criteria		Target Score	Raw Score	% Criteria Score	% Weighting	% Total Score	Comment
4	STUDENTS	56	9	16%	15%	2.4%	
4.1.1.	Student Management System	12	9				
i.	Documented policy and Procedures covering	4	3				
	a) Covering all courses						
	b) Course Registrations						
	c) Variations						
	d) Withdrawal						
	e) Suspension						
ii.	Codes of Conduct	4	3				
iii.	Use of Institution Facilities	4	3				

In this way, the assessment instrument is a way forward to an accreditation system, which in time, may be equated to national, regional or international accreditation standards.

b). Level of Performance

The assessment of the quality of a TVET program is adopted the four level of performance of "excellent", " good", " acceptable", and "unsatisfactory" for rating institutions work.

Level of Institutional Performance	Assessment Criteria
Area for Improvement (<= 40%)	Many major weakness in the area in question with undesirable outcomes, pre-set goals fail to be attained and immediate improvement must be made
Acceptable (41% - 65%)	Institution work in the area in question is marked by some strengths and weaknesses. The institution is advancing towards pre-set goals with some initial observable outcomes.

Level of Institutional Performance	Assessment Criteria
Good (66% - 80%)	Strengths outweigh weaknesses in the area of institution work in question; the institution is advancing steadily towards pre-set goals with pleasing outcomes
Excellent (> 80%)	Institution work in the area in question is often characterized by major strengths, attainment of expected outcomes and outstanding performance. An exemplary case worthy of dissemination.

V. Conclusion

QA of TVET programs are increasingly recognized as indispensable management functions. For many years, QA of TVET programs in the developing countries have been given little attention. Some of the main constraints and problems (but not limited to) that hampered QA in these country's TVET programs/projects include: weak interest and commitment to the evaluation function by TVET organizations, weak culture of carrying out, sharing, discussing and using the results of monitoring and evaluation activities among TVET institutions, a relative shortage of professional monitoring and evaluation officials (in comparison with researchers, trainers, etc.), insufficient technical resources, limited monetary allocation to QA activities and limited training opportunities in monitoring and evaluation.

QA provides a rational basis for planning and implementing quality management for TVET programs. It also provides a feedback system that would guide the policy makers, planners and managers in measuring the performance and potential problems of Quality Assured TVET programs. In particular, the DGTVET under the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training in Cambodia is currently conducting technical and vocational training with the help of employers, institutions and other relevant stakeholders to an agreed national competency standards. It is therefore important to establish an efficient mechanism to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of these training programs conducted by the different training providers.

Finally, QA is the key to an effective measurement of the entire system and an indispensable tool of ensuring quality improvement. With the appropriate indicators, targets, tools and processes, QA establishes performance standards

that would be used to track past performances and forecast future outcomes. It gives one an early warning system that tells where intervention or corrective action is needed. Additionally, it helps clarify people's responsibilities, forms a sound, logical basis upon which to allocate resources, and ensures a quality assured, goal-oriented focus.

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Learning Quality Standards for Consumer Protection and Consumer Confidence: The Canadian Approach to eLearning Quality Assurance

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Abstract

Emerging concerns about quality of eLearning products and services animated a project in Canada to create quality standards that derived primarily from the needs of consumer, that could be used to guide the development and choice of eLearning at all levels of education and training, and that could be implemented in a simple manner. A set of quality standards were created to reflect best practices in learning technologies, open and distance learning, and student-centred learning. The standards, first labelled the Canadian Recommended ELearning Guidelines, are now available in the Creative Commons as the Open eQuality Learning Standards. To implement the standards, two tools were created: a Consumer's Guide to eLearning and a certification mark - the eQcheck quality mark - to indicate that eLearning courses, modules, and programs, and elements of them, meet those quality standards. The purpose is to provide consumer confidence in the eLearning enterprise and consumer protection for the investments made by individuals, agencies, and entire governments. This approach, a Canadian case study in eLearning quality assurance, differs substantially from other eLearning quality initiatives, making a unique contribution to the eLearning quality assurance dialogue.

Keywords

Quality standard, Consumer-based quality assurance, Quality mark, ELearning quality, Quality certification

Introduction

This article describes an approach to eLearning quality assurance that originated in Canada. As the eLearning enterprise began to develop in Canada, it was recognized that quality would be an issue for both providers and consumers of eLearning products and services. This article, then, sets out the rationale for this project, the process that was followed in creating the Canadian Recommended

The global eLearning enterprise

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eLearning Guidelines, the underlying concepts and principles, the actual standards, and the approach taken to implementing them - a Canadian case study in eLearning quality assurance aimed at the global eLearning enterprise.

eLearning is one of the primary products/services in the global knowledge economy. Worldwide, businesses and public-sector agencies are producing and marketing eLearning products/services in a very competitive marketplace; and on a global basis, individuals, corporations, and governments are using eLearning products at an increasing rate. When this project began in 1998, estimates by Industry Canada indicated that there were more than 5,000 companies worldwide engaged in online learning. Brandon-Hall determined that the e-training industry in the US would grow to US$83.1 billion by 2006. In Canada in 2002, students could access 66,107 courses from 36 countries or 1,952 institutions.

For all these courses and institutions, there was no quality assurance mechanism to protect consumers and students (Barker, 2003; Parker, 2004). Although many prestigious education institutions and businesses began to provide eLearning, there was and is no discernable or defensible connection between the institution's reputation and the quality of the eLearning. The development and marketing of eLearning has become an enterprise that is continuously changing and which is totally unregulated.

For purposes of this quality assurance initiative, the term eLearning is used to mean learning using both a computer and the Internet. eLearning products or services take various forms. They may be single courses and/or entire programs; entire courses and/or course units, lessons, or components; or elements of an eLearning package, for example, a learning management system. The eLearning may be offered for credit at an education institution and/or for general interest without credit, aimed at individuals or entire groups in classes, aimed at specific age groups and/or any age group, and offered by public and/or commercial education and training agencies.

Consumers of eLearning may be individual students, schools boards, education and training departments of governments, and corporations. Providers may be publicly-funded schools, universities, and colleges, or they may be private enterprises producing portions of eLearning from content, design, and production, the delivery and management of learning, and/or the management of students. From the purchaser's perspective, the eLearning service may be very expensive or free of charge; really effective or of questionable quality. Both providers and consumers of eLearning want education and training products and services that are effective and efficient (Barker, 1999). The term quality is used to encompass these concepts; however, the defining and measuring quality in eLearning presents an ongoing dilemma (Abrioux, 2004; Parker, 2004).

With these basic premises, eLearning experts in Canada and from the Commonwealth of Learning began the process of creating a quality assurance mechanism for eLearning, a project that culminated with a full set of standards of

excellence in eLearning endorsed by the eLearning community in Canada. The standards, originally labelled the Canadian Recommended ELearning Guidelines (CanREGs), have subsequently been launched in the global eLearning community as the Open eQuality Learning Standards, with the addition of ePortfolio Quality Standards (Barker, 2004). These market-oriented quality standards are important for two significant reasons. First, they help purchasers, through criteria and standards, to make appropriate eLearning choices in order to maximize return on their investment. There are vast numbers and types of eLearning opportunities available to students, options that are highly variable and totally unregulated in terms of price, utility, and quality. Second, they help those who develop and offer eLearning. Colleges, universities, and private enterprise need quality standards and certification in order to meet consumer expectations and to sustain the eLearning enterprise worldwide. Formal eLearning standards, including technical and interoperability standards, assist developers in the same way; they do not provide the same customer protection regarding learning outcomes and utility.

Development of the eLearning quality standards

The CanREGs / Open eQuality Learning Standards (OeQLs) are based on best practices and research in distributed learning and learning technologies, developed through an international consultation process, and sponsored and endorsed by a number of national and international organizations. Project participants stipulated that the eLearning quality standards meet these criteria, that is, that they be:

- consumer oriented - developed with particular attention to return on investment in eLearning for learners;
- consensus based - developed through consultation with a balance of provider and consumer groups;
- comprehensive - inclusive of all elements of the learning system: outcomes and outputs, processes and practices, inputs and resources;
- recommended only - using suasion and market forces rather than legislation to ratchet up the quality of eLearning;
- futuristic - describing a preferred future rather than the present circumstances for design and delivery; and
- Adaptable - best used for adult and post-secondary education and training, but adaptable to other levels of learning services. These are criteria that contribute to the unique nature of the OeQLs and the resulting quality assurance approach.

This work was an extension of the FuturEd research on Learn ware quality (Barker, 1997, 1998), school effectiveness (ibid. 1998), uses of Information and communication Technologies (ICT) in international education at Canada's post-secondary institutions (ibid. 2001, 2003), return on investment in eLearning (Barker, 2005). The FuturEd approach to eLearning quality - the same process of environmental scanning, drafting of inclusive and comprehensive quality standards, consensus-based approval, and endorsement with subsequent

consumer's guide and quality assurance tools for informed choice - has been used in the context of national training standards (Barker, 1994), prior learning assessment standards (Barker, 1998, 2001), ePortfolio quality standards (Barker, 2004) and, most recently, learning objects (Barker, 2006).

Under FuturEd leadership, beginning in 1998 with funding from the Canadian federal government, eLearning experts in Canada began work on quality standards. To develop the consumer-based CanREGs, FuturEd undertook five steps. The first was to assemble an expert panel representing a balance of consumers and providers from seven national and international organizations, including Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), SchoolNet (Industry Canada), and the Commonwealth of Learning. The second was an extensive literature search for both complete sets of guidelines and individual quality indicators for distance learning, education in general, and the use of learning technologies, resulting a background paper and draft standards for consultation purposes. The third step was a national consultation process, including workshops and an online workbook. The fourth step was refinement of the standards into the form of the Canadian Recommended Elearning Guidelines (CanREGs), based on consultation input, with experts from the field. The final step was the creation of a consumer's guide to eLearning based on the CanREGs - providing potential purchasers with the questions to ask in order to identify quality eLearning and make informed choices.

Comparing four different methods of eLearning quality assurance, Parker (2004) notes:

In Canada, the responsibility for education rests at the provincial, not the national, level. Each province has its own quality assurance framework or approach to determining whether postsecondary programs are eligible for student funding or to receive public money. The degree to which a province might regulate or even provide subsidies to private or for-profit educational institutions varies widely. It is fitting, then, that the Canadian example of quality guidelines originates with a private corporation sponsored by community and government-funded agencies.

In 2002, FuturEd and the Canadian Association for Community Education (CACE) produced the CanREGs. In May 2004, the CanREGs became the Open eQuality Learning

Standards and a Creative Commons “some rights reserved” copyright has been transferred to the European Institute for eLearning (EIfEL) and the Learning Innovations Forum d'Innovations d'Apprentissage (LIfIA), rendering the standards “open.” Responsibility for maintaining the open source standards has been assumed by a joint EIfEL — LIfIA international committee. The joint eQuality Committee plans to meet annually and focus on maintaining the currency of the learning quality standards.

Underlying principles and conceptual basis

The project to create eLearning quality standards in Canada focused on the development of consumer-based quality guidelines that:

1. described either minimum acceptability and/or excellence in the application of learning technologies;
2. took the form of statements/principles of good practice or best practices, and included all elements of the learning system;
3. were developed by Canadian consumers to reflect Canadian values and concerns, but had potential applicability to the international environment;
4. were created through a consensus-based process involving actual consumers;
5. included a method of implementation that was neither cumbersome or costly;
6. incorporated the most current thinking on the effective use of learning technologies; and
7. contributed to increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of learning technologies and Canada's learning culture.

At that time of project inception, there were no commonly accepted standards of excellence in technology-based open and distance learning in Canada. There was, however, a great deal of useful advice in both literature and practice specific to quality assurance in education and training; applications of technology in education and training; quality assurance in Internet information sources and online practices in education and training; and excellence in distance education, distance learning, and distance delivery of education/training.

Quality assurance in education and training

In the context of products and services such as education/training, quality had been defined as having the characteristics of being well thought out, prepared with care, and implemented with responsibility; having a firm direction but flexible enough to cope with contextual variation; and being positively responsive to comment and criticism (Lucent Technologies, 1999).

An example of the definition of a quality educational experience, arrived at through stakeholder consensus, included the following elements: the quality of learning materials, the availability of materials, support for students through well-trained staff, a well-managed system, monitoring, and feedback mechanisms to improve the system (Barker, 1994). For the Canadian Labour Force Development Board, quality education was seen as education that produces an independent learner.

At that time, there was a growing interest in the delivery of high-quality education and training that met one or more types of standards, for example:

- standards for all elements of the learning system: inputs and resources, processes and practices, and outputs and outcomes (Barker, 1995);
- quality standards for education that is delivered transnational, as set by the Global Alliance for Transnational Education (GATE, 1996);
- principles for good practice in undergraduate education, first published by the American Association for Higher Education in 1987;

- requirements for promoting lifelong learning (Candy, Crebert, & O'Leary, 1994);
- program quality for adult education programs (Office of Vocational and Adult Education, US Department of Education, July 1992);
- international education from the Centre for Quality Assurance in International Education;
- standards for student admissions from the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers;
- assessment of students learning to use technology developed by the American Association for Higher Education;
- standards for instructional design by The International Board of Standards for Training, Performance and Instruction; and
- Information literacy standards developed by the American Library Association.

The literature on quality assurance in education and training was vast, ranging over such topics as standards, national standards, quality assurance, accountability, effective schools, and so on. The focus had largely been on the provider's perspective; however, there were increasing demands from the public and from education/training consumers to be involved in describing and improving quality in learning systems.

Quality assurance in the uses of educational technologies

Quality in the use of educational technologies is viewed from many different perspectives: (1) what learning technologies are touted to achieve; (2) quality assurance in the appropriate uses of technologies; and (3) issues of quality and the Internet. From the earliest uses of learning technologies there have been claims or hopes about what educational technologies could achieve. For example, according to the BC Ministry of Education, Skills and Training (BC MEST, 1996), technology was used to assist with the attainment of such educational goals as individualization; increasing proficiency at accessing, evaluating, and communicating information; increasing quantity and quality of students' thinking and writing; improving students' ability to solve complex problems; nurturing artistic expression; increasing global awareness; creating opportunities for students to do meaningful work; providing access to high-level and high-interest courses; making students feel comfortable with tools of the information age; and increasing the productivity and efficiency of schools. Similarly, Frayer and West (1997) identified the following ways in which instructional technology should support learning: enabling active engagement in construction of knowledge; making available real-world situations; providing representations in multiple modalities; drilling students on basic concepts to reach mastery; facilitating collaborative activity among students; seeing interconnections among concepts through hypertext; learning to use the tools of scholarship; and simulating laboratory work. From yet another perspective, NCREL (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory) developed a

"technology effectiveness framework" which theorized that the intersection of two continua — with learning on one end of the axis and technology performance on the other — defines what a particular technology could achieve vis-à-vis student learning. One quality criterion, then, must relate to the use of appropriate technologies. These goals all contributed to a conceptualization of eLearning quality.

Technology has multiple uses in the context of education and learning, for example, information management (IT), learning management, and distance delivery. As well, technology has the capacity to deliver better forms of student assessment, that is, what the International Society for Technology in Education calls "authentic testing."

To ensure the best uses of technology, the Open University in the UK differentiated between different media according to ease of use, availability, access, questions, contacts, experts, opportunity to question experts, integration, status, and synergy. The categories for comparison used were learners' needs, usage, effectiveness, perceived value, and comparative value. For the University of California, the four key characteristics of effective software are presentability, accountability, customizability, and extensibility. A second type of quality criteria, then, is the appropriate use of technology.

As the Internet was increasingly used in distance delivery of education/training, both for information retrieval (distributed learning) and for online delivery of courses and programs (distance learning), there was a need for quality criteria for both Internet sources and use of the Internet. The criteria for evaluating Internet information range from the simplistic to the highly complex. At the simplistic end of the scale, according to the University of Wisconsin, the Ten C's for Evaluating Internet Resources are Content, Credibility, Critical thinking, Copyright, Citation, Continuity, Censorship, Connectivity, Comparability, and Context. At the complex end of the scale, Wilkinson and others at the University of Georgia developed a list including 11 criteria and 125 indicators in *Evaluating the Quality of Internet Information Sources: Consolidated Listing of Evaluation Criteria and Quality Indicators,* including but not limited to: site access and usability (18 indicators), resource identification (13 indicators), author identification (9 indicators), authority of author (5 indicators), information structure and design (19 indicators), relevance and scope of content (6 indicators), validity of content (9 indicators), accuracy and balance of content (8 indicators), navigation within the document (12 indicators), quality of the links (13 indicators), and aesthetic and affective aspects (13 indicators). They concluded that the indicators of (1) information quality and (2) site quality were ranked in importance by experienced Internet users. Somewhere in the middle, the Internet Public Library has a selection policy for quality information sources, and resources that are selected/approved by the IPL receive the IPL Ready Reference Seal. In summation, it is a particular concern of educators that the sources they use on the Internet are reliable, accurate, authoritative, current, fair, adequate, and efficient. These were all factored into the understanding of quality eLearning.

Further considered were quality education practices on the Internet. Specific to education and training offered on the Internet, a variety of tools and standards were created. At the broadest level, the American Association for Higher Education produced *a Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for the Electronic Community of Learners,* which set out the rights and responsibilities of individuals together with the rights and responsibilities of educational institutions. Teachers considering web-based instruction were strongly encouraged to consider choice of pedagogy over choice of available technology, particularly when some research suggested that the use of technology to enable instruction conveys no significant difference in student achievement (Reeves, 1997). All of these elements of eLearning quality were considered in the creation of the standards of excellence, which became the CanREGs and then the OeQLs.

Quality assurance in distance education and distance learning

Open and Distance learning can be used for many purposes, for example, for formal education, continuing education, advanced professional education, and management/employee development. Advocates for distance learning claim that it makes learning and training more accessible, more convenient, more effective, and more cost efficient for the learners and for the education provider.

The environment for distance learning is characterized as one in which remote students have special needs that include advising needs, access needs, communication needs, and administrative needs. In the traditional context — distance education delivered by traditional learning organizations for course/program credit — these needs should be met through appropriate institutional support structures. This means that providers of distance learning must help consumers to take greater responsibility for their own learning, become more active in asking questions and obtaining help, and be prepared to deal with technical difficulties in the two-way flow of information.

Research by Lucent Technologies indicates that the following three approaches are commonly advocated to develop independent and self-reliant distance learners:

1. the service model approach, which focuses on the providers' integration of quality into distance delivery and courseware through quality-assurance methods in courses and curricula, high quality support services, integration of the study of communication itself into the curriculum, and the Total Quality Management (TQM) model of consumer-oriented quality in methods and materials;
2. a stakeholder analysis model, which focuses on defining quality for distance education, that is, involving more than the learning providers in defining quality and setting benchmarks;
3. a quality improvement model, which involves ongoing evaluation such as qualitative assessment techniques to understand stakeholder values, and quantitative evaluation to provide indicators of quality and areas of concern.

In building a service approach to distance education programs, Fulkerth (1998) recommended that courses be flexible, nimble, and asynchronous; blend traditional education and applied technology skills; integrate institutional services and activities into the delivery environment (e.g., registration, payment, advising, tutorial assistance, library services); and incorporate personalized, high-touch access to services, instructors, and classmates. To assist in making informed decisions, Miller and Schlosberg (1997) created tools to help individuals determine if they were good candidates for online learning, and Porter (1997) set out a checklist for evaluating distance learning courses.

Finally, in some jurisdictions — the US and the Commonwealth — agencies had taken this one step further to develop standards of excellence for distance education. The Canadian Recommended ELearning Guidelines incorporate elements of:

- the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education's (WICHE) principles of good practice for electronically offered academic degree and certificate programs;
- the American Council on Education, Center for Adult Learning and Educational Credentials' guiding principles for distance learning in a learning society; and
- the guidelines for remote delivery of courses, developed by the Commonwealth of Learning.

In conclusion, standards and best practices in education and training, uses of learning technologies, and distance education were incorporated into the development of the CanREGs. The next challenge was how to implement the standards, given that there was no desire or opportunity to create legislation and regulation.

Implementing eLearning quality assurance

As stated earlier, there was never an intention to create legislation or a body to regulate eLearning quality. In order to encourage good eLearning rather than punish bad eLearning, the quality-assurance approach adopted included three key elements: (1) the provision of eLearning quality standards created through consensus among providers and consumers of eLearning products and services; (2) the provision of a consumer's guide to eLearning, reflecting the quality standards, to help consumers compare products and services and, in demanding good eLearning, help to improve the overall quality; and (3) the provision of an objective, third-party quality mark that providers could use to indicate compliance with the quality standards and to create a competitive advantage in the global marketplace.

The standards had been created and they could be used by developers of eLearning as a design or evaluation checklist. However, the jargon and conceptual density made them hard for learners or purchasers of eLearning to use; hence, an

interactive tool was created and distributed widely by all the project participants. Regrettably, the use of the consumer's guide to eLearning has not been tracked. Learners and purchasers were encouraged to either use the interactive guide when they had the time and if they could gather the necessary information from providers, or look for a quality mark as a short-hand method of assuring quality for themselves.

The final element, then, was the creation of a quality mark that would demonstrate compliance with these eLearning quality standards. Beginning in 2002, the eQcheck quality mark was made available to eLearning providers as a mark of objective, professional quality assurance. QualitELearning Assurance Inc (Canada) and QualitELearning Assurances Services (UK) — the "eQcheck group of companies" — attempted to operate worldwide through a system of brokers and partnerships. Using an online, e-portfolio approach, eLearning providers could earn the eQcheck quality mark by providing digital evidence of compliance with the CanREGs in Canada, and OeQLs internationally. Since 2002, other quality marks have been developed, marks that reflect different types of standards. For example, the American Association offers certification services for the quality of instructional design, largely from the perspective of professional trainers; the British Learning Association promotes a quality mark that is recognized largely in the United Kingdom; the European Foundation for ELearning Quality is developing a quality mark for the European Union. These quality-assurance initiatives are not mutually exclusive, and it is conceivable that eLearning products and services should acquire a number of quality marks if they can afford it. Primarily, consumers want the quality marks to provide a form of consumer confidence, as does the "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval" on household goods, and a form of consumer protection, as does the Canadian Standards Association quality mark. Providers of eLearning want to achieve the industry excellence mark evidenced, for example, by the VQA quality mark on Canadian wine.

Companies in the eQcheck group do not provide eLearning products or services. It is, in fact, a legal requirement that a quality certifying body be independent and not be engaged in provision of such services. In 1998, FuturEd had identified the need to promote and support eLearning quality to provide consumer confidence and consumer protection in eLearning products and services. Government, national, and international bodies in Canada agreed with this and supported the creation of the CanREGs, and they subsequently endorsed the creation of the eQcheck quality mark and quality assurance approach.

The mission of the eQcheck companies is to support the eLearning industry by supporting both providers and consumers through assurance of high quality products and services. Producers use this process and certification mark in their marketing to indicate third-party quality assessment and OeQLs compliance. Consumers are urged to look for and insist upon the eQcheck as a measure of confidence and consumer protection. Governments and funding agencies are beginning to require it. The eQcheck quality mark is gaining currency worldwide because it transfers the cost of quality assurance from the consumer to the eLearning provider. This appeals to governments, industry, and large enterprises

that buy a lot of eLearning products, and it appeals to the World Bank as it seeks to assure quality purchases for the loans it grants.

In addition, it differs from other eLearning quality assurance methods in that it is:

- transparent, that is, the industry-based standards are widely available;
- inexpensive, that is, producers are encouraged to undertake a self-assessment process, limiting the cost of earning the eQcheck mark to the cost of the audit process;
- iterative, that is, producers of eLearning can improve the quality of eLearning where weaknesses are identified.

The eQcheck is the only consumer-based eLearning quality-assurance system in the world. It dovetails easily with other methods, ensuring that eLearning meets technical quality standards for interoperability. The development and implementation of this quality-assurance mechanism has not been without significant challenges. Is the eLearning enterprise ready for consumer empowerment? Dr. Abrioux, when he was president of Athabasca University, thought so. He asserted that students were customers, and that customer satisfaction was his first priority. He formally encouraged other universities to adopt the approach of the consumer's guide based on the OeQLs.

A number of products and services have earned the eQcheck quality certification mark. In the process, this Canadian case study demonstrates a number of valuable lessons about how complex and confusing the eLearning enterprise is, even to professional educators. The major challenge to implementation, however, has been the processes of quality assurance in public education worldwide. The predominant quality-assurance mechanisms include peer review of programs and, in some cases, state and professional regulation of curricula. This leads to the quality paradox — that is, the fact that providers of any product or service must assure quality but they can't provide quality assurance. Quality assurance must be:

- objective (incorporating both provider and user views)
- professional (conducted by quality assessors)
- credible (when compared to standards of excellence)
- reputable (using processes and standards recognized by others)
- iterative (process-oriented)
- continuous (ongoing and built in to the organization's funding and planning strategies)

Quality-assurance claims that come from education providers alone are subjective and questionable at best. Therefore, objective, professional quality assurance through a quality mark and objective professional quality certification provides for a win-win-win scenario. Students win with credible, consumer-oriented information to

help them make informed choices. eLearning providers win with objective evidence to enhance their reputation and create competitive advantage, the consumer quality mark. The eLearning enterprise wins with substantial effort directed at quality, return on investment and, ultimately, sustainability. These are all issues that support the implementation of informed choice and consumer pressure for assured quality. In a world where there are increasing numbers of dedicated online learning providers, it is essential to provide consumer protection and consumer confidence in both online and on-site learning.

The entire set of quality standards is available online at www.FuturEd.com. In brief, the standards begin with what is most important to consumers: assurance that they will learn content skills and knowledge that are relevant and recognized, together with lifelong learning skills that are transferable and applicable. When consumers are assured their investment of time and finances will be rewarded with recognized competencies and credits (quality outcomes), they then concern themselves with the details of student services and delivery: teaching, learning, assessment, and support (quality processes and practices). When they are assured that teaching and learning are appropriate and effective, they finally concern themselves with the nature of the organization standing behind the learning service: the quality of staff, budgets, and plans (quality inputs).

Conclusion

This Canadian initiative to support eLearning quality was grounded in conventional best practices in distance learning, learner-centred education and training, and global use of learning technologies. The resulting eLearning quality standards are consumer-oriented, consensus-based, comprehensive, futuristic, adaptable, and flexible. At this time, the eQcheck quality mark, based on the quality standards, is the only internationally recognized eLearning quality mark, and consumers are beginning to look for it to provide consumer confidence and consumer protection. That being said, there must be a constant effort to update the standards, as learning technologies change and new approaches to the management of learning are developed. Efforts are under way to implement ePortfolio systems for eLearning quality assurance, systems that are based on quality standards and that require digital evidence to support quality claims. This is but one approach to quality assurance in eLearning, a natural partner to technical and interoperability standards.

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Development of Quality Assurance and Evaluation in Higher Education in the Past Decade---- An Experience of China

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Abstract:

Quality assurance practices in higher education sector have gained prominent structure over the period of years. Increased demand on higher education and remarkable growth in number of institutions led to the establishment of QA bodies to regulate the quality related issued in HE. China has 2422 HEIs by the end of 2011 with 33,000,000 student enrolment in higher education institutions. Development and increased number often pose challenges for the efficacy of institutional quality controls. Chinese government has all along showed great concern for and given support to the quality assurance and evaluation of higher education. It also introduced quality assurance framework which encompasses on high national threshold standards for licensing and accreditation, building of top-notch HEIs and disciplines, national project of undergraduate teaching quality improvement, periodic evaluation and quality monitoring mechanism and supervision and quality assurance of cross-border higher education. The paper tries to highlights on the major developments in the HE sector in China over the past decade.

Key words: Quality Assurance and Evaluation in Higher Education

Introduction

1. Development of the Higher Education in China

China, a developing country with 1.37 billion people, has been calling for efforts to transform from a country with a large population into one rich in human resources. In 1999, Chinese Ministry of Education promulgated the Action Plan to Vitalize Education Facing the Twenty-first Century and this strategic policy greatly boosted the higher education development and enlarges the higher education scale.

By the end of 2011, there had been all together 2,422 Regular Higher Education Institutions, among which there were 1,129 HEIs offering degree-level programs (universities, academies, colleges), and 1,293 tertiary vocational-technical colleges. Besides these, there had been

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365 adult colleges and 836 non-state/private higher education providers. In 2011, the total enrolment of all HEIs broke through 33,000,000, among which 23,200,000 enrolled in regular HEIs. The gross enrolment rate reached 26.5%.

In addition, by the end of 2010, there had been 797 institutions offering postgraduate programs, including 481 regular HEIs with graduate schools, and 316 research institutes; the total enrolment of fulltime graduate students was 1,538,000, including 258,500 doctoral candidates and 1,279,500 in pursuit of a master's degree

2. The Framework of Quality Assurance in China

There has been a move from elite higher education to mass higher education in China, associated with greater diversity of institutions and programs and a large increase in the number and size of HEIs. All these developments pose challenges for the efficacy of institutional quality controls. We are confronting the conflict between the need of economic and social development for high quality personnel and the incapacities of education system to produce enough talents and professionals; the conflict between the public's longing for better education and the relative shortage in education resources; the conflict between the need to invigorate education system and the institutional impediments to it; and the conflict between the expansion of education scale and its quality assurance and improvement.

In this context, Chinese government has all along showed great concern for and given support to the quality assurance and evaluation of higher education. The quality assurance framework encompasses the following elements:

1) *High National Threshold Standards for Licensing and Accreditation*

- ❖ Set up high national licensing threshold standards for institutions and disciplines;
- ❖ Set up strict standards in the accreditation of degree-granting programs.

2) *Building of Top-Notch HEIs and Disciplines*

- ❖ Project 985 and Project 211: to establish world-class universities;
- ❖ Project of Establishing 100 Demonstrative and Key Tertiary Vocational Colleges.

3) *National Project of Undergraduate Teaching Quality Improvement*

This project was launched in 2007, mainly for undergraduate teaching quality assurance and improvement.

- ❖ Program restructuring and program accreditation;
- ❖ Curriculum optimization and textbook improvement;
- ❖ Innovation of the training modes and approaches: e.g. refining existing practice-oriented teaching and learning approaches and developing innovative approaches;
- ❖ Capacity building and development of faculty teams;
- ❖ Periodic evaluation on undergraduate teaching quality.

4) *Periodic Evaluation and Quality Monitoring Mechanism*

- ❖ Evaluation of Undergraduate Teaching Quality

  1994-2002: Pilot evaluation of undergraduate teaching quality, 254 universities evaluated;

  2003: First cycle periodic evaluation of undergraduate teaching quality launched;

  2008: First cycle periodic evaluation finished, 589 universities evaluated;

  2009-2011: Follow-up of the first cycle evaluation, review and analysis of the good practice and experience, update the evaluation plan and standards, prepare for the second cycle evaluation.

- ❖ Evaluation of Tertiary Vocational-Technical Colleges

  Since 2004: Evaluation of Training Model and Quality in Tertiary Vocational-Technical Colleges. Over 700 colleges have been evaluated till now.

5) *Supervision and Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education*

- ❖ Recognition of Foreign Academic Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates

  China has signed memorandum with 40 countries and regions in terms of mutual recognition of academic degrees. Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE) is responsible for the recognition of academic degrees, diplomas and certificates obtained outside China.

❖ Supervision of Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools and Programs (CFCRS/P)

Till April 2011, 1,340 CFCRS/P had been approved, among them 157 schools and 1,183 programs; Ministry of Education issued *Regulations of People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (March, 2003), and Measures for the Implementation of the Regulations of People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (March, 2004)*

3. Measures to Further Improve the Quality across the Board

Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) was promulgated in July, 2010, regarding quality assurance and improvement as the core task for education reform and development. Chinese President Hu Jintao pointed out at the Work Conference on National Education on July 13th 2010 that "state standards for education quality should be worked out along with a state framework to guarantee the quality." Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao addressed at the same conference that "we should insist on combining the steady development with the quality improvement of higher education, while placing more emphases on improving quality."

In October 2011, the MoE issued the *Opinion on the Quality Evaluation of Regular Higher Education Institutions* (No. 9 of 13.10.2011) to elaborate the updated evaluation system. According to the Opinion, a feasible multi-agent based quality evaluation system corresponding to the modern higher education system with Chinese characteristics shall be set up and improved step by step. The system shall be based on HEIs' internal self-evaluation mechanism, and work mainly by conducting categorized institutional evaluation on teaching quality, implementing accreditation of disciplines, subjects and programs, encouraging international evaluation, and conducting regular teaching quality data monitoring.

- ♦ HEIs' Self-Evaluation System: Urge and support HEIs to establish effective internal QA System;
- ♦ Implement the Categorized Periodic Evaluation on HEIs' Teaching Quality: Explore two evaluation models: eligibility evaluation model for newly-built HEIs, and audit model for HEIs that have passed the first-cycle evaluation;
- ♦ Promote the Accreditation of Disciplines, Subjects and Programs in HEIs, conducted by professional Intermediary Agencies;

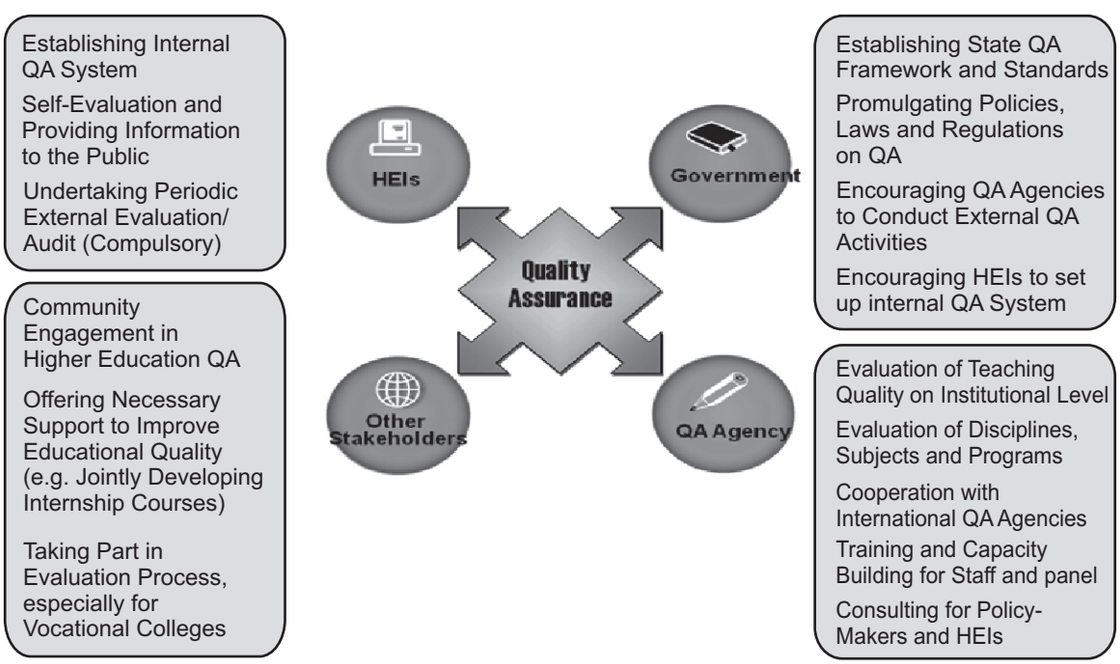
- Encourage International Evaluation/Audit: Encourage Chinese HEIs (especially the top-notch universities) to invite high-level experts from outside China to do peer review; cooperate with advanced QA agencies in the world and learn their Good Experiences and Practices.
- Regular Teaching Quality Data Monitoring: Develop National Database of HEIs' Teaching Quality status indicators, and publish evaluation reports on HEIs' quality at regular intervals.

Authorized by the Ministry of Education, HEEC is committed to a series of external QA activities. Along with many experts in higher education sectors, HEEC made a concerted effort to develop the "Eligibility Evaluation Scheme" and "Audit Scheme" over the last two years. From December 2009 to December 2010, HEEC conducted pilot eligibility evaluation to 20 different types of newly-built HEIs. The eligibility evaluation to newly-built HEIs was officially launched in October 2011, and 17 newly-built HEIs had undergone evaluation up to December 2011. Another 15 newly-built HEIs will receive eligibility evaluation in the first half of 2012. The audit scheme will be finalized later and the pilot audit will be conducted to a couple of universities in the second half of 2012.

The updated evaluation system encompasses the following roles:

1) New Principles of Eligibility Evaluation

- Guarantee education quality for the state; provide quality assurance service to the HEIs



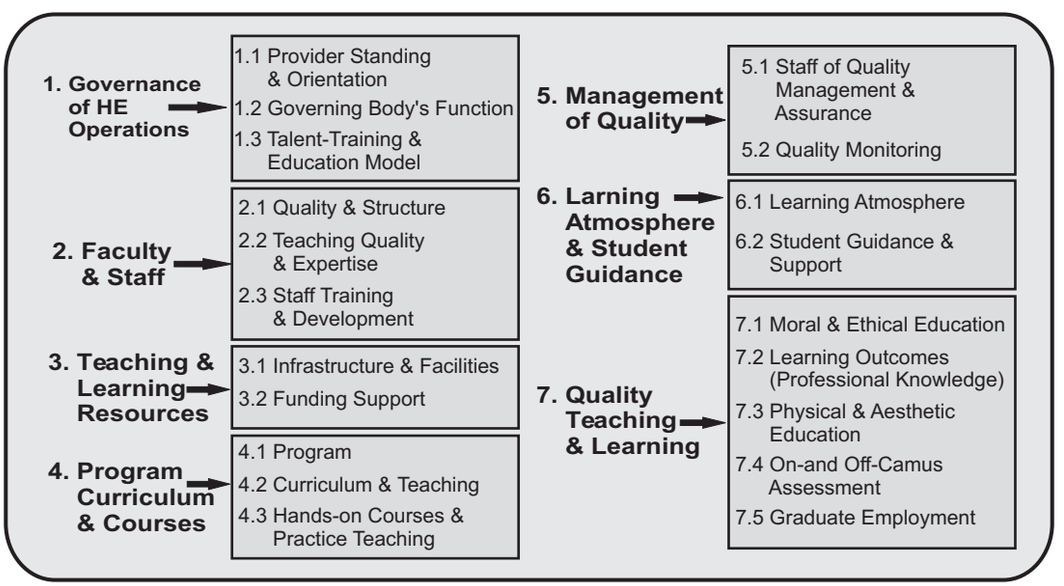
- ❖ HEIs-centered (The primary responsibility for academic quality rests with the HEIs and they are the main body of quality assurance and evaluation.)
- ❖ Student-oriented

2) Core Connotations of Eligibility Evaluation

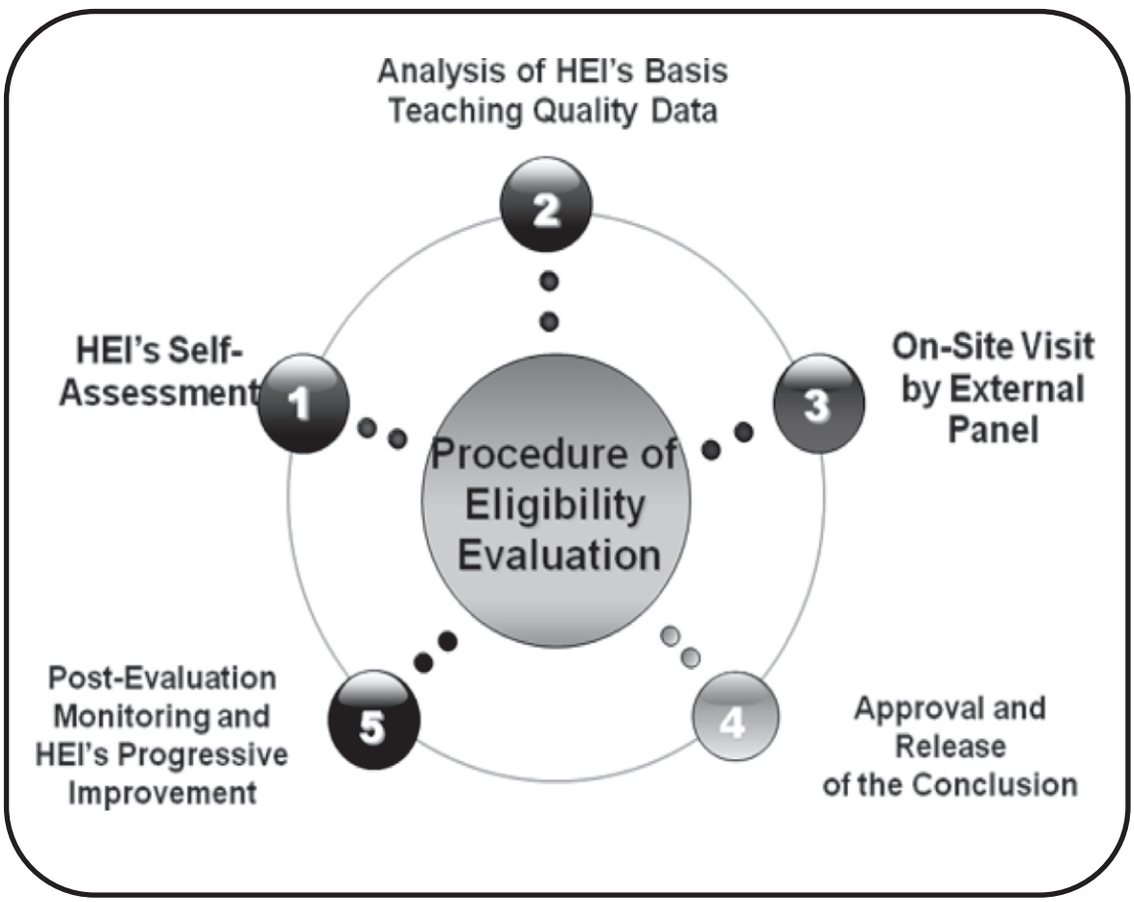
- ❖ "Four Promoting": Promoting the HEIs operation funding input increased; promoting the infrastructure and resources improved; promoting teaching management regulated; promoting the teaching quality improved.
- ❖ "Three Fundamentally": The HEIs' resources fundamentally meet the state standards; the teaching management is fundamentally regulated; the teaching quality is fundamentally guaranteed and ensured.
- ❖ "Two Emphasizing": Emphasizing the HEIs' service function to regional economy and society development; emphasizing the HEIs' orientation of cultivating talents with practical ability.
- ❖ "One Guiding": Guiding HEIs to establish and improve the internal quality assurance system, and set up long-term effective mechanism to improve the teaching quality.

3) Criteria of Eligibility Evaluation

The criteria contain 7 primary indicators, 20 secondary indicators and 39 specific evaluation factors, with no weighted index. The HEI will receive one of three possible judgments: "pass", "suspended pass", or "not pass". Considering giving guidelines according to different HEI



categories, we also designed different versions of criteria which are slightly different from the regular criteria with a few secondary indicators or specific evaluation factors adjusted to fit the characteristics of the non-state/private HEIs, medical schools or art academies.



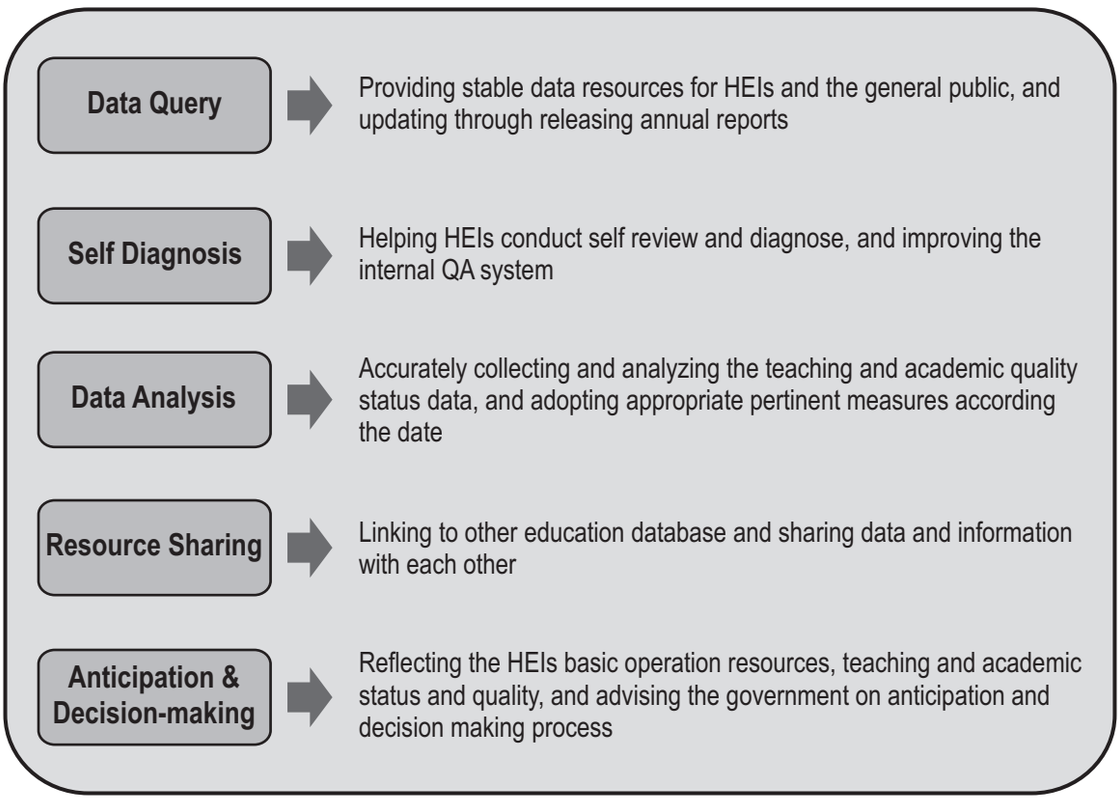
4) Procedure of Eligibility Evaluation

- HEI conducts self assessment in line with the eligibility evaluation criteria, and submits the self-assessment report to HEEC on time. Indicate some priorities to adequately reflect and analyze "problems" (which does not meet expectations or requires improvement to meet expectations) in the general context of its educational objectives with no less than 1/3 of the entire length, the SA report drafted by the HEI should be limited to 40,000 words. This format requirement enhances the formative nature of the process.

- ❖ HEEC analyzes the basic teaching quality status data submitted by HEIs and formulates the analysis report, and provides it along with the SA report to the panel. Panel members for Eligibility Evaluation are drawn from the HEEC's Register of Evaluator. Only those evaluators who have taken the training and got HEEC's Certificate can be selected as the panel members.
- ❖ Evidence-based peer review process consists of three phases - prior-to-visit phase (desk-based review and analysis of SA Report and Data Analysis Report), on-site visit, and panelist's personal review report. The head of panel is responsible for formulating the definitive draft evaluation report and giving the conclusion after panel deliberation. The report outlines the panel's findings, which it has reached through its interpretation of the specific evidence it has gathered. The report must note both commendable practices and areas for improvement, the latter of which indicates some priorities. The definitive draft report is also sent to HEEC for information and comments.
- ❖ Once finalized, the evaluation report (with conclusion in it) is submitted to the Expert Committee to be audited and approved, and the result (final evaluation report) is published by HEEC.
- ❖ There are strict post-evaluation requirements for the HEI. HEEC pays great attention to the follow-up monitoring to promote the HEI to improve its academic quality and management. HEI's quality improvement and internal QA system development will be critically reviewed in the next cycle (featuring audit model).

5) IT Development & Utilization in the Evaluation

HEEC adopts effective measures to facilitate the IT development and utilization in quality evaluation, including finishing the feasibility study and development of the National Database of HEIs' Teaching Quality Status Indicators, collecting and analyzing the status data of over 200 newly-built HEIs, elaborating the State Quality Report of Chinese Newly-built HEIs. All of the efforts ensure the successful launch and implementation of the eligibility evaluation. In the meantime HEEC has also finished the Data Analysis Reports of the post-secondary vocational technical colleges of 2008, 2009 and 2010, and collected the data of 2011, thus providing strong information support to the decision and policy making process of the MoE.



Functions of the National Database of HEIs' Teaching Quality Status Indicators

In addition, to improve the efficiency of quality evaluation, HEEC developed the National Quality Evaluation Management Information System. This system contains information of HEIs, information of registered evaluators, and can function to provide information service and support during the whole evaluation process.

Measuring International Quality Review and the Impact on AACSB Institutions and IEET Accredited Programs in Taiwan

Angela Yung-chi Hou*

Abstract

In order to strengthen the international outlook of Taiwan higher education, colleges and universities were encouraged by the government to enhance various seek the international accreditation, such as AACSB and IEET. The schools that are granted international accreditation will be eligible for HEEACT exemption. However, several questions are raised regarding international quality review, such as jurisdiction over the national accreditation, a set of international standards for the fitness of the mission of local higher education institutions, and the role of government as a safeguard of international accreditors' quality, and the impact of international accreditation on quality enhancement of local higher education institutions. Hence, the purpose of the paper is to realize the impact of AACSB and IEET accreditation on accredited institutions and programs in Taiwan will be measured via a survey.

Key words

Quality Assurance, International Quality Review, Accreditation, AACSB, IEET

1. Introduction

In recent years, globalization in higher education provoked growing international exchanges in higher education institutions among various countries, which is leading to increased quality review activities across borders, expansion of bi-lateral and regional quality review agreements, and continued discussion about national, regional or international standards for higher education quality (Knight, 2007). Yet, the emergence of international quality review and accreditation is contributing to a more complicated relationship among different stakeholders, which include international quality assurance networks, accrediting organizations, governments and higher education institutions.

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Evaluation Association (TWAEA), Taiwan Medical Accreditation Council (TMAC), Taiwan Nursing Accreditation Council (TNAC), and Institute of Engineering Education Taiwan (IEET) (Hou, 2011). Yet, a decentralized system of quality assurance framework in Taiwan higher education has not thus being formed until the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT) was established in 2005 with funding from the government and 153 colleges and universities. With a compulsory approach, HEEACT was commissioned by the MOE to conduct institutional and program accreditations over Taiwan's higher education institutions in 2006 (HEEACT, 2011).

However, prior to the establishment of national quality assurance framework, many Taiwan universities which would like to sharpen their global competitive edge began to seek out international recognition in quality in the early twenty first century (Hou, 2011). In order to strengthen the international outlook of higher education, at the same time, Taiwan's government encouraged colleges and universities in Taiwan to enhance various types of cross-border cooperation and activities with foreign universities as well as to seek international accreditation, such as that offered by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and Institute of Engineering Education Taiwan (IEET) accreditation.

AACSB International, as an American professional accreditor, has been implementing accreditation abroad for many years and now accredits programs in over 38 countries (AACSB International, 2010). Although IEET was a local engineering accreditor chartered by the Taiwan government in 2003, it was successfully supported by The Washington Accord signatories as a Provisional Signatory of the Accord at the 2005 IEM Meetings and became a formal signatory of the Accord in 2007 (IEET, 2011). Comparing AACSB International, IEET is initially regarded as a local accreditor but becomes internationally recognized. Now those schools granted accreditation by either AACSB or IEET will be eligible for HEEACT exemption. However, several questions are being raised regarding the exemption policy, such as jurisdiction over the national accreditation, a set of international standards for the fitness of the mission of local higher education institutions, and the role of government as a safeguard of international accreditors' quality, and the impact of international accreditation on quality enhancement of accredited institutions and programs. Hence, the purpose of the paper is to realize the impact of AACSB and IEET accreditation on accredited institutions and programs in Taiwan are measured via a survey.

2. Research subjects and method

In order to realize how international accreditation is impacting on the development and reforms of Taiwan higher education institutions, a survey targeting top administrators and staff of AACSB institutions and IEET

accredited programs for their views in regards to the accreditation was conducted in 2010. A total number of 175 questionnaires were sent out to deans, department heads and staff from 5 AACSB accredited business schools in Taiwan. There were 201 department heads randomly selected from 455 IEET's accredited programs. All respondents were asked to fill out questionnaires consisting of 5 categories, including organizational change, curriculum reform, student learning outcomes, faculty sufficiency on research and teaching, internationalization and challenges.

3. Major findings

First of all, all respondents were asked the major reasons for applying AACSB and IEET accreditation. Respondents from both accreditations agreed most on the items of "to enhance international outlook to connect with the global", followed by "to improve themselves in order to be more competitive academically", "to be requested by University", and "to avoid HEEACT accreditation". Truly, some respondents admitted that they didn't want to be assessed by HEEACT accreditation. Comparing to AACSB, 21 % of IEET's respondents felt more pressured by university request to apply for the accreditation (see table 1).

Table 1: Respondent's attitude toward the reasons of application

	Administrator			
	AACSB		IEET	
Response for application	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
To be requested by University	1	5.6%	21	21.2%
To enhance international outlook to connect with the global	13	72.2%	61	61.6%
To improve themselves in order to be more competitive academically	13	72.2%	54	54.5%
To avoid HEEACT's accreditation	8	44.4%	44	44.4%

1) *Organizational change*

To efficiently gain international accreditation in a period of time, organizational changes are required in most institutions. The survey showed that 27.8 % of AACSB institutions and 45.5 % of IEET programs changed the allocation of their budget in order to enable these organizational changes. Most respondents said that the institutions strengthened human resources as well, including recruiting more full time staff, setting up an accreditation office (see table 2).

Table 2: Respondent's attitude toward the reasons of application

Items	Administrator	
Organizational Reforms	**AACSB**	**IEET**
To relocate resources for international accreditation	27.8%	45.5%
To transform the discipline into program based governance model	44.4%	15.2%

2) *Curriculum reform*

When it comes to curriculum reform, both AACSB and IEET's respondents agreed more on the items of "to re-adjust the learning goals of the programs and curriculum" and "to restructure curriculum at the collegiate level". Comparing with IEET, AACSB tended to focus on "increasing the number of English taught courses and its quality". In contrast, IEET paid more attention to "developing interdisciplinary system of course selection" (see table 3)

Table 3: Respondent's attitude towards curriculum reform

Curriculum reform	AACSB	IEET
To restructure curriculum at the collegiate level	50.0%	46.5%
To develop interdisciplinary system of course selection	27.8%	35.4%
To increase the number of English taught courses and its quality	72.2%	28.3%
To re-adjust the learning goals of the programs and curriculum	77.8%	68.7%
To develop diversifying teaching strategies and modes	44.4%	35.4%
To set up collaborative teaching model among colleges and departments	33.3%	21.2%

3) *Student learning outcomes*

As to the impact on student learning outcomes assurance, both AACSB and IEET agreed highly on the items of "developing the assessment mechanism of learning outcomes", " providing learning resources and developing the learning support system for students", " developing a graduate tracking system", and " strengthening the function of Office of Alumni". Different from AACSB, IEET focused more on "conducting recruiter's survey on a regular basis" (see table 4).

Table 4 Respondent's attitude towards student learning outcomes

Student learning outcomes	AACSB	IEET
To develop the assessment mechanism of learning outcomes	66.7%	60.6%
To provide learning resources and develop the learning support system for students	50.0%	55.6%
To develop a graduate tracking system	66.7%	84.8%
To strengthen the function of Office of Alumni	66.7%	73.7%
To conduct recruiter's survey on a regular basis	16.7%	73.7%

4) *Faculty sufficiency on research and teaching*

According to both AACSB and IEET's respondents, international accreditations have greater impact on the items of "making regulations and rules for faculty evaluation on academic performance and research output" and "providing faculty with more instructional resources and support on research and teaching". IEET respondents agreed more on "building up the system of faculty development" than AACSB's. However, both respondents didn't think that institutions have decreased teaching loads and weekly teaching hours for faculty due to the accreditation (see table 5).

Table 5 Respondent's attitude towards faculty sufficiency

Faculty sufficiency on research and teaching	AACSB	IEET
To make regulations and rules for faculty evaluation on academic performance and research output	61.1%	56.6%
To provide faculty with more instructional resources and support on research and teaching	55.6%	42.4%
To decrease teaching loads and weekly teaching hours	22.2%	17.2%
To build up the system of faculty development	38.9%	50.5%

5) Internationalization

As to the impact on the internationalization of the institutions, both agreed that the institutions "invested more resources on international exchanges", "attracted more international students", and "increased the number of English taught courses". Comparing IEET, AACSB respondents felt that the institutions tended to invest more human resources on international affairs and to develop cross-border joint degree programs. In terms of "developing industry internship oversea", and "recruiting international faculty", both agreed least on them (see table 6).

Table 6 Respondent's attitude towards internationalization

Internationalization	AACSB	IEET
To invest more resources on international exchanges	61.1%	47.5%
To invest more human resources on international affairs	50.0%	40.4%
To develop industry internship oversea	22.2%	15.2%
To develop cross border joint degree program	44.4%	33.3%
To attract more international students	50.0%	53.5%
To recruit international faculty	11.1%	10.1%
To increase the number of English taught courses	83.3%	50.5%

6) Challenges

In the process of AACSB and IEET accreditation, three big challenges for institutions for faculty and staff according to the survey, including "time consuming and costly", "more workload increase", and "more demands on teaching quality and assessment of learning" (see table 7). Generally speaking, the level of resistance from administrators and staff is still low with a score of 2.4 and 2.6 and there is no significant difference among the different types of respondents by AACSB and IEET (see table 8).

Table 7: Respondent's attitude towards challenges

Challenges	AACSB	IEET
It is very time consuming and costly	44.4%	58.6%
It results in more workload	88.9%	76.8%
The accreditation outcomes will be used to evaluate performance of faculty and staff	22.2%	23.2%
Faculty and staff don't realize the international accreditation	11.1%	9.1%

Challenges	AACSB	IEET
Academic freedom is interrupted	11.1%	11.1%
Research pressured faculty heavily	22.2%	12.1%
Faculty are demanded more on teaching quality and assessment of learning	83.3%	65.7%
The role of disciplines is getting blurring	22.2%	1.0%

Table 8: Respondents attitude towards the level of resistance

Items	AACSB			IEET		
	M	SD	APE/ p	M	SD	CT/ p
Resistance from Faculty and Staff	2.4	1.0	0.48	2.6	1.0	0.75

$p>0.05$ means there is no difference among groups.

7) Impact

Generally speaking, AACSB institutions and IEET programs accredited all responded positively on the impact of accreditation that assisted them to enhance quality of education in terms of developing closer partnership among faculty and staff, curriculum reform, student learning outcomes, faculty sufficiency on research and teaching, and internationalization. When it comes to the level of impact, both AACSB and IEET agreed highly on curriculum reform which facilitates courses more integrated and the incorporation of institutional mission and objectives into teaching design. Both respondents had the same level of agreement on the impact on learning outcomes and faculty efficiency, including the items of "improving student learning outcomes significantly", "increasing quantity and quality of academic research by faculty", and "improve teaching quality". Compared to IEET, AACSB institutions responded more positively on the item of internationalization impact, particularly "enhancement of institutional academic reputation domestically", "international visibility", "international competitiveness", and "benefiting graduates to study abroad and to get a job in a foreign country". Relatively speaking, "attracting more international students" was agreed least by both respondents.

4. Conclusion

Based the analysis above, it can be found that international accreditation did have a great impact on Taiwan higher education, including the government, the institutions, faculty and staff, and local accreditors. Compared with other Asian

nations, Taiwan government adopted a more open policy to encourage the institutions to apply for international accreditation. Being pressured by the international accreditors, Taiwan quality assurance started to internationalize themselves in terms of joining international networks of QA, developing partnership with foreign accreditors, and conducting self-evaluation and recruiting international reviewers, and so on (Kristoffersen, 2010; Hou, 2011).

The results of the study indicated that AACSB and IEET accreditation brought a great impact on Taiwan's higher education and institutions, particularly the items of the development of internationalization and the implementation of learning outcomes. In fact, the two greater impacts exactly correspond to goals and missions by AACSB and IEET accreditors. Yet, the increased time and effort on staff and faculty inevitably has led to the level of resistance in certain ways.

The Taiwan government is firmly convinced that a prominence of higher education certainly increases economic strengths and increases Taiwan's international influence. Hence, the more that Taiwan's government concerns itself with maintaining Taiwan's competitive edge in regional and global markets by internationalizing Taiwan higher education, the more opportunities international accreditors will find for their services here. Therefore, it is predictable that the role of international accreditors in enhancing quality of national higher education will continue to have resonance for Taiwan society as well as other Asian countries.

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Qualifications Frameworks - A Pacific Preoccupation?

Lemalu Lafi Sanerivi*

Abstract

The Pacific region has joined the snowballing effect of qualifications frameworks accrediting agencies. The advantages in instituting national and a regional standard for quality assurance benchmarked against international good practices, clarity of qualifications currency and relationships with other qualifications and facilitating the recognition of institutions and qualifications for learner and labour mobility are recognised.

The challenges of resource constraints and capacity limitations are real. Are these developments sustainable and will it improve the futures of Pacific countries whose major resource are people?

Keywords:

Qualifications frameworks, quality assurance

INTRODUCTION:

The last decade, from 2001 to 2010, has witnessed a marked growth of interest in the Pacific region in developing national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and a regional register of qualifications and standards (PRQS). This Pacific engagement closely follows and adopts best practices from global developments of national and regional qualifications frameworks. This is strategic for the Pacific that has neither the time, nor resources to manage and address any errors already made by the first and second generations of qualifications frameworks. Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu have developed national qualifications frameworks and dedicated agencies to coordinate developments and implementation. For Solomon Islands, the Education Act is currently being reviewed to include the development of a national qualifications framework. The Cabinets for Kiribati (2014) and Tuvalu (2012) have adopted in principle the adoption of the Pacific Qualifications Framework (PQF) as their framework in

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1 Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards (PRQS)

2 The New Zealand Qualifications Authority

progress. Nauru has indicated that it will be aligned with the Queensland State of Australia. Cook Islands and Niue are aligned with the New Zealand qualifications system (NZQA). Tokelau is exploring the best option for its system. The Northern Pacific countries such as the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) and Palau come under the quality assuring functions of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) of the United States.

In general, the expectation is for the NQFs to establish coherence within the currently fragmented education and training systems. NQFs are deemed to enhance the transparency of a country's qualifications system and clarify the link between education and training, labour mobility and sustainable livelihood. The NQFs clarify the pathways between various forms of continuing studies and employment opportunities whether within the domestic or global labour markets. The sizes of the economies of the Pacific's small islands states are such that the domestic labour market cannot find employment for all the young people who leave formal school or even post compulsory training.

The national qualifications frameworks being developed are outcomes-based and credit based. This poses a challenge to the education and training institutions whose programmes were designed, delivered and assessed in an institutional-specific way prior to the advent of NQFs. Most of the existing providers were initially established as 'second chance' education institutions.

Given the gradual but decided growth of higher education institutions in each of the Pacific countries and the region in general, the biggest challenge is the cultivation of a "culture of quality". The Pacific Forum Leaders, at their meeting in September in Auckland New Zealand, made the following declarations.

- (para 12) Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to raising educational standards, improving participation rates, and expanding market-relevant vocational and technical training. …. and
- (para 25) Leaders underlined the important role of government, the private sector and technical and vocational training institutions in urgently addressing youth unemployment. Leaders also recognised the need for the development of a regional framework for youth employment, the contribution that labour mobility offers,

[1] *Sustainable livelihood includes being employed, self-employment or engaging in a productive livelihood in the subsistence sector*

[2] *Refers to the meeting of Prime Ministers of the Pacific countries*

[3] *Pacific Islands forum Secretariat, Forum Communique 2011*

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS (NQFs)

National qualifications frameworks were developed in response to various national priorities. While these priorities vary from country to country, they become the underlying philosophies that underpin the development of NQFs such as:

1. NQFs are agents and instruments of change that reform the education and training sector by having one coherent structure that establishes transparent relationships amongst the plethora of qualifications delivered within a fragmented post school education and training system;
2. NQFs introduce a "level playing field" through a common national quality assurance standard for the design, delivery, assessment and resourcing of all education and training programmes; and
3. NQFs will facilitate the national and international recognition of a country's qualifications.

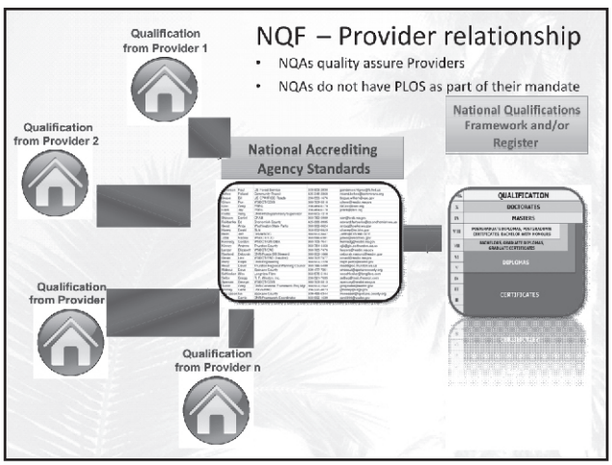
These are realistic and achievable goals that will improve the education and training environment and instill confidence among all stakeholders.

Although this is welcomed by the majority of stakeholders, the providers find it very expensive and time consuming to make the switch. Institutional culture requires rethinking and redesigning to conform with the new quality standards but also to comply with those standards to meet the regulatory functions of the national accrediting agencies. Linking disbursement of government funds to provider compliance with a national quality standard can overcome provider reservation and possible resistance to change.

The relationship between the national (or regional) accrediting agencies and its providers is as shown in the diagram. The national accrediting agency quality assures the providers and their programmes and then registers the provider qualifications onto the national register.

NZQA and WASC have a history of development and their processes have been developed and tested over time. The accreditation needs of Pacific countries that come under those agencies are well taken care of. This discussion will briefly highlight the developments of the national qualifications agencies in the five countries referred to earlier.

There are apparent similarities in the general architecture of the national qualifications frame works being developed. These are:



- Generally all have 10 levels
  - ♦ Level 10 is Doctorate degrees
  - ♦ Level 9 is Masters degrees
  - ♦ Level 8 is Bachelor (Hons) and Post Graduate Certificates and Diplomas
  - ♦ Level 7 is Bachelors and Graduate Certificates and Diplomas
  - ♦ Levels 5-6 are Diplomas
  - ♦ Levels 1-4 are Certificates;
- The qualifications are outcomes based;
- Learning outcomes are linked to a credit system;
- Each NQF level is defined Level Descriptors that differentiate the broad outcomes of one level from another;
- There are clear definitions of qualification types that discriminates one qualification from another

The NQFs are supported by well defined national quality assurance systems that cover the criteria for registration of providers, accreditation of programmes and periodic quality audit of institutions or their programmes.

THE PACIFIC QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (PQF)

The architecture of the Pacific Qualifications Framework (PQF) as a meta-framework has followed on from the general design of the national and other international qualifications frameworks. That is:

PACIFIC QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK	
10	Doctorate
9	Master's
8	Bachelor (honours), Post-graduate certificate, post-graduate diploma
7	Bachelor. Graduate certificate, Graduate diploma
5	Diploma
4	Certificate
3	Certificate
2	Certificate
1	Certificate

- the PQF has ten levels
  - Level 10 is Doctorate degrees
  - Level 9 is Masters degrees
  - Level 8 is Bachelor (Hons) and Post Graduate Certificates and Diplomas
  - Level 7 is Bachelors and Graduate Certificates and Diplomas
  - Levels 5-6 are Diplomas
  - Levels 1-4 are Certificates;
- It is outcomes based and credit based;
- It has Level Descriptors that discriminate the prescribed outcomes from one level and another; and
- the Definitions of qualification types provide a guide for comparison with those used by national agencies.

Being mindful of the resource limitations and capacity constraints of our member countries, the PQF design allows our small island states adopt it should they wish to do so. Kiribati and Tuvalu have indicated their intention to do this.

In implementing the PQF as a meta-framework, quality assured qualifications from Pacific countries are referenced against the Pacific Qualifications Framework for confirming a level for registration onto the PRQS. Where there may be mismatches between the recommended levels as submitted by countries with an SPBEA assessment, dialogue will clarify such cases until it is mutually agreed and settled. For qualifications at Levels 7 and above, it may be necessary to invite independent external panel members to adjudicate. This practice will facilitate the international benchmarking of Pacific qualifications. The members of the PRQS Advisory Board can be seconded as members of these external accrediting Panels.

The PQF is supported by a well-defined Pacific Quality Assurance Framework (PQAF) is the Pacific's response to the Brisbane Communiqué. The PQAF contains standards and guidelines for accrediting agencies, providers of education and training services, programmes and courses. The PQAF provides a common measure for the Pacific region in understanding quality, which moderates the diversity of national strategies. Any difference between the regional standard and the national standard is expected to be minimal and to do with specifics of each country's context.

THE PACIFIC REGISTER OF QUALIFICATIONS AND STANDARDS (PRQS)

The Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards (PRQS) has been developed in response to the Forum Education Ministers decision in 2001 in Auckland New Zealand *"consider the setting up of a regional qualifications framework, covering basic, primary, secondary, TVET and tertiary education benchmarked against appropriate international standards and qualifications"*. The Australian government through AusAID offered to fund a five year project from 2008 to 2013, which is now extended to June 2016. Development work started in 2009 when SPBEA recruited a staff of four to coordinate developments.

PACIFIC REGISTER OF QUALIFICATIONS AND STANDARDS		
Quality Assured Qualifications		Other domains
10	Doctorate Degrees	Professional licensing and occupational standards [PLOS]
9	Masters Degrees	
8	Bachelor (honours), post-graduate certificate, post-graduate diploma	
7	Bachelor, graduate certificate, graduate diploma	
6	Diploma	
5	Diploma	
4	Certificate	Traditional knowledge and indigenous skills [TKIS]
3	Certificate	
2	Certificate	
1	Certificate	
Regional benchmarks for literacy, numeracy and life skills for basic and primary education		

The Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards (PRQS) comprises four domains namely: (i) the accredited qualifications; (ii) professional licensing and occupational standards; (iii) traditional knowledge and indigenous skills; and (iv) regional standards for education. Development has focused on the "accredited qualifications" domain as a priority to dovetail with country developments of their national qualifications framework.

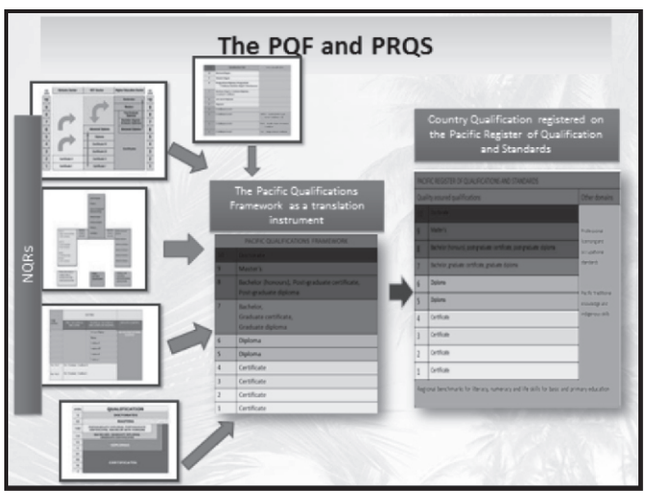
The perceived benefits of a regional register are that it:

- provides a coherent and unified register of equivalent qualifications from diverse education and training systems of the Pacific that are at the same level;
- allows for the comparability of qualifications across Pacific Island Countries (PICs);
- becomes a single reference for collective understanding and benchmarking of PICs' qualifications against international qualification systems;
- facilitates Pacific learner and labour mobility into further educational opportunities or entry into the global labour market (e.g. the PICTA3 scheme and other regional protocols);

* *The Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards Booklet 2011 pp 9 and 10.*

- clarifies pathways to higher levels of educational achievement; and
- encourages and sustains lifelong learning from basic and primary education to the highest level attainable by each individual.

The relationship between the national qualifications frameworks, the Pacific Qualifications Framework and the Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards is as shown in the diagram.



The link between national qualifica- tions frameworks and the PRQS through the PQF will provide flexible pathways for each Pacific learner and worker to exploit the opportunities provided by globalisation, be it in further studies or employment opportunities.

THE PACIFIC QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK:

From the Asia-Pacific Ministers of Education meeting in Brisbane in 2006, they determined to *"develop a quality assurance framework for the region linked to international standards, including courses delivered online"* amongst other important priorities. In the course of developing the Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards (PRQS), this became an important prerequisite to establishing a common understanding of quality assurance for all of our Pacific national accrediting agencies. The Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) assisted with partial funding of a "Pacific Capacity Building Workshop in Quality Assurance" held from 9th to 11th November 2011. Dr Jagannath Patil (NAAC, India) and Ms Connie Lok (HKCAAVQ, Hong Kong) were the facilitators. Various resources were explored including the INQAAHE Principles of Good Practice, APQN's quality assurance principles as well as the Chiba principles as options for the Pacific to consider. The PQAF has been evaluated against the ENQA, INQAAHE and APQN principles. The process of assessing it against the quality assurance strategies of each of our member countries' has started and will continue to ensure close alignment.

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THE PACIFIC OVER THE NEXT DECADE

There is no doubt that the Pacific's learning curve in the development and fine-tuning of their NQFs, Agencies and systems will continue in a fairly steep path. The primary focus will be on capacity building and consolidation of current developments. A lot of activities will be taking place at the national level such as:

1. reviewing of framework and related policies and procedures for "continuous improvement" towards full implementation;
2. Several countries will have national qualifications frameworks or confirmed the best option for their education and training systems
3. establish links with international agencies such as APQN and INQAAHE in valuable professional partnerships

At the regional level, SPBEA's Accreditation Unit will:

1. continue capacity building activities in support of national and regional accrediting agencies;
2. continue to populate the PRQS, review current developments and fully administer the registration of institutions, qualifications and standards submitted by national and regional accrediting agencies and other relevant bodies;
3. conduct periodic audit of the national and regional accrediting agencies;
4. participate in the periodic audit of higher education institutions in consultation with the relevant national or regional agencies;
5. complete development of the domain on traditional knowledge and indigenous skills;
6. establish dialogue and linkages with relevant international agencies and countries for the international benchmarking of Pacific qualifications and standards;
7. support regional Labour Mobility protocols for regional socio-economic development;
8. strengthen professional linkages with international quality assurance agencies; and
9. continuous review and development of policies, procedures and its administration to remain current and relevant.

CONCLUSION

Pacific nation's understanding and acceptance of the value in developing qualifications frameworks are based on how it will contribute to the improvement of the quality of education and training in a nation's efforts to raise the skill levels of its human resource. Pacific countries' commitment to this development is unwavering. All stakeholders must work collaboratively to ensure the NQFs do achieve what they have been set up to accomplish. The initial investment is high both in terms of financial costs, technical advice and capacity building necessary to sustain it over the long term. However, the benefits far outweigh the costs.

Pacific countries' most basic resource is their people. This investment can only improve the future of Pacific people, countries and the Pacific region.

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What are the quality indicators of TNE? A Reflection on Non-local Learning Programme Accreditation in Hong Kong

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Abstract

With the launch of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (QF) in 2008, the Government of Hong Kong (HKG) made provision for further quality assurance of NLP in Hong Kong through accreditation on a voluntary basis. A NLP Accreditation model was developed by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ), the Accreditation Authority. The model was tested in a pilot exercise in 2009 (Lee, 2010) and refined for full operation in 2010. This paper explores the quality indicators observed to be important in NLP accreditation exercises in the Art and Design discipline in 2010. This paper is part of a series of papers investigating the effect and impact of NLP accreditation since the pilot exercise (Lee & Fearnside, 2011), (Fan, Fearnside & Lee, 2011) of the NLP Team of the HKCAAVQ (i.e. the in-house accreditation team responsible for the NLP accreditation exercises).

Keywords:
Qualifications Framework, Quality Indicators, Accreditation

Introduction

Hong Kong has been importing TNE (termed as Non-local Courses) for many years. Since 1997, all non-local courses (NLPs) delivered in Hong Kong are required to be registered by law. As of August 2011, 1,140 courses are on the register (NCR, 2011), most of them (92%) are from English speaking countries. Under the compulsory registration system, students are guaranteed that the NLPs that they take in Hong Kong (HK) are comparable in academic standards to the ones taken in the home country. In effect, the compulsory registration system says no more or no less about the standards of the NLPs or the education system of the home countries.

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Study Methodology

The findings in this paper are underpinned by document review of the accreditation reports, observation of the accreditation exercises and sharing by Dr. Alan Wu, the Head of the NLP

Team of the HKCAAVQ (i.e. the in-house accreditation team responsible for the NLP accreditation exercises).

The Accreditation Model

Accreditation of non-local learning programmes (NLP) is a voluntary quality assurance process that underpins the QF. It comprises two stages. The first stage is Initial Evaluation (IE) for collaborative provision to determine whether the collaborating operators (partnership) are able to achieve their objectives and to operate the learning programmes (under the collaborative provision) that meet the claimed QF standards. The second stage is Programme Validation (PV). It is an overall evaluation of the non-local learning programme(s) under the partnership to determine whether the learning programme meets the required standards to achieve its claimed objectives and deliver the intended learning outcomes.

The NLP in Hong Kong is normally operated jointly by both the local and the non-local partners, leading to qualification(s) awarded by the non-local partner. The non-local partner, being the awarding body, is required to be ultimately responsible for the academic standards of the NLP delivered in Hong Kong. Between the two partners, there is normally a division of duties and responsibilities that should have been reflected in their signed collaborative agreements. Where the non-local operator operates as a branch campus in HK (whether or not established as a separate legal entity) without a local partner, the branch campus is treated as the local partner while the parent institution remains as the non-local operator.

The NLP accreditation is conducted through peer review and is evidence-based, benchmarking against the standards under the HKQF, as specified via outcome-based Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) (Education Bureau, 2008) devised by the HKG. The IE and PV are conducted in an integrated exercise.

Partnership Competency and Programme Quality

At the IE stage, the partners must jointly demonstrate that they have the competency to effectively manage the collaboration and resource the development, delivery, assessment and quality assurance of the NLPs covered in the partnership agreement. The quality indicators under respective accreditation criteria of the IE stage are summarised as follows.

Figure 1. Quality Indicators under Respective Accreditation Criteria for Stage 1 Initial Evaluation of Collaborative Provision (IE)

1.Organisational Management	**Institutional Strategy and Authority to Establish the Collaboration Accreditation / Recognition Status of the Non-Local Operator Contractual considerations specifying the rights, obligations and responsibilities of both partners** **Policy and Operational Framework for** the non-local partner to assume overall responsibility of the academic standards of the NLP **Assessment and Management of Risk** to protect student interests
2.Financial and Physical resource	Adequate financial and physical resource base to support its NLP(s)
3.Staffing and Staff Development	**Effective Staffing policies** **Effective Staff Development policies to ensure that** teaching staff (i) enhance their pedagogical skills and subject knowledge and (ii) are familiar with the academic ethos of the non-local partner
4.Quality Assurance	1. Appropriate and effective quality assurance mechanism to ensure the quality of the (i) collaboration and the (ii) NLP 2. Provision of accurate, current and complete information to the public and students

During the PV stage, the NLP is evaluated to ensure that:

- learning outcomes and standards of the NLP are appropriate for the qualification;
- content and design of the NLP and the methods of delivery are likely to achieve its objectives and deliver the intended learning outcomes for the target students;
- assessment aligns with the content, design and delivery of the NLP, and is valid and appropriate to test the intended learning outcomes based on relevant academic and vocational standards at the proposed QF Level;
- other arrangements, including management, facilities, staffing and student services are appropriate for the NLP and will facilitate successful delivery of the stated objectives and learning outcomes at the proposed QF Level; and
- the NLP is planned, developed, managed and monitored in accordance with the quality assurance policy and mechanism under the partnership agreement.

The quality indicators for the NLP in Stage 2 are outlined below.

Figure 2. Quality Indicators under Respective Accreditation Criteria for NLP Stage 2 Validation of NLP

1.Outcome-based learning programme	**Objectives and Learning Outcomes** The learning outcomes must reflect the stated programme objectives and the objectives should be fit for purpose in the local context with the QF Level of the learning outcomes corresponding to the GLD. **Content and Structure** The content and structure of the NLP must be coherent, integrated and effective for the target students to attain the stated learning outcomes at the required standards in an appropriate progression. **Admission Requirements and Student Selection** The minimum admission requirements must be appropriately set to ensure that the average students admitted to the NLP have the requisite prior knowledge and skills to undertake the learning activities in the NLP. The admission requirements should be properly administered via a transparent and appropriate student selection process. **Teaching and Learning** The teaching and learning activities must be effective, coherent and balanced to deliver the intended learning outcomes and programme content. **Student Assessment** Assessments must support effective teaching and learning and enable students to demonstrate attainment of the learning outcomes at the required standards. The assessment methods and techniques must be valid, reliable, fair and sufficient to reflect the learning outcomes at the claimed QF Level, and secure against cheating.
2.Student Support Services	(i) clear, accurate information and dependable access to student support services; (ii) clear information to students guiding them to access the non-local partners with appropriate support if the non-local partner is responsible for providing a service, or determining an appeal, complaint or other application
3.Staffing and Staff Development	(i) adequate and competent teaching and supporting staff to manage, plan, deliver and monitor the NLP; (ii) adequate staff development schemes and activities
4.Financial and Physical Resources	adequate financial and physical resources for the delivery of the NLP.

5.Quality Assurance (including Programme Development and Management)	The partnership must (i) develop the NLP that addresses the needs of the community, employees and employers and that delivers learning outcomes at the intended QF Level; (ii) monitor and review the performance of the NLP on an ongoing basis to ensure that it remains current and valid and that the learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and student assessments are effective; and (iii) ensure that there is a clear delineation of responsibilities for all aspects of quality
6.Student Records and Information Management	(i) effective administration and management systems and procedures to ensure integrity, security, accuracy and currency of their student records, and (ii) effective arrangements for information to be shared between the local and the non-local partners.

NLP Exercise 2010

The NLP accreditation was formally launched in 2010 in the Art and Design discipline after the pilot exercise in 2009 (Lee, 2010). The 2010 exercise involved five partnerships covering 25 NLPs. Six of the learning programmes are at Master's degree level and the rest at Bachelor's level. The nature of the partnerships is as follows.

Figure 3. Partnerships in the NLP Exercise 2010

		Non-local Partners			Number of NLPs	
		UK	**US**	**Australia**	**Bachelor's**	**Master's**
Local Partners	Branch campus		1		8	6
	University extension arms			1	3	
	Non-university statutory body	3			4, 2, 2 (per partnership)	
	Total	**3**	**1**	**1**	**19**	**6**

It is noted that the US operator has prior accreditation experience while those from the UK and Australia are under an audit regime. The accreditation exercises were evaluated by five panels of expert peers with common members, i.e. one panel for each of the partnership covering all the NLPs under the same partnership. Four of the five panels were chaired by the same chairperson and the fifth one was chaired by a member of another panel. This arrangement ensures consistency in accreditation consideration for cases in the same discipline.

Accreditation Outcomes

According to prevailing accreditation policy, the accreditation outcomes can be one of the following:

Accreditation is approved at specified QF Level(s) within a stipulated validity period without any condition(s); or

Accreditation is approved at specified QF Level(s) within a stipulated validity period subject to the fulfilment by the partnership of certain condition(s) (i.e. pre-conditions and / or requirements) by the stipulated deadline(s); or

Accreditation as sought is not approved.

Pre-conditions are to be fulfilled by the partnership prior to the start of the validity period of the accreditation status while requirements are to be fulfilled by the partnership by the specified deadline(s) during the validity period.

In addition, the HKCAAVQ may put forth recommendations which are suggestions for improvement. It is at the discretion of the partnership to decide whether and how to follow up on the recommendations and to account for their actions / non-actions at subsequent re-accreditation exercise.

All five partnerships and their NLPs were approved. For the partnership, the validity period of the IE status is a standard two years period, which will be automatically extended to align with the validity period of the successfully accredited NLP and will not expire provided that the partnership continue to have their NLP successfully accredited thereafter. Details of the approval are as follows.

Figure 4. Accreditation Outcomes of NLP Exercise 2010

	NLPs	Pre-conditions	Require ments	Recommendations	Validity Period for NLP
The US operator with its branch campus in HK	All 14 programmes	Nil	Nil	1. documentation of the assessment moderation process and procedures to facilitate understanding by all teaching staff concerned	5 years
The Australian operator with a local university arm	Partnership	Nil	Nil	Renewal of Collaborative Agreement to cover all planned student	NA

	NLPs	Pre-conditions	Require ments	Recommendations	Validity Period for NLP
	One NLP#	To provide specific plans for teaching, learning and staffing resources (in PT mode)	Analysis of additional staffing, teaching and learning resources for the FT mode	cohorts within the validity period of all three NLPs.Joint development of a risk management plan for the collaboration. 1. Revisit and revise (a) unit titles to reflect the contents (b) unit a.ims, learning objectives	4 years for PT mode 3 years for FT mode*
	Two NLPs	Nil	Nil		4 years

NA - not applicable

not yet offered at the time of accreditation

* The FT mode is scheduled by the partnership to start one year later. So the shorter validity period is to align the expiry date of the learning programme for both modes (i.e. PT and FT).

	NLPs	Pre-conditions	Require ments	Recommendations	Validity Period for NLP
One UK University with a local non-university statutory body	Four NLPs	Nil	Strengthen the training in students' research skills by engaging a research coordinator to oversee the super-vision of students' research projects.	Review and provide additional staffing resources by appointing a separate programme coordinator for each of the programmes	4 years
One UK University with a local non-university statutory body	Two NLPs	Nil			4 years
One UK University with a local non-university statutory body	Two NLPs#	Submit the Final Major Project and individual results of All the students		Nil	4 years

	NLPs	Pre-conditions	Require ments	Recommendations	Validity Period for NLP
		admitted to the 2010/2011 academic year, with the external examiners' reports to demonstrate the full attainment of programme learning outcomes.			

not yet offered at the time of accreditation

Rationales for the Conditions

It was observed from accreditation reports that conditions are set in areas where the fulfilment is fundamental to the quality of the NLPs but there is not yet evidence from the partnership to demonstrate it is fully meeting the standard (i.e. new programmes). The conditions are primarily related to staffing and teaching resources, operators' input to ensure students' attainment of learning outcomes in research for honours degree programmes. It is further noted that the programmes that meet the required standards without conditions have been granted the longest validity period (5 years) in the case of the US partnership while for the Australian one the validity period was aligned with the conditionally approved programme (i.e. 4 years) so as to enable the partnership to go through the revalidation exercises at one go in four years time. The rest of the programmes with pre-conditions / requirements received 4 years validity with the exception of the full-time (FT) mode of one programme which is scheduled to start one year later than its part-time (PT) mode. The rationales for the conditions are summarised in the following table.

	NLPs	Pre-conditions	Require ments	Rtionales
The Australian operator with a local university arm	One NLP (new programme)	To provide specific plans for teaching,learning and staffing resources (in PT mode)	Analysis of additional staffing and teaching and learning resources for the FT mode	At the time of the visit, the NLP was not yet launched. Required staff and facilities were not yet in place. To support the planned implementation of the programme in PT

	NLPs	Pre-conditions	Requirements	Rtionales
The Australian operator with a local university arm	One NLP (new programme)	To provide specific plans for teaching,learning and staffing resources (in PT mode)		mode, relevant details of the facilities and staffing arrangements are required as a pre-condition prior to its operation.
			Analysis of additional staffing and teaching and learning resources for the FT mode	Likewise, for the FT mode that is planned to start one year after the PT mode, analysis of the staffing and facilities requirements are required which can be submitted after the start of the PT mode.
One UK university with a local-non university statutory body	Two NLPs (new programmes)	Submit the Final Major Project and individual results of ALL the students admitted to the 2010/2011 academic year, with the external examiners' reports to demonstrate the full attainment of programme learning outcomes.	Strengthen the training in students' research skills by engaging a research coordinator to oversee the supervision of students' research projects.	Final Major Projects were not yet available for the Panel to judge whether the intended learning outcomes can be achieved by the students at the time of accreditation. Discussion with the students showed that they had not yet demonstrated sufficient understanding of the rationale and theory that underpinned research methodology for their research projects. The two NLPs lead to honours degree awards with claimed strong emphasis on research projects.
One UK university with a local-non university statutory body	Four NLPs (prevailing programmes)	Nil	Strengthen the training in students' research skills by engaging a research coordinator to oversee the	The NLPs lead to honours degree awards with claimed strong emphasis on the development of students' professional specialist aptitudes and attitudes

	NLPs	Pre-conditions	Requirements	Rtionales
			Strengthen the training in students' research skills by engaging a research coordinator to oversee the supervision of students' research projects.	through research project. Poor referencing was exhibited in the displayed projects with low, medium and even high marks. The students have not demonstrated a sufficient understanding in planning and conducting the planned research projects.
One UK university with a local-non university statutory body	Two NLPs (revailing programmes)	Nil		The NLPs lead to honours degree awards with claimed strong emphasis on the development of students' creative potential through the research project. Poor referencing was exhibited in the displayed projects with low, medium and even high marks. The students have not demonstrated a sufficient understanding in planning and conducting the research projects.

Prior Accreditation Experience of Non-local Partners

Prior EQA experience has an impact on the understanding and performance of the partners in the accreditation exercise (Fan, Fearnside & Lee, 2011). It is apparent from this round of accreditation exercises for NLP that relevant prior EQA experience brings about positive effect and hence outcomes, i.e. approval without conditions in the case of the US partnership. It is also further observed from accreditation preparation (such as accreditation document, on-site visit) and actual performance that the US partnership demonstrated a better understanding of the nature of accreditation. That also explains the outcomes recorded in the accreditation report.

Quality Indicators that need to be addressed

From observations shared by Dr. Alan Wu, head of the HKCAAVQ NLP Team, the following are areas of quality which are considered important by the accreditation

panels when evaluating the quality of the collaboration and require further input by the partnership.

Coverage in the collaboration agreement

As the basis for collaboration, a collaboration agreement should provide sufficient coverage both in terms of breadth and substance of the division of labour, duties and responsibilities of each partner.

Control of the academic standard of the NLP(s)

The awarding body, i.e. the non-local partner, should assume and demonstrate its overall responsibility in the academic standard of the NLP through its quality assurance procedures including programme design, control and monitoring review. And the claimed practice must be demonstrated through the actual implementation of the NLP. Gaps are observed from time to time between what is on paper and what is in practice

Demonstration of Meeting the HKQF requirements

The partnership should demonstrate its ability to operate learning programmes that meet the HKQF standards. Simply stating the standard of the NLP back in the home country is insufficient evidence of its meeting the HKQF standards. Whether the HKQF standards are met or not have to be demonstrated through the quality indicators underpinning outcome-based learning programmes in totality. This is primarily the difference between registration and accreditation of NLP in Hong Kong.

Evidence of using feedback for evaluation and enhancement at c ollaboration level

Most partnerships have systems to collect feedback for enhancement at programme level. However, not many evaluate the effectiveness of the collaboration at a system level. Since effective collaboration is fundamental to the quality of the NLP, the partnership must have effective measures to evaluate and monitor the partnership.

Awareness of and attention to the needs of local staff

Local staff should have reliable and regular communication with their counterpart in the home country. It is not uncommon that local staff is deprived of such opportunities and unaware of the ethos of the awarding body and underlying principles for the delivery of the learning programme. This in turn will hamper their ability to provide students with the requisite learning experience.

Awareness of and attention to the needs of local students

Sometimes, there is too much reliance on the local operator to meet the needs of the local students and insufficient evidence that such needs are

systematically evaluated and used for continuous enhancement by the non-local partner.

Bottleneck in communication between the two partners

To facilitate communication between the two partners, it is quite common that a single point of contact is established by each of the partner to be the bridge between them. While this arrangement has an advantage of ensuring the flow of information from a proper channel, this may not be ideal from a quality assurance point of view given that checks and balances achieved via roles played by different parties at different levels may not take effect after screening of information through the single contact points. The single contact point might have also created a bottleneck in communication as those closely involved in programme quality might not have first hand information to address the issues in the first instance.

Lessons Learnt for Forthcoming Exercises in 2011

The biggest NLP accreditation exercises by discipline will take place in October 2011 to March 2012 in the Business and Management Discipline. A total of 22 partnerships have expressed interest in participation, involving 48 programmes. All the non-local operators are from either the UK or Australia, with the exception of one from Macau.

Capacity building of the operators to provide evidence corresponding to the quality indicators

To assist the operators in making preparation for the exercises, workshops have been conducted highlighting quality indicators that need to be sufficiently addressed. Standardised templates for compilation of data to address the quality issues identified above have been developed for use by the operators. This is to facilitate analysis and comparison of data as well as to help collect sufficient data for evaluation of the core quality indicators.

Capacity building of the panellists

In view of the large number of panellists (a number of them are from overseas) to be engaged, an online platform has been developed on a trial run basis for the 22 accreditation panels to facilitate sharing of information and panel discussion. To prepare the panellists for the exercises, just-in-time training is provided through this test site to cover questioning techniques at on-site visit meetings. The training materials are presented in video clips supplemented by case synopsis, scripts, analysis, notes and sample questions for meetings with different representatives. Background information about the accreditation cases as well as other relevant reference materials are also shared in the test site for their reference prior to the on-site visit. It is intended that the online platform would

help to achieve common understanding and consensus amongst the panellists to ensure consistency in accreditation consideration.

The effectiveness of the capacity building activities is to be monitored and further reviewed at the end of this round of NLP exercises.

Conclusion

There are lessons learnt from each round of NLP accreditation exercises. Such lessons learnt lead to enhancement of the NLP accreditation model and operational arrangements. Quality indicators identified as having an impact on the accreditation consideration have to be shared and understood among all parties in accreditation, including the partnerships and the panellists.

The NLP accreditation model has its own purposes to meet and possesses relevant features. Nonetheless, refinement is always feasible. With more diverse partnerships going through the process, the HKCAAVQ will certainly benefit from the experience. It is hoped that through the first rounds of NLP accreditation, the HKCAAVQ can learn and be ready for enhanced model(s) that meet(s) the needs of the sector and answer the quality questions raised by parents, students and tax payers.

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Good Practices in Quality Assurance

Ms. WS Wong*

Abstract

Identification of good practices is now considered as one of the important measures used in many Quality Assurance (QA) agencies. These practices are being identified and shared among the institutions for better quality improvement in the sector. It is the responsibility of both the QA body and the institutions to identify and promote the good practices. Joint Quality Review Committee (JQRC) of Hong Kong, which conducts institutional reviews, indentifies such practices, and also publishes the same in a handbook for promoting the practices. The paper gives an example of how good practices in quality assurance are shared and promoted to the institutions, for the purpose of improving the quality of post-secondary education in Hong Kong and promoting the spirit of professional exchange and sharing in post secondary education.

Keywords:
Quality Assurance, Quality Improvement, Good Practices

Introduction

JQRC is an independent corporate quality assurance body established in August 2005 by the Heads of Universities Committee (HUCOM) of Hong Kong constituted by the eight institutions under the aegis of the University Grants Committee (UGC). Its major function is to provide for the peer review of the quality assurance processes of the self-financed sub-degree programmes of these institutions. The eight member institutions are City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University, Lingnan University, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, The Hong Kong Institute of Education, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and The University of Hong Kong.

The major remit of JQRC is the implementation of a framework of quality assurance, based on peer review, for the Self-financed Sub-degree Programme Units of member institutions - such as the continuing education divisions and the

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community colleges established under its member institutions. The quality assurance framework employs a process of Institutional Review whereby JQRC examines the structures and processes pertaining to the quality assurance and quality improvement of programmes offered by the Self-financed Sub-degree Programme Units (SSPUs). In the Institutional Review, JQRC adopts a practice of voluntary audit trail, which may be regarded as an example of good practice.

The practice of allowing institutions to choose evidence of quality assurance builds upon the internal quality assurance mechanisms of the institutions and takes into account the self-accrediting status of the institutions, thus respecting the maturity of the institutions and their institutional culture.

JQRC is established with two major remits. The first one is the establishment of a quality assurance framework to oversee the Self-financed Sub-degree Programme Units of its member institutions. The second major remit is the promotion and sharing of good practices among member institutions. Thus, another good practice adopted by JQRC is **the promotion of good Quality Assurance practices** among the institutions reviewed by JQRC.

One of the purposes of the Institutional Reviews (IR) conducted by JQRC is the identification of Good Practices in the institutions/ Self-financed Sub-degree Programme Units (SSPUs). The good practices are identified by the IR Panel and acknowledged in the IR report. Further, these good practices are collated and resulted in the publication of a Handbook, ***Good Practices in Quality Assurance: A Handbook for the Sub-degree Sector.***

It is commonly acknowledged that quality assurance in education is both the responsibility of the QA agency and the responsibility of the institution. As quality assurance evolves, both the QA agency and the institutions become more mature, and have developed their respective good practices in quality assurance. It is important that both QA agencies and institutions identify and share their respective good practices with their counterparts.

In a globalized world, there is as much a need for competition as for sharing and learning from others.

Using the Audit Trail and Examining Evidence

The Institutional Review (IR) is the major tool employed in JQRC's quality assurance framework. While the review process is similar to many other reviews conducted by similar agencies, JQRC has adopted a voluntary audit trail approach which is evidence-based, and which builds upon the internal quality assurance mechanisms of the institutions and takes into account the self-accrediting status of the institutions.

The Institutional Review (IR) is the second stage in a two-stage review process, preceded by the Preview. While the Preview examines general quality assurance practices across all member institutions, the IR is conducted on an individual institutional basis. Through the IR, JQRC examines the structures and processes pertaining to the quality assurance and quality improvement of programmes offered by the Self-financed Sub-degree Programme Units (SSPUs). The review focuses on institution-wide (or unit-wide) structures and process rather than individual programmes. However, the Self-financed Sub-degree Programme Units are also required, as part of the self evaluation, to submit evidence pertaining to the implementation of their quality assurance systems, by providing **an audit trail of selected programme(s)**. They may select one or more programmes and submit documentation relating to different aspects that the selected programme(s) has gone through: such as the programme design and approval process, programme delivery, monitoring of programme quality, re-approval process, external review, etc.

The merit of the practice is that institutions/SSPUs have the liberty to choose the programmes and the type of evidence for the audit trail. Through this, they are encouraged to conduct self evaluation of how well they have implemented their QA systems. By selecting the programme(s) and the evidence for submission to JQRC, they also have a better sense of participation in the Institutional Review exercise.

Purposes of the Audit Trail

Thus the purpose of the practice is to require institutions to provide instances of the implementation of their quality assurance system, by choosing and submitting evidence pertaining to the quality assurance of one or more selected programmes. The more extensive objectives are:

- Providing evidence for the review of quality assurance processes in the Institutional Review (IR), rendering it an evidence-based process
- Providing the basis for comparison in any follow-up reviews, through the records of evidence
- Allowing institutions/units to select evidence for submission and thus encouraging active institutional participation in the IR process
- Encouraging institutions/units to conduct self-evaluation when selecting the evidence
- Promoting the practice of documentation of QA processes in the institutions

It may be said that the primary objective of the audit trail is the provision of supporting evidence for the functioning of the QA system. The evidence provides

support for the claims of the institution regarding the effectiveness of its QA system, enabling the QA body to examine the evidence and formulate conclusions about the claims. However, the effects of encouraging institutional participation and institutional self-evaluation are additional outcomes, and as such may be regarded as part of the intended objectives.

Types of Evidence

The type of evidence of the audit trail provided by institutions may include, inter alia:

- Internal validation reports
- Programme proposals/applications for approval of new programmes
- Minutes of committees involved in the programme approval, implementation, and monitoring processes
- Minutes of meetings of advisory bodies/meetings with external advisors
- External examiners' reports
- Reports of external evaluation/professional accreditation
- Results of teaching evaluation
- Teaching/post-teaching reports from lecturers
- Annual programme reports/departmental reports
- Annual Quality Assurance reports
- Quality Assurance manuals/guidelines
- Terms of reference and membership of committees involved in QA processes/ governing bodies

The above are examples of the type and nature of evidence which may be supplied by the institution, but the availability or the relevance of these depend certainly on the QA processes employed, or the programmes selected for the audit trail. The QA Body should not have any pre-determined list of required documents, although there can be a suggested list. Nevertheless, after the institution provides the document trail, JQRC may request for additional documents related to the paper trail, such as documents related to certain parts or missing parts of the QA process; or relevant internal regulations, statistics, among others.

Interpretation of Evidence

From the QA Body's point of view, the audit trail of programmes provides good clues for evaluating the QA system of an institution: whether the system is appropriate and robust for the institution and the type of programmes offered; whether the QA systems are functioning effectively to safeguard and/or improve

quality. This requires close examination and interpretation of the evidence: requiring analysis, comparison and corroboration, and for this to be done in the context of the nature, background and characteristics of the institution or unit concerned. The following show some of the conclusions which may be drawn from the QA documentation and review process:

- Through an audit trail of the different QA processes, to verify the QA processes, as claimed, or stated in QA manuals, are actually followed
- Records of meetings, reports etc. are able to show the level and complexity of discussion and the issues raised
- The documentation is able to show whether the functions of various committees and officers are actually carried out according to the stated terms of reference or remit
- A comparison of information in different documents/types of evidence can show consistency or inconsistency in information provided
- The documentation can show whether there are follow-up actions and whether the QA cycle is complete
- The evidence facilitates comparison across units and across institutions

An actual example of an audit trail of documents submitted to JQRC for an Institutional Review is provided in the Table below.

Example of Audit Trail of Documents for a Sub-degree Programme		
Professional Diploma in Management		
Minutes of Programme Planning Committee	)	
Minutes of School Board meeting	)	
Extract of minutes of Education Committee	)	Program design & Approval
Extract of minutes of Academic Board meeting	)	
Report on internal Faculty consultation	)	
Extract of minutes of Board for sub-degrees	)	
Letter of approval from Senate	)	
Minutes of Programme Advisory Committee	)	
Minutes of Programme Examinations Committee	)	Implementation & Monitoring
Course & Teaching Evaluation Report on the Professional Diploma	)	
Annual Programme Review Report on the Professional Diploma	)	

The practice of audit trail has the advantage that no additional resources are required except for the manpower required to collate relevant documentation on the part of the institution, for submission to the QA Body. On the part of the QA Body, it requires expertise for collecting and interpreting the evidence submitted. For this, JQRC's reviews are supported by experienced academics and senior administrators on the IR Panels and a professional secretariat. The collection and interpretation of evidence are carried out through submission and correspondence prior to the site visit, as well as through interactive dialogue during the site visit.

JQRC has completed the first cycle of IR and has found it useful to examine the audit trail whereby it is able to evaluate how well SSPUs have adhered to their quality assurance systems. Experience in the first cycle of IR shows that the practice is an effective tool which is also well accepted by the institutions. JQRC is able to base its findings and recommendations upon the documentation supplied by the paper trail, as verified during the site visit, which provides solid evidence to support the findings.

Identification and Sharing of Institutional Good Practices

The second remit is being achieved through the Institutional Reviews (IR) conducted by JQRC. Good practices are identified by the IR Panel, and there is a section in the IR report which records the good practices. The aim is to encourage institutions/SSPUs to develop good practices in quality assurance and share these within their institution and with other institutions.

The objectives of identifying Good Practices are:

- Encouraging institutions to develop good practices
- Encouraging institutions to conduct self evaluation for identifying the good practices, and evaluating the merit and usefulness of the good practice
- Encouraging and facilitating institutions to share good practices internally
- Compiling a collection of good practices for dissemination and sharing among institutions

Identification of Good Practices during Institutional Review
There are two phases in the identification and collection of good practices from institutions. The first phase is conducted through JQRC's Institutional Reviews.

JQRC has a remit to conduct reviews of the quality assurance processes adopted by member institutions over their self-financed sub-degree programmes. Through conducting Institutional Reviews (IR), JQRC examines the structures

and processes pertaining to the quality assurance and quality improvement of self-financed sub-degree programmes. During the Institutional Review, the good practices are identified. Firstly, in the **Self evaluation** documentation, the Self-financed Sub-degree Programme Units (SSPUs) are asked to select and report on good practices adopted in their Units and provide evidence of such good practices. Then, during the process of review by the IR Panel and the **site visit**, the Panel would further identify good practices if these are not already selected by the SSPU. Finally, the IR Panel would deliberate upon the proposed and the identified good practices to select a final list and include these in a section on Good Practices in the **Institutional Review Report**.

Handbook on Good Practices

The second phase has been conducted through the collation of good practices from a wider group of institutions, including institutions outside the remit of JQRC, in a collaborative project commissioned by the Education Bureau of the Government of Hong Kong S.A.R., resulting in the publication of a Handbook on good practices, Good Practices in Quality Assurance: ***A Handbook for the Sub-degree Sector.*** As described in the Message from the JQRC Chairman in the Handbook, "*JQRC…. strongly believe that appropriate and rigorous internal quality assurance mechanisms at our member institutions are key drivers of long-term success and the guarantee of quality……The Handbook aims to share within the sub-degree sector the essential quality assurance principles and key elements of good practices. This aligns well with one of the key objectives of the JQRC: the sharing of good practices among institutions for the mutual enhancement of quality.*"

The good practices cited in the Handbook are sourced from the Institutional Reviews conducted by JQRC as well as solicited directly from other institutions outside JQRC's remit. JQRC was appointed as the Professional Consultant for the Handbook, responsible for the collation and compilation of the work. The Handbook focuses on good practices in quality assurance at both institutional and programme level. Published in 2009, the Handbook is distributed both in printed and electronic forms.

Good Practices cited in the Handbook are categorized into the following areas:

- Vision, Mission and Planning
- Governance and Management
- Programme Design, Approval, Monitoring and Review
- Teaching, Learning and Learner Support
- Assessment of Learning Outcomes

- ❖ Collaborative Arrangements, Professional Programmes and Professional Accreditation
- ❖ Resources, Staffing and Infrastructure

Institutions are found to be very responsive to the call to put forth examples of good practices in quality assurance. During the JQRC Institutional Reviews, some Units have conducted detailed self evaluation to identify lists of good practices together with evaluations of the impact of the practices.

JQRC's IR Reports, containing examples of the good practices, are disseminated to heads of institutions and heads of the community colleges/ continuing education divisions; thus the good practices are expected to be disseminated and shared internally. On the other hand, the **Handbook** on good practices is more widely distributed and available to a wide range of stakeholders including front-line teachers and administrators. Thus it is expected to further assist the dissemination of good practices. The Handbook not only promotes good practice in quality assurance, but also promotes the spirit of professional exchange and sharing in post-secondary education.3

As pointed out by the Secretary for Education in the Handbook, "*This Handbook rightly makes the point that one size does not fit all. There is no one single quality assurance process that befits each and every post-secondary education institution in Hong Kong. However, there are universal basic principles and practical ways of assuring teaching and learning quality that the institutions can share among themselves and learn from each other.*" *Thus, it is both the spirit of sharing, and the spirit of diversity, which underpin the dissemination of Good Practices in the post-secondary education sector in Hong Kong.*

The views as expressed in this paper are the personal views of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Joint Quality Review Committee.

Building Quality Culture: Role of IQA & EQA in India

B. S. Ponmudiraj*

Abstract

Trends in students enrolment in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in India and other countries is increasing over the years. Students attend HEIs not only for undergraduate, postgraduate and research studies but also for certificate, pre-diploma, diploma, post diploma, advanced diploma courses/programmes of studies. The Universities and Colleges - HEIs in India offer a variety of programmes for students to choose from. Right from the establishment of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), the External Quality Assurance (EQA) Agency in India has been propagating the philosophy of building quality culture among Universities and Colleges - HEIs through Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) structures, mechanisms and processes. The general philosophy being quality in HEIs is the responsibility of HEIs themselves. It is not the responsibility of EQA. EQA facilitates HEIs to establish IQA processes. EQA promotes the concept of IQA in order to assure quality to its stakeholders. The concept propagated by NAAC in order to sustain quality culture and enhance quality among HEIs has grown by leaps and bounds. The role of EQA complementing IQA through different ways and means is solely to support Universities and Colleges. The impact of NAAC among Universities and Colleges to imbibe the quality culture has been seen through the last 17 years after NAAC establishment. With the prime agenda to assess and accredit institutions of higher learning in India through a combination of self and external assessment processes, NAAC has been successful in building quality culture, the buzzword among Universities and Colleges in India. NAAC not only assesses and accredits but also grade HEIs based on their overall performance. This conceptual paper clearly explains the role EQA which has complemented the role of IQA in Universities and Colleges in India.

Keywords: Quality Culture, IQA and EQA

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Introduction

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) established on 16th September 1994 with headquarters at Bangalore, India is an External Quality Assurance (EQA) Agency. It is created as an autonomous institution of the University Grants Commission (UGC) by 12ccc of the UGC Act 1956 as an inter-university centre. NAAC comes under the purview of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) of the Government of India. The objectives of NAAC are to assess and accredit Universities and Colleges in India and to grade them. After assessing around 6000 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in India over the last 17 years, the picture of the EQA and its role among HEIs almost fully emerged out. Not only EQA but the role of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) processes in Universities and Colleges has received more and more overwhelming responses.

Though there are other EQA agencies in India viz., Accreditation Board (AB) of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) for assessing agricultural education in the country; National Board of Accreditation (NBA) of the All India Council for Technical Education which does programme accreditation exclusively for technical education in India; Distance Education Council (DEC) of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) - assessment and accreditation / norm and standards for Open and Distance Learning (ODL); NAAC does institutional accreditation for Universities and Colleges separately who volunteer to get themselves assessed and accredited. Accreditation, the final outcome of assessment is a quality stamp which is valid for five years from the date of its certification. After five years all HEIs have to undergo the process of assessment and accreditation for the second time called Reaccreditation or second cycle. NAAC so far completed third cycle of assessment and accreditation. Now venturing into the fourth cycle in the coming years for a few institutions.

NAAC has spent over three years time after its establishment to commence the process of onsite visit for Universities and Colleges. The initial phase of three or four years of NAAC has been challenging in the development of manuals, guidelines, etc. both for IQA in HEIs and for EQA. The process of accreditation by NAAC as stated in its vision and mission is a combination of self and external assessment.

As a philosophy and now as a matured EQA, NAAC has been propagating the importance of IQA right from its beginning of its operations. NAAC has developed guidelines for different levels of HEIs viz., Affiliated/Constituent Colleges, Autonomous Colleges and Universities.

Over the years and still NAAC continues to support IQA in Universities and Colleges through different ways. The clear impact which has been seen is that the

success stories of IQA have resulted in success of the HEIs itself. Either through first cycle, second cycle (Reaccreditation) or third cycle of assessment and accreditation, NAAC could clearly see the policy perspectives of HEIs, documentation culture, participative management approaches in decision-making process and in overall performance of the HEIs itself the role IQA has played and found itself in a proactive position thus complementing EQA.

NAAC takes the fine-tuning process of the methodology per se and in guidelines and manuals for IQA and EQA as Higher Education itself changing across. There is a shift in focus and IQA and EQA processes adapts to the ever changing scenario of higher education.

Role of IQA

One of the contributions NAAC has made is informing all HEIs to establish an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC). Right from the establishment of NAAC, as a philosophy NAAC has been instrumental in encouraging all Universities and Colleges to establish IQA processes. First few years, NAAC has exclusively developed guidelines for the operations of the IQA. This concept has been recently informed by the UGC to all HEIs to establish IQAC. In fact, UGC has also made a financial budget to encourage IQAC in HEIs, which are covered under their provision. Earlier NAAC has developed the guidelines and informed HEIs as how to establish IQAC and the processes of IQA in Universities and Colleges. Secondly fine-tuning the processes of assessment and accreditation manuals and guidelines had happened over the years through the learning process of IQA. These guidelines categorically mention the benefits of effective functioning of IQA.

Time and again NAAC has stressed the importance of IQA especially in documentation of the processes of quality. Not only documentation, but also imbibing the quality culture and institutionalizing quality principles through IQA is one of the essences of NAAC. A year was dedicated by the NAAC to celebrate IQA in Universities and Colleges in India. IQA has been viewed as part of a capacity building exercise for quality. Many interaction meetings have taken place among the IQA of different HEIs across the country. This in fact has built up more IQACs among Universities and Colleges. More and more these continuous interactions among IQA have helped in sharing of good practices among HEIs. A couple of Universities even initiated a separate department for IQA with full-fledged faculty members.

Twenty-six state governments have also established State Level Quality Assurance Cells (SQACs) as per NAAC guidelines for establishment of SQACs. NAAC supports these SQACs so that in turn they can help all HEIs in particular Colleges under the State to promote Quality culture. There are dedicated

members in each SQACs for its effective functioning. Other than preparing the Colleges for undergoing the process of assessment and accreditation by NAAC, the SQACs has role of promotion of IQA in Colleges. Some states have proactively propagated IQA in Colleges by way of giving them financial incentives to public Colleges under the State. Over the years NAAC has conclave of SQACs so that all SQACs share their good practices and a yearly analysis of each SQACs against their met out plans. The outcomes of these conclaves have been brought out as publication for wider dissemination.

Most of the good HEIs, now bring out a separate IQA newsletter from their HEIs. These IQA newsletters of HEIs are widely circulated among the IQAs of other HEIs for sharing purposes. This is a helping platform for much broader plethora of discussions among IQAs of Universities and Colleges.

Role of EQA

EQA has been complementing in building quality culture in Universities and Colleges in India. More than seventy percent of the accredited higher education institutions have established IQA in their institutions. NAAC as an EQA not only promotes establishment of IQA but also encourage them by way of making platform to share good practices among the HEIs. NAAC also supports HEIs for giving them financial incentives to organize seminar, conferences, workshops, symposia, exhibitions, etc. especially on IQA. This concept of supporting IQA has tremendously facilitated other HEIs to institutionalize good practices and carry forward building of quality culture.

Resources have been developed out of these platforms as a good number of publications. NAAC has published a good number of articles and booklets for wider dissemination of good practices of IQA among Universities and Colleges. These publications are all available free of cost for wider circulation. And all these documents are also available in the NAAC website for free downloads. The State Level Quality Assurance Cells (SQACs) has helped IQA and in particular EQA for cascading effect of quality culture in Universities and Colleges in India. For all the programmes organized by the SQACs in order to build quality culture among Universities and Colleges in particular Colleges, not only financial resources but human resources are supported by the EQA, NAAC. SQACs have played a significant role in helping EQA in order to attain its mission.

Therefore, there are two levels of operations to build quality culture among HEIs in India. At both the levels EQA complements IQA. Firstly operations through SQACs and secondly through IQACs of HEIs. As on today in addition to these sufficient support from the University Grants Commission (UGC) is flowing towards IQA in HEIs.

One could clearly see the greatest value addition the EQA has made for IQA in order to build the quality culture among the Universities and Colleges in India is the yearly analysis of performance evaluation of the HEIs. Every functional IQACs is expected to submit an Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR) to NAAC. This is one way for any EQA to continuously facilitate IQA activities. In fact, quite a few good HEIs upload their AQARs in their Institutional website domain. Some of the HEIs go beyond by hosting the first cycle peer team report and successive AQARs as a self-imposed public disclosure system of them.

Conclusion

Over the last 17 years, India has seen a clear quality culture map among Universities and Colleges across the length and breadth of the country. Thanks to NAAC for not only assessing and accrediting institutions of higher learning in India but also as a corollary was able to carry forward building quality culture in HEIs. This has happened by the very concept of IQA. Also by way of philosophy, quality and level of quality of any HEIs rests with the Institution and not with EQA. EQA agency was able to diagnose, measure and could benchmark each HEI against standards. The process of building quality culture continues through a combination IQA and EQA. As categorically discussed EQA compliments IQA in all process activities of building quality culture. NAAC stands for relevance, credibility and excellence and the same has been propagated for all HEIs in India to be imbibed in order to build quality culture.

An analysis of Certified Evaluation and Accreditation of Universities by examining the evaluation reports

Susumu SHIBUI*, Masaaki IDA**

Abstract

There is an increasing demand for university evaluation to assure the quality of higher education. NIAD-UE has conducted "Certified Evaluation and Accreditation" for universities, junior colleges, colleges of technology, and law schools since FY2005. Certified Evaluation and Accreditation plays an important role in improving the quality of education, research, and other activities of the higher education institutions.

To maintain the quality of the evaluation system, it is necessary to improve the quality of quality assurance system as a meta-evaluation examining the past evaluation continuously. It is important to clear and visualize what is going on under the judgment of the peer-review process. In this paper, we analyzed the relationship between self-assessments reports submitted by universities and evaluation reports reflecting the evaluators' judgment.

As a method, the numbers of "Good Practices" and "Needed Improvements" in each report from FY2005 to FY2009 Certified Evaluation and Accreditation for Universities performed by NIAD-UE in Japan were counted. The contents of the description in each point were also analyzed.

Results showed that the number of "Good Practices" and "Needed Improvements" in the self-assessment reports was higher than those in the evaluation reports in general. The differences of the proportion of "Good Practices" to "Needed Improvements" between the self-assessment reports and evaluation reports were also revealed. Some standards showed different tendencies from the overall tendencies. The characteristics of the evaluation are discussed based on these data.

Keywords: Quality Evaluation, Good Practices, Need for Improvements

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1. Introduction

There is an increasing demand for improving the quality of the quality assurance system by verifying the past evaluation. This practice is called as the meta-evaluation and is used to assess the effectiveness of the evaluation being carried out and the evaluator's performance. In this paper, the analysis of the verification of the Certified Evaluation and Accreditation in Japan from the past evaluation reports and self-assessment reports are reported.

NIAD-UE has conducted Certified Evaluation and Accreditation for universities, junior colleges, colleges of technology, and law schools since FY2005. The Certified Evaluation and Accreditation is a system unique to Japanese quality assurance. Its name has three meanings, Certified (by Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, MEXT), Accreditation (to assess whether a university fulfils the Standards), and Evaluation (to promote the quality enhancement of education and research) by third-party organizations. The standards for Evaluation and Accreditation in NIAD-UE are shown in Table1.

Table1. Standards for Evaluation and Accreditation in NIAD-UE (FY2005-2011).

Standard 1	**Purpose of the University**	Standard 2	**Education and Research Structure**
Standard 3	**Academic Staff and Education Supporting Staff**	Srandard 4	**Student Admission**
Standard 5	**Academic Programs**	Standard 6	**Effectiveness of Institutional Performance**
Standard 7	**Student Support**	Standard 8	**Facilities**
Standard 9	**Internal Quality Assurance System**	Standard10	**Finance**
Standard11	**Management**		

NIAD-UE has used the questionnaire surveys on evaluation methods to review and verify the appropriateness of the evaluations every year. The surveys are targeted at the institutions that were evaluated as well as the external evaluators who were responsible for these evaluations. These results of the questionnaires includes the effective and appropriate practices of the evaluation process and arrangements, matters that should improve or continue to discuss for further development of the evaluation framework, samples of institutions' actions taken to address their improvements identified in the evaluation reports, and samples of NIAD-UE's actions taken in response to the questionnaire results (e.g. updating the standards for evaluation and accreditation, simplifying the method of site visit, etc.).

On the other hand, some limitations of this analysis exist because those analyses are based on the subjective answer of the Questionnaires. In this study, as an objective approach, analysis of the past evaluation reports was performed. The verification approach by analyzing the past evaluation reports are performed in some countries (e.g. The QAA, 2008). The characteristic of our study is based not only on the evaluation reports but also on the relationship with the self-assessments reports.

The aim of this study is to visualize the relationship between the self-assessments reports and evaluation reports as one of the material to discuss the new evaluation system. The first cycle of the evaluation performed by NIAD-UE ends in FY2011 and new system begins at FY2012. To sum up the past evaluation and construct the new system, it is necessary to examine the data resulting from the past evaluation bringing the transitional change into view. We have performed the analysis over the "Good Practices" and "Needed Improvements" in self-assessments reports and evaluation reports in multiple years of the first cycle.

2. Method

2.1. Data of the Evaluation Reports

A part of the evaluation reports and self-assessments reports of the Certified Evaluation and Accreditation performed in Japan from FY2005-2009 by NIAD-UE was extracted for the analysis. The number of universities was 95 (77 National, 15 Public, 3 Private). In this reports, the "Good Practices" and "Needed Improvements" were reported by universities and evaluators for each university in the end of each of the 11 Standards. The data of the self-assessments reports and evaluation reports are open to public in the website of the NIAD-UE (NIAD-UE, 2011).

2.2. Process of the Analysis

The number of "Good Practices" and "Needed Improvements" is counted both in self-assessments reports and evaluation reports for each standard. There were various formats on the descriptions for writing the "Good Practices" and "Needed Improvements" especially in the self-assessments reports because there was no definite format for universities. So, it was necessary to standardize the descriptions before counting. In the process, the sentences of the "Good Practices" and "Needed Improvements" are examined in their meanings and compiled into viewpoints level. The viewpoints are the reference points and example data listed under each evaluation standard for subject institutions to refer to when implementing self-assessment. The process to examine the meanings was manually done referring the

definition of the viewpoints by 3 people who have experienced for university evaluation and psychological text analysis. The relationship between the self-assessments reports and the evaluation reports on the "Good Practices" and "Needed Improvements" were analyzed.

3. Results and Discussion

The appearance of each description for standards was counted (Figure1).

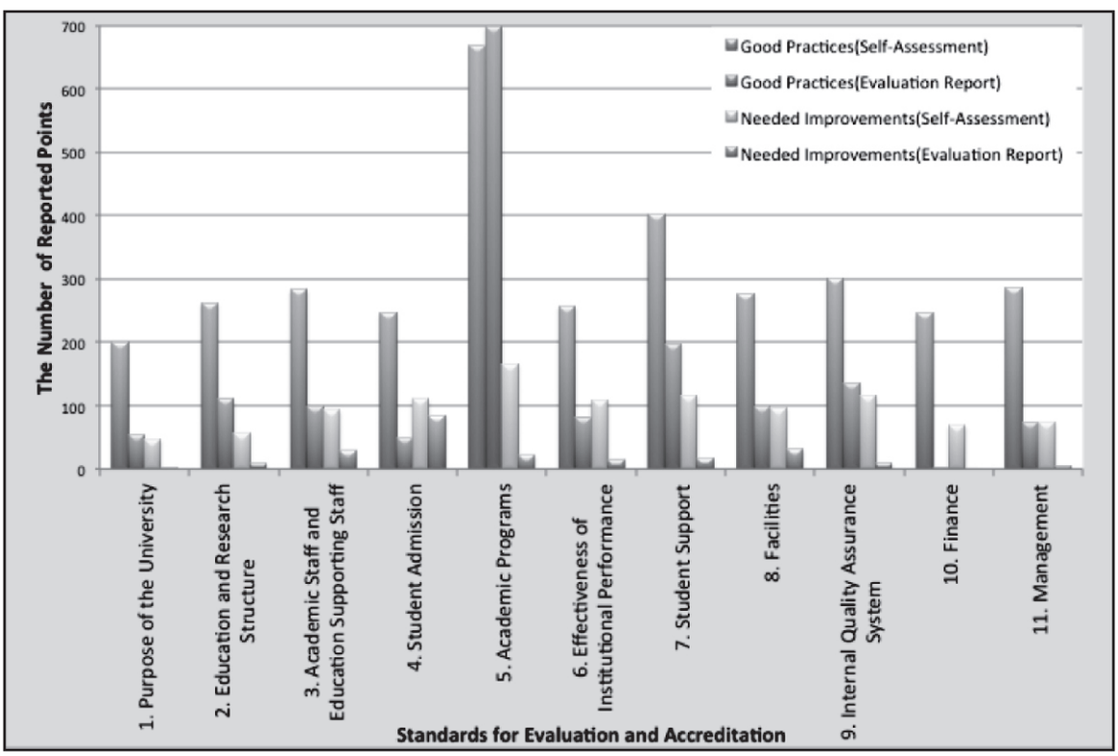

Figure1. The appearance of "Good Practices" and "Needed Improvements".

Two (self-assessments reports or evaluation reports) by two (Good Practices or Needed Improvements) chi-square tests were adopted to examine the proportion for judgments. In the overall tendencies, significant difference was shown in reporting the points between universities and evaluators (x^2=99.47, df=1, p<.001, Table2). This indicates that universities report the needed improvements more positively than evaluators.

Table2. The cross-table of subjects and reported points for overall conditions.

		Reported Points	
		Good Practices	Needed Improvements
Subjects	Universities	3430	1053
	Evaluators	1597	225

In addition to the analysis of the overall conditions, the same tests were adopted for each condition of the standards except for standards 1 and 10 because there were not enough observations to perform the analysis in the standards 1 and 10. For the standard2 (x^2=7.48, df=1, p<.01), standard5 (x^2=101.19, df=1, p<.01), standard6 (x^2=8.19, df=1, p<.01), standard7 (x^2=20.57, df=1, p<.01), standard9 (x^2=26.73, df=1, p<.01), and standard 11 (x^2=7.48, df=1, p<.01), significant difference was shown. The tendency was the same as the overall condition that universities report the needed improvements more positively than evaluators. On the other hand, for the standard3 (x^2=.0007, df=1, p=.98) and standard 8 (x^2=.088, df=1, p=.77), there were no significant difference. For the standard4 (x^2=38.21, df=1, p<.01), significant difference was shown. But the tendency was contrary to the overall condition.

From these analyses, we can see that in the overall condition, significant difference was shown in the proportion of judging the "Good Practices" and "Needed Improvements" between the universities and evaluators. On the standards 3, 4, and 8, "Needed Improvements" were described positively by the evaluators to some extent. There are common tendencies in these three standards that these standards have the objectively measurable indicators and based on the concretely understandable objects like improving the facilities. This indicates that evaluators can point out the "Needed Improvements" strictly for the standards with the objectively measurable indicators.

4. Conclusion

The process of the evaluation was visualized by analyzing the universities and evaluator's judgment process for the evaluation. This information could be useful to construct the evaluation system for the future. To perform the evaluation strictly, the need for collecting the data by objectively measurable database for some standards was suggested. In FY2012, the standards for evaluation and accreditation have revised for the second cycle as shown Table 3. For the furth research, it is worth comparing the data of the second cycle to the data given in this research to verify the appropriateness of evaluation by means of objective tendency of the evaluator's judgments.

Table3. Standards for Evaluation and Accreditation in NIAD-UE (FY2012-).

Standard 1	**Mission of the University**	Standard 2	**Teaching and Research Structure**
Standard 3	**Academic Staff and Education Supporting Staff**	Srandard 4	**Student Admission**
Standard 5	**Academic Programs**	Standard 6	**Learning Outcomes**
Standard 7	**Facilities and Student Support**	Standard 8	**Internal Quality Assurance System of Teaching and Learning**
Standard 9	**Finance and Management**	Standard10	**Public Information on Teaching and Learning**

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Capacity Building for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) in Nepal

Prof. Bhola N. Pokharel* and Prof. Kanhaiya B. Mathema**

Abstract

Nepal is undergoing through rapid changes in terms of higher education development. There has been a very rapid growth in the number of higher education institutions and in the student enrolment. Ensuring quality and relevance of the higher education programs, effectiveness and efficiency in management of the institutions, and expansion of access with equity and inclusion are the major concerns of higher education development in the country. Addressing the challenges demands a robust system of quality assurance and accreditation. The challenge is building the capacity in terms of human resource, funding sources, as well as institutional set up in a sustainable way. For this, Nepal is endeavouring to enhance the capacity for establishing a viable QAA system in the country. This paper has been prepared for presentation in the APQN Conference on February 2012 in Siem Reap Angkor. It lists the issues of higher education development, QAA efforts and the capacity development in the country. The paper is expected to initiate a discussion in system development and to accruing feedback for the enhancement of the QAA system in Nepal at institutional and individual levels.

Keywords: Capacity Building-Quality Assurance and Accreditation

Introduction

Higher Education Development and Issues of Quality

Development of modern education system, higher education in particular started rather late in Nepal, the first college , Tri-Chandra College was established in 1918 and Tribhuvan University, the first university, in 1958. By 1965 there were about 15000 students enrolled in 5 government supported colleges and 51 colleges run by public (communities). Ever since, there has been a very rapid expansion of higher education enrolment and correspondingly expansion in the number of higher education institutions in the country. At present there are nine universities and three higher education academies.

* University Grants Commission, Nepal

** University Grants Commission, Nepal

According to UGC EMIS, in 2009/10, total HE enrolment was 376,869, studying in a system consisting of 6 universities, their 81 constituent campuses, and 886 campuses affiliated to them. Many of the affiliated campuses, 587 are set up and operated by private entrepreneurs and are called private campuses. The other 289 are established and operated by concerned members of local communities which mobilized resources from local bodies, government, donors and people. The growth in affiliated community as well as private campuses is rather very rapid in the recent years, in the last five years there has been an average annual growth in institutions by 16.6%. The average annual growth in enrolment in the period is about 21.4%. Despite the growth in the number of the institutions and the student enrolment, Nepal is still far behind in terms of Gross Enrolment Ratio, which in 2009 was 13.1% as compared to the world average of 26% . The expansions of numbers of enrolment and institutions will therefore continue.

The developments of higher education institutions and enrolment expansion in the country have taken place without a system to ensure quality norms and standards. Also, there is no viable mechanism to monitor the quality of higher education institutions in the country. Consequently the institutions have come up in a multitude of quality status - many of them are in poor conditions. Particularly, many of the private institutions are setup on commercial motives and the parents, students as well as others are concerned. The concerns are regarding whether the infrastructures are appropriate and adequate, whether the environment meet the academic essences, whether the governance and management are appropriate, whether the teaching learning activities meet universal academic standards, whether students get guidance and counselling support, and whether the institution operate in transparent way and that the information are circulated appropriately. Obviously the concerns converge towards the issue of the lack of a QAA system.

QAA Efforts in Nepal

Concerned with the need to establish a system to ensure quality of higher education institutions as well as to monitor them on periodic basis the government listed formation of Quality Assurance and Accreditation system in the 10th national development plan (2002-07), University Grants Commission (UGC) using the authority provided in its regulation formed Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee and Quality Assurance and Accreditation Division to work as its secretariat. A QAA Technical Committee was also formed to facilitate QAA work. The QAA setup is permanent functional entity to undertake quality assurance and accreditation of higher education programs and institutions. The Accreditation Division is responsible for regular activities related to QAA which include organizing dialogues with various stakeholders, supporting peer reviewers, preparing draft QAA criteria and benchmarks, QAA guidelines and manual for self-evaluation, planning self-assessments in various

institutions. Previously, particularly during the 1980s, there was no such system of QAA in higher education system in Nepal.

The establishment of QAA system in the country is a part of the Second Higher Education Project, a national reform initiative supported by the World Bank. It is being piloted through some selected institutions not as discriminatory evaluation system but as confidence building measure towards achieving and sustaining better quality. The participating institutions of higher education on voluntary basis take self initiatives for quality self assessment and submit for peer review. The peer review team makes critical examination of the self study report and make field based observation towards completing the assessment diagnostically and make suggestions for quality enhancement in line with the criteria and indicators of QAA system.

QAA Approach in Nepal

In Nepal QAA is a new concept and thus is in a formative stage. The regulatory provisions in the country for establishment of higher education institutions or implementing programs do not list standardized criteria and benchmarks except in the case of technical and professional programs under respective professional councils (Annex 1).

Universities, their constituent Institutes, Campuses and Departments, as well as the affiliated colleges are covered by the QAA system in the country. Since most of the institutions have been established without the basis of QAA standard, joining and completing the QAA process has been felt as a challenging task. Therefore, motivation, facilitation and support are the key aspects of the strategy taken by UGC to ensure meaningful participation of the institutions in the QAA system.

Some of the QAA accomplishments

The structure and provisions for operations of QAA system have been established. The QAA Committee has been formed and a Technical committee has also been formed. A Roster of Experts for Peer Review has been prepared along with the guidelines for QAA system.

The QAA process has been piloted through selected institutions participating on voluntary basis under this system. More importantly, the personnel of concerned institutions are given orientation on preparation of self study report (SSR). Some of the institutions have already prepared SSRs. Accordingly, Peer Review Teams have been formed which have undertaken the observation visit followed by the final assessment of the concerned institutions and feedbacks have been passed out to them.

Six institutions have completed QAA cycle, one institution has been already accredited another on the final stage, while four others are in the process. Public

** UIS (GED 2010)*

announcement has been made through appropriate media about the call for Letter of Intent for the new institutions. Such call has been responded positively by the new institutions and 18 institutions have shown their interest for the same.

QAAD has been conducting dissemination and orientation programs for institutions which are likely to participate in the QAA cycle. Recently, the division has conducted such program on 4th November 2011. The division also conducts training and orientation for resource persons who could be the member of Peer review team for the evaluation of the SSR, which is supposed to be submitted by the participating institutions. The division undergoes in consultation with universities and professional councils with respect to the participation in QAA cycle on technical subjects.

Another important achievement is the establishment of the QAA Board, an independent body for QAA in the country. The UGC Nepal expects to enhance its QAA capacity through participation in APQN activities. In this regard, APQN workshop participation, participation in attachment program and other training programs are important for UGC. It is expected that it would also help promote networking with other QAA bodies.

Major Tasks of QAA Capacity Building

The major tasks in the process of QAA capacity building are related with the preparation of criteria wise benchmarks, facilitation to the institutions for self assessment and SSR preparation, review of SSR by QAA division, facilitating review by experts (PRT), training/orientation, building QAA awareness/dissemination, counselling, record keeping/information system, publications, and website operation. Some of these are already in the process.

The QAA capacity building in Nepal need to cover both institutional and personnel capacity enhancement. Institutional capacity building is concerned with infrastructure, networking, collaboration (national and international) and human resource development. Similarly, personnel development is associated with the development of the expertise, personnel management and experiences of the division staffs which is coupled with the pool of resource persons and mobilization of the available human resource at its disposal. It is also necessary for the QAA office to expand with additional personnel with expertise in the field of QAA. Also there is a continued need for support of expert technical advisor.

Relevance to the Conference Theme

The main theme of the 2012 Asia-Pacific Quality Network Conference is **External quality assurance in the Asia- Pacific: what has changed over the decade?**

The topic has its relevance in the context of changed practices of QAA in Nepal. It is already a core concern and focus of higher education in the country. At the

initial phase UGC itself has to select the higher education institutions for the participation in the QAA process. With the development of QAA system, the institutions themselves have started to show interest in upgrading their teaching- learning and research process by participating in the QAA cycle.

UGC has become successful in motivating the HEIs for participation in the QAA system. This conference will help the QAA system in Nepal at various levels such as institutional, individual and system development. At institutional level this conference will help widen our vision with respect to QAA system itself. At the individual level it enhances the skill of the concerned person of QAA system which ultimately would strengthen the whole system of quality assurance and accreditation in the country.

Final Recollections

In the previous days little was known about QAA in the regime of higher education in the country. The development of HEIs in the country has taken place without a system to ensure quality norms and standards. Nepal is endeavouring to enhance the capacity for establishing a viable QAA system in the country. It is inevitable to emphasize that QAA system in Nepal is at the early formative stage. Nepal is moving towards this direction with the process of 'learning by doing'.

Therefore, motivation, facilitation and support are key aspects of the strategy to ensure meaningful participation of the institutions in QAA system. Accordingly, eighteen Campuses have submitted their letter of intent to inter into the system. It has been rightly discerned by the accreditation of one Campus and three others are in the pipeline while two Peer Review Teams will be formed in the near future. Nevertheless, it is our conviction that our steps are closer and closer to our goal. These developments can rightly be taken as the changes that are being discerned towards the QAA process in the country over the decade. However, there is a considerable way to move forward in this direction.

Annex 1

QAA Related Professional Councils in Nepal

1. Nepal Medical Council (NMC)
2. Nepal Engineering Council (NEC)
3. Nepal Nursing Council (NNC)
4. Nepal Ayurvedic Medical Council
5. Nepal Health Professional council (NHPC)
6. Nepal Veterinary Council (NVC)
7. Nepal Bar Council (NBC)
8. Nepal Pharmacy Council (NPH)

Quality in common: Reflections on findings from AQA academic audits 2000 - 2011

Heather Kirkwood*

This paper draws on material published in 2011 by the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities in "A thematic overview of institutional audit 2000 - 2010". This report is available from the AQA website: www.aqa.ac.nz/SeriesonQuality11.

An update to this paper is available in a report entitled "Academic quality in New Zealand universities: An analysis of academic audit findings 2008 - 2012", published March 2013. This report is available from the AQA website: www.aqa.ac.nz/cycle4analysis.

Abstract

Between 2000 and 2011, the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA) conducted 23 academic audits of New Zealand's eight universities. Nearing the end of its fourth cycle of audit, AQA has been taking a closer look at some of the issues, successes and challenges characterising New Zealand universities during this period. The paper takes a sector-wide look at the findings of audits, exploring over 700 recommendations, commendations and affirmations made during what has been a period of change and challenge for many New Zealand universities.

The shifting focus of academic audit panels, and of universities themselves, has seen changes in the foci of each audit with increasing attention paid to the role of governance and management structures and communication, to learning technologies and learning spaces, and to institution-wide approaches to quality assurance. Other areas that continue to provide a focus of audit include postgraduate supervision, academic honesty, internationalisation, staff training and development, and the development and support of a research-led teaching

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* Prior to 1 January 2013, the AQA was known as the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit.

environment. Engagement with, and support of, Māori and Pacific students and their communities is a particular emphasis of New Zealand universities and, thus, of New Zealand academic audit.

The paper suggests that an observed decline in the number of recommendations with each cycle of audit reflects a maturing of the university sector's approach to academic quality assurance. The paper concludes with a look ahead to a fifth cycle of academic audit in New Zealand.

Keywords:

Quality in common, AQA academic audits

Introduction

The Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA) was established by the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee in 1993 to provide assurance and quality enhancement services which assist universities in excellent student experience and learning outcomes. Between 2000 and 2011, AQA undertook a total of 23 audits resulting in more than 700 recommendations, commendations and affirmations on matters of academic quality.

AQA academic audit panels work within an indicative framework, focusing their attention on areas of particular importance to universities. Audit reports include affirmations, commendations and recommendations made by an independent panel of 4 – 5 academic auditors (including at least one international panel member). The audit report reflects the panel's collective view following consideration of: the self-review portfolio of the institution (based on the university's own strategic objectives and related to the nominated foci of the audit); supporting materials and documentation provided by the university; and interviews and discussions with staff, students and other university stakeholders.

Overview of broad themes

Because of the change in focus of each of the audit cycles, along with the differing objectives of individual institutions and audit panels, drawing conclusions from an analysis of broad themes is difficult. What does emerge, however, is a picture

***** The audits of seven universities had been completed in Cycle 4 (2008-2012) at the time this paper was prepared. The remaining audit was completed in the second half of 2012.*

*****Figure 1 appears to show a greatly reduced emphasis on university research since Cycle 2 (2000 - 2001). In reality, the chosen topic for the Cycle 2 audits was research and this cycle of audits coincided with preparation for New Zealand's first Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) evaluation of tertiary education research in 2003. In latter cycles, in a desire not to duplicate the quality assessment activities of the PBRF, audit panels confined their comments to consideration of the extent to which the research culture, research environment and research activities enhance teaching and learning and impact on staff responsibilities.*

of the advent and progression of themes common to some or all of the eight universities since 2000.

As shown in Figure 1, the proportion of recommendations and commendations related to management and governance, including strategic planning and internal structure and communication, grew in each audit cycle. This may be attributable to several factors, including a greater focus on university differentiation, an increase in compliance responsibilities, and the complexity of institutional decision-making in a rapidly shifting policy context. As can also be seen, the proportion of recommendations and commendations related to the Treaty of Waitangi, Maori and Pacific staff and students grew during this period. Whether these shifts in emphases occurred on the part of the audit panels, AQA, the universities themselves or a combination of all three is difficult to unpack.

At the same time, as shown in Figure 2, the number of recommendations made by audit panels has been decreasing in each cycle. Since Cycle 2, the areas of focus and level of specifiity of the audit reports have shifted. Universities have also individually responded to recommendations in preceding cycles as well as to changes that have occurred in the external quality environment.

Figure 1: Audit recommendations and commendations by cycle and broad theme, 2000 - 2011

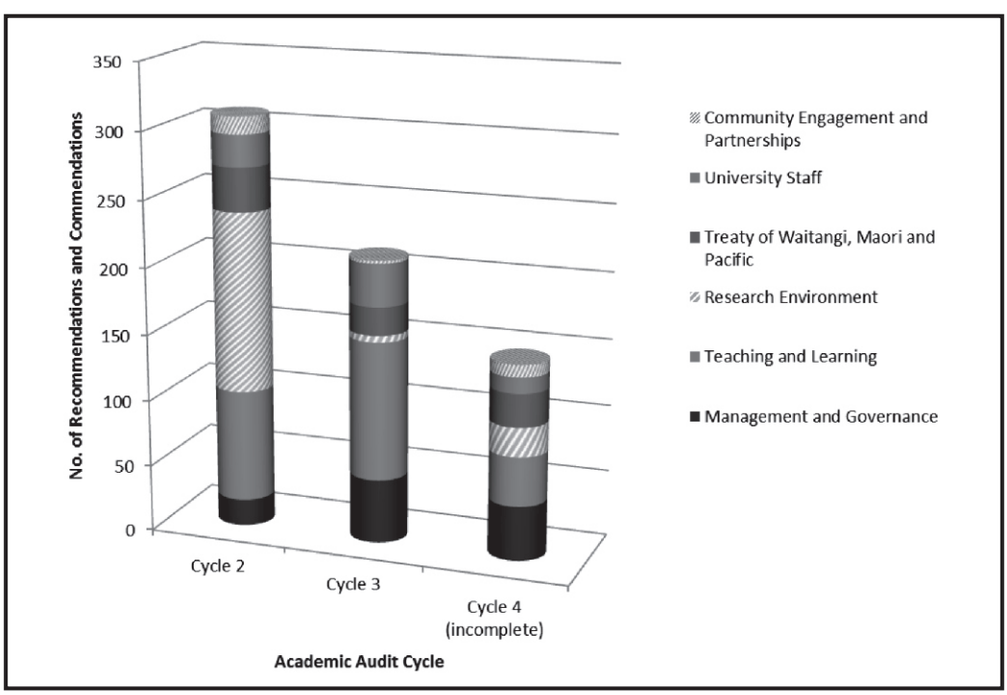
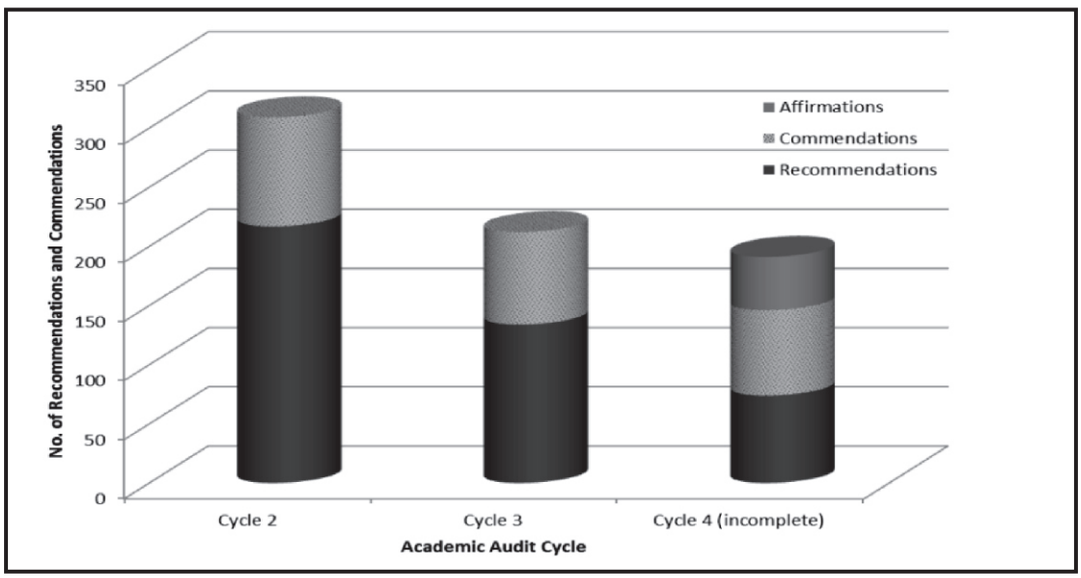


Figure 2: Academic audit recommendations, commendations and affirmations by cycle, 2000 - 2011

** Cycles 2 and 3 include the audits of all 8 New Zealand universities; Cycle 4 includes 7 universities with one university audit remaining for 2012.*

** While Cycle 4 is incomplete, with one audit remaining the number of recommendations made in Cycle 4 is very unlikely to exceed Cycles 2 or 3.*



This means that while some areas remain challenging and others will emerge as the external context changes, the role of audit panels in Cycle 4 has been increasingly one of affirming and commending good practice, and fine-tuning the implementation of recommendations previously adopted by the institutions. It is AQA's view that this trend is most likely to be attributable to a general maturing of the universities' quality assurance processes over this time.

Turning now to explore these broad categories of findings in greater depth, the audit reports reveal themes that are likely to be more reflective of university activities and priorities than the development of the audit process per se.

Teaching and learning

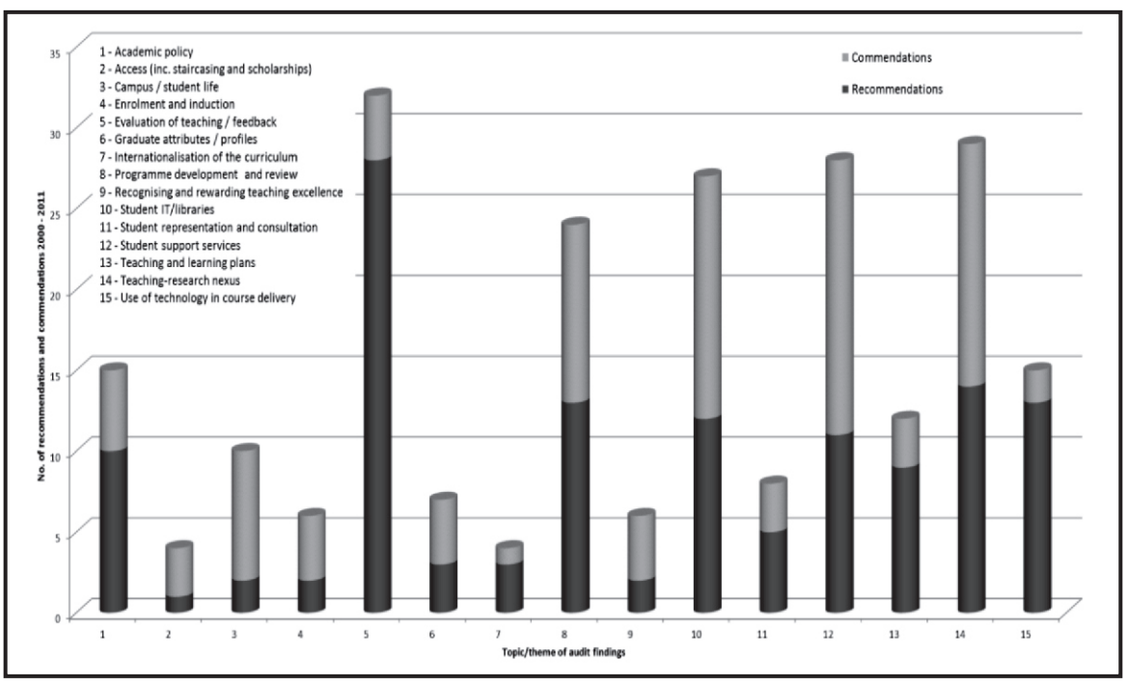
As shown in Figure 3, evaluation of teaching (including responding to student feedback) was the single most prominent theme of recommendations about teaching and learning made to universities during Cycles 2 - 4. Each university received recommendations relating to the need to improve the way in which they sought feedback from students on the quality of teaching, and on the mechanisms

** Affirmations were introduced in Cycle 4.*

through which they acknowledge and respond to that feedback. In Cycle 4, recommendations have moved to making greater use of information technology in the appraisal of teaching and course quality, and the dissemination of the results of evaluation.

Student support services received a large number of recommendations and commendations over the decade. Across the three Cycles, most institutions were commended on the support services they provided to students, with individual institutions reminded of the particular needs of students with disabilities, students based on satellite campuses, and international students. Audit panels also highlighted the importance of systems designed to identify and support students at risk.

Figure 3: Teaching and learning recommendations and commendations, 2000 - 2011



Reflecting significant campus redevelopments by several universities since 2000, a number of institutions received commendations from audit panels for student information technology and library services, learning spaces, and improvements in student services and campus/student life.

Commendations also focused on universities' approaches to programme development and approval, and evidence of the teaching-research nexus. Recognition of the role of stakeholder participation (including students and community groups) was endorsed in some institutions and reinforced as an area

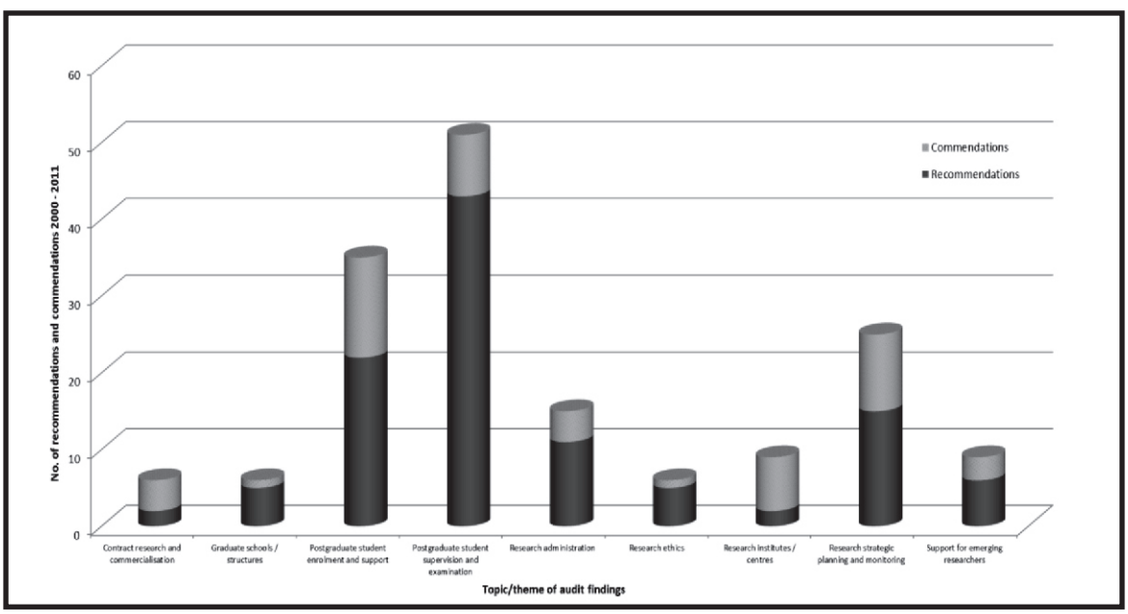
for improvement in others. Several areas to emerge included the development of graduate profiles, and greater use of technology in teaching and learning, including on-line delivery of courses.

During Cycle 2 (2000 - 2001), recommendations emerged that universities needed to take a proactive and strategic approach to the development of web-based courses and the integration of information technology into the curriculum. By Cycle 3, there were some commendations for initiatives in the development and implementation of flexible learning and teaching, but the need for adequate training and support for affected staff was being reinforced by several audit panels. Audit reports during this time stressed the need for institution-wide leadership to support pedagogical change. In Cycle 4, institutions have been reminded of the need for adequate investment and of the importance of monitoring the effectiveness of this investment to ensure improved success and outcomes for learners, including students learning from a distance.

Research environment

As shown in Figure 4, audit panel comment on the academic quality of universities' research environment was largely concentrated on postgraduate student supervision and examination, followed by postgraduate student enrolment and support. Universities received many commendations on these topics, but many more recommendations for quality enhancement.

Figure 4: Research Environment recommendations and commendations, 2000 - 2011



The same challenges observed in Cycle 2 continued into Cycles 3 and 4; namely, the need to develop university-wide standards expected of supervisory arrangements, to ensure adherence with these standards is monitored, and to provide staff and students with the training and resources they require to ensure that the supervisory relationship is supportive of students and their progress. Examples of systematic approaches were commended, along with university initiatives designed to collect and respond to feedback from postgraduate students.

Student handbooks, statements of minimum resources, and the quality of written materials provided to prospective and current postgraduate students dominated recommendations and commendations in Cycle 2. Cycle 4 recommendations and commendations have focused on developing student-centred enrolment and transition processes, along with affirmations of universities' plans to make further improvements in this area while growing postgraduate student numbers.

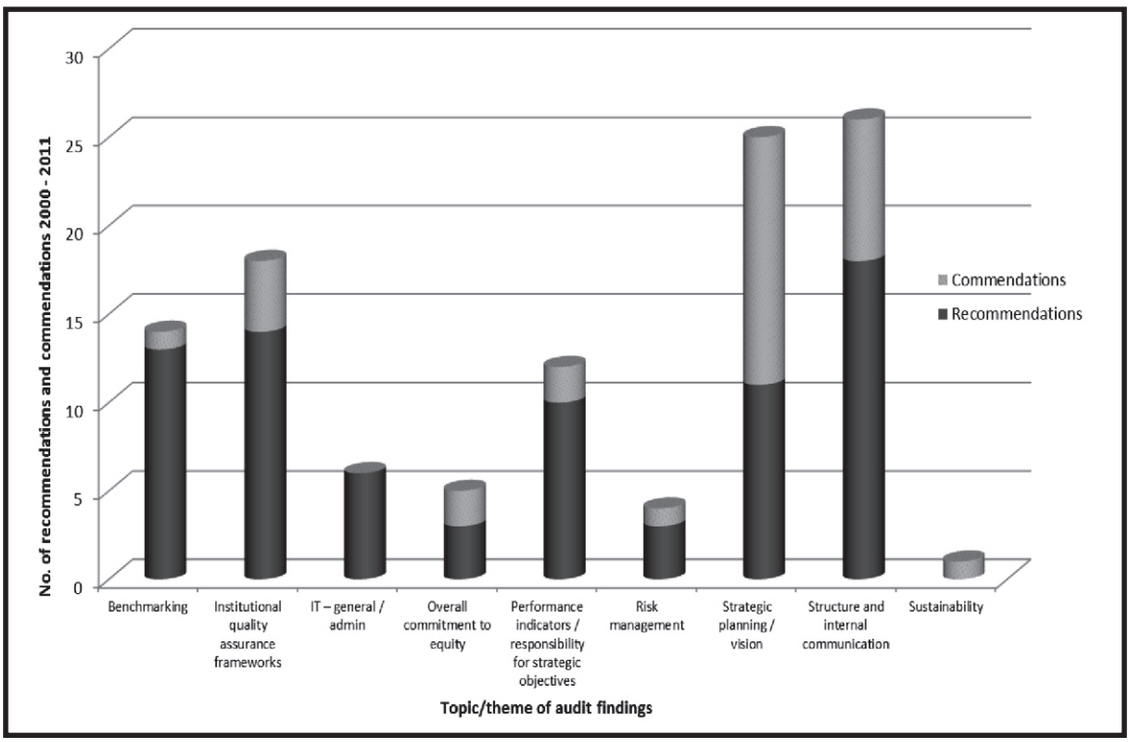
Management and governance

As shown in Figure 5, the key themes of structure and internal communication, performance indicators, institutional quality assurance frameworks, benchmarking and strategic planning/vision dominated audit panel findings in the area of university management and governance over the past 10 years.

In Cycle 2, recommendations were made to several universities about their structure and internal communication, largely related to clarifying responsibilities across faculties and divisions, enhancing internal communication and ensuring consistency in service and quality for students. By Cycle 3 and into Cycle 4, the focus of recommendations had shifted toward the importance of effective communication between senior management/leadership teams, and their Council, faculties, schools and administrative units.

In Cycle 2, recommendations focused on the need to develop an inclusive strategy that included the input of Council, senior managers and other university staff. By Cycle 3 and 4, audit panels were commending most universities on the consultation and communication that surrounded the development of strategies, and for the clear articulation of their institutional vision.

Figure 5: Management and governance recommendations and commendations, 2000 - 2011



Institutional quality assurance frameworks have been a particular focus of academic audit panels in Cycles 3 and 4, and recommendations suggest universities could do more to meet their stated objectives in this area. While commending examples of good practice, audit panels noted the need for a more systematic framework in almost all universities to enable the monitoring and review of quality in teaching and research, as well as of functional areas including service and support departments. A focus remains on the identification and application of appropriate benchmarks to assist in the enhancement of research-led teaching and learning.

Treaty of Waitangi, Maori and Pacific

In Cycle 2 (2000 - 2001), all New Zealand universities received recommendations related to improving their active commitment to the advancement of Maori students and staff; by Cycle 3 (2002 - 2007) several universities were being commended for their plans and progress. In Cycle 4, most universities have been commended for the visible and practical ways in which their commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi has been embedded and is expressed throughout the university.

For other universities, recommendations in Cycle 4 have highlighted the need for greater institution-wide awareness and commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. Audit panels have commented on the role of well-defined objectives and effective mechanisms for monitoring to ensure institutions retain a focus on building M?ori capability, research and leadership.

Commitment to the advancement of Pacific students and staff is a theme that has emerged over the course of the decade. In Cycle 4, audit panels have reinforced university objectives in this area, highlighting the need for specific targets and planning community-based activities that recognise Pacific peoples as a distinctive stakeholder group.

University staff

University staff – particularly, but not exclusively academic staff – have been the focus of many audit panel findings, and the proportion of recommendations and commendations focusing on staff has remained relatively constant since 2000. The quality and effectiveness of the training and staff development units of universities have received many commendations over the decade. Recommendations for further enhancement have focused on the needs of casual and fixed-term staff and those located on satellite campuses.

In Cycle 3 and, particularly, Cycle 4, a focus of audit panel comment has been the need for leadership and management training and development. Audit panels have also stressed the need for induction processes and courses specifically tailored to the needs of new staff, suggesting these should take into account prior teaching experience, anticipated academic duties, and interactions with students.

*****The Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi) is New Zealand's founding document. It was signed in 1840, and is a broad statement of principles on which the British Crown and Maori chiefs reached agreement to found a nation state and build a government in New Zealand. All New Zealand tertiary education institutions are expected to operate consistently with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and AQA, therefore, specifically identifies the Treaty of Waitangi as a topic for audit. In practice, many university support structures also accommodate Pacific students and staff as well as Maori.*

*****The broad themes of the Treaty of Waitangi, M?ori and Pacific have been combined in this analysis because university strategic objectives and activities in these areas could not be easily separated for the purposes of analysis. Several audit panels recommended universities consider these two groups separately in their performance objectives and in the design and delivery of services, and this is now largely the case for New Zealand universities.*

*****The term 'Pacific' (i.e., Pacific students and staff, and Pacific peoples) has been used throughout this report reflecting the language used in AQA audit reports during the period under review, and as a collective term for all peoples from, or self-identifying with, the Pacific region.*

Academic staff workload policies and models have received attention throughout all cycles of audit since 2000. Most universities received recommendations during this time, with audit panels particularly keen to see the development of institution-wide guidelines about maximum numbers of postgraduate students per supervisor, administrative demands, and ensuring the Performance-Based Research Fund and the cultural leadership roles undertaken by some staff do not negatively affect the time available for staff to enhance the quality of teaching.

Looking ahead

This analysis suggests a number of issues that are likely to continue to occupy New Zealand universities in their commitment to academic quality, including postgraduate supervisory arrangements, student feedback mechanisms, the support of Maori and Pacific students, and staff workloads. Changes in government policy (including a shift to nationwide voluntary student membership of student unions, and the introduction of ministerial directives on the use of student services fees), could see academic and pastoral support services, and student representation and consultation, feature to a greater extent in future academic audits. Identifying and supporting students at risk is an increasingly high-profile area internationally and audit reports suggest further enhancement could occur in New Zealand universities.

Other changes in emphasis which might be expected include: further development and integration of academic honesty/plagiarism policies into the curriculum and into assessment practices; internationalisation of the curriculum; succession planning; and the on-going task of reconciling employer and alumni input with professional bodies' needs, student expectations and universities' own graduate profiles.

Nearing the end of its fourth cycle of academic audits, AQA has been considering the nature and value of audits undertaken, along with national and international developments in the area of academic quality. The focus of Cycle 5 audits (commencing in 2013) will be on 'teaching and learning and student support'. AQA audit panels will adopt an academic risk management approach in their investigations and audits will include evaluation against a set of expectations (currently under development).

Institutional ownership of quality through self-assessment

Tim Fowler*

Abstract

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority's (NZQA) External Evaluation and Review (EER) of an individual tertiary education institution results in two judgements of confidence. One is for educational performance and the other is for capability in 'self-assessment'.

The paper discusses 'self-assessment' by educational institutions, which NZQA introduced in 2009 as a key component of its evaluative quality assurance framework for New Zealand's non-university tertiary education sector.

NZQA regards institutional self-assessment as arguably the most powerful means for institutions to understand and improve their quality culture and educational performance. Through self-assessment, NZQA expects institutions to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and to show how this information is leading to actual, worthwhile improvements. The EER team expects to see valid evidence of this work during its external quality assurance visit to the institution.

NZQA has for two years been analysing the results of EER. This project has encompassed gathering evidence about links between self-assessment processes and the quality of educational outcomes.

Keywords: Institutional ownership of quality, self-assessment

Introduction

Context

Tertiary education in New Zealand must meet the needs of a small, socially and geographically diverse nation within a highly globalised, export-led economy.

The New Zealand government has a vision for a world-leading education system that equips all New Zealanders with the knowledge, skills and values to be successful citizens in the 21st Century. Growth in quality international

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education is another important strategic driver for the government, as is value for money.

Like other Asia-Pacific nations, New Zealand learners have increasingly high expectations of tertiary education: they want qualifications that enhance life chances and lead to satisfying careers. Equally, industry stakeholders seek graduates' with qualifications that have a relevance to the workforce.

Tertiary education institutions must be responsive and adaptable to the needs of their stakeholders, and at the same time produce consistently good education outcomes.

Thirty-two per cent of New Zealand's 20-29 year olds are enrolled in formal education. Approximately 25 per cent of New Zealanders holds a tertiary-level qualification. The base of domestic students is complemented by 83,300 international students attending New Zealand tertiary education institutions.

These institutions are diverse, with 8 universities, 18 institutes of technology and polytechnics, three w?nanga (M?ori institutes of higher learning), 7 government training establishments, and 660 registered private training establishments. In addition, 33 industry training organisations are responsible for workplace training and assessment of 35,000 workplace trainees.

The evaluative quality assurance framework

NZQA is two years into a five year developmental process to implement evaluative quality assurance within the tertiary education sector. Over the past decade, one of the major changes has been a change in the focus of external quality assurance from audit to an evaluative methodology. Predominantly through the introduction of an EER process in 2009, the methodology seeks to support the development and enhancement of a culture of quality and high performance in tertiary education institutions, and to create an environment in which evidence and accountability are valued and autonomy is earned.

NZQA is responsible for quality assuring the non-university tertiary education sector and ensuring institutions continue to comply with rules established under the Education Act 1989. These rules regulate a quality assurance framework that comprises four components:

1. initial entry processes including listing qualifications on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF), programme approval and accreditation, and registration of private training establishments
2. self-assessment by tertiary education institutions
3. external evaluation and review (EER) of non-university institutions by NZQA
4. procedures to assure compliance with the Education Act 1989 with appropriate actions being taken where non-compliance is found.

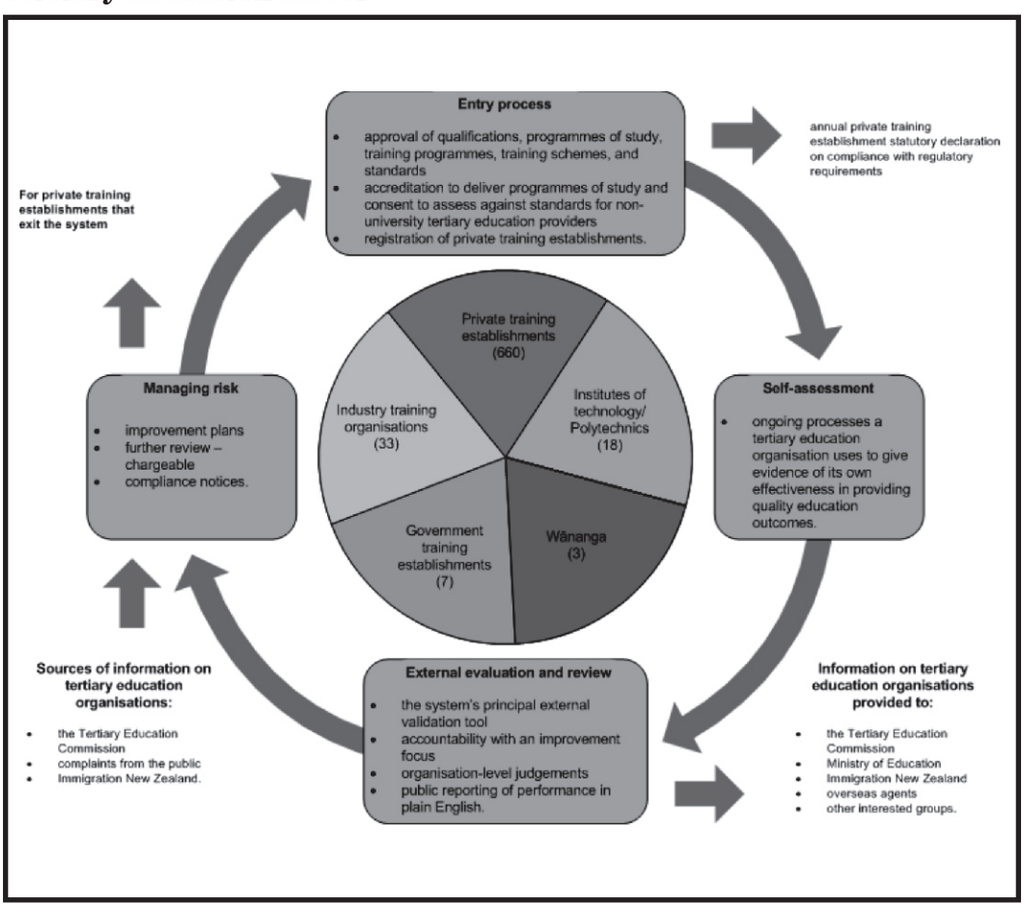
External evaluation and review

Each non-university tertiary education institution is required to participate in an EER at least once every four years. More frequent EERs are conducted when institutions appear to be posing a risk to their learners or the reputation of the New Zealand tertiary education system. EER uses an evidential methodology to reach reliable and valid judgements about an institution's educational performance and capability in self-assessment:

Educational performance is the extent to which the educational outcomes achieved by the institution represent quality and value for learners and the wider community.

Capability in self-assessment indicates how effectively an institution uses self-assessment information to understand its performance and bring about improvement.

Illustration 1:
NZQA's quality assurance framework for the non-university tertiary education sector



At the conclusion of an EER, institutional-level statements on educational performance and capability in self-assessment are reached using the designated performance criteria descriptors of 'Highly Confident', 'Confident', 'Not Yet Confident' and 'Not Confident'. All reports are published on NZQA's website and contain the institutional-level statements on an institution's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

Through periodic EER, institutions are held accountable to their stakeholders, including learners, employers, funders and quality assurance bodies, and other interested parties. The review process also provides information to support improvement across the tertiary education sector.

The results of EER are integrated into NZQA's wider evaluative quality assurance framework. For instance, NZQA has recently implemented an incentives and sanctions framework, whereby institutions in which NZQA has confidence are incentivised through reduced external compliance requirements, while institutions in which NZQA does not have confidence are subject to increased external scrutiny. Other government agencies have shown interest in using the EER results to develop their own incentives and sanctions framework for tertiary education institutions.

Self-assessment

Institutional self-assessment plays an integral role in NZQA's evaluative quality assurance framework and is, therefore, one of the two foci for external evaluation and review. Through the practice of self-assessment, an institution takes ownership of quality. This notion of ownership supports the view that quality is best guaranteed when responsibility for it is located as close as possible to processes concerned.

NZQA maintains that to be successful, an institution's business decisions need to be driven by a thorough understanding of its education performance in terms of outcomes for learners and communities.

Prior to 2009, institutional self-review was a requirement of audit, but it was undervalued as only one of many audit standards. Additionally, institutions often interpreted self-review as a compliance check-list, primarily used to prepare for an external audit rather than for aiding and embedding continuous improvement.

As early as 2006, government Cabinet papers recognised that quality assurance is reliant on information from institutions. The use of self-assessment as the means for collecting this information was identified as more effective, and less costly, than a heavy inspectorial approach.

Implementing effective self-assessment

The process of self-assessment should be comprehensive, authentic, transparent, and robust, and focused on the key features of effective self-assessment. The approach used should be systematic and applied with a view to understanding the whole institution.

Key features of effective self-assessment

Needs assessment	the extent to which institutions systematically determine and address the needs of learners, employers and the wider community.
Processes and practices	the processes and practices that help to achieve outcomes, e.g. the primary importance of good teaching, or the role of effective learner support services.
Learner achievement	the impact of educational provision on learner progress and achievement.
Outcomes	what is being achieved and the value for learners, employers and the wider community.
Using what is learned	evidence-based conclusions and decision-making that will feed into strategic and business planning, leading to positive change.
Actual improvement	the extent to which improvements are relevant and worthwhile.

NZQA recommends that institutions systematically implement self-assessment across the whole of the institution over a period of time. In the planning stages, different parts of the institution should be prioritised, such as a programme with high enrolments, impending government policy changes or an area of concern.

Information used for self-assessment is drawn from formal and informal data sources, such as enrolments, learner completion and achievement, moderation and monitoring reports and feedback from identified stakeholders.

Effective and sustainable data gathering for self-assessment does three things:

- ❖ makes maximum use of data an institution is already gathering for other purposes
- ❖ acknowledges, utilises and, where appropriate, formalises ways informal or anecdotal data is being collected within an institution
- ❖ utilises various sources of data to triangulate the findings from separate analyses and/or data sets.

Importantly, an ongoing analysis of data, and reflection on this analysis, provides the means for making evidence-based conclusions and decisions that contribute to strategic and business planning, leading to positive change. Self-assessment not only provides the platform for making positive change but through monitoring improvements, and capturing opportunities for innovation, an institution knows in what way a change has impacted on its education outcomes.

What does the future hold for self-assessment?

Institutions are now in varying stages of implementing and conducting institutional self-assessment. Within this transition, NZQA continually considers the optimum level of support it should provide to the sector. One view is that too much support breeds dependency and NZQA remains of the firm view that self-assessment methods cannot be prescribed.

Recognising that truly effective self-assessment is developmental, NZQA has sought to enhance sector capability in self-assessment through providing a range of practical tools and information. NZQA supports the implementation of self-assessment through on-line resources that include educational research references, video clips and examples of effective self-assessment practice. There is also an NZQA team of sector relationship managers whose role includes developing self-assessment capability in the sector through dissemination of information, workshops and so on.

Analysis of external evaluation and review results

NZQA is engaged with ongoing analysis reviewing the results of EER. This project forms part of NZQA's own self-assessment, and the aim is to gather evidence from external quality assurance about the links between self-assessment practice and the quality of education outcomes and the contributing processes.

In the first year of the project, NZQA analysed 144 EER reports on private training establishments identifying common themes that would support continuous improvement. Findings in the first year indicated that some institutions were still coming to terms with the how their role within the quality assurance system had changed. During the developmental stage of the framework, institutions often commented that their self-review processes were already strong and that there was nothing really to learn in this area.

The challenge of the evaluative approach to quality assurance for institutions has been the requirement to make key shifts in how they view quality, particularly in how they sustain and improve processes that lead to quality education outcomes. A seemingly simple, but important, shift has been moving individual and institutional thinking away from a position where an external body, such as

NZQA, defines quality, and into a place where the institution takes ownership of quality and is engaged with defining quality for itself.

Audit thinking	*Evaluative thinking*
Separated from the everyday activities of an institution	Internal
"What do they want us to do?"	Integrated into everything an institution is and does
Contractual	"What matters to us…?"
Minimum standards	Participatory
Pass/Fail	Ongoing improvement

After the first year, high-performing private training establishments were commonly seen to:

- ❖ select and prepare learners for study in a way that maximises achievement
- ❖ have a clear purpose for teaching, and awareness of how their self-assessment supports this
- ❖ ensure educational and institutional structures and systems support self-assessment
- ❖ use formative and summative assessments to help learners achieve qualifications
- ❖ show the positive impact they have had on learners
- ❖ ensure teaching staff are appropriately recruited, trained and supported and professionally developed
- ❖ facilitate senior management discussions about self-assessment and good practice with teaching staff
- ❖ have systems for senior management and teaching staff to collect useful data, learn from what the data tell them, make improvements, and know that these improvements have actually made the difference.

NZQA's analysis is now moving into the second year, and an additional 176 EER reports are being analysed. The scope of this analysis has been broadened to include reports from a wider range of tertiary education institutions: institutes of technology and polytechnics, wānanga, government training establishments and industry training organisations, as well as private training establishments.

As stated previously, early findings indicate that institutions are increasingly taking ownership of quality. Many institutions are demonstrating the key features of effective self-assessment, particularly in how they have implemented processes for measuring learner achievement. These processes are effectively expanding their view of learner achievement beyond just rates of completions, and into what outcomes learners, graduates and the community are gaining.

NZQA sees it as a priority to share the results of the analysis with the tertiary education sector so that the overall quality of educational performance can be further enhanced. One way NZQA does this is through the team of sector relationship managers referred to earlier.

For some institutions, time is needed to move from 'audit thinking' to become confident, high performing institutions that are taking full responsibility for their own quality. However, overall, the tertiary education sector is responding in a strong way to the change in NZQA's approach. NZQA is increasingly seeing many examples in the sector where evaluation has genuinely become the driving influence of quality. The sector is now building its own self-assessment capability, stimulated by the desire to improve quality and further improve the educational performance and outcomes that are so important in tertiary education.

Conclusion

NZQA has over the past five years developed and implemented evaluation methodologies for the quality assurance of non-university tertiary education institutions in New Zealand – where the basic approach is focused on answering high-level and open-ended questions, which are directed at the quality and value of outcomes and their key contributing processes. Two key components of the evaluative approach to quality assurance, EER and self-assessment, are now grounded in ever-growing experience and understanding within the tertiary education sector, and are beginning to produce real results.

Through focusing on identifying, responding to and meeting the needs of their clients (learners, employers, economic interests, specific and wider societal groups), tertiary education institutions are taking ownership of quality and its improvement.

Pakistan Qualification Framework: Pakistan Perspective

SanaullahMemon* and Muneer Ahmed**

Abstract:

The demography, location of natural resources, and concentration of industry and technology demands global quality standards for outlining minimum learning outcomes of the graduates to compete in the international market. Higher education commission, Pakistan in response to these essentials has undergone phenomenal changes, especially towards devising global quality standards transcending borders and ideologies with a common goal of mutually acceptable qualifications. One of the key elements of global market is the acceptance of the degrees awarded in varied education systems throughout the world which requires each country to develop a 'Qualification Framework' on international standards. The National qualification Framework was initiated by several countries in 1990s with an objective to reform the national education system. Pakistan where the higher education system is going through a transformational phase has embarked on the development of Pakistan Qualification Framework on priority which will provide a systematic picture of all the qualifications, level and the learning outcomes within education system. The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan is completing the mapping of the entire spectrum of degrees awarded by the 158 HEIs in the country. The paper will highlight the progress in terms of levels, learning outcomes and also a framework of equivalence of 'quality assured qualifications' with other countries' qualifications.

Keywords:

Quality Standards, Qualification Framework

Introduction:

The main policy priorities around the countries of the world are to reform in prevailing education and training systems and to improve the qualifications systems. In this context, many countries focus to improve the linkages between education and training systems on the one side, and labour markets on the other.

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Therefore, the development of qualifications frameworks has been perceived as a suitable policy instrument to accomplish these goals. At present more than 100 countries are involved in implementing, or developing, or considering NQFs and it is perceived that that it will ensure that qualifications offered in country meet economic and social needs, provide information about progression routes for learners, and also enjoy international recognition.

Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, established in 2002 with the objective to facilitate the institutions of higher learning to serve as an engine of growth for the socio-economic development of the country has embarked on the development of Pakistan Qualification Framework that will provide a systemic picture of all the qualification, academic levels and learning outcome within education system. It is a system to structure existing and new qualifications by defining the learning outcomes, i.e. explicit statement of what the learner know or be able to do whether learned in a classroom, on-the-job, or less formally. The primary objective of the Pakistan Qualification Framework (PQF) is to provide a comprehensive set of information to the stakeholders and international Organizations regarding all kinds of qualifications offered by Pakistani HEIs and to standardize the levels of qualifications for the purpose of equivalence.

International activity

There are different uses of word 'qualification' in the case studies and the literature. Traditionally qualification is used, relates to that somebody has formally completed an education or training programme through prescribed process in an educational or training institution. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development define the qualification as follows;

> "A qualification is attained when a competent body agrees that an individual has achieved knowledge, skills or/and competences to stated standards. The standard of learning is determined by means of an assessment process or the successful completion of a course of study".

The countries involved in implementing, developing NQFs considered them as vehicle used to enhance the communication of existing qualifications systems; increase transparency of qualifications; improve linkages among education, training and labour markets; helps in movement of learners between sectors, allow the recognition of prior learning.

The European Commission define NQF as:

> "National Qualifications Framework" is an instrument to classify the qualifications as per set of criteria for stated levels of learning outcomes achieved, which aims to integrate and synchronise national qualification subsystems and enhance the access, transparency, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the civil society and labour market.

A research report regarding what qualification framework can contribute with regard to qualification frameworks in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) area makes suggestions:

A qualifications framework is an instrument to classify qualifications as per set of criteria for levels of learning outcomes. Substantial benefits are anticipated of national qualification frameworks (NQFs) if supported by a system of quality assurance, they can assist educational and labour market mobility, support the development of workers' skills, and enhance the access of individuals to higher and different levels of education and training over their lives. If they have understanding and confidence in qualifications, Employers can benefit in recruitment and training of staff. The NQF contribute in transparency of qualifications which can enhance the international recognition of an economy's qualifications.

The countries adopting NQF has increased many folds and it has been observed that more than hundred countries now implementing, or developing, or considering NQFs. In addition, Regional Qualification Frameworks (RQFs) are also developed or in process of development in the Caribbean, Southern African Development Community (SADC), Pacific Islands, and European Union (EU).

The following table provides some indication of NQF introduction across the world.

Implementation started between late 1980s and 1990s.	*Under Consideration*
Australia, UK Ireland, Malaysia, New Zealand, Scotland, South Africa, Maldives, Singapore, Trinidad, Mauritius, Mexico, Namibia, Philippines, and Tobago, Wales	Albania; Angola, Barbados; Botswana, Brazil, Chile, China, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Jamaica, Lesotho, Mozambique, Romania, Macedonia, Uzbekistan, Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, Malawi, Serbia, Slovenia, , Zambia, Zimbabwe

There are three model of the qualification framework are in presence in the world. Integrated, combined and partial models. Integrated model implies one joint qualification framework having shared qualification levels, descriptors, learning outcomes .i.e. Scottish NQF, Irish NQF, South African NQF, EU Qualification Framework. Combined model indicates partial qualification framework of each education sector (general, vocational, higher) having own levels, descriptor, learning paths, QA pathways. All these are combined in a joint framework. Partial Model implies partial qualification framework of each education sector (general, vocational, higher) having own levels, descriptor, learning paths, QA pathways.

History of Pakistan Education System:

The Islamic republic of Pakistan appeared as an independent sovereign state on Fourteen August 1947, as a result of the partition of former British India. Pakistan covers 796,095 sq.km with a population of approximately 180 million. It is federation of four provinces: Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkkhwa, Balochistan and Islamabad constitutes a separate federal district.

The literacy rate (10 years & above) is 57.7% in 2009-10, and male literacy rate (10 years & above) remained 69.5% in 2009-10 while it is 45.2 percent for females during 2009-2010. Pakistan has three distinct education sectors i.e. Elementary and Secondary Education, Higher Education and Technical and Vocation Education. The Elementary and Secondary education is managed by the respective province in their territory and the Examinations in general secondary education are set by respective provincial boards. Higher Education and Technical and Vocational Education function under the Federal Government. The public and private higher education institutions have been recognized by the HEC. Primary education is offered at primary schools and starts at the age of 5 and lasts for 5 years. Middle school comprised of Grades 6 to 8. General secondary education is divided into 2 years of secondary education at Secondary School (Matriculation) and 2 years of senior secondary education at Higher Secondary School or Intermediate School. Higher education in Pakistan is provided by universities, institutions/Colleges affiliated with university. There are 74 public and 60 Private higher education institutions in Pakistan and all are recognized by the Higher Education Commission (HEC)

Development of Pakistan Qualification Framework:

Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan was established in 2002 with the aim to facilitate the institutions of higher learning to serve as an engine of growth for the socio-economic development of the country. The Quality Assurance Division was established within the HEC with the aim to remain focused to improve the quality of education across the country and to bring the HEIs at par with international standards. In pursuance of such task, the Quality Assurance Division of HEC has embarked on the development of Pakistan Qualification Framework that will provide a systemic picture of all the qualification, academic levels and learning outcome within education system. A Qualifications Framework is a tool for the development, classification and recognition of skill, knowledge and competency along with a range of established levels. It is a way to structure existing and new qualifications and defined by learning outcomes, i.e. clear statements of what the learner know or be able to do whether learned in a classroom, on-the-job, or less formally. The primary objective of the Pakistan Qualification Framework (PQF) is to provide a

comprehensive set of information to the stakeholders and international Organizations regarding all kinds of qualifications offered by Pakistani HEIs and to standardize the levels of qualifications for the purpose of equivalence. It will not replace the existing education system rather provide a platform to make the system more interconnected and transparent. The PQF is way of showing relations among different qualifications and how they relate to one another. The qualifications are generally comparable, but it does not mean they are equal. The PQF also viewed as Public accessible Register of all qualifications and HEIs/DAIs recognized by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan.

A common problem faced by employers in Pakistan is that of understanding how a qualification held by a person relates to the job requirements of that organization. This confusion is further aggravated by the use of diverse nomenclature for parallel degree and use of related nomenclature for degrees that are actually quite different in duration and scope. The classification of subjects in a particular discipline is also another problem confronted by the employers, employee as well as the graduates in Pakistan.

In order to address such issues, Higher Education Commission launched an initiative to document ALL degrees that have ever been issued by any university in Pakistan and to document the "level" at which this degree has been awarded. Pakistan education system has been categorized in eight levels and is based on the generic nomenclature used for the qualification in the country. It will help in international comparability of qualifications to facilitate student and graduate mobility of qualifications and elucidate the entry and exit points as well as the opportunities for progression and credit transfer. Flowing are the qualification types which are classified and used as quality assured qualification in the country.

	Years	***Levels***	***Award Type***	***Award Example***
Higher Education Levels	21			
	20 19	8	Doctoral	PhD
Intermediate Level	18 17	7	Masters	M.Arch., M.E, MS, MBA, M.Phil, M.Sc. (Eng.), M.Tech etc
	16 15	6	Bachelor	B.Arch., B.Com (Hons), B.E, BS, BSc (Eng.), BSc (Agri), B.Tech (Hons), MSc /MA (16 year), LLB, MBBS, PharmD, DVM, etc
Matriculation Level	14 13	5	Associate Ordinary Bachelor Certificate (HSSC)	Associate Degree, ADE, BA/ BSc (Pass), B.Tech (Pass), etc

Years	*Levels*	*Award Type*	*Award Example*
12 11	4	Higher Secondary School	F.Sc, F.A, DBA, D.Com, I.Com, ICS, etc
10 9	3	Secondary School Certificate (SSC)	Matric
	2		Middle (3 Years)
	1		Primary (1-5 Years) Pre-Primary (1-2 Years)

The Framework does not express qualification at the same level as being equal and interchangeable, however, it is at a comparable level in terms of knowledge, skills or competence required. They are positioned at similar level in framework as they make similar demands from learner. It will facilitate the learners, graduates, institutions, employers in several ways and also to make informed decisions. It will facilitates the mobility of the learner and graduates anywhere in the world by providing the base on which the levels are compared in international educations structure. It will also help in international comparability of qualifications to facilitate student and graduate mobility and inform about the route of progression from one level to another.

The PQF contains a public accessible register of all qualifications recognized by the Higher Education Commission. The data of the all the degrees awarded since the establishment of the HEIs/DAIs has been obtained on proforma designed specifically for the such purpose by keeping in view the issues and their remedies. It includes the information i.e. Name of Qualification as appeared on Degree, Title of Qualification as appeared on degree, Level, credit hours required, subject classification, mode of study, date of commencement of program first, details of qualification providers. The information provided in register will help in maintaining the transparency in education system and support mobility of graduates at national and international level. It will also eliminate the misunderstanding of nomenclature and will direct the higher education institutions to use the quality assured nomenclature. Moreover, it will help in management of degrees awarded by the HEIs/DAIs i.e. one has to verify individual degree from the awarding institutions for its genuineness. For employers it is difficult to verify and conclude status of the degrees i.e. when awarding institutions started awarding such degree and under what name etc. The data provided on the register will help in addressing the issue to a great extent. The register also possesses the information on subject classification as it is one of core issue in Pakistan. In this context, subject classification has been

compiled in consultation with Joint Academic Classification of Subject developed by Higher Education Statistic Agency (HESA), Uk and the support of HESA has been requested in developing the subject classification list in light of national as well as international trend. It will solve the issue of relevance in appointment and admission.

The qualifications categorized in levels will be described in terms of learning outcomes which comprises of Knowledge, Skill and competence. The European Commission offers the following definition of learning outcomes:

> "The set of knowledge, skills or/and competences an individual has attained or/and is capable to display after completion of a learning process. Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner is anticipated to know, understand or/and be capable to do at the end of a learning".

The 'shift to outcomes' is extensively (if largely uncritically) supported internationally, and represents a real change in how qualifications are thought about (Cedefop, 2008). Several qualification frameworks including higher education are also based on learning outcomes, and Cedefop (ibid) recommend that the learning outcomes approach is starting to take hold in higher education as well as in school systems. In PQF outcomes will be developed in concurrence with the curriculum practiced for the qualifications registered on each and every level. In this regards, the stakeholders including HEIs, National Curriculum Revision Committee (NCRC), accreditation councils/bodies and Chamber of Commerce and industry will be engaged in developing the learning outcomes. The learning outcomes will be key feature of the Pakistan Qualification Framework. It will make the purpose and goal of learning obvious to the learner and also inform every employer about what job applicant knows. Learning outcomes will be linked with the achievements of the learner rather than the intentions of the teacher. In fact, Institutions are not updating content which is delivered during the teaching /learning exercise and due to that less innovation is expected. Through PQF, it will be possible to compare similarities between dissimilar degrees and dissimilarities within similar degrees. Resultantly, Universities will more focus on learning outcomes and market requirement.

Conclusion

It is concluded that the Higher Education Commission Pakistan has initiated the process of developing the Pakistan Qualification Framework which is a lengthy process and require an exhausting endeavor. The PQF will be designed by the keeping in view the national and international trends so it can cope with difficulties faced by graduate, learners, employers, employee etc. in Pakistan and in the world. The qualification framework will be based on learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and experience student should have on completion of

level. The development and implementation of PQF will not replace the existing education system but helps to reform the education system. The PQF contains a public accessible register of all qualifications recognized by the Higher Education Commission. The information provided in register will help in maintaining the transparency in education system and support mobility of graduates at national and international level. It will also eliminate the misunderstanding of nomenclature and will direct the higher education institutions to use the quality assured nomenclature.

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Quality Label and Quality Certification 2.0: Drawing on the Principles of Web 2.0 and Crowd sourcing in Developing and Implementing a Quality Label for e-Learning in Capacity Building

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Abstract

This paper will discuss the open, community driven framework that underpins the quality label for e-learning in capacity building, called Open ECBCheck (E-learning for Capacity Building Check). The quality label was developed in cooperation with a network of capacity building organizations to promote transparency in the quality of their e-learning courses or programs. The author, who was trained as one of the peer evaluators, analyzed the entire process and concluded that OpenECB Check draws its framework from some of the qualities of two very important technological concepts - crowd sourcing and web 2.0. It offers a more open process of developing and implementing a quality label and quality certification, tapping on the wisdom of the community. The objectives of this paper are (1) to introduce the OpenECB Check process to the quality assurance community by summarizing and presenting the results of the studies made by InWent (the proponent) as written by Ulf Ehlers in his book Open ECBCheck: Low Cost, Community Based Certification for E-learning in Capacity Building, and (2) discuss how Web 2.0 and Crowd sourcing, two very important innovations brought about by technology have been used as frameworks by the certification. At this point, there are no clear indicators yet as well as formal investigation results that will show if capacity building does happen. The project is still in its infancy stage where peer evaluators are just beginning to be trained. This paper does not cover evidence on the level of capacity building that happens or has happened since the project was rolled-out.

Keywords: Quality Label, Quality Certification, Crowd sourcing, Capacity Building.

Introduction

Quality assurance of e-learning courses is an important concern, especially with the phenomenal rise in the number of e-learning courses being offered in the national, regional and international scale. InWEnt* - Capacity Building International, Germany, is a non-profit organization with worldwide operations

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dedicated to human resource development, advanced training, and dialogue. At the heart of InWEnt's operations is the promotion of capacity building, where e-learning is largely integrated. Since 2008, it has been exploring the field of quality management and accreditation in e-learning for capacity building. Through the cooperation of an international community of e-learning practitioners and experts, InWEnt conceptualized the international quality standards for capacity building in e-elearning, and spearheaded the establishment of an international quality certificate for e-elearning (Ehlers 2010). The quality label was developed in cooperation with a network of capacity building organizations to promote transparency in the quality of their e-learning courses or programs.

This paper discusses the open, community driven framework that underpins the quality label for e-learning in capacity building, called Open ECBCheck (E-learning for Capacity Building Check). It draws most of its data from the reader of Ehlers (2010), and the results of his group's study on conceptualizing and implementing a community-based certification for e-learning. While there are a number of existing quality management and certification approaches, these do not address the specific needs and requirements of e-learning in the context of capacity building (Ehlers 2010). This is the gap that ECBCheck aims to fill.

Capacity Building and e-Learning in Capacity Building Organizations

Ehlers (2010, p.12) offers the following definition of capacity building in the context of ECBCheck: "Capacity Building means further education for individuals to empower them to shape and take part in their living spaces as well as giving them the chance to develop competencies that are needed at their workplace. It refers likewise to the empowerment of organizational learning, the development of management structures as well as the design of legal and political frameworks, to strengthen the capacity for independent advancement."

Capacity Building Organizations provide learning services which are integrated in larger Capacity Building programs. Some development cooperation organizations actively implement independent capacity building activities (Ehlers 2010).

How e-Learning is integrated in Capacity Building Organizations

Ehlers (2010 p. 21) classifies the way Capacity Building Organizations integrate e-learning into their programs into 3 phases. He calls this the three phases of innovation diffusion. Those who fall under the "project orientation phase" do not include e-learning in their organization's strategy. They've worked on one or more e-Learning projects as mainly

provider of content. On the other hand, those who belong in the "systems orientation phase" have integrated e-learning in their organization's strategy but there is no specific e-learning strategy for the organization. Roles and responsibilities of people involved in e-learning are clearly defined and services include tutoring and consultancy. Lastly, those who are under the "potential orientation phase" strategically integrate e-learning in their organizational processes and all their capacity building activities. These organizations have their own strategy for ICT or e-learning. They have full-fledged tutored e-learning and blended learning and full Capacity Building programs offered thru e-learning. There is continuity in the 3 phases mentioned and some organizations may start off at the "project orientation phase" and continue to develop to the "potential orientation phase".

Study of the Needs and Requirements of the Stakeholders

In developing a quality label and certification process for e-learning in Capacity Building, it is important to consult the stakeholders to understand their unique requirements. This consultative process was conducted by InWEnt through a questionnaire that was given out to selected Capacity Building organizations and by conducting a follow-up interview after they have answered the questionnaire.

The following important points were revealed in the research and were used in crafting the framework and details of the quality certification and label.

1. All the organizations were highly interested in being involved in the development of the quality label. A quality certification could lead to higher trust if developed through the cooperation of a network of Capacity Building organizations.
2. The organizations had different reasons for being interested in obtaining a quality label such as the Open ECBCheck. But the most important reason was to "measure or improve impact efficiency of e-learning". Some of the other reasons as stated in Ehlers (2010) were as an instrument of legitimization for the use of funds or to obtain more financial resources for Capacity Building, to foster quality and innovation within the organization, for compliance with legal standards and for marketing or public perception.
3. Some expressed more interest in the quality guideline over having a quality label. They were interested in contributing to the process of putting together and identifying the criteria for the certification, and curious about the existing quality guidelines rather than having their courses certified.

4. Most of the organizations showed high interest in being part of a professional community involved in the development of the quality label. They see this as an opportunity to benchmark their own e-learning courses and as a venue for sharing best practices.
5. The Capacity Building organizations put a high premium on governance.

   The discussion on governance highlights four core requirements for a quality label for e-learning in Capacity Building. (1) quality certification as an open, community driven process, (2) governance of the quality label, (3) low cost certification system, and (4) learning for improvement.

   (1) There is a preference for an open model, instead of working in private, keeping information from one's competitors. The evaluation processes that are carried out by peer-reviewers should be transparent to merit acceptance.

   (2) It is not simple to impose quality standards in Capacity Building organizations due to the group's specific constraints. Because of this, it is best to develop the certification system around a community of organizations in which Capacity Building Organizations are represented.

   (3) The certification system should be affordable to accommodate majority of the Capacity Building Organizations and their clients in developing countries. Instead of paying for services, an exchange of services between the stakeholders shall be made.

   (4) The entire certification process should be a learning experience for those involved, where they get to analyze their e-learning program's strengths and weaknesses.

Based on the above results, it was decided that the quality certification for e-Learning in Capacity Building should be open, low cost, community, and learning based.

Crowd sourcing and Quality Certification 2.0

Open ECB Check draws its framework from some of the qualities of two very important technological concepts - crowd sourcing and web 2.0. It offers a more open process of developing and implementing a quality label and quality certification, tapping on the wisdom of the community. By submitting one's e-learning course to the peer-reviewers of the community, who are also its "competitors", one gets a better leverage of how one fare in the "competition". Getting the quality label from the community of experts means gaining acceptance within your community who truly understand what you do.

As of 2011, the community of Capacity Building organizations involved in e-learning has already been established and the first comprehensive training/workshop of peer-reviewers has been conducted. There is already a pool of e-learning experts from the community, trained in the process of peer-reviewing, ready to review any course that gets submitted for assessment.

Figure 1 shows the complete certification process of Open ECBCheck.

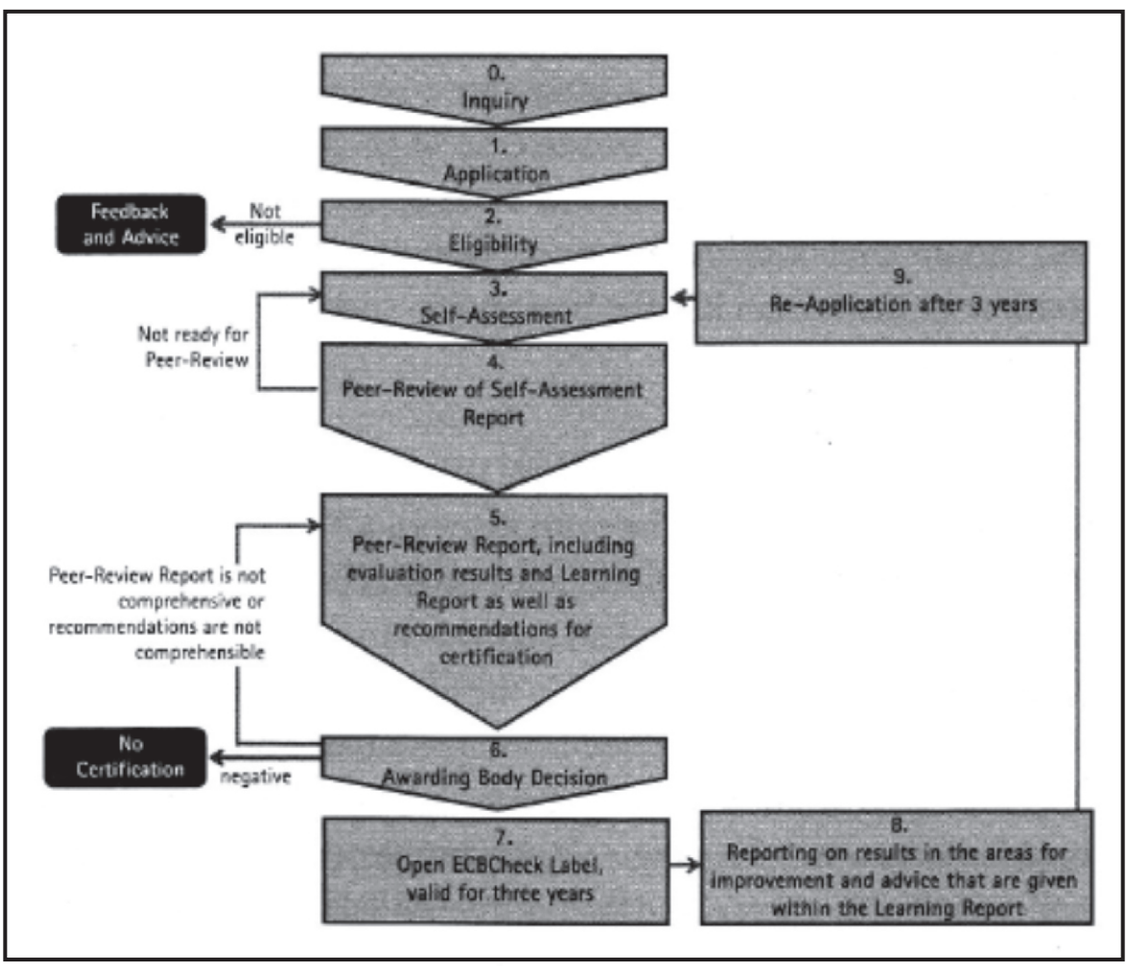

Figure 1. Open ECBCheck Certification Process. (Ehlers 2010)

After applying for eligibility and getting an acceptance, the organization is provided with a ToolKitSelf-assessment questionnaire which is available online via http://www.ecb-check.org. The organization goes through the different criteria and does a self-assessment of its own course or program. The self-assessment is evidence-based, and aside from providing self-evaluations, it needs to submit proof in the form of documents, links, photos or other files to support its

rating. As the organization goes through the self-assessment, it does not only provide documentation which will be the basis of the certification. It is also a learning activity for the organization to identify its strengths, weaknesses and areas for possible improvement.

While the self-assessment is ongoing, the Administrative Office proposes at least two peer-reviewers from the Open ECBCheck community. The Office sends out an open call within the community through email stating the topic of the course of program. Those who are willing to take on the task of peer-reviewing respond to the call and officially review the self-assessment made by the organization seeking certification. The coming together of experts from the community to review the programs/courses and answer the open call for "solutions" employs the concept of crowd sourcing. The entire concept of crowd sourcing is enabled by web 2.0 technologies where participatory information sharing and collaboration on the World Wide Web are made possible. Open ECB Check facilitates the same participatory and collaborative process amongst its community, to ensure the quality of the e-learning program being assessed.

If the peer-reviewer finds the self-assessment report of the organization clear, comprehensive and valid, he or she writes a peer-review report based on the self-assessment provided and supporting documents submitted. The Administrative Office forwards the anonymous peer-review report to the Awarding Body who will review the reports and decide on whether to grant the quality label.

The Quality Criteria

e-Learning courses and programs are rated according to the following criteria: Quality of Content, Program/Course Design, E-Media Design, Technology, and Evaluation and Review of the Program/Course. In the beginning of the assessment, information about the organization and the program are provided. They are also required to provide information about the target audience of the program or course. More information about the Open ECB Check guidelines and criteria can be accessed through its website
http://openecbcheck.innovationpros.net/2011-06-15-07-04-37/.

Future directions

Open ECB Check Community's immediate goal is to promote the Quality Accreditation for Capacity Building in as much venues as it can and to increase the number of peer-reviewers who will undergo training. Open ECB Check has great potentials for growth with the support of its community. It allows for continuous improvement for both the entire concept of the quality accreditation process, and the e-learning programs or courses through peer-collaboration. Through the efforts of this community, it is hoped that the quality of e-learning

courses of Capacity Building Organizations will continuously improve for the benefit of its students and clients as well. It is also a good model for quality assessment of e-learning courses which Capacity Building Organizations can use as reference.

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Building bridges: ESG, UNIQUe, WICHE, ACE and ISO

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Abstract

Information-communication technologies (ICT) are the quickest changing sphere of business. They support the innovation development of the markets. With the help of these technologies emerged the new sphere of education called e-learning. As this sphere is quite new the questions of standards for e-learning and the e-learning quality issues are widely discussed all over the world. The aim of this study is to observe the ESG for university internal quality assurance and the existing standards for measurement of the e-learning, namely with University Quality in E-learning (UNIQUe) program in terms of self-evaluation report. Then we will consider also the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) principles, American Council on Education (ACE) principles, standard ISO 19796-1 and make some recommendations for the future of these standards.

Key words:
e-learning, standards, quality assurance, comparison

Introduction

Signing of the Bologna declaration in the year 2003 made Russia one of the countries where all the unified European principles of education and quality assurance are to be implemented. The State Management Bodies started with the change the education system from 5-year to 4-year one. Not all the educational programs will be changed. For Russia it is a very difficult question. It was from my point of view one of the prerequisites, but not the only one, for creation in the year 2005 Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance and Career Development (AKKORK). Its task is to find a balance in the stakeholder's interest, create procedures and criteria, which can reflect the interests of employers, the State starting from the content of the education programs, didactical units, ending with management issues, effective management technologies and the economic stability of the University (that is traditionally called conditions for the education program realization). Now Agency is uniting a range of the civil society institutions, accumulating the approaches from the

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world practice. AKKORK have many national and international partners. For instance in Russia it collaborates with the Associations of Universities, Rectors Councils, Russian Academy of Education (well-known scientific research body, with AKKORK has the joint accreditation of the pedagogy education programs). At the international arena AKKORK is a full member of such well known QA networks as International Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (INQAAHE), Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN), European Foundation for Quality in E-learning (EFQUEL), and associate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). Also together with EFQUEL AKKORK is realizing on the territory of Russia the program of accreditation named University Quality in E-learning (UNIQUe). It is used for the Universities which are using e-learning in their educational programs.

E-learning or electronic learning is nowadays one of the most active developing spheres of education. The confirmation for this could be the International Conference Moscow Education Online, which for the third time was held in 2009 in the President Hotel (Moscow, Russia). The participants of the conference are the representatives of the above stated organizations and the IT companies staff from Europe and CIS countries. This conference is held in Moscow and this facilitates the participation of the persons from the RF regions in it. The participation gives them the opportunity to get acquainted with the technological innovations, new projects, practical usage of new and existing technologies and the results of the researches which exist on the e-learning market. In the plenary sessions and parallel discussions took part the also the representatives of the education management bodies, what makes possible the constructive discussion on problems existing in the e-learning.

Today ?-learning becomes one of the priority activity lines of the organizations in the sphere of education. This determines the fact that the educational institutions and training companies are becoming more and more active users of the IT-consulting services.

On the e-learning market there exist the following types of organizations offering the learning with the usage of information - communication technologies. (e-learning):

- higher educational institutions;
- training companies, offering courses on certain themes ;
- companies, which develop courses for education of their own staff in the e-learning environment.

Electronic learning represents itself from our point of view not the set of defined technological solutions for educational processes but the new form of the educational process which is formed with the usage of Hi-Tech technologies in

education. For instance, when professor is teaching the course on management he should possess not only the technologies he uses in teaching but also he should know the teaching methodic based these technologies .

UNIQUe is the first EFQUEL program aimed at Western Europe countries. The goal of this program is to help the reforms in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by means of creating the quality assurance systems for the e-learning universities, and the main task is to create the European accreditation system for the universities which use e-learning instruments in their educational activity. Russia needs to enter in this process. For the time being only one Russian university - Moscow University of Industry and Finance - which as experiment undergone the accreditation according to the UNIQUe program received the European Quality Mark but we are planning to disseminate this experience on all Russian universities.

In terms of e-learning quality standards EFQUEL offers different indices which correspond to all the components of education process. First of all is evaluated the educational context. It includes the e-learning development strategy, the openness of the university to the public and its innovation policy.

Apart from this are evaluated the educational resources which has the university, namely the level of students' preparation, qualification characteristics of the teaching staff and the material and technical facilities of the university.

Then the university education process is evaluated. It includes: educational services quality, the level of intellectual property protection and the existence and quality of the education and advanced training programs for teaching and administrative staff.

If we consider the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) developed by ENQA, we will see the completely different system with different purposes.

1.1 Policy and procedures for quality assurance

STANDARD: Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards.

1.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards

STANDARD: Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards

* *Rubin Y.B. Sovremennoe obrazovanie: kachestvo, standarti, instrumenti. (Modern education: quality, standards, instruments). Ed.2nd . — M.: Market DS, 2009.*

1.3 Assessment of students

STANDARD: Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.

1.4 Quality assurance of teaching staff

STANDARD: Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so. They should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.

1.5 Learning resources and student support

STANDARD: Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.

1.6 Information systems

STANDARD: Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyze and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities.

1.7 Public information

STANDARD: Institutions should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering.

We can see that ENQA has developed the concrete set of standards and UNIQUe has the criteria that help to evaluate the university. ENQA standards are most common and vague ones, whereas the UNIQUe program evaluates the concrete sphere of the university i.e. e-learning activities applied to different fields of the university work. ENQA standards are for quality assurance whereas the UNIQUe criteria does not use this expression but the fulfillment of this criteria guarantees quality.

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) principles were developed especially for online education programs * . They include:

** Taken directly from Jones, G.R. (1997). Cyberschools: An education renaissance. Englewood, CO: Jones Digital Century Inc. – who cites Johnstone, S.M. and Krauth, B. (March-April 1996). Some Principles of Good Practice for the Virtual University, Change, p. 40. Available on the WICHE web site at http://www.wiche.edu/Telecom/projects/principles.html*

Principles

Curriculum and Instruction

1. Each electronically offered program of study results in learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded.
2. An electronically offered degree or certificate program is coherent and complete.
3. The program provides for appropriate real-time or delayed interaction between faculty and students and among students.
4. Qualified faculty provides appropriate oversight of the program electronically offered.

Institutional Context and Commitment to Role and Mission

5. The program is consistent with the institution's role and mission.
6. Review and approval processes ensure the appropriateness of the technology being used to meet the program's objectives.

Faculty Support

7. The program provides faculty support services specifically related to teaching via an electronic system.
8. The program provides training for faculty who teach via the use of technology.

Resources for Learning

9. The program ensures appropriate learning resources are available to students.

Students and Student Services

10. The program provides students with clear, complete, and timely information on the curriculum, course and degree requirements, nature of faculty/student interaction, assumptions about technological competence and skills, technical equipment requirements, availability of academic support services and financial aid resources, and costs and payment policies.
11. The enrolled students have reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support their learning. That accepted students have the background, knowledge, and technical skills needed to undertake the program.

12.Advertising, recruiting, and admissions materials clearly and accurately represent the program and services available.

Commitment to Support

13.Policies for faculty evaluation include appropriate consideration of teaching and scholarly activities related to electronically offered programs.

14.The institution demonstrates a commitment to ongoing support, both financial and technical, and to continuation of the program for a period sufficient to enable students to complete a degree / certificate.

Evaluation and Assessment

15.The institution evaluates the program's educational effectiveness, including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction.

16. Students have access to such program evaluation data.

17.The institution provides for assessment and documentation of student achievement in each course and at completion of the program.

American Council on Education (ACE) principles include :

1. Distance learning activities are designed to fit the specific context for learning.

a. Learning opportunities include a clear statement of intended learning outcomes, learning content that is appropriate to those outcomes, clear expectations of learner activities, flexible opportunities for interactions, and assessment methods appropriate to the activities and technologies.

b. Elements of a learning event - the learning content, instructional methods, technologies, and context - complement each other.

c. The selection and application of technologies for a specific learning opportunity are appropriate for the intended learning outcomes, subject matter content, relevant characteristics and circumstances of the learner, and cost range.

d. Learning activities and modes of assessment are responsible to the learning needs of individual learners.

e. The learning experience is organized to increase learner control over the time, place and pace of instruction.

f. Learning outcomes address both content mastery and increased learning skills.

g. Individuals with specialized skills in content, instructional methods, or technologies work collaboratively as a design team to create learning opportunities.

h. The learning design is evaluated on a regular basis for effectiveness, with findings utilized as a basis for improvement.

2. Distance learning opportunities are effectively supported for learners through fully accessible modes of delivery and resources

a. The providing organization has a learner support system to assist the learner in effectively using the resources provided. This system includes technology and technical support, site facilitation, library and information services, advising, counseling, and problem-solving assistance.

** Taken directly from Jones, G.R. (1997). Cyberschools: An education renaissance. Englewood, CO: Jones Digital Century Inc. – who cites Sullivan, E., and Rocco, T (co-chairs, Task Force on Distance Learning) (draft: May 1996). Guiding Principles for Distance Learning in a Learning Society, p. 3-5.*

b. The provider considers the needs for learner support in relation to the distance learning mode(s) used and makes provision for delivery of appropriate resources based on the design of the learning activities, the technology involved, and the needs of the learner.

c. Access to support services – such as scheduling, registration, and record keeping – is convenient, efficient, and responsive to diverse learners as well as consistent with other elements of the delivery system.

d. Support systems are accessible to and usable by the learners and are sufficiently flexible to accommodate different learning styles.

e. The provider discloses to the learner all information pertinent to the learning opportunity – such as course prerequisites, modes of study, evaluation criteria, and technical needs – and provides some form of orientation for those desiring it.

f. Support systems for learning opportunity are reviewed regularly to ensure their currency and effectiveness.

3. Distance learning initiatives must be backed by an organizational commitment to quality and effectiveness in all aspects of the learning environment.

a. Involvement in distance learning is consistent with the overall mission of the provider;

   policies regarding distance learning are integrated into the provider's overall policy framework.

b. The providing organization makes a financial and administrative commitment to maintain distance learning programs through completion and to support faculty and learner services needed to ensure an effective learning environment.

c. Administrative and support systems (registration, advising, assessment, etc.) are compatible with the learning delivery system to ensure a coherent learning environment.

d. The organization's curricular and administrative policies incorporate the needs of distance learning as well as traditional learning activities.

e. The provider makes a commitment to research and development of distance learning, maintaining a systematic evaluation of the content, processes, and support systems involved in its distance learning activities.

f. The provider makes a concomitant investment of resources and effort in professional development and support of both faculty and staff involved in distance learning.

g. The providing organization recognizes effective participation in distance learning in its promotion and reward system for faculty and staff and ensures that its policies regarding promotion, tenure (if applicable), and departmental / program funding reflect the integration of distance learning into the organization's mission.

h. The policies, management practices, learning design process, and operational procedures for distance learning are regularly evaluated to ensure effectiveness and currency.

i. The provider does not distinguish between learning accomplished at a distance and learning accomplished through other means in recognizing learner achievement.

4. Distance education programs organize learning activities around demonstrable learning outcomes, assist the learner to achieve these outcomes, and assess learner progress by reference to these outcomes.

a. When possible, individual learners help shape the learning outcomes and how they are achieved.

b. Intended learning outcomes are described in observable, measurable, and achievable terms.

c. The learning design is consistent with and shaped to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

d. Distance education media and delivery systems are used in a way that facilitates achievement of intended learning outcomes.

e. Learning outcomes are assessed in a way relevant to the content, the learner's situation, and the distance education delivery system.

f. Assessment of learning is timely, appropriate, and responsive to the needs of the learner.

g. Intended learning outcomes are reviewed regularly to assure their clarity, utility, and appropriateness for the learners.

5. The provider has a plan and infrastructure for using technology that support its learning goals and activities.

a. The technology plan defines the technical requirement and compatibility needed to support the learning activity.

b. The technology plan addresses system security to assure the integrity and validity of information shared in the learning activities.

c. The technology facilitates interactivity among all elements of a learning environment and places a high value on ease of use by learners.

d. The technology selected for distance learning is fully accessible and understandable to learners and has the power necessary to support its intended use.

e. Providers communicate the purpose of the technologies used for learning and, through training, assist learner, faculty, and staff to understand its etiquette, acquire the knowledge and skills to manipulate and interact with it, and understand the objectives and outcomes that the technologies are intended to support.

f. The technology infrastructure meets the needs of both learners and learning facilitators for presenting information, interacting within the learning community, and gaining access to learning resources.

Standard ISO/IEC 19796-1 represents the basic scheme for description of the approaches to quality in the organization. It consists of two parts:

- ❖ Scheme-description of the approaches to quality;
- ❖ Process model, used as a basic classification.

All these standards and principles are completely different. As the e-learning becomes more and more popular there would appear much more standards. From our point of view in order to lessen the number of standards and unify them and create common EHEA the ESG approach should be integrated while using them. This means that ESG should be the main reference point for the QAA agencies. Further when this agency evaluates for instance the e-learning activity of the university it could use, for instance the EFQUEL or ISO standards depending on the fact what is under evaluation. Such approach is used by AKKORK.

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Challenges and Considerations for Recognition in the Asia Pacific Region: an European Perspective

Tim Buttress*

Abstract

The past decade has seen huge change in higher education across the globe. At the start of the 21st Century transnational education, distance learning and education hubs were all exotic terms. Now they are used every day and have changed the face of higher education for ever. Additionally the diversity and complexity of national approaches to education, quality assurance and mutual recognition, not only in the Asia-Pacific but internationally, show that traditional boundaries in education have been redefined, raising questions relating to the role of educational stakeholders both nationally and internationally:

- *How can we ensure qualifications are recognised in other countries?*
- *What are the roles for providers, government ministries, competent authorities, quality assurance agencies and credential evaluation bodies in the Asia-Pacific region in facilitating recognition?*
- *What collaboration is needed between these bodies?*
- *What defines good practice in these areas?*

UK NARIC will approach these questions from a recognition perspective, looking at ongoing work in the development of national and regional qualification frameworks in the Asia-Pacific and drawing on experiences developed through qualification benchmarking and sectoral mapping with a case study from the region to illustrate the practicalities and benefits of developing qualification frameworks and internationally-credible practices in quality assurance. Collaborative work in the ENIC-NARIC network to develop and promote tools for transparency and mobility in the European Higher Education Area will also provide a valuable external perspective on creating a common learning space in the Asia-Pacific.

Keywords: Challenges and Considerations for Recognition

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1. Introduction

No education system is the same: different countries attach different values to certain aspects of education, some for example favouring in-depth specialisation, others striving to deliver graduates with a broader subject area knowledge base. With increasing globalisation and specifically cross-border student mobility, the importance of dynamic and transparent qualification frameworks, quality assurance and credential evaluation practices has never been so prominent.

The Bologna Process, the on-going referencing of national qualification frameworks to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the implementation of key recognition tools such as the Europass Diploma Supplement have all been launched with a single purpose: to facilitate recognition and mobility in Europe through a harmonisation of education systems and standards, a European Higher Education Area.

The concept of an Asian or Asia-Pacific Higher Education Area is one which has been discussed within international and Asia-Pacific conferences and within the context of many individual projects aimed at improving transparency and mobility in the region. A thorough examination of qualification frameworks, quality assurance mechanisms and strategies through such projects has led to a general consensus that the complex nature of the Asia-Pacific region would not allow for a direct exportation of the European model.

This paper aims to highlight some of the considerations and challenges for recognition by considering core credential evaluation criteria and discussing whether established and emerging recognition tools and practices in the EHEA could serve to strengthen recognition practices in the Asia-Pacific region. Central to this is a consideration of the impact of external quality assurance and qualification framework developments on recognition procedures over the last decade.

2. How can we ensure that qualifications are recognised in other countries?

A thorough understanding of a qualification's core components as well as the education system from which it originates is crucial to being able to recognise the true value and academic standing of a qualification in the context of another education system. In accordance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, credential evaluation bodies within the ENIC-NARIC network consider a number of factors when evaluating qualifications including:

- duration;
- status of the institution;
- entry requirements;

- qualification structure and content;
- modes of learning and assessment;
- learning outcomes;
- standing of the qualification in the awarding country together with any formal rights attached in terms of access to further study or employment;

So how can we use these criteria in practice? Let's firstly consider programme duration. The prevalence of transnational education and flexible learning across the Asia-Pacific region means that the number of years is often too simplistic a quantifier. Credit hours can provide a more meaningful indication of programme duration but credit allocation and value can vary considerably not only from country to country but also from institution to institution. The South East Asia Credit Transfer System and the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific Credit Transfer System (UCTS) together with the introduction of a number of national qualification frameworks (NQFs) expressing expected minimum credits for each level, constitute significant progress in facilitating recognition yet neither duration or credits alone represent primary indicators of academic value.

Quality assurance and institution status are also essential considerations for recognition but the diversity of accreditation and monitoring procedures in the Asia-Pacific region makes full mutual recognition of quality assurance agencies a very complex process. In the last decade nearly a dozen countries in the Asia-Pacific have established dedicated quality assurance bodies, adding to those already in operation prior to 2002. *The Quality Assurance Arrangements in Higher Education in the Broader Asia Pacific Region** highlighted, however, the variations in remit, practices and procedures that exist in agencies across the region.

Central also to the assessment of international qualifications is an understanding of where a qualification sits within the national context, its entry routes and progression pathways on completion. In this regard the value of NQFs for recognition cannot be emphasised enough. Ten years ago few countries in the region had an overarching NQF or higher education framework in place. Today over a dozen Asia-Pacific countries have developed or are in the process of developing an NQF and the possibility of regional frameworks is also being explored. Recent studies in the region however have highlighted variations in the interpretation of an NQF and the information it should seek to provide.

For example, both the Malaysian Qualifications Framework and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Thailand assign specific

* *Prepared by the DEEWR of Australia in 2008 for the Asia-Pacific Quality Network*

learning outcomes to each framework level, demonstrating the knowledge, skills and competencies that may be expected of an individual upon completion of a particular qualification. On the other hand the APQN's research of the development and implementation of NQFs, together with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' (DEEWR) *Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications across the Brisbane Communique Region* highlighted that the framework in Oman appears to be more of a qualifications system than a specific framework. In both the UK and wider EHEA, there has been a clear shift away from traditional rigid frameworks based on duration towards flexible outcomes-based frameworks such as the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), capable of encompassing different educational strands and learning pathways.

2.1 Case Study: The importance of quality assurance and qualification frameworks in the benchmarking of international qualifications

In 2011, UK NARIC undertook a project to identify, benchmark and map qualifications in the field of training and development in 37 countries around the world, many of which were in the Asia-Pacific region, against the professional standards prescribed for the sector in one country. The project was commissioned with the aim of facilitating recognition for those qualified in the sector overseas to access relevant professions in that country.

The project served to highlight difficulties in assessing qualifications from such a diverse range of systems. Firstly, only qualifications that were subject to external quality assurance were included in the study. Some of the countries examined however were found to have quality assurance systems focussed on only one or two aspects of education provision, such as public higher education institutions: in fact many of the qualifications relevant for the study were offered by the private sector. The study also found significant variation in the level of qualifications in the sector: completion of a two or three week training course for high school graduates in some countries compared with completion of a higher education diploma in others. As such the existence of outcomes-based NQFs in the countries examined had important implications for the evaluation process.

The Australian Qualifications Framework presented a particularly useful example of the benefits of an outcomes-based framework for recognition. The AQF first describes the generic knowledge, skills and application expected at each of the ten levels. Comparison of these

level descriptors with those prescribed in the home country provided an initial insight into how the Australian and home country qualification levels may correspond, which could then be refined through a more in-depth analysis of qualification content, structure and outcomes.

Of course, the absence of a qualifications framework did not prevent recognition of a country's qualifications but reference to a framework, such as the AQF, provided a more immediate and clear picture of where the qualifications sat within the national context while comparative analysis of the generic descriptors or learning outcomes associated with the particular qualification level(s), further informed the evaluation process.

Transparent and robust quality assurance procedures together with detailed outcomes-based qualification frameworks are thus fundamental to facilitating the recognition of a country's qualifications outside the national context and as such are integral factors in promoting cross-border mobility.

3.What are the roles for providers, government ministries, competent authorities, quality assurance agencies and credential evaluators in facilitating recognition? What collaboration is needed between these bodies and how can best practice be assured?

Education providers, government ministries, competent authorities, quality assurance agencies and credential evaluation bodies all play an essential and integral role in facilitating recognition and inward and outward mobility.

Firstly the availability and clarity of information on qualifications and qualification systems is a crucial element of recognition and one which all these bodies can contribute to, from providers, who can aid recognition for their students by ensuring detailed information* on their awards is readily available, to credential evaluators who should be able to furnish other educational and professional stakeholders with consistent information on international qualifications and their comparability within the national context.

Secondly, whether the direct responsibility of a government ministry or entrusted to an appointed third-party organisation, a robust, comprehensive and transparent approach to quality assurance underpins the recognition process with many credential evaluation bodies refusing recognition from institutions that are not subject to external quality assurance.

** programme entry requirements, duration, course content and structure, modes of learning and assessment and importantly, learning outcomes*

Acceptance of other countries' quality assurance procedures has long been highlighted as a necessity for full mobility and recognition within the EHEA. The Asia-Pacific context is however more complex in that the precise remit and statutory function of quality assurance agencies varies markedly across the region. Some agencies have the power to forcibly close sub-standard institutions while others, whose function is purely advisory, can only make recommendations to the central government, Ministry of Education or other designated agency, resulting sometimes in prolonged processes to close institutions that do not meet the required standards. This has clear implications for the mobility of graduates from these institutions who struggle to obtain recognition for their education because of the question mark hanging over the awarding institution.

An overarching regional quality assurance framework would go a long way towards resolving these issues and enabling transferability and eventually, harmonisation. This would require careful, long-term planning though to devise and implement sufficiently so as not to cross the line between this harmonisation and homogenisation. In the meantime, publication of quality assurance and accreditation handbooks online and preferably full institutional assessment reports, as many quality assurance agencies are now doing, can at least assist in ensuring transparency in the diverse approaches taken.

However, central also to mobility and a common education space is a harmonisation of credential evaluation processes. The National Action Plans written by national recognition information centres within the ENIC-NARIC network, together with a number of projects conducted by network members, have sought to identify, discuss and critically analyse current credential evaluation practices in participating countries to inform the development of common criteria and processes for recognition. The projects in fact highlighted a number of differences between the centres and confirmed the need for a more coherent approach to recognition. Differences included whether the agency worked in an advisory or decision-making capacity, the understanding of key terms in quality assurance, standards and benchmarking, and crucially the way in which evaluation criteria were applied with some countries reliant on notification to determine comparability of an overseas qualification within their own system.

If we accept that every education system is unique, displaying differences which reflect the varying needs of their countries, it follows that qualifications from different countries will rarely be identical in scope or content. The notification process, when applied in the strictest sense, excludes recognition for what may be a valid qualification with comparable outcome levels because the specific subjects studied may not be a perfect match for the closest counterpart qualification in the host country.

The European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual, due for publication in the coming months, has been developed through a collaborative partnership between several ENIC-NARIC network members. Covering key topics such as information provision; accreditation and quality assurance; the Diploma Supplement; qualification frameworks; credit transfer; substantial differences; and transnational education, the EAR manual represents a compendium of practical advice and recommended best practice for recognition.

The projects and on-going review work conducted in the EHEA is crucial to harmonise processes across the region, however with the discussed development of an Asia-Pacific Network of Information Centres and the development of an Asia-Pacific Area of Recognition Manual, drawing inspiration from EAR and using the experience of established education stakeholders, the Asia-Pacific region has an invaluable opportunity to use the template as a blue-print for establishing the centres to ensure harmonisation in recognition processes from the outset.

Challenges and Issues of External Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Dr. C. S. Patil*

Abstract

There has been an increasing awareness towards external quality assurance in higher education in the Indian sub continent. NAAC, plays a major role in maintaining quality among higher educational institutions in the country. The journey of external quality assessment in India is traced, starting from the introduction of Total Quality Management and establishment of Internal Quality Assurance Cells (IQACs) in all the institutions of higher education. Various criteria of external assessment have been elaborated. The hierarchy of TQM has also been traced.

Keywords: External Quality Assurance

INTRODUCTION:

Many great thinkers have tried to define the word education. Even then, most people are unaware of the real meaning of the significant word EDUCATION. The 16th President of USA Abraham Lincoln writes a letter to his son's class teacher "*Teach him that for every enemy, there is a friend. He will have to know that all men are not just, that all men are not true. But teach him also that for every scoundrel there is a hero that for every crooked politician, there is a dedicated leader. Teach him to be gentle with people, tough with tough people. Teach him the secret of quiet laughter. Teach him if you can how to laugh when he is sad, teach him there is no shame in tears.*"

This is an interesting and also a thought provoking letter. It is always true that today's youngsters are tomorrow's citizens. But it is equally true that the quality of the future citizens depends on today's elders, teachers and the type of education they receive.

Education is considered as an investment both at the individual and society levels, but the benefits from such investments are not immediate and quick. The higher education by nature demands higher investment, both individually and collectively. The role of higher education in national development is well

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established as it is this level of education which provides top level of man power like doctors, engineers, scientists, technologists, bureaucrats, teachers etc., the institutions of higher education are also require to undertake research to generate new knowledge for scientific and technological advancement and make use of the resources available to community through extension and consultancy services. They are accountable to students, society and employer and to all stake holders. Low quality education affects development in the country. At a time when the country is liberalizing the economy and entering the global market, we need to stress quality in higher education. It is the nature of the market economy that only those who are efficient to maintain high productivity and quality will survive. Since quality needs intensive capital investment, talent and hard work, therefore there is no short cut to quality. It has been rightly said "Quality is not a chance but a choice, Quality is not an accident but a design, Quality is not a destination but a continuous journey".

QUALITY ASSURANCE CONCEPT

According to great philosopher Swamy Vivekananda "**Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man**". He said that quality remains within the learners but is controlled by external factors. The higher education in India is considered to be third largest system in the world. On the quality front there are three academic bodies that evaluate institutional quality through the accreditation process in the Indian higher education sector as follows

1. NAAC **(National Assessment and Accreditation Council)** Established in 1994 by the UGC - To accredit higher educational Institution.
2. NBA **(National Board of Accreditation)** Established by the AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education) in 1994 - To accredit management and engineering programmes.
3. AB **(Accreditation Board)** Established by the ICAR (Indian Council for Agricultural research) in 1996 - To accredit agricultural Institutions.

But, many questions arise

- Is the Accreditation conclusive evidence of quality in an institute?
- Does the quality lie in brick and mortar model of education?
- Can window dressing be used to get a higher grade?

Answer for these questions or Institution Accredited in India, where quality is the parameter as we have been observing product of IT and BT sector. The system of assessment and accreditation adopted for promoting quality mainly focuses the concern on institution instead of learners. It appears to be based on the assumption that good institution would turn out good graduates. Some

people are of the view that quality should shift its focus from institution to learners. Despite all these efforts, quality of higher education is seriously and continuously depleting, hence we have created centres of excellence in our higher educational institutions. The world conference on higher education in Paris in 1998, recognized that apart from other factors such as finance, accessibility and equity enhancement, quality in teaching and research was a great challenge in recent times. Despite massive expense in higher education during the last five decades in India the quality of education and academic culture is not what we expected. The outdated curriculum and irrelevant courses budget oriented programmes are being triggered in low profile, quality of research and quality of teaching from average to poor. Despite all these efforts, teaching has not so far been able to attract best brains. Without this factor, delivering quality education will remain a dream. A famous educationist, great teacher and former president of India Dr. Radhakrishnan said "Unless and Until we have dedicated and committed teachers, who take teaching as mission in their lives, we cannot have good educational system". Every institution has two kinds of people, those who matter and those who work. But the Irony is that those who matter they don't work, and those who work they don't matter. Hence quality being a holistic approach brings both of them together.

JOURNEY OF QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

Quality concept is all pervasive. Since education involves management of human resources, thus the management concept of quality and other management techniques are best applicable in education to improve academic performance. Quality in education is an optimizing process, where all the attributes and components in quality are utilized to their fullest capacity. Starting from a simple quality concept and reaching to total quality management (TQM) in education must be the ultimate objective of sound education policy. Quality of design refers to designing quality characteristics into a service or product. The quality characteristics are weighed by the customer relative to the cost of the product. In general, they will pay for the level of quality they can afford. Quality of conformance is making sure the product of service is offered according to design. Once the quality of design has been determined, the implementation process must be able to conform to the specifications required by the design. It needs a solid feedback system. In education system, it involves competent and honest teachers, need based curriculum, adequate infrastructure and ideal student teacher ratio. Quality assurance occupies the central position in the quality hierarchy. Quality assurance is a commitment to quality throughout the organization, whereby a stakeholder is confident that standards will be maintained. It is a dynamic process which encompasses continuous assessment of performance and requisite corrective actions. The philosophy of continually

seeking ways to improve operation based on Japanese concept called Kaizen. The basis of continuous improvement philosophy is the belief that virtually any aspect of an operation can be improved and that the people most closely associated with an operation are in the best position to identify the changes that should be made (Sundra raju, 1995).

ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

It is an accepted fact that for improving programmes of quality assurance it is necessary to first assess the functioning, performance and current standards of an institution. In a way it is to test accountability of an institution. The main purpose of system of accountability is to ensure minimum performance and thus help enhancing the quality in higher education.

I. NTERNAL QUALITY ASESSMENT (Self assessment)

The successful internal assessment requires the involvement of all major stake holders such as faculty, students and management and close interaction between them. It is necessary to assess the programmes of all the individuals of an institution. Internal assessment on the following lines.

- Self appraisal of teachers
- Self appraisal of departments
- Internal reviews of heads of the departments and demands of faculty.
- Internal review at top level, administrators like registrars, controller of examinations, Finance officers and Vice chancellors.
- Internal review of librarians, Academic staff college directors, College developmental council director and physical education instructors.
- EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT (Accreditation)

  The external assessment is a mechanism of quality control in the functioning of higher education. Quality assessment through external agency is a standard practice in developed and many developing countries. In India we have national assessment and accreditation council which is interested with the task of performance evaluation, assessment and accreditation of colleges and universities. It has laid down the following parameters for assessments.
- Curricular aspect
- Teaching, Learning and Evaluation

- Research, Consultancy and extension infrastructure and learning resources.
- Student support and progression.
- Organization and management
- Healthy practices/Best practices.

TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

TQM is concerned with the efforts of accomplishing business excellence through strategic planning, outstanding leadership, benchmark processes coupled with creativity and innovation. TQM is a never ending journey, it is customer but not the supplier, and it involves moving with changing customer expectations and fissions to design products and services which meet their expectations

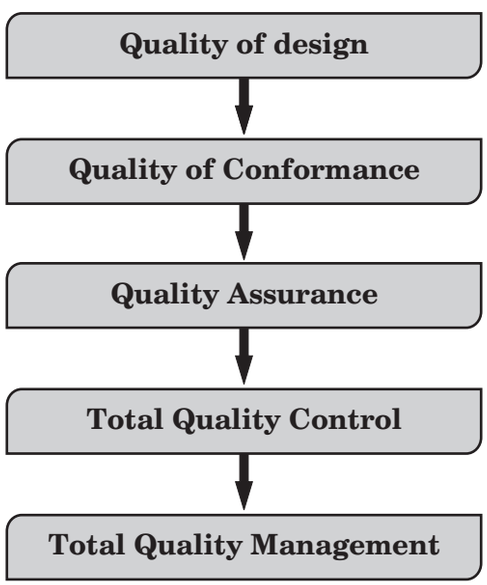

Fig: Quality Management Hierarchy

In higher education it is about relevance of education it addresses the following questions

- Are the courses of study updated?
- Are the existing subjects of study still required by the society?
- What new subjects of study are in demand, now and how can they be introduced?
- Are students satisfied with the quality of teaching they are provided?
- Are the students and parents satisfied with the procedures of examination and evaluation?

In TQM the most powerful vehicle to ensuring quality relationship is the effective team the success of any quality assurance initiative is greatly dependent on the managerial factors.

CONCLUSION

The rapid growth of the higher education over the years has resulted in the dilution of its quality and standard, which in turn has affected the quality of man power produced, therefore, a need to develop a quality culture in our institutions of higher education. This will require the quality of mental infrastructure more than the physical infrastructure because quality depends upon our vision, sincerity of purpose and conviction to do our duty (Dhar, 2008). There is an interlink age between quality and excellence for promoting excellence we are expected to provide adequate academic and physical infrastructure in colleges and universities (Thorat, 2006).

Today's competitive environment demands better quality of education, the institution which can impart quality education on a continuous basis shall be in a position to compete in a global market. Improving the quality of higher education has therefore become a primary concern of the countries world over.

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The Case of Cambodia Higher Education System and Quality Improvement

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Abstract

The history of Cambodian higher education system and attempts to ensure quality improvement have been traced. Starting from Khmer Rouge Regime to the developments in 1990s, the journey of quality improvement in higher education is addressed. The current higher education system in Cambodia is thoroughly explained. Current trends in higher education and the challenges being faced are also addressed. The role of MoEYS in managing higher education and in establishing or ensuring quality improvement is explained. At the same time, the role of ACC in assessment and accreditation is also described. Various categories of HEIs and the establishment of internal quality assurance units in all HEIs are explained. Lastly various problems and concerns and Future Directions of Quality Improvement Reforms in HEIs are also explained.

Keyword: Quality Improvement

1. Introduction

After the colonial period by France (1863-1953), Cambodia established its own independent education system for the needs of society. Higher education (HE) system in this country was formed in the 1950s and developed remarkably in the 1960s.

Tragically, the development of Cambodian education had declined since 1970 when the civil war started. All schools and universities were closed during the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979). However, schools and higher education institutions (HEIs) were opened to serve the needs of the country after the genocide regime. The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has been trying to develop its human resources to accelerate social and economic development, reconstruct the country and integrate it into the regional and global community. The current stage of development of education is still at an early stage compared with its neighbouring Southeast Asian countries. The RGC and international community are working together to achieve the goals of Education for All by

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2015. On the other, the Government has been being reforming and developing HE to improve its quality, since it needs its young generation - the graduates from higher education institutions - to be equipped with new skills, improved knowledge, but also good attitudes and ideals.

In the late 1990s, *privatization of the HE* sub-sector commenced. To benefit from public private development partnerships, the RGC has encouraged the private sector to invest in HE. The number of *private* HEIs has grown rapidly since 2000. Consequently, private investments have added support to the achievement of the government's three strategic priorities in education - *equitable access, quality and efficiency, institutional development.* The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) has spelled out these priorities in progressively greater detail, commencing with the new Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2009-2013, defining the education sector goals, targets and processes to realize the national Government's development goals.

Starting from that first ESP, there has been considerable change over the past 10 years. There have been *institutional and financial reforms that enable greater operational autonomy for public HEIs by granting them the status of public administration institutions (PAI). The reforms in academic development are improving the quality of teaching, learning and research* in HE through implementing updated teaching methodology, *organizing and developing curriculum* and equipping HEIs staff with skills to respond to the needs of teaching, learning and research activity. To support these the MoEYS issued a regulation in 2004 requiring each HEI to create an internal quality assurance unit to promote self-assessment as a process of quality assurance to help each HEI in preparing itself to obtain accreditation from the Accreditation Commission of Cambodia (ACC).

2. Current Higher Education System

Higher Education (HE) - the third level (3rd Phumaseksar) of education is education in HEIs following on from secondary education. Learners in HE shall be taught to have complete personality and characteristics; and HE shall promote scientific, technical, cultural and social research to achieve, knowledge, skills, morality, and inventiveness of complete personalities characterized by creative ideas and the spirit of enterprise to advance the modernization of Cambodia (Law on Education, 2007).

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) covers all professional and trade skills provided by public and private technical and vocational education and training institutions, enterprises, communities, and families or in co-operation between technical and vocational education and training institutions and enterprises and/or communities and families (Law on Education, 2007).

The HE system through to 1997 was relatively small, exclusively public and fragmented amongst fourteen controlling Ministries. The Cambodian HE system still remains fragmented among Ministries and agencies (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of HEIs (Main Campuses only) under their Parent Ministries

	Parent Ministries	Number of HEIs	
		Public	Private
1	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS)	8	49
2	Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training (MoLVT)	9	10
3	Ministry of National Defense (MoND)	5	0
4	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery (MoAFF)	3	0
5	Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA)	3	0
6	Ministry of Interior (MoI)	2	0
7	Ministry of Health (MoH)	1	0
8	Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts (MoCFA)	1	0
9	Ministry of Economy and Finance (MoEF)	1	0
10	Ministry of Public Works and Transportation (MoPWT)	1	0
11	Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans & Youth Rehabilitation	1	0
12	Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy	1	0
13	National Bank of Cambodia (NBC)	1	0
14	Office of the Council of Ministers (CoM)	1	0
	Total = 97 HEIs	**38**	**59**

At present, there are **97** HEIs in Cambodia, located on located in 19 provinces/cities (of a total of 24 provinces/cities). **38** of them are **public** HEIs. By regulations, there are two categories of HEIs - universities and institutes. However there are also two academies, the Royal Academy of Cambodia and the Academy of National Police, and other two schools of agriculture, providing degree programs. By international comparison, most HEIs are small, with narrow academic and resource bases.

Total student enrolments (associate to doctoral degrees) in both public and private HEIs in HE and TVET streams have more than doubled from 117,420 in

2006-2007 to 245,329 in the 2011-2012 academic year. Females now make up around 37.17% of all students as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Student Numbers Enrolled in Academic Year 2006-2007 compared with 2011-2012

Degree	2006-2007		2011-2012	
	Total	Female	Total	Female
Doctoral	448	6.47%	998	58 (5.81%)
Master	8,830	15.48%	13,542	2,568 (18.96%)
Bachelor	92,340	35.18%	207,666	83,463 (40.19%)
Associate	15,802	28.97%	23,123	7,861 (33.39%)
Grand Total	117,420	32.75%	245,329	39,950 (37.17%)

Source: MOEYS (2011)

Total faculty numbers (bachelor to doctoral degrees) - teaching in all fields of study as full-time and part-time in both public and private HEIs - had increased in 2010 to 10,612 staff. Females make up around 11.86 % of all staff. Foreign faculty is 6% alongside Cambodian faculty at 94%.

Table 3: Statistics on Cambodian and foreign faculty (as of 2010)

Degree	Cambodian Faculty		Foreign Faculty	
	Total	Female	Total	Female
Doctoral/Ph.D. Holders	689	75	127	24
Master Holders	5835	547	304	83
Bachelor Holders	3417	473	240	57
Total by Faculty	9941	1095	671	164
Grand Total (9941 + 671) = 10612 (female: 11.86%)				

Source: MOEYS (2011)

3. Current Trends in HE and Challenges being addressed

Objectives and Justifications

The HE sub-sector will continue to expand access to HE, while at the same time safeguarding quality to ensure that Cambodia's economic, social and market needs are met in the areas of intellectual development and human

resource provision. Pro-poor access will be addressed through merit driven scholarships, especially for girls. Some priority will be given to students enrolling for less market oriented and more socially beneficial programs, especially education, health, agriculture, technology, engineering, science and mathematics. The following fruitful results have been accomplished under the three strategic policies of the ESP : (1)- Equitable Access to HE; (2)- Improvement of Quality and Efficiency of HE; and (3)- Institutional and Capacity Development.

1) ❖ The strategies of equitable access to HE are to increase opportunities for equitable access through increasing scholarship numbers for prioritized students (poor students, female students, students from remote areas and outstanding students) and promoting partnerships between the public and private sectors, and development partners.

The Challenges to equitable access to HE is as follows:

- ♦ The share of scholarship students keeps decreasing every year, as a percentage of the number of students who pass the high school examination and choose to enter HEIs.
- ♦ The budget allocation in HE is not balanced between the Ministry in charge of education (i.e. the MoEYS) and the other ministries which supervise HEIs. In 2008 the MoEYS, responsible for public and private institutions enrolling HEIs and enrolling 76% of HE students, received 34% of the Government budget for HE, while the other Ministries, enrolling 24% of the student body, received 66% of the Government budget for HE.

2) ❖ The strategies to Improve the quality and efficiency of HE include improving the quality of teaching, learning and research through implementing updated teaching methodology, developing curriculum and equipping HEIs with facilities needed to respond to the needs of teaching, learning and research activities; to increase transparency and improve performance monitoring and accountability of HEIs.

- ♦ The organizational structures of some HEIs are still not clear and do not have the clear vision, mission, or strategic plans for future development.
- ♦ Some HEIs lack financial resources for qualified lecturer development.

- Royal Kret/Decree (2003), establishing the ACC
- Sub-Decree (2003) on the Organization and Functioning of the ACC,
- Prakas (2007) on Conditions and Detailed Criteria for Establishment of HEIs
- Royal Kram/Act, (Dec., 2007), promulgating the Law on Education,

The Law on Education (passed in 2007) defines the principles, a supreme authority and procedures to determine the national measures and criteria for establishing a completely comprehensive and uniform education system, ensuring the principle of freedom of studies in compliance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia. The objective of this law is to develop the human resources of the nation by providing a lifelong education for the learners to acquire knowledge, skills, capacities, dignity, good moral behaviour and characteristics, in order to enable the learners to know, love and protect the national identity, cultures and language. This Law authorizes the establishment of the Supreme National Council of Education (SNCE), which will function to: (1)- develop policy proposals and strategies for the long term which respond to the social and economic development aims of the RGC; (2)- provide timely advice to the RGC on the priority tasks of the education sector, including technical and vocational training, and (3)- advise the RGC on the mobilization of all resources needed for servicing national education.

The ministry in charge of education (i.e. MoEYS) and the institution in charge of the accreditation of HEIs (ACC) are the executive bodies of the SNCE.

This law covers all educational programs, research studies, technical and vocational education and training at all public and private levels of the education system whether the educational programs are offered by educational institutions or by other education personnel. It also covers education administration and management at all levels, except for individual persons involved in religious education and practice, technique, military strategy and security, territorial administration, Royal School of Administration and court professions.

Consequently, strengthening HE quality is one of the three over riding key policy priorities among other key tasks that have been emphasized in the Education Strategic Plan (2001-2005 rolling over through 2009-2013). Prepared by the MoEYS, endorsed by the RGOC, the ESP highlights and reflects the Capacity Building and Human Resources Development priority of the national "Rectangular Strategy: For Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency".

- ♦ The science, agriculture and mathematics specialties nationally needed are not often selected by the students, who prefer business, economics, law, languages
- ♦ Libraries and laboratories in some HEIs are not adequately well equipped; not having sufficient books for literature on policy and research.

3) ❖ The strategies for institutional and capacity development are to improve staff Capacity and institutional management through training and effective incentives, institutional and financial reforms that allow for greater operational autonomy for HEIs and for accountability regarding operational budgets, revenues and decisions on priority programs.

The Challenges to the institutional and capacity development are as follows:

- ♦ The Vision and Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2025 have not yet been finalized
- ♦ Financial management systems in many HEIs are not transparent to the public.
- ♦ Some public HEIs which are under the supervision of the MoEYS have not yet applied to become Public Administration Institutions (as autonomous universities),
- ♦ The management and organization structure of faculties at some HEIs are still not clearly defined and so are not up to the standards of the new Education Law.

4. Background and Current Status of HE Management and Quality Improvement

Policy guidelines and regulations for development, management and quality improvement in HE, strengthening education quality assurance are stated in many existing legislative instruments, as follows:

- ♦ Sub-Decree (1992) on the Establishment & Administering of TVET & HEIs
- ♦ Royal Kram/Act (Jan.1996), promulgating the Law on the Establishment of MoEYS
- ♦ Sub-Decree (1998) on the Organization and Functioning of the MoEYS
- ♦ Sub-Decree (2002) on the Criteria for University Establishment

The Jurisdictions of the MoEYS and the ACC:

In the years 2000-2003 the MoEYS worked with a World Bank technical team to prepare and create a legal framework for HE in regard to both the establishment and institutional accreditation of HEIs. The ACC was established in March 2003 with its main purpose, as stated in the Royal Kret, to establish a legal mechanism for administering the accreditation of HE for all HEIs.

The Royal Kret states that leading and administering HE and the Establishment and Management / Supervision of HEIs are subject to the jurisdiction of the MoEYS. Whereas the Accreditation of HEIs is subject to the jurisdiction of the ACC, which is under the supervision of the Council of Ministers.

In the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) stream, the Establishment and Management of TVET Institutions are subject to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. Whereas Accreditation in TVET is subject to the jurisdiction of the Accreditation Committee for TVET, which is under the supervision of the National Training Board, consisting of relevant ministry representatives and chambers of commerce. Its Secretariat is the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training.

*The **ACC** is an external quality assurance body supervised by the Office of the Council of Ministers. The ACC functions through its Governing Board. The details of the mechanism for administering the accreditation of higher education are to be presented later by Mr Lay Sopagna, Deputy Director of the ACCDepartment for Training, Planning and Research.*

Roles and Duties of the Directorate-General of HE of the MoEYS:

In accordance with the Sub-Decree on its Organization and Functioning, the MoEYS Directorate-General for HE, in which there are the Department of HE (DHE) and the Department of Scientific Research (DSR), serving as its Secretariat, has the following roles and functions:

- Develop aHE vision, policies and planning aimed at assuring human resource development in HE,
- Establish the legal framework for HE development
- Establish the strategic plans, processes of monitoring and evaluation of HE policies aimed at developing human resources, and to determine the new directions as well as the performance measurements for the next stages of improvement and reform
- Enhance HE quality to respond to the needs of each phase of national socio-economic development, aiming to develop the needed knowledge, capacities, skills, morality and living in harmonization,
- Develop HE curriculum frameworks and qualifications at all levels of HE

- Examine and assess document files for licensing new HEIs/branches, for integrating two or more HEIs into the one institution, for dividing one institution into two or more institutions, and for annulling license recognition,
- Examine and assess document files for transforming public HEIs into Public Administration Institutions (PAI - Status of HEI as autonomous institution),
- Coordinate, verify and give comments on MoU agreements on international cooperation policy in HE and also between HEIs and countries, taking account of Ministry of Foreign Affairs conditions and the availability of government funds.
- Monitoring and evaluating institutional performance, in the aspects of governance and organization, academic and financial management,
- Recognition, award or withdrawal of diploma/s proposed by institutions; evaluate and determine the equivalence of diploma/s provided by institutions in/outside of the country,
- Examine education advertisements and provide or deny approval to institutions to publish,
- Manage and coordinate the academic affairs of public and private HEIs,
- Manage the HE database and management information system,
- Manage the recruitment of foundation year scholarship students subsidized by government funds for admission to public HEIs, using a computerized system,
- Enhance and develop research policies in HE - in science, technology, culture and social science,
- Develop policy and planning for scientific research and training,
- Monitor and evaluate the results of technical and scientific research.

The Categories of HEIs and their differentiation:

HEIs have started and been involved in quality assurance since their establishment, complying with the conditions and detailed criteria for HEI establishment - mission, governance and management, academic programs and teaching/learning, administration and teaching staff, location, building, physical facility, study resources, infrastructure, strategic planning and financing. Besides organizing the educational structure of HEIs, there must be offices established to accomplish such tasks – administration and personnel, planning and finance, academic and student affairs, research and development, cooperation and public relations, publication and information dissemination. There are two categories of HEIs - universities and institutes.

An **University** is defined as a HEI entitled to deliver all HE diplomas (bachelor, master and doctorate), providing **multi-disciplinary fields** of study (through the **requirements** for the establishment of a foundation year program, as year one of the four-year Bachelor Degree Program), of teaching and research activities using modern methodologies, **in a minimum of 5 different faculties, comprising three obligatory Faculties: (1)- Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Languages; (2)- Faculty of Mathematics and Science; (3)- Faculty of Social Science; and at least two more** of the following faculties, providing such disciplines as Health Science, Engineering, Computer Science, Law, Agriculture, Architecture and Design, Education, Business Administration Management, Telecommunication (including Information Network Studies), Environmental Education, Tourism and Hospitality , etc.

An **Institute** or independent school is defined as a **vocationally specialized** HEI (i.e. not required to providing the three general education faculties required for university status), ranging from those offering higher degrees - (Associate, Bachelor, Master and Doctorate)- such as the Institute of Technology of Cambodia to those offering specialized courses in science, in one of such specialized disciplines as Health Science, Engineering, Computer Science, Law, Agriculture, Architecture and Design, Education, Business Administration Management, Telecommunication, including Information Network Studies, Environmental Education, Tourism and Hospitality.

Academies are advanced/comprehensive research and education institutions capable of giving advice to the government on social, political and economic issues, humanities, arts, sciences and technology, thus serving as the government think tank. There are currently two academies in Cambodia – the Royal Academy of Cambodia (RAC) and the Police Academy of Cambodia (PAC).

The Internal Quality Assurance Unit in all HEIs:

To facilitate the capacity and institutional development of all HEIs, the MoEYS took many policy actions to assure and improve the quality of education provided by institutions. One of them was the issue of the regulation in (2004) for each HEI to create an Internal Quality Assurance unit in every HEI to conduct internal self assessment to help in preparing the HEI to obtain accreditation from the ACC. The internal quality assurance unit is led by the vice-rector/deputy-director in charge of academic affairs. All internal quality assurance units are to be characterized by the following **common roles and mandates:**

- ❖ develop procedures and provisions for assessment to assure internal quality within the institution in accordance with the MoEYS guidelines,
- ❖ prepare annual reports on institutional performance, educational effectiveness, organization and governance, planning and finance for MoEYS inspection,

- ❖ prepare self-assessment reports of the institutions in accordance with the ACC indicators and minimum standards for accreditation
- ❖ develop the process of monitoring and evaluation for applying internal assessment in academic administration, curriculum implementation and institutional management,
- ❖ communicate with the ACC to follow up on the processes and the evolution of management mechanisms and of accreditation provision,
- ❖ cooperate with non educational units within the institution in assessment activities in order to gather an adequate database for the self-assessment reports
- ❖ prepare reports, publish the assessment results and manage feedback from staff
- ❖ manage and strengthen a code of ethics of faculty member and assessors.
- ❖ consult the rector and HEI directors to strengthen, improve and assure quality,
- ❖ prepare quarter, semester and annual reports for rector/directors

5- Problems and Concerns of the Quality Improvement Processes

For the MoEYS and HEIs, quality assurance is not new aspect; however there are concerns about its implementation, due to inadequate human and financial resources. The budget allocation in HE does not balance HE funds provided by the government to match the resource needs of the number of graduates output by each HEI.

There is many administration staff, even in the Ministry to service HEIs, and also in the HEIs themselves, but some of them are not competent enough to carry out their work. Some of the HEIs fail to attract or develop sufficient qualified lecturers and do not have enough permanent/full-time lecturers or staff. There is much lecturing but very little research. Libraries and laboratories in many HEIs are not adequately and well equipped. There is a lack of sufficient suitable books for students to research the knowledge base in their subjects. The HE Management Information System database on students, staff, subjects and higher education teachers still needs to be integrated and that reform is only now starting to be implemented. The Vision of HE 2025 and the resultant strategic priorities still need to be finalized and approved. The financial management systems in many HEIs are not transparent or disseminated within the HEI or to the public. Some public HEIs have still not applied to be autonomous Public Administration Institutions.

Over and above these many emergent tasks yet to be fully addressed, until the Law on Education comes into force, the HEIs, which continue to operate with

some violations of the principles of the new law, have not yet been required to prepare the necessary documents on the legal adjustments for the Ministry in charge of Education to implement the necessary regulations within a period of 2 (two years). So, until the Education Law has been activated, the MoEYS has not yet been empowered to prepare and develop on time the many legal standards/regulations, related to internal quality assurance in HE.

Implementation of the criteria for establishment of HEIs and of the sub-decree on criteria in establishing universities along with the standard of education law will be begun through monitoring HEIs performance. The outcome will be used for amendment of the detailed criteria for the establishment of HEIs.

6- The Future Directions of Quality Improvement Reforms in HE

The MoEYS plans to carry out the following policy development actions over the next three years targeted on quality improvement in HE:

- ❖ Finalize the medium term plan (2012-2015), for capacity development in HE and provide a budget package for staff capacity development
- ❖ Develop an incentive framework to identify hierarchical ranks and status levels in the career development of HE teachers,
- ❖ Develop curriculum minimum standards as a base for a qualifications framework
- ❖ Conduct research on rate and level of employment of graduates,
- ❖ Develop and implement a comprehensive HE Management Information System (HEMIS) to support the development of a strategic plan for HE development,
- ❖ Develop assessment criteria for monitoring HEI performance
- ❖ Transform existing public HEIs into autonomous public administration institutions,
- ❖ Strengthen education law enforcement by defining standards set by the Education Law requiring each HEI to meet the new legal requirements of its type of HEI
- ❖ Create one comprehensive university at national level,
- ❖ Provide financing to public HEIs based on public scholarship student numbers
- ❖ Define guidelines to assist each HEI to make short, medium and long-terms income and expenditure plans.

Implementing the HE Quality and Capacity Improvement Project approved by the RGC and supported by the World Bank in 23 millions USD (50% grant and 50% credit) is to aim to improving capacity to develop HE quality:

1 Strengthening the Governance and Capacity of the HE System will improve the overall development and management of the HE sub-sector by focusing on staff development at DHE, DSR and ACC, by improving their capacity to offer practical guidance and support to HEIs. It is also designed to strengthen the capacity of individual HEIs.

2 Provision of Competitive Development and Innovation Grants will strengthen the capacity of participating HEIs and provide the enabling conditions for improved quality in research, teaching and management; and introduce an efficient and sustainable mechanism, which emphasizes innovation and accountability, in the DHE for the allocation of public funds for research to eligible public and private HEIs.

3 Provision of Scholarships to Disadvantaged Students will increase the retention of poor students in HE through the provision of 1,050 "special-priority" scholarships, based on pro-poor targeting and educational criteria.

4 Project Management and Monitoring and Evaluation will support management efforts to coordinate project activities and also assist MoEYS, DHE, ACC, and HEIs to systematically collect, collate, analyse, and report on the human and information resources needed to further develop the HE sub-sector.

7. Conclusion

The system of HE in Cambodia is only 30 years old, because it was reborn in the 1980s. It has expanded greatly since 2000 in the context of today's fast changing global HE of the 21st century. It is recognized that HE in Cambodia cannot keep itself away from these processes of change, evolution and development. It is essential to adapt the system to the regional and global context, the highest priority being to improve the quality of HE.

Quality assurance (internal and external assessment) in Cambodia is a progressively emerging feature. This has commenced with the process of institutional accreditation now completed at Foundation Year level and is beginning to reach up to higher degree levels.

Given the limited availability of material and human resources and of experience in HE administration the challenge is to proceed as fast as is possible with the definition of minimum standards of quality and with the accreditation process and definition of criteria at bachelor degree level and above.

Given the foregoing background to the re-emergence of Cambodia's HE system, I do hope we will learn more about quality assurance (IQA & EQA) from this important event – the 2012 Asia-Pacific Quality Network Conference on Quality Assurance in HE.

We – the educationalists in HE from the higher/education ministry/ies, higher education commissions, accrediting body/ies and HEIs - can draw on our leanings from this conference. These will include information about best practice resources to measure and strengthen our APQN cooperation to support the socio-economic and education development of our countries and also to enhance future collaboration to promote quality investment in human capital development.

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