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Internationalisation and Quality Assurance

Connecting European and Global Experiences

- A Selection of Presentations -

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Introduction

I started professional life in the seventies at University of Massachusetts at Amherst and once I got my doctorate, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, which is the accrediting body for that section of the United States, had me on teams, and then I was chairing teams, and then I was training teams. Next thing I know I was called to Washington, D.C. in 1982 to oversee the process by which U.S. accreditors were accredited and to provide professional development to accreditors at a national level. From 1982 to 1991, I did just that.

By the mid to late 80s, it became clear that there were international dimensions, either because national systems needed to be developed and were recognized as such by organizations including the World Bank or they recognized it themselves, such as Japan or the movement of professions across national borders. It became more important to have a standards-based process that would work across borders.

By the early 90s, I founded the organization, Center for Quality Assurance in International Education. However, I couldn't completely predict what was going to happen, but we developed a mission statement at the very beginning that has worked ever since: one that affirmed the importance of assessing countries, working for the globalization of the professions, and the movement of education and the professions across national borders. We have consistently remained at least a half decade to decade ahead of higher education globally.

Dr. Marjorie Peace Lenn, Spring 2010

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Long before many in her field, Dr. Marjorie Peace Lenn recognized that in a shrinking, increasingly interdependent world, countries who are serious about economic growth should not only educate more women and men at higher rates, but be able to address the growing global demand for better higher education. She observed that this is precisely why "[t]he assessment and enhancement of quality, and attempts to define and measure quality, are major issues for higher education in many countries." [1]

Very early on, in the late 1980's, Dr. Lenn witnessed first hand countries grappling with these important concerns and worked to make sure their quality demands were met. The Association of American Colleges and Universities in Japan and the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation were the direct result of this initial push to set and streamline standards.

As global demands for quality grew, she knew *there was no time to waste* in expanding this work.

Dr. Lenn launched the Center for Quality Assurance in International Education (CQAIE) in 1991 to help countries envision and implement standards and systems to embrace these

[1] Dr. Marjorie Peace Lenn, Global Trends in Quality Assurance in Higher Education, World Education News & Reviews, v. 5, no. 2, Spring 1992, pages 1 and 21.

growing demands at home and abroad. From the outset, the Center was at the cutting edge of three quality-focused strategies, which are alive and well today thanks to the work of INQAAHE members and partners: 1) national and institutional capacity building in quality assurance and accreditation; 2) advocacy and planning for the globalization of the professions; and 3) ensuring the quality of transnational education.

Over the last two decades, these strategies, at the core of her pioneering vision for quality assurance, paved the way for new and improved systems and programmes in over 50 countries throughout Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America.

As the quality assurance movement continues to grow in influence throughout the world, countries, institutions, and agencies are confronting new and often difficult challenges. That's why Dr. Lenn valued international networks like the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) – a network devoted to providing the space, time, and resources for key players to dialogue, strengthen relationships across borders, and most importantly, spur innovative strategies to meet new demands.

In December 2011, INQAAHE demonstrated once again what Dr. Lenn valued most in bringing quality assurance stakeholders together. As a tribute to her life and work, INQAAHE together with the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA) hosted a conference in Brussels to explore the intersections of internationalisation and quality assurance, especially connecting European experiences with others throughout the world. The first day was dedicated to the quality of internationalisation in the professions. The second day addressed mutual recognition and European and International disciplinary accreditation initiatives with the third focused on European Quality Labels and external quality review procedures.

This volume features the papers delivered at each of the plenary sessions throughout the conference, all of which reflect on where we've been, where we are now, and where we're headed. Together, they are a timely assessment of the quality assurance movement and its push for internationalisation:

Reflecting on the life and work of Dr. Lenn, Dr. Bethany Jones takes us into the world of quality assurance in teacher education, a foundational profession learning to adapt to challenges posed by globalisation.

Dr. Hans de Wit offers a comprehensive and timely analysis of the debate on quality and the necessary benchmarking of internationalisation in higher education. Also addressing this phenomenon, Dr. Patricia Pol asks whether internationalisation is a threat or benefit to quality in light of recent survey data (from IAU's 3rd Global Survey) showing regional and global perceptions of risks and benefits.

In addition to internationalisation, increased student and workforce mobility and the need for mutual recognition of accreditation or quality assurance decisions across borders are realities that need to be strategically addressed. Rolf Heusser, Antony Stella, and Rafael Llavori do just that in their comparative analysis of mutual recognition efforts and their efficacy in Europe, Asia and Latin America.

Also in need of assessment and strategic rethinking are the transnational external review processes that have developed over the last decade. Achim Hopbach offers a look into these procedures within the European context, especially the evolution of "European Quality Labels" and their contribution to quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Maria Jose Lemaitre, President of INQAAHE, concludes with the key takeaways from the conference in Brussels and discusses how we should guide our thinking on these issues going forward.

It is clear from this conference and these papers that the international quality assurance community is more coordinated and equipped *than ever* to make sure quality in higher education stays relevant in this rapidly changing world. New standards, processes, and structures are being developed to ensure that quality will improve and more collaboration is being fostered among established/emerging and national/regional agencies.

As this movement continues to unfold, it is important to recognize that quality assurance is not (and never should be) an end in itself, but rather a means by which we enable, equip, and empower women and men to take leadership in an interdependent world. That's the vision that guided the work of Dr. Lenn, her colleagues and INQAAHE in the last two decades. And as demonstrated by this conference, that's the vision that lives on.

Rebecca Peace Lenn

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Quality Assurance in Teacher Education: Lessons from Marjorie Peace Lenn

Bethany S. Jones, Ph.D.

President, Center for Quality Assurance In International Education

INQAAHE, Brussels, December 1, 2011

I want to thank the organizers of this conference for inviting me to speak as part of your tribute to Dr. Marjorie Peace Lenn and her contributions to quality assurance in the professions. This speech has given me an opportunity to reflect back on what Marjorie accomplished, and to tell you about her significant contribution to quality assurance in teacher education, a foundational profession to which globalization presents so many challenges.

In the early 1990s, Marjorie was working in Washington, DC, at COPA, the Council on Post-Secondary Accreditation, the forerunner of CHEA, the Council on Higher Education Accreditation, which is the umbrella organization for accreditors in the United States. At that time many institutions, individuals, governments and funding agencies from around the world were paying increased attention to the need for quality assurance in post-secondary education and were seeking help from organizations such as COPA. At that time few people or agencies in the US, including COPA, were prepared to provide adequate assistance to agencies from outside the US, so Marjorie stepped forward to create the Center for Quality Assurance in International Education (CQAIE) in 1992 to take on that role. For the next twenty years she engaged herself full-time in responding to calls for help, advice, guidance, and support on quality assurance in education at the international level.

While Marjorie's professional and personal talents were the keys to the Center's successful agenda of activities, the design of the Center was also important. The Center is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization operating under the guidance of a board of directors. All the members of the board have in-depth knowledgeable of post-secondary education and its role in the increasingly shrinking and inter-dependent world. And all of them were always busy enough and wise enough not to micro-manage.

This expertise and independence permitted Marjorie to respond to a wide variety of opportunities with agility and flexibility. She relied heavily on her own enormous talent and energy, but she also developed a network of like-minded experts all around the world. The Center provided operational continuity and a visible presence, but Marjorie retained her option of picking and choosing its work.

What kind of work was she able to do with this independence and flexibility?

- she incubated new initiatives;
- she created enduring structures;
- she developed effective networks of skilled and dedicated people;
- she articulated, recorded, ordered, synthesized and disseminated useful ideas in person and in print;
- she designed new processes and procedures;
- she drilled down through complex systems to understand, and she fought up through equally complex organizations to ensure that her ideas were heard;
- and she mentored people.

Here is what she didn't do:

- she never sought to create an empire in the form of increasing numbers of full-time professional or administrative staff;
- she never aspired to acquire a burgeoning footprint of plush offices or outposts;
- she never let herself be manipulated or co-opted;
- and she was never less than honest.

Above all, she remained a courageous truth-teller. She would provide service by contributing expertise, then hand off long-term implementation to the people who needed to work to maintain the progress: she knew early on about capacity building and sustainability.

CQAIE's activities took many forms, and were orchestrated with varying emphasis over the years.

Work in-country

Over the years Marjorie work at the national level in a long list of countries to create or upgrade systems of quality assurance in postsecondary education. She was in Romania; Bulgaria; Estonia; Sweden; South Africa; Zambia; Egypt; Israel; Jordan; Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; the United Arab Emirates; Costa Rica; Vietnam; East Timor; Japan; China; Colombia; Chile; Indonesia. All told, Marjorie worked in around fifty countries. Many of these countries were very challenging environments because they were under stress from political or social or economic change. But Marjorie was both intellectually curious and fearless in her determination to make a difference where she could.

Not all of her projects were completely successful. There were times when things did not move forward as expected, when people did not live up to what was expected of them, when for whatever reason individuals or organizations became obstructionist or hostile. Marjorie became known in these cases for making a final report which included a clear and frank accounting of the problems which were impeding solutions to urgent problems. Then she closed the books and went on with other work. Occasionally someone who had caused everyone a great deal of heartburn had a comeuppance, in which case Marjorie indulged in her wicked little laugh.

Creating the A-Teams

Marjorie was adept at forming teams in response to a request for help from a university or a professional group -- “We need accountants, engineers, nurses, former deans, department chairs, to help us improve our education programmes. “ Marjorie would pull together a working group and present it as her “A-Team,” and then go about the work of planning. As the years went by, she had increasing success in tapping the talent pools of many professional schools and organizations to help in furthering quality education programmes in specialized areas. And those A-Teams were increasingly international in composition, as she discovered like-minded people in her travels around the world.

Conferring

Over the years hundreds of people attended the many conferences, training sessions, workshops or special meetings Marjorie designed, convened, sponsored, co-sponsored, organized, or ran. The topics were invariably central to the important issues of the day. “Gateways to Quality and Mobility in the Americas” in San Jose, Costa Rica; “The WTO and International Trade in Education Services”: a workshop for specialized and professional accreditors on “The Globalization of the Professions and its Impact on Accreditation” in 2003; “Assuring the Integrity of Higher Education in the Global Marketplace: Implications of Current and Future Services Trade Negotiations.”

Spreading the word

In addition to events, we should also look at the publications that bear Marjorie’s imprint, either as author, co-author, editor, contributor or publisher. “Foundations of Globalization of Higher Education and the Professions”; “Ethics and Educational Assessment: The Search for Quality and the Role of Accreditation in American Higher Education”; “Conflicts of Interest and the Accreditation Process”; “Site Visitors in the Accreditation Process: A Guide to Issues and Practical Concerns”; “Distance Learning and Accreditation,” (published in 1991!).

Creating networks and organizations

Members of INQAAHE know that Marjorie was very active in the formation of many international networks and organizations, beginning with the International Network of Quality Assurance Associations in Higher Education. The Arab Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education spun off from INQAAHE. Then there are the Asia-Pacific Quality Network, the Ibero-American Network for Higher Education Accreditation, the American International Recruitment Council (AIRC), to list a few.

Marjorie had an unusual ability to work with the minutiae that a new organization requires without letting herself become bogged down in the details or bureaucratic in her thinking. The last organization I mentioned – AIRC – is a good example of her work. She and a group of like-minded colleagues took on the challenge of applying quality standards to the activities of overseas recruiters who work to send undergraduate

students to US colleges and universities. Marjorie not only saw the problems raised by such activities, and helped formulate an appropriate response (the high level thinking), she was also the one to engage in writing bylaws and standards and creating the framework for the organization, which now has over 130 institutional members. AIRC was created a few years before the practice of using paid recruiters become a hotly debated issue in the US, so its members and leadership had a well formulated point of view which has added clarity to recent impassioned discussions. Marjorie and the Center ran the accrediting process for AIRC from its creation through the end of 2010, when with the Center's blessing it spread its wings and flew from its formative incubator.

The funders

Finally, I think you will find it interesting to see who called upon Marjorie to do the heavy lifting and at various times (sometimes repeatedly) funded her work:

- The World Bank,
- The Asian Development Bank,
- The United Nations Development Program,
- The Organization of Economic and Cultural Development,
- The Gulf Cooperative Council,
- The Council of Europe,
- The Soros Foundation,
- The US State Department,
- The South African Universities Chancellor's Association,
- The Carnegie Foundation,
- The Association of African Universities,
- The Organization of American States,
- The Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada.

Reputations are precious and competition for resources is strong. This impressive list is evidence of Marjorie's reputation for not only expertise and experience, but also reliability, integrity, honesty, forthrightness, and intellectual courage.

When Marjorie passed away in October 2010, she had begun scaling back some of her activities. But to the very end she followed in detail the on-going operations of one of her most noteworthy projects: IRTE, International Recognition in Teacher Education. This brings us back to the theme of this conference, quality assurance in the professions, and the important subject of teacher education.

Over the years colleges of teacher education abroad began to look to the United States for help in stimulating quality improvement in their programmes. Many education deans had been educated in the United States and were attracted to the possibility of benchmarking themselves against the standards of peers in the United States. They contacted NCATE (the National Council on Accreditation in Teacher Education) to see whether they could be accredited, but discovered that NCATE did not accredit institutions outside of the United States. Recognizing the importance of responding to this need from abroad, Dr. Arthur Wise, the then Executive Director of NCATE, Marjorie, and some faculty leaders in teacher education in the US together formulated a plan to create a programme which would use NCATE unit standards, NCATE-experienced visiting teams,

and a process very close to NCATE's. This programme would be available to institutions outside of the US and offer "international recognition" in place of "accreditation." Thus in 2003 International Recognition in Teacher Education (IRTE) was begun, administered by Marjorie through the Center.

NCATE nominated dozens of US education professionals who had extensive experience with its accreditation process. From these lists of nominees, Marjorie and her colleagues formed a Board of International Reviewers and smaller, separate Recognition Council. The International Reviewers are involved with IRTE in two ways. They can be nominated to work as consultants with an institution needing external developmental support as they institute quality assurance systems in preparation for an international site visit, (in which case they became ineligible to serve on a site visit to that institution). Or they can be named to serve as a member of a visiting team and make a recommendation on whether the institution should be awarded international recognition. The Recognition Council, including a number of NCATE activists and leaders who also were deans or provosts, functioned as the ultimate decision maker. Because only a few of these people had engaged in quality assurance work in teacher education outside of the United States, Marjorie insisted in preparing them by conducting workshops to guide them in the challenges of cross-cultural engagement.

From the beginning, Marjorie insisted that IRTE be a supportive process, not a daunting challenge. While the standards were clearly defined, it was understood that considerable expert consultation and help would be required to prevent institutions from becoming bogged down in an unfamiliar process. No institution would be left to struggle alone to try to achieve success. Periodic reports were required so that progress could be monitored, and problems identified before they grew into serious impediments. Workshops were offered drawing together candidate institutions to introduce faculty members to the practice of evidence-based standards. Timetables pushed institutions to get on with the work required, or else step out of the process for a year if required to regain momentum. In short, everything was done to promote the possibility of success.

There were some casualties along the way. Some institutions showed initial interest in becoming candidates for IRTE recognition, but dropped out. Some institutions were in no position to even begin the official process: they needed to do substantial up-front work to put their houses in order in terms of faculty quality, adequate funding, basic faculty governance. The collegial drafting of a conceptual framework for the education unit as a first step presented a major hurdle to some institutions that had simply grown too quickly to have had the luxury of thinking about what they were doing! But IRTE grew and matured over the years, along with the institutions it served.

Marjorie never was aggressive about building IRTE into a large programme. International accreditation and quality assurance take an enormous amount of institutional resources on the part of everyone. If we talk about the need to engage in capacity building in developing countries, we should also look at capacity building in our own organizations, and acknowledge that established quality assurance organizations

take years to build. IRTE started modestly and remained small enough so that each institution received personalized care and support.

IRTE turned out to be a remarkably timely creation. A couple of decades ago, developing countries were persuaded that having "accredited" colleges of business in their universities was essential to a higher standard of living. Then the spotlight shifted, and having an accredited engineering college seemed to be the key to economic development. Now, as important as it is for countries to have high quality schools of business and colleges of engineering, today it is clear that the provision of high quality primary and secondary education is a pre-requisite to it all. And quality schools require quality teachers. The call for quality assurance in colleges of education is coming down from the very top of government offices and university officials around the world. With their heavy burden of transmitting cultural values as well as core content, teachers are not yet as globally exportable as managers, technical experts, and financial experts. There is no way that a country can import all the primary and secondary school teachers it needs from outside its own borders. So the search for quality education has to begin at home.

The ten years of experience that IRTE has had working with colleges of education – mostly in the Middle East – have been richly informative for everyone involved in the process. Here are some of the issues, which have gained importance through repetition:

- A quality assurance process requiring data-driven evidence is particularly challenging. A move from descriptive evidence and inputs to data-gathering, analysis and application often requires the creation of a new office of dedicated professionals to work with the faculty. It certainly requires a new mind-set in most of the teaching staff and administration.
- Expectations that faculty must be scholars of their profession, contributing to local and global debates on important issues through peer-reviewed publications present serious issues, especially when language issues are present. What is a reasonable level of scholarly activity for a faculty member for whom English is a second language, and peer reviewed publications in her native language are limited?
- The interaction between international specialized accreditation agencies and national quality assurance agencies is complex, and calls for repeated and open dialogue between everyone involved. Competition between the parties would benefit no one.
- Many times the very people who are most motivated and best prepared to engage in quality assurance are the first to be picked off by the upper administration of a university or even the government to take another position. So the person leaves, there is a vacuum that has to be filled, a delay, some scrambling around. Frustrating to everyone, yes. But until there is more expertise cultivated in quality assurance around the world, this will remain a fundamental challenge.
- Cultural notions are so deeply embedded in accreditation standards and processes, while teacher education is so closely aligned with local practices and deeply held beliefs that there will need to be time to resolve inevitable collisions.

The month I became president of the Center – in October 2010 – a major development occurred. IRTE's partner, he National Council on Accreditation of Teacher Education, and a second accreditor – TEAC, the Teacher Educator Accreditation Council – announced that the two groups would merge and form a new single accrediting organization, the Council on Accreditation of Education Professionals or CAEP, in January 2013.
And CAEP's agenda called for it to engage in international accreditation. Clearly, it was time to look at IRTE and decide on its future and the future of its institutions.
After several months of conversations with NCATE, TEAC and CAEP colleagues we found that the IRTE agenda coincided with the new agenda of CAEP, and that CAEP would offer IRTE institutions some expanded options, including accreditation, which was until that time unavailable to them. As a result of these talks, on July 1, 2012, the Center will return IRTE to its roots at NCATE for administration.

This transition provides CAEP with a precious resource. Rather than plunging into international activities with only good planning and fine intentions, IRTE is a functioning model for CAEP to study and build upon. The IRTE International Reviewers and Recognition Council members are all internationally experienced teacher education professionals. And IRTE institutions abroad all have faculty and administrators who have experienced US quality assurance processes and are willing to share their ideas on how CAEP can best proceed in building its international agenda.

I cannot think of a better tribute to Marjorie and her work than to know that IRTE has served as a valuable bridge as quality assurance and accreditation in teacher education go global.[2]

With the future of the institutions active in international recognition in teacher education programme assured, the final decision is what to do with the Center itself? And here, again, the future is bright.

WASC is the acronym for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), one of six regional accreditors in the United States. In November of 2011 the WASC Senior Commission approved an increase in its international work in quality assurance, recognizing the increasing globalization of its member institutions in the United States. WASC and the Center are discussing a possible collaboration based on the Center's strong history of quality assurance work both in the United States and abroad.[3]

From the perspective of the Center's leadership, many of WASC's aspirations map well onto what Marjorie Peace Lenn achieved in her work in the past two decades. There would be no higher tribute to this remarkable woman than to have her accomplishments recognized, reflected and sustained by her valued peers around the world.

[2] For more information on the creation of CAEP, see www.ncate.org/, www.teac.org/, and www.caepsite.org/
[3] For more information on WASC, see www.wascsenior.org/

Issues of Quality and Internationalisation

Dr. J.W.M (Hans) de Wit

Hans de Wit is professor of internationalisation of higher education at the Centre for Applied Research on Economics and Management (CAREM) of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands. As of 2012, he is also the Director of the new Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (UCSC) in Milan, Italy.

Over the past 25 years, the internationalisation of higher education in Europe has become more and more of a priority. The growing importance of internationalisation in higher education on the one hand and the diversity in rationales, approaches and strategies of institutions and programmes on the other call for an *assessment* of the quality of internationalisation at the programme and institutional level and a system of *certifications* in order to define the progress and status of internationalisation. *Internationalisation has become a marker of quality* in higher education. And there is more debate about the *quality of internationalisation itself*. Deardorff, Pysarchik and Yun (2009) stated: "with globalisation driving the demand for global-ready graduates, it becomes crucial for administrators to assess these outcomes of internationalisation to determine exactly what our students are learning through these efforts and how effective our programmes are in achieving the stated learning outcomes."

This article gives an overview of the debate on quality and benchmarking of internationalisation of higher education. Based on the pilot scheme (2010) of the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) 20 Dutch and Flemish degree programmes assessed the quality of their internationalisation.

Assessment of internationalisation strategies

Internationalisation has long been a key marker of quality in higher education. The growing importance of internationalisation on the one hand and the diversity in rationales, approaches and strategies of institutions and programmes on the other call for an assessment of the quality of internationalisation and the development of a system of certifications that define the progress and status of the internationalisation at the programme and institutional level. Over the past two decades several instruments have been designed to assess this, primarily at the institutional level.

In 1999, the OECD published a book edited by Jane Knight and Hans de Wit entitled, *Quality and Internationalisation in Higher Education*, in which instruments and guidelines were provided to assess internationalisation strategies based on a number of pilot reviews of institutions in different parts of the world. The EAIE Occasional Paper *Measuring the success of what we do* ten years later focuses on the same theme (De Wit, 2009). Its introduction states that measuring success is becoming a more urgent matter for professionals in internationalisation. The widely debated movement to rank institutions of higher education internationally has significantly influenced the way we

measure success in our profession. The global call for accountability by students, faculty, deans, the management of higher education institutions and national governments, as well as the call for quality assurance, has triggered the need to evaluate internationalisation processes, programmes and projects. Accreditation, ranking, certification, auditing, and benchmarking have therefore become key priorities for international higher education.

Following the Internationalisation Quality Review Process of 1999, several steps have been taken in different countries to develop tools and instruments for measuring internationalisation. Regretfully, they all measure input and/or output, but not outcomes. According to Hudzik and Stohl (2009), outcomes are "usually most closely associated with measuring goal achievement and the missions of institutions (…) and are the really important measures."

Crucial elements

As principle guidelines, the Internationalisation Quality Review Process identified the following as crucial:

- Progress (measured by quantitative and qualitative measures) and quality (measured by opinion of those who do the assessment);
- Measurement based on the objectives and targets set by the institution;
- Focus on both organisational and programme strategies;
- Emphasis on evaluating the process more than the outcome(s) or impact;
- Identify where improvement is desirable and necessary;
- Acceptance that there is no ideal or optimal measurement profile;
- Focus on how the different elements of the institution or programme work together in an integrated and strategic manner;
- Implement the assessment on a regular basis and over a period of time so as to reinforce the process. (Knight, ibid, 44-45)

Also important to add to that list is commitment to involving and engaging leadership, faculty, students and administrative staff at all levels in the quality review process.

Based on experiences so far with assessment of internationalisation, the following are noticeably clear:

- There is a need for quality assessment of internationalisation strategies in higher education;
- Throughout the world, particularly in the United States and Europe, several instruments have been developed over the past 15 years to assess that quality;
- Institutions throughout the world use more or less the same programmatic and organizational categories for assessment;
- These instruments focus on input AND output assessment, are mainly implemented at the institutional level, and address the state of the art and/or the process for improvement;
- And, among institutions involved, some form of benchmarking is preferred to create comparison and best practice.

At the same time, one can observe that:

- Institutions are reluctant to assess internationalisation strategies on a regular basis, as it is a time consuming process;
- In a competitive world of branding and ranking, an instrument without some kind of certification is not considered a high priority;
- Assessment of institutional strategies can overlook the diversity of strategies for disciplines and programmes and the different levels within them;
- More and more institutions and programmes distinguish between a minimum requirement of internationalisation, applicable to all students and all programmes, and a maximum requirement, applicable to programmes and students with a heavy international and intercultural focus;
- Internationalisation is becoming a more mainstream priority for higher education institutions, especially since internationalisation is strongly linked to innovation, interdisciplinarity and interculturality in an increasingly globalized world.

Based on these observations, it appears advisable to develop a system of *certification of internationalisation at the programme level.* For such a certification process, the following should be taken into consideration:

- The use of different assessment levels in order to indicate the state of internationalisation (what has been achieved so far) and to provide incentives for improvement (where is it headed or what is attainable);
- The certification is available at least at the programme level or a combination of programmes at different levels or across disciplines (bachelor and/or master; schools/faculties);
- The assessment comprehensive in its focus (namely the why, how and what of internationalisation);
- It should focus on how internationalisation contributes to the overall quality of the programme by focusing on qualitative indicators (vision, content, provisional elements and outcomes) while using quantitative indicators (e.g. staff mobility figures) as supporting elements;
- Preference should be given to either a regional (European) or international certificate, as the purpose is to position it in a comparative international context;
- The assessment should be done by a team that combines expertise on the programme subject, quality assurance and internationalisation, and should include international expertise and the student perspective;
- Given the diverse global society we live in, both intercultural and international competencies should be addressed;
- And as much as possible, the assessment should be combined with the accreditation of the programme, as to avoid extra workload and costs.

Assessment of internationalisation at the programme level

The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) decided to develop an instrument for the certification of internationalisation at the programme level. This certificate, called a “distinguished quality feature for internationalisation”, has

different levels to indicate the state of internationalisation (achieved so far) and to provide incentives for improvement (where it is headed). The certificate doesn't assess a specific activity but is comprehensive in its approach (focusing on the why, how and what of internationalisation). It uses both quantitative (what has been achieved) and qualitative indicators (rationales, vision, targets, content). Its starting point is the internationalisation objectives of the institution itself.

The framework used is guided by the following questions: what (the programme wants to achieve with internationalisation); why (internationalisation contributes to overall quality); and how (internationalisation shapes the teaching and learning outcomes of staff, students, and services). The standards focused on vision/policy, learning outcomes, teaching and learning process, students, staff and services, each having two to three criteria.

In 2010, NVAO tested this approach in a pilot project among 21 Dutch and Flemish programmes. The experiences with and findings of this pilot project are described in this report (www.nvao.net: *Assessment of Internationalisation - An evaluation of the NVAOs pilot procedures*, 2011a).

While NVAO envisions internationalisation as a mandatory element of all higher education, this assessment was distinctively voluntary, making a distinction between basic internationalisation for every programme under the regular accreditation process, and deeper or further internationalisation as a deliberate choice.

The pilot institutions

A total of 21 programmes applied to participate in the pilot (triple the number expected) of which 11 programmes were offered by universities of applied sciences or university colleges and 10 by research universities. The majority of the applications came from Dutch institutions and only four Flemish programmes, all offered by university colleges, decided to participate. A clarification may be found in the legal constraints of the Flemish Higher Education system. Institutions can only offer English taught programmes at the Master's level and if an equivalent Dutch taught programme is available in Flanders. This makes the creation of an international programme a bigger challenge.
When looking at the different fields of study participating in the pilot, eight programmes in the field of international business were involved. Various representatives of these programmes indicated that "business by nature is international" which explains their interest in the pilot. Other participating programmes represented the field of law and social sciences (four in total). Also the internationalisation of four engineering programmes was assessed during the pilot: one of a university of applied sciences and three of a research university. Two programmes in the field of health sciences and two in the field of performing arts were involved too.

Overview of programmes assessed

None of the programmes were assessed overall as "excellent": almost fifty percent were assessed as "good"; eight programmes were assessed as "satisfactory" and three were considered as "unsatisfactory."

When looking at the 126 assessments that were given at the standard level, an "unsatisfactory" was reported 4 times and an "excellent" was reported 26 times. Eighteen criteria were assessed as "unsatisfactory" and fifty-nine as "excellent". Despite the relatively high percentage of criteria (22%) and standards (21%) assessed as "excellent," no programme received an "excellent" overall. This can be explained by the assessment rules applied during the pilot. For an overall "excellent" assessment, the first two standards needed to be assessed as "excellent" as well as two of the other four, and none of the standards could be "unsatisfactory." Although the percentage of "unsatisfactory" assessments at criteria level and standard level (7% and 3%) is much lower, three programmes received an "unsatisfactory" overall. If one of the standards was assessed as "unsatisfactory" the programme received an overall "unsatisfactory" assessment.

When making a distinction between the programmes with a professional orientation and the programmes with an academic orientation, the latter fared better: 69% of them were assessed as "good," while 13% of the professional programmes received this assessment. The three programmes that were assessed as "unsatisfactory" are all professional programmes. However, the number of participants in this pilot is not statistically representative and therefore we cannot draw any generic conclusions from this outcome.

Master's programmes fared better than Bachelor programmes: 70% of the Master's programmes were assessed as "good," while 27% of the Bachelor programmes received the same assessment. The three programmes that were assessed as "unsatisfactory" are all Bachelor programmes.

Revised framework

Both institutions, the staff from NVAO and the members of the expert panel provided extensive feedback to the pilot project, which resulted in better guidelines for the self-assessment, the visits, the reporting and the certification. The feedback provided, resulting in particular in a revised framework, in which services were no longer a separate standard but included into students and staff. The revision was intended to make the framework meet the evaluation results, to enhance the interpretation of the criteria and to achieve a better balance between the standards and their underlying criteria. The new framework looks as follows:

Assessment framework distinctive quality feature internationalisation

Standard 1:Vision on internationalisation

Criterion 1a: Shared vision

The programme has a vision on internationalisation. This vision is supported by stakeholders within and outside the programme.

Criterion 1b: Verifiable objectives

The vision on internationalisation includes verifiable objectives.

Criterion 1c: Improvement-oriented evaluations

The vision on internationalisation is evaluated periodically and this evaluation forms the basis for improvement measures.

Standard 2: Learning outcomes

Criterion 2a: Intended learning outcomes

The intended international and intercultural learning outcomes defined by the programme are a clear reflection of its vision on internationalisation.

Criterion 2b: Student assessment

The methods that are used for the assessment of students are suitable for measuring the achievement of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.

Criterion 2c: Graduate achievement

The programme can demonstrate that the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes are achieved by its graduates.

Standard 3: Teaching and Learning

Criterion 3a: Curriculum

The content and structure of the curriculum enable the achievement of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.

Criterion 3b: Teaching methods

The teaching methods enable the achievement of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.

Criterion 3c: Learning environment

The learning environment is suitable

Standard 4: Staff

Criterion 4a: Staff composition

The composition of the staff (in quality and quantity) facilitates the achievement of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.

Criterion 4b: International experience and competence

Staff members have sufficient international experience, intercultural competences and language skills.

Criterion 4c: Services provided to staff

The services provided to the staff (e.g. training, facilities, staff exchanges) are in line with the staff composition and facilitate international experiences, intercultural competences and language skills.

Standard 5: Students

Criterion 5a: Student group composition

The composition of the student group (diversity of national and cultural backgrounds) is in line with the programme's vision on internationalisation.

Criterion 5b: International experience

The international experience gained by students is adequate and in line with the programme's internationalisation vision.

Criterion 5c: Services provided to students

The services provided to the students (e.g. information provision, counselling, guidance, accommodation, Diploma Supplement) are adequate and in line with the composition of the student group.

Assessment: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent (weighted and substantiated).

Source: www.nvao.net: Framework for the Assessment of Internationalisation, 2011b.

Next steps

While developing the framework and running the pilot procedures, NVAO closely collaborated with its partners in the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). NVAO invited international experts from other agencies to take part as panel members and, where possible, included observers from additional agencies in the procedures. The ECA has formally decided to build on the Dutch-Flemish pilot and extend the certificate for internationalisation to the European level.

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Global and regional trends in internationalisation – threat to or improvement of quality ?

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Introduction

Internationalisation of higher education institutions (HEIs) is not a new phenomenon but the way it has evolved and assumed increasing importance in recent years are unprecedented. Whether it is helping graduates cope in a more international world, or pursuing international standards of excellence in teaching and research, or remaining competitive internationally, higher education policy makers and institutional and association leaders are keenly interested in, and proactively pursuing, policies to *internationalise* higher education.

It is therefore the priority driving the work of the International Association of Universities (IAU). The results of the 3rd Global Survey published in 2010[4] can be of great interest for quality assurance (QA) agencies all over the world. The December 2011 INQAAHE conference in Brussels addressed some of the survey's key findings to question the issue of evaluating internationalisation and therefore the role of QA agencies in this global process. This paper will mainly focus on the results of the 3rd Global survey, with the aim of considering the impact of internationalisation on the quality of higher education and the internationalisation strategies of QA agencies.

The 3rd Global Survey : Global trends and regional perspectives

The 3rd Global Survey is the largest one undertaken so far. It builds on the analytical work done by Dr. Jane Knight in the past two IAU surveys (2003 and 2005) and based on her definition of internationalisation, which is as follows : *Internationalization is the process that leads to introduce international and intercultural dimensions into teaching, learning, research and mode of delivery of higher education* (Knight, 2006, 2008[5]). The methodology of the 3rd survey draws on the expert input of a group of higher education professionals and specialists from every region of the world. These international experts helped design the two new questionnaires used for collecting data from institutions and associations respectively. The questionnaires were structured to address six main areas: institutional information and profile; internationalisation as an institutional priority ; institutional internationalisation policy and strategy; administrative support and funding

[4]Egron Polak, E. and Hudson, R. *Internationalization of Higher Education : Global trends, Regional perspectives* IAU publication, September 2010.

[5] Knight, J. (2006) *Internationalization of Higher Education : new directions, New challenges,* International Association of Universities (IAU), 2005 IAU Global Survey Report.
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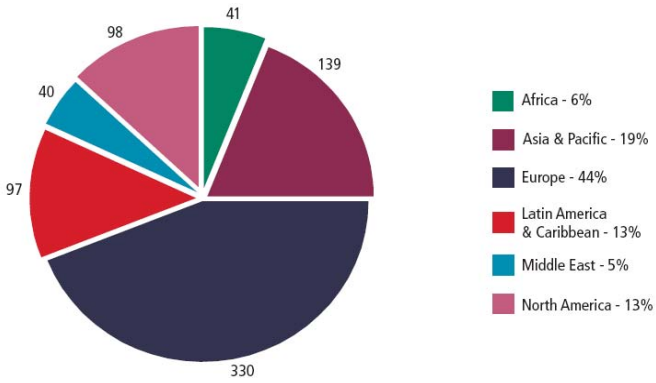
for internationalisation; internationalisation activities and foreign language learning; and quality assurance.

With a response rate of 22%, the data was collected from 745 institutions in 115 countries. 61% of participants were public institutions. 59% reported a specialisation in teaching and research and 63% offered degrees up to PhD/3rd Cycle level.

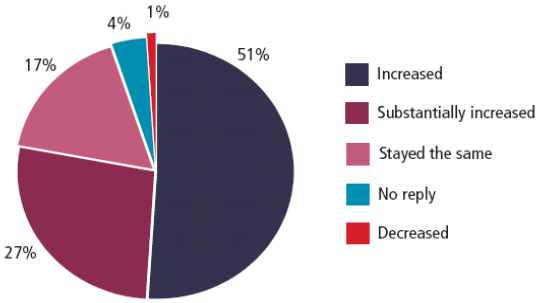


The strength of the public sector in higher education is evident in Europe, where 74% of respondents were public institutions. Contrast this with Latin America and the Caribbean, where the private sector (for-profit and non-for profit) represented 67% of the participating institutions.

The results of the 3rd Global Survey, compared to the surveys that preceeded it, illustrated just how diverse the global higher education landscape is, even if pressures for reform and change may be similar around the world. Regional differences and regional dynamics are strong and likely to persist given the steadfast intra-regional focus of internationalisation strategies. Some of the differences that become apparent in this report also underscore the unrelenting divide between developing and industrialized countries' systems. The reality of such diversity can be more easily addressed in internationalisation as long as they are recognised. Thus comparing rationales, benefits, perceived risks and obstacles remains valid, both at aggregate and regional levels.

Internationalisation as a strategic priority

87% of HEIs specified that internationalisation is mentioned in their institutional mission statements and/or overall strategic plan.



But far fewer HEIs in the Middle East (48%) and in Latin Amercia and the Caribbean (51%) indicated that internationalisation was of high importance. In fact, HEIs in Asia and Pacific reported the largest increase in level of importance attributed to internationalisation, with 39% indicating that for their leaders, the process had susbtantially increased in importance in the past three years.

Why Internationalisation ?

The following table shows that for HEIs in all regions (with the exception of Africa), *Improve student preparedness for a globalized/internationalized world* ranked as the leading rationale for undertaking internationalisation. This rationale is ranked particularly high by HEIs in North America and Latin America and Caribbean. For HEIs in Africa and the Middle East, *Strenghen research and knowledge capacity production* was ranked the leading rationale. For European HEIs, *Enhanced international profile and reputation* was ranked the second most important rationale.

Most important rationales for internationalization– regional results (N =745)

Rationales for internationalization	World	Africa	Asia & Pacific	Europe	Latin - America & Caribbean	Middle East	North America
Improve student preparedeness	30%	19%	31%	27%	39%	22%	39%
Internationalize curriculum	17%	15%	17%	16%	18%	16%	17%
Enhance international profile	15%	13%	14%	20%	6%	17%	9%
Strengthen research and K. production	14%	24%	15%	13%	16%	22%	8%
Broaden an diversify source of students	9%	8%	7%	10%	4%	5%	17%
Broaden and diversify source of faculty/staff	4%	3%	6%	4%	3%	10%	2%

1st 2nd 3rd

Benefits and risks of internationalisation

Increased international awareness of students was ranked as the most important factor in all regions except in Africa and the Middle East. *Enhanced international cooperation and solidarity* was ranked as either the second or third most important benefit in all regions, except in North Amercia. No HEIs, in any region, indicated internationalisation did not bring benefits.

Most important benefits of internationalization - regional results (N = 745)

Benefits of internationalization	World	Africa	Asia & Pacific	Europe	Latin - America & Caribbean	Middle East	North America
Increased int'l. awareness of students	24%	15%	20%	23%	30%	18%	33%
Strengthened research and K. production	16%	24%	20%	14%	18%	21%	9%
Int'l. cooperation and solidarity	12%	15%	11%	14%	10%	15%	8%
Enhanced internationalization of the curriculum	11%	7%	12%	11%	9%	7%	17%
Enhanced prestige/profile for the institution	10%	11%	11%	12%	10%	9%	7%
Increased int'l. orientation of faculty/staff	10%	9%	12%	9%	10%	7%	9%
Better capacity to attract students	5%	3%	3%	6%	2%	9%	7%

1st 2nd 3rd

When it came to risks, there was a high degree of variation among regions. For HEIs in both North Amercia and Europe, *no reply* was the highest ranked response. *Commodification and commercialization of education programmes* was seen as a risk most especially for HEIs in Asia & Pacific and North America. *Brain drain* was ranked as the most important risk of internationalisation by HEIs in Africa, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Most significant risks of internationlization – regional results (N = 745)

Risks of internationalization	World	Africa	Asia & Pacific	Europe	Latin - America & Caribbean	Middle East	North America
Commodification of education programmes	12%	8%	16%	9%	12%	11%	13%
Brain drain	10%	16%	8%	10%	17%	12%	6%
Increase in number of foreign degree mills	9%	6%	11%	7%	12%	6%	7%
Over-emphasis on internationalization	8%	14%	8%	8%	8%	15%	7%
Greater competition among HEIs	8%	6%	11%	8%	4%	4%	6%
Elitism in acess to int'l. education opportunities	7%	9%	4%	6%	11%	4%	7%
Loss of cultural identity	7%	11%	9%	6%	5%	17%	2%
Too much focus on recruitment of fee paying int'l. students	7%	6%	4%	7%	4%	3%	13%
None	6%	1%	5%	7%	3%	6%	11%

1st 2nd 3rd

Internal and external obstacles to internationalisation

The highest ranked internal obstacle in all regions, at the aggregate level, is *insufficient financial resources. Limited expertise of staff/lack of foreign language proficiency* and *Difficulties of recognition of qualification nor study programmes* were ranked as either second or third in all regions except in North America. The HEIs in Africa and Middle East identified *Visa restrictions imposed on our students by other countries* as a significant external barrier. In North Amercia, HEIs saw *Visa restrictions imposed by our country on foreign students* as a leading external obstacle, while *Difficulties of recognition and equivalences of qualifications or study programmes* was deemed as the second most significant in four world regions, including in Europe.

Most important internal obstacles to advancing internationalization- regional results (N = 745)

Internal obstacles	World	Africa	Asia & Pacific	Europe	Latin - America & Caribbean	Middle East	North America
Insufficient financial resources	27%	29%	24%	25%	29%	31%	32%
Limited faculty interest	11%	11%	11%	13%	9%	10%	8%
Limited expertise of staff / lack of foreign language proficiency	11%	11%	12%	11%	12%	11%	6%
Administrative inertia	8%	8%	6%	10%	8%	9%	8%
Too rigorous / inflexible curriculum	8%	7%	9%	9%	9%	4%	6%
Absence of strategy / plan to guide the process	7%	12%	9%	4%	8%	8%	9%
Limited student interest	6%	4%	6%	6%	5%	12%	3%

1st 2nd 3rd

Internationalisation activities given priority

For HEIs in the Middle East, *Outgoing student mobility* was not among the top five priorities most cited. HEIs in only two regions, Africa and the Middle East, placed *Development cooperation* and *Capacity building projects* in their top five priorities.

Internationalization activities given highest priority in institutional internationalization policy – regional results (N = 498)

Internationalization activity	World	Africa	Asia & Pacific	Europe	Latin - America & Caribbean	Middle East	North America
Outgoing mobility opportunities for students (study, internships etc)	44%	29%	40%	49%	45%	18%	43%
Int'l. student exchanges and attracting int'l. students	43%	27%	50%	45%	29%	35%	42%
Int'l. research collaboration	40%	46%	52%	41%	35%	32%	23%
Strengthening international/intercultural content of curriculum	31%	29%	33%	30%	27%	25%	40%
Developing joint and double/dual degree programmes with foreign partner institutions	30%	24%	27%	35%	27%	30%	17%
Outgoing mobility opportunities for faculty / staff	29%	24%	24%	35%	33%	18%	14%
Int'l. development and capacity building projects	17%	27%	14%	17%	13%	22%	18%
Hosting int'l. scholars	17%	22%	18%	13%	23%	20%	16%

KEY: 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th

The internationalisation of curricula

Concerning the internationalisation of curricula, it is interesting to see that more institutions offered courses abroad (70% of North American institutions compared to 15% in the Middle East) and joint and dual programmes (41% for joint degree programmes with international partners, and 47% at the post-graduate level). HEIs in Africa and the Middle East were the most likely to offer joint degree programmes, while, those in Europe and North America were most likely to offer dual/double degree programmes. But considering the difficulty of sharing a common definition or understanding of such programmes, and the high number of respondents marking *Not applicable*, those results have to be taken with care and would need more qualitative analysis. While only 3% of the institutions indicated that their domestic programmes were not reviewed by a quality assurance mechanism, 23% indicated that the programmes they offered internationally were reviewed within the framework of their domestic quality assurance system. North American institutions reported the highest frequency of applying their domestic quality assurance process to programmes they offered abroad. 57% overall indicated the same.

This may be the result of too many QA agencies being ill-equipped to evaluate the quality of such programmes as well as the overall international dimension of institutions and their programmes. This raises the larger question of whether QA agencies should become more internationlised and how?

New challenges for QA Agencies

It's not easy for QA agencies to become internationalised when more than 90% of their activities are domestic in focus. As a matter of fact, whatever their scope (Institution, Programmes, Research, Faculty members) most agencies first operate in their national context. This situation could change with domestic legislation that opens up a free market of domestic and international agencies and the possibility for HEIs to choose a foreign agency to be accredited, audited or evaluated. For example, the European Quality Agency Register (EQAR) will facilitate this adaptation and HEIs in Austria, Rumania and Lituania already have this opportunity. As long as competition increases at intra and inter-national levels, cooperation among agencies will need to be more structured and enhanced.

Regional networks play a significant role in the landscape of QA agencies : for instance, in Europe (ENQA), Asia-Pacific (APQN), Middle East (ANQAHE), Africa (AfriQAN), Central America (CANQATE), IberoAmerica (RIACES)[6]. To build a Regional Higher Education Area, harmonizing the methodologies and discussing ways to to improve quality in higher education at national and international levels, it is important for QA agencies to have the space to collaborate. Developing international policies and approaches has therefore become a necessity for agencies just like it has for HEIs, as demonstrated by the AIU 3rd Global Survey.

Since there is no one-size-fits-all approach to work across borders for any organization and it depends on the existing and expected degree of internationalisation, it is important to be aware of the benefits and risks of internalisation and make sure that it fits in the overall mission of the agency. To define clear, transparent and measurable goals is the first step for setting up and implementing a realistic international strategy. To ensure that the process is shared by all the internal and external stakeholders is a very good way to limit risks.

When designing an international strategy for quality assurance agencies, the following questions should be taken into consideration:

- Do we want to become an international leader? Or just cooperate to improve quality in domestic activities? Or both?
- Will international strategy be focused on the export of domestic activities (i.e. accreditation of programmes and institutions abroad)? How adaptable should these services be to different regional contexts? And will they be focused on cooperation and collaboration with local agencies?
- What will be the geographic priorities if any? Is it more valuable to focus mainly on the regions where national HEIs operate?
- How do we design a quality assurance system that improves the evaluation of the international dimension of HEIs (including institutional international strategy,

[6] ENQA, European Network for Quality Agencies, APQN, Asia Pacific Quality Network, ANQAHE, Arab Network for Quality Assurance for Higher Education, RIACES, Red iberoamericana de cooperación en la educación superior.

transnational education : programmes abroad, off-shore campuses, joint or dual degrees, collaborative research or training projects, mobility, international recruitment)? Is it better to integrate it into the national quality assurance system or to develop separate accreditation processes, labels, audits[7], and operate jointly[8] ? How do we assess the strengths and weaknesses of each approach?

- How do we recruit international experts for peer review? Can the cooperation among agencies ensure quality?
- How do we deliver relevant and reliable international benchmarking in order to improve internal and external quality?
- How do we finance such development and how do we select and apply to the international calls for proposal or international programmes?

Answers to these questions will depend on the national and regional contexts in which agencies find themselves and the degree of autonomy these agencies enjoy. Of course, they also depend on the resources agencies can dedicate to this development. Some agencies with more than 10 years of experience have already implemented such processes, including those specializing in business and engineering. But with the ongoing demands of domestic activities, there is always the risk of international activities becoming marginal and less of a priority.

Conclusion

The time has come to *re-think internationalisation* of HEIs as mentioned by IAU's General Secretary E. Egron Polak and other specialists[9]. Internationalisation will become more and more of a priority for HEIs, regardless of their prestige and rank. The IAU 3rd Global Survey underscored this trend among institutions and highlighted the benefits perceived by the institutions of internationalising their policies and programmes. The inability of institutions and agencies to develop relevant methodologies to assess internationalisation is very important to address. More international cooperation among stakeholders is needed because the quality of teaching, learning and research is very much at stake. INQAAHE can become a strong network for QA agencies as they develop new forms of national and regional regulation in higher education.

[7] Such as ISAS, International Strategy Advisory Services, IAU, www.iau-aiu.net , NVAO services, www. nvao.net, more information on the ACA seminar on March 23rd, www.aca-secretariat.be

[8] See the Joqar project. www.joqar.net

[9] See the last IAU horizon Journal, February 2012.

International Mutual Recognition (MR) Initiatives - A Comparison

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Introduction

Over the past two decades, higher education has become increasingly internationalised and transnational mobility in different forms has grown considerably. Along with these developments has come the need to facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications. Such efforts have been hindered until today, partially due to the lack of transparent and mutually-accepted information about the quality of higher education. In past years, initiatives for mutual recognition of quality assurance (QA) outcomes have been launched on several continents. The aim of mutual recognition (MR) agreements between quality assurance agencies (QAA) is not primarily to benefit the agencies themselves but to achieve beneficial results for institutions and their students and graduates in terms of mobility, credit transfer and acceptance of qualifications. In this workshop, the preliminary results of MR efforts in Europe, Asia and Latin America were presented and discussed, especially in the light of their methodology, potential added value and the barriers perceived.

MR initiatives in Europe

In Europe, mutual recognition initiatives in QA have been carried out by the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). In 2003, ECA has been established as project organisation by 15 European Accreditation agencies with the aim of reaching mutual recognition agreements among its member organizations (www.ecaconsortium.net). The objectives and activities of the ECA project are in line with the ministerial communiqués of the Bologna process and with the recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. ECA members believe that mutual recognition of accreditation or quality assurance decisions can substantially reduce existing barriers in the recognition of qualifications and thereby enhance academic and professional mobility in Europe. Moreover, mutual recognition of accreditation decisions would prevent joint programmes and joint degrees from needing to be accredited in each of the participating countries.

The ECA approach of mutual recognition is based on a process of intensive trust-building among the involved QAAs. Mutual trust in this model is based on evidence and created through information exchange, the establishment of commonly agreed tools and through co-operation projects in practice.

The European Network of Information Centres in the European Region (ENIC) and National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union (NARIC) of ECA member countries have been involved in the project in order to strengthen the link between accreditation decisions and recognition of qualifications.

Results of the ECA project were as follows:

- ECA has established a road map towards mutual recognition (3 years action plan);
- ECA members agreed on a code of good practice as common denominator of their activities (compatible to the ESG and the principles of good practices of INQAAHE);
- The accreditation systems of the participating ECA members countries have been rigorously compared -- similarities and differences have been discussed;
- Commonly agreed tools have been established, such as principles for the selection of experts, principles for the accreditation of joint programmers, etc.;
- Mutual observations of accreditation procedures took place among all involved ECA partners;
- A joint declaration was signed between ECA members and ENIC/NARICs in 6 countries on the automatic recognition of qualifications;
- Based on the above stated trust building activities, the ECA members agreed to regard their accreditation procedures, standards and results as free of significant differences;
- Bilateral mutual recognition agreements have been signed, confirming that the signing QAAs would accept within their competencies the accreditation decision/results of the procedures of the other signing agencies;
- The MR agreements have been applied for simplified accreditation of joint programmes; one single accreditation procedure replacing the multiple procedures of all countries involved in the joints programmes/joint degrees;
- In 2010, ECA members launched Multilateral Agreements on the Mutual Recognition of Accreditation Results regarding Joint Programmes (MULTRA). Such contracts are open to QAAs outside of the ECA consortium and aim to simplify the accreditation and recognition of joint programmes and degrees awarded.

The ECA experiences prove that MR agreements can be reached on the basis of co-operation, evidence and mutual trust. Both bilateral and multinational MR agreements between QAAs could be set up, with general and specific purposes. The ECA approach towards mutual recognition is not replacing but supplementing existing harmonization initiatives in Europe (e.g. Lisbon Recognition Convention, setting up of ESG). The example of successful application of MR agreements in the area of joint programmes points to the high potential of such agreements to facilitate trans-border recognition of qualifications. Based on its positive results, ECA recommends promoting trust-based MR initiatives among QAAs in all Bologna countries and beyond. Such bottom-up initiatives are a good alternative to purely political MR approaches. Involvement of government, HEIs and the national recognition authorities is needed to assure that the results of MR agreements of QA outcomes are used to facilitate trans-border recognition of qualifications.

MR of Quality Assurance Decisions in the Asia Pacific

Discussion around MR is relatively recent in the Asia-Pacific region. One of the purposes of the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) is "to facilitate links between quality assurance agencies and acceptance of each others' decisions and judgements" (APQN Constitution v7, section 2 on Purposes 4.4 available at http://www.apqn.org/home/constitution/purposes/). To explore ways to facilitate this "understanding", and "trust" APQN initiated a project in 2004 that builds on the work that has been done by a number of interested groups including INQAAHE, ECA and ENQA. Four APQN members participated in the project – Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC, India) and New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (NZUAAU). In 2010, the project received some funding from the Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity-Building (GIQAC).

What do we want to achieve?

An INQAAHE report (2001) identified the following as goals of mutual recognition:

- Understanding and knowledge of and by each agency;
- Collaboration among agencies;
- Research into QA processes and their effects;
- Enrichment of agencies' activities;
- Appreciation of the quality parameters underpinning institutions and programmes;
- Basis for judgements on the quality of institutions and/or programmes in other jurisdictions;
- Basis for granting credit for prior studies;
- And basis for accepting qualifications.

To this list, APQN added one more, namely "quality assurance of quality assurance agencies." Involvement in MR could be an opportunity for the QA agencies to go through their own processes and practices and have them reviewed by experts not only against their own procedures but also those of the agency from which recognition is being sought. Review against an international framework is also possible.

Acknowledging the fact that some of the goals are for the short-term while others are for the long-term, the APQN project has been developed on these four key principles: Acknowledge diversity; build on common elements; choose a regional/international framework of good principles and practices; and develop realistic expectations.

In particular, the principle regarding "realistic expectations" is very critical. QA agencies engage in discussions on MR with a number of expectations and MR can often provide a basis for desired outcomes, but other factors also have an effect in determining what is possible. One example is the most quoted benefit of MR, namely qualification recognition. Institutions of higher education can use MR between QA agencies as a basis for granting

credit for prior studies or for accepting qualifications from other institutions. But the final decision on credit transfer and recognition of qualifications is with the institutions of higher education, so MR between QA agencies may not lead to automatic qualification recognition by the institutions.

Another example is the cooperation that is becoming necessary in QA of transnational education. With institutions becoming more globalized with their operations distributed across national borders, MR between QA agencies will help reduce the QA workload for institutions as well as the QA agencies, but the political and legal contexts in which the QA agencies operate also have a significant effect.

The implication is that the agencies that pursue MR should have a clear understanding of what they want to achieve and what is possible within their operating context. The project team was aware that it is not realistic to expect that all the ambitious goals can be achieved in a short period of time and therefore the project has been planned in three phases.

Typically, QA agencies that have engaged in MR discussions have scrutinised each other's documents to understand each other's processes, and observed each others' main events and QA decision-making activities. The purpose is to explore whether they would be able to affirm that the criteria, policies and procedures used by the agencies in taking QA decisions are comparable and trustworthy. The APQN project is taking a similar approach involving three phases.

What have we achieved?

Phase 1 (2010): Mapping of QA frameworks and desk study of key elements
The project considered only the QA approach that is relevant to the "institution as the unit of assessment." Even in the case of QA agencies that have multiple QA approaches (programmatic as well as institutional) the project considered only the institutional aspects. Further, the scope of the project was confined to QA of universities and university level institutions. The project looked at the "processes and their robustness," not the actual conclusions reached from those processes. The INQAAHE Guidelines for Good Practices provided the basis for evaluating the processes and their robustness.

The project team met on October 21, 2010 and sketched out the expectations, challenges and contextual factors that will shape the project. A discussion paper that presents the views of the project members is available in the APQN website. A "mapping of QA frameworks" on key QA elements that highlights the commonalities, diversities and gaps in the QA policies and practices of the project members was developed. Guidelines for the observations of each other's QA exercise and a plan for the observation visits was agreed upon.

Phase 2 (2011): Observation of the QA activities
While an understanding of QA frameworks is critical to building trust, it is important to know how well the key elements are implemented. This involves observing important activities such as a peer review visit, training of peers, meeting where the QA decisions

are approved, etc. These were carried out in 2011. Observers were asked to evaluate whether they have confidence that, allowing for contextual constraints, the observed agency's processes are exploring similar activity within similar standard expectations as those which would be explored by the observer's agency. NAAC observed an NZUAAU audit and MQA observed an AUQA audit in June 2011. NZUAAU's observation of a NAAC assessment planned originally for February 2011 materialised in February 2012.
The proposed observation of an institutional review by MQA during the second half of 2011 did not materialise since MQA did not conduct any institutional reviews during that period.

Phase 3 (2012): Statement of Trust
Based on the conclusions drawn from the observation visits, the project members have identified areas where they are comfortable placing their trust in each other's QA work. Areas that are handled differently and therefore would need a closer look have also been noted. While the present stage of the project may not lead to an immediate MR among the project members, it can result in a statement affirming the possibilities and benefits of MR which will facilitate the involvement of other stakeholder groups such as governments and recognition bodies in the next stage of the project. The project members are discussing "a statement on the trust the agencies are able to place on each other's aims and processes" and a project report that will share those outcomes with the APQN membership is under way. The outcome should be of interest and value to all QA agencies that wish to extend the cross-border understanding and appreciation of their work.

MR initiatives based on INQAAHE GGP alignment within RIACES

In Latin America, mutual recognition activities in QA have generally taken place within the context of the Ibero-American Network of Accreditation Agencies for Higher Education, RIACES. This network comprises the QA/accreditation agencies and authorities from 17 countries in the region plus Spain. Beyond the political momentum given by the communiqués of the ministers of education summoning in the various summits of multilateral organisations (OEA, UNASUR, OEI), and the particular efforts derived from the IESALC-UNESCO conferences (CRES, 2009), the main focus on MR agreements between accreditation agencies comes from the reflection raised from the external reviews processes accomplished by some accreditation agencies in the last five years following the good practices developed in other regional networks.

Internationalisation and networking favours the building of trust among accreditation agencies both bilaterally and within the regions: Europe, Latin America, etc. In such a context, MR becomes a natural consequence in order to create HE areas at the regional level. This positive framework has to deal with political considerations on recognition at the national and regional level:

- QAAs with different competencies;
- Recognition bodies with competencies at the national level (QAAs acting as technical bodies);
- And HE common areas for recognition: Lisbon Convention.

Trust among QA agencies is built upon mutual understanding but can also be defined according to a particular methodology.

The Spanish National Agency for QA and Accreditation (ANECA) and the National Accreditation System of Costa Rica (SINAES) set up a common project to advance the MR model of their accreditation procedures in order to favour the dialogue at their respective national level. The first step to set up the procedure was twofold: the programmes have to be accredited according to a formal procedure at the national level and both agencies have accomplished an external review against international standards, coordinated by an international organisation and run by an international expert panel.

ANECA was reviewed by the European Association for QA Agencies, ENQA in 2007. But ANECA requested INQAAHE in 2010 to be aligned to the GGP and conducted an analysis of the criteria established by INQAAHE based on a comparison with the procedure defined by ENQA for the review against the European Standards and Guidelines for QA. In 2010, the Board of INQAAHE decided that ANECA's external review process allowed the alignment with the GGP as well.

SINAES, on the other side, was reviewed by the Central-American Accreditation Council in 2008 and requested an international review to INQAAHE, which took place in 2009. Therefore, the legal status of a foreign agency should be recognised by the national authority and at the international level by means of an external review. Both criteria were fulfilled by the agencies involved.

These international procedures guaranteed the fulfilment of some key criteria identified across the world that make the MR approach more feasible. These criteria focus on two main sets of technical considerations to be aligned to any MR procedure:

- *Internal to the agencies*: official status, independence, activities and mission, internal quality assurance procedures implemented;
- *External processes run by the agencies*: evaluation criteria, accreditation procedures, decision-making processes, evaluation reports, publicity of the reports, and the selection, appointment, training of panel experts.

But trust by itself is not enough to sustain political decisions concerning MR. Is the accreditation procedure from an externally reviewed agency enough for mutual recognition in another country? The external review provides a technical threshold but not enough support for a political decision. It is a necessary condition but not sufficient. What else do we need then? We definitely need enough technical information about the procedure to turn trust among agencies reviewed into sufficient evidence to undergo a political MR decision. Then, the good practices and the experience derived from ECA were considered a good starting point for the methodology of the project. The steps could be roughly summarised as follows:

- A comparison document to contrast the accreditation criteria and to identify the relevant missing elements;
- Identification of differences to analyse and conclude whether these differences are substantial and can be prevented going forward, or can be solved strengthening

the technical corrective actions;
- A site visit at each agency to monitor the procedure to assure that they fulfil the legal requirements in their own context;
- And decision about the MRA on accreditation/QA results, where possible.

What will be achieved? A technical accreditation judgment that reinforces trust:
A Mutual Recognition Agreement based upon an international methodology but respecting also the national/cultural particularities (horizontal approach).

What else do we need then? A political statement to turn a pilot project into a legal requirement for MR of accreditation results purposes applying for students and graduates. But although this outcome lies beyond the objectives of the current bilateral pilot project on MR between ANECA and SINAES, both parties agree that it could advance in the political arena.

Conclusions

Mutual recognition of accreditation decisions contributes to the recognition of qualifications and makes multiple accreditations of institutions and programmes operating across borders unnecessary. Because of the potential benefits to European and global student mobility it is important to intensify co-operation in this domain within and outside of Europe. It seems advisable to coordinate the various MR initiatives around the globe. The newly created MR working group of INQAAHE provides an excellent platform for this. The working group should systematically collect, analyse and compare existing information of mutual recognition initiatives around the globe. Successful models for mutual recognition of QA decisions should be identified, described and disseminated. New mutual recognition agreements (multinational or bi-national) between QAAs/networks should be encouraged as outcome of such work. This could be a substantial relief for the work of national recognition bodies and would contribute to an enhanced academic and professional mobility around the globe.

"European Quality Labels" and Quality Assurance

Dr Achim Hopbach, President of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
Managing Director of the German Accreditation Council

The development of quality assurance in European higher education reached a major milestone when ministers of higher education of the Bologna signatory countries met in Berlin in 2003 and agreed on a number of basic principles that paved the way for developing procedures and systems:
[Ministers] also stress that consistent with the principle of institutional autonomy, the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework.
Based on this principle, they committed themselves to developing and implementing quality assurance systems that would include:

- *A definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.*
- *Evaluation of programmes or institutions, including internal assessment, external review, participation of students and the publication of results.*
- *A system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures.*
- *International participation, co-operation and networking.* (Berlin Communiqué 2003, 3).

Based on these principles, national quality assurance systems and agencies were set up to form the basic model for assessment. When ministers officially launched the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2010, external quality assurance based on this model had been implemented in all Bologna signatory countries, however in unique and diverse ways. Regarding external quality assurance procedures as such, one can say that they are by and large designed and conducted in accordance with ESG part II. (Hopbach 2012)

However, in addition to the national approach to quality assurance, initiatives at European level already existed such as accreditation schemes in the fields of economics (EQUIS[10]) and public administration (EAPAA[11]) and also the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) of the European University Association.[12] After 2003, this approach gained momentum when, with financial support of the European Commission, pan-European subject-specific initiatives for quality assurance emerged, often referred to as "European Quality Labels", the first of which was the Eurobachelor®[13] in chemistry which

[10] http://www.efmd.org/accreditation-main/equis (accessed 13 March 2012)
[11] http://www.eapaa.org/ (accessed 13 March 2012)
[12] http://www.eua.be/iep/Home.aspx (accessed 13 March 2012)
[13] http://ectn-assoc.cpe.fr/chemistry-eurolabels/ (accessed 13 March 2012) In the following Eurobachelor® refers also to the Euromaster® label in chemistry, conveyed by the same association.

started in 2003. These approaches caught attention in political debates around 2009 when the "Report on progress in quality assurance in higher education" by the European Commission emphasized their role in fostering a stronger European dimension in quality assurance.[14]

The seminar was dedicated to discussing the nature of these "European Quality Labels" in terms of their aims and objectives, methodological approaches and criteria used in their reviews, and particularly, to analyse their specific contribution to quality assurance in the EHEA. It also focused on "European Quality Labels" in the fields of engineering and science such as the EURO-INF Quality Label[15] in informatics and EURO-AGES in the field of geology[16] which were set up following the most well-known label EUR-ACE®[17] and polifonia which started as an ERASMUS Network for Music in 2004.[18] Recently, some of these initiatives joined together with professional accreditors in the foundation of the *European Alliance for Subject Specific and Professional Accreditation and Quality Assurance (EASPA).* This report highlights the main discussions and issues that arose from this seminar.[19]

One obvious outcome of the seminar shall be mentioned right at the beginning. It seems rather inappropriate to subsume the aforementioned initiatives and approaches under the uniform heading "quality label". On the one hand, they share the view that there is a need for a subject-specific approach to quality assurance in Europe as it is put by AEC: "assessing and accrediting institutions and programmes for higher music education must be rooted in a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of music and the contexts and traditions in which music is created. Without such a rooting, the assessment may be preoccupied with only technical and academic aspects of musical production and ignore the innate unique and artistic characteristics of music." (AEC 2010, p 6) On the other hand, the labels differ substantially in the implementation as far as purposes, organisational structures and activities are concerned in detail. This has to be borne in mind whenever the labels are mentioned or rather generalizing statements are made in the following.

Purpose

The principles of quality assurance in the EHEA are laid down in *The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG)* ministers of the Bologna signatory countries adopted in 2005. The ESG were "designed to be applicable to all higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies in Europe, irrespective of their structure, function and size, and the national system in which they are located." Based on this very comprehensive claim, the ESG can be considered as the main

[14] http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc/report09_en.pdf (accessed 13 March 2012)
[15] http://www.eqanie.eu/pages/quality-label.php (accessed 13 March 2012)
[16] http://www.euro-ages.eu/ (accessed 13 March 2012)
[17] http://www.enaee.eu/ (accessed 13 March 2012)
[18] http://www.polifonia-tn.org/ (accessed 13 March 2012)
[19] The report is based on the presentation given at the seminar, to be found here: http://www.inqaahe.org/internationalisation-and-qa/presentations; and on the following documents listed in the references.

reference point for the design of quality assurance in the emerging EHEA, be it internal or external quality assurance. (ENQA 2009)
The main purpose of these standards and guidelines was to guarantee professionally conducted quality assurance procedures on a high quality level. The ESG prefer the generic principle to the specific requirement and focus more on what should be done than how it should be achieved. Therefore, the ESG were not meant to explicitly comprise standards for quality of higher education as such (i.e. requirements for HE institutions and the design of programmes). The ESG combine two aspects in particular common standards for professionalism in terms of procedures and agencies which nowadays are not only shared within Europe and the EHEA but more and more worldwide; and the European notion of quality assurance which is in the first instance laid down in the following principles:

- HEIs bare the main responsibility for quality;
- The four stage-model applies: Internal evaluation, external evaluation by peers, publication of reports, follow-up procedure;
- External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes;
- Quality assurance processes, irrespective of the very nature and design of the chosen approach, have to serve the developmental function of quality assurance;
- Stakeholder, especially student involvement is critical in all phases, also in the development of quality assurance processes;
- And quality assurance agencies need to be independent in so far as they must have full autonomy for their procedures and decisions.

The specific meaning of the ESG lies not only in the fact that quality assurance processes are carried out throughout the EHEA based on the same standards. Even more interesting is the fact that the ESG were developed by all relevant stakeholders (EUA, EURASHE, ESU and ENQA; known as the E4 group) and, thus, make actors in the field of quality assurance share the same values and principles, fostering a common understanding. This alludes to a significant feature of the quality assurance in European higher education, which is the key role of stakeholders. (Hopbach 2012)

The most important feature of the “quality labels” refers to their respective backgrounds and purposes. In general, the emergence of many labels is to be seen in the frame of the development of the learning outcomes approach and of qualifications frameworks within the Bologna Process since 2003. Partly linked to the TUNING project, a major purpose of the labels was to add subject-specific learning outcomes or qualification frameworks to the generic approach of the Qualifications Framework of the EHEA. In particular, the Eurobachelor® project in chemistry and Polifonia can be subsumed under this heading. Whereas the quality assurance and/or accreditation function was added to the initial purpose of these labels only after some time other initiatives envisaged the set up of a

subject-specific accreditation scheme at European level right from the beginning, such as EUR-ACE® and EURO-INF, both of which go further by linking subject-specific learning outcomes to standards for the design of the respective curricula.

By referring to subject-specific academic standards, the quality labels go beyond the European understanding of quality assurance which refrain from this type of standardisation, based on the principle of autonomy of HEI as stipulated in the Berlin Communiqué. The discussion about the specific purpose of the quality labels culminates in the perhaps most relevant question which reads as follows: Who shall be responsible for defining academic standards? On the one hand, labels representatives state that this needs to be an integral part of quality assurance and thus the agency has to play a core role. On the other hand, the EHEA has set up a whole quality infrastructure which consists of qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes, and ECTS, etc., with quality assurance as only one part of it, and with different responsibilities, namely the responsibility of autonomous HEI for academic standards and of independent agencies for quality assurance procedures. Regarding common learning outcomes in the EHEA ministers, in the Communiqué of Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve ministerial meeting in 2004 also emphasized this role of HEI:"Academics, in close cooperation with student and employer representatives, will continue to develop learning outcomes and international reference points for a growing number of subject areas" (Leuven Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué 2009, p. 4), without mentioning quality assurance agencies in this respect.

This leads to another important feature of some of the labels, namely the role of professional standards at the European level. The labels, for example, in the engineering sector focus on professional standards in addition to academic standards as criteria for the accreditation decision. By referring to entry qualifications for the labor market, these labels widen the focus and add to their approach elements of professional accreditation. Hence the perspective of the individual is added to the perspective of the programme. In the case for instance of EUR-ACE® this shouldn't come as a surprise since the membership comprises also statutory bodies with responsibility for professional accreditation and thus for regulating the access to the profession. However, a discussion which is as old as the discussion about learning outcomes gains momentum through this widened focus: The discussion about a comprehensive educational mandate of HEI which goes beyond short term employability compared to a rather focused interest of professional associations which is necessarily oriented towards actual requirements in a certain professional field.

The specific nature of the purposes of the labels is closely linked with the organizational set up which, again, reveals the substantial differences between some of the labels. Mainly three groups of actors involved can be identified: HEI, professional associations/bodies and accreditation agencies. These collaborate in different combinations. Whereas polifonia is an initiative by the Association of European Conservatoires (AEC) and, thus, exclusively, run by HEIs, EUR-ACE® on the other side has only two members coming from academia, one Italian HEI and one association of faculties in Italy, and the rest representing professions or statutory bodies which regulate the professions.

This means that, in accordance with the organizational structure the academic standards might either be defined by representatives coming from academia (polifonia) or rather by professional organizations (EUR-ACE®).
It's obvious that in the latter case the critical question about the autonomy of HEI for quality in higher education gains even more relevance.
In conclusion, one can say that the principles and purposes of the labels are broader than those of quality assurance and focus on translating the learning outcomes approach to subject specific standards at European level.

Methodology

As far as the methodology of external quality assurance in the EHEA is concerned, the principles are laid down in part II of the ESG which start with part I of the ESG that refers to the prime responsibility of the HEI for quality assurance. The other standards refer to procedural principles such as:

- Determination of aims and objectives before the process starts by including HEI (2.2);
- Application of publicly available predefined criteria in case formal decisions are made (2.3);
- Appropriate design of processes ffp (2.4);
- Publication of reports (2.5);
- Predetermined follow-up procedure (2.6);
- Periodicity of reviews (2.7);
- And system-wide analyses reports are produced describing and analysing the general findings. (2.8) (ENQA, 2009)

In general, the quality labels took these principles, as developed since the pilot projects in the mid nineties, as reference point for the design of their quality assurance and accreditation procedures, however to a different degree. They work with self-evaluation and external evaluation with a site visit by peers, and a compulsory follow-up. The Eurobachelor® label in chemistry is partly an exception since in some countries the label is awarded by the responsible committee based exclusively on a report by the HEI without any self-evaluation and also without any peer review and site visits. In other countries, the label is awarded by recognized agencies which do site visits. Also, polifonia has to be distinguished from other labels due to its wider scope. Whereas EURO-AGES, EURO-INF and EUR-ACE® are restricted to accreditation at the programme level, polifonia "offers" a more comprehensive approach with guidelines for internal quality assurance and also guidelines and criteria for external quality assurance at programme and institutional levels. Designing the guidelines in accordance with the ESG the specific contribution of polifonia is rather to be seen in "translating" the regular procedures of quality into a discipline that deviates substantially from other disciplines as far as fundamental features such as programme design, teaching, the learning environment

and the whole set-up and profile of the institutions are concerned. To name but one specific feature, polifonia highlights the great variety of musical education which makes it impossible to set up prescriptive standards: “Even if objectivity can be applied to a number of aspects and concepts relating to musical skills, there are ultimately no final solutions or truths in music; there is no single method or route that will attain artistic goals.“ (AEC 2010, 14) Review panels need to be sensitive regarding this specific nature of musical education, which translates in curricular features such as private lessons, more time for self-study, etc. than in other disciplines.

The requirements for accreditation procedures for the purpose of conveying the labels of EURO-AGES, EURO-INF and EUR-ACE® are almost identical. With regard to two core aspects of quality assurance in the EHEA the three of them deviate substantially by neither requiring student involvement at all in the review panels nor foreseeing a publication of the review reports. Both standards have to be considered obviously as core elements of external quality assurance in the EHEA. Otherwise these labels don’t provide any specific additional feature in their methodology, which would relate to subject specific questions.

One commonality of almost all labels refers to the actual implementation of reviews because they don’t necessarily conduct the reviews by themselves but also certify other bodies to do so. EUR-ACE® has authorized accreditation agencies like ASIIN and the French CTI, professional associations like the *Association for Engineering Education in Russia*, the Turkish *Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Engineering*, and statutory bodies like the *Engineering Council* in UK, *Engineers Ireland*, and the Portugese *Ordem dos Engenheiros.* Eurobachelor® is working with agencies from the academic sector like ASIIN and the *University Accreditation Commission* from Poland, and also with professional associations like the *Italian Chemical Association* and the *Royal Society of Chemistry* for procedures in the UK and Ireland. EURO-INF is working so far with ASIIN. Polifonia does not certify other agencies but rather collaborates with national agencies in the accreditation of priogrammes.

In conclusion, one can say that in terms of methodology, the labels, different from their principles and purposes, don’t make a subject-specific contribution to quality assurance in the EHEA. The specificity of some labels consists rather of shortcomings in terms of application of the ESG.

Conclusion

The seminar and the discussions revealed that:

- European Quality Labels are not monolithic, so it is misleading to talk about “the” labels because of their substantial heterogeneity in terms of purpose, structure and procedures;
- The most important feature of the labels, and maybe the only feature they have in common, is the core role that academic standards, in some cases also professional standards, play. Some of the labels translate this role also into requirements for the design of programmes.

- In terms of methodology and design of the quality assurance procedures, no subject-specific feature applies which would add to the European approach in quality assurance. However, the labels from the engineering and informatics sectors fall short in terms of compliance with the ESG due to lack of student members on the review panels and lack of publication of reports.

- These outcomes demonstrate that most of the labels don't make a subject-specific contribution to quality assurance as such. They should rather be called as a means to link subject-specific learning outcomes at the European level to quality assurance. This counts particularly for those labels that also apply professional standards and thus link academic accreditation of programmes to regulating access to the profession.

- The discussion revealed that the definition of subject-specific learning outcomes by agencies other than representing academia and also partly in collaboration with professional associations creates substantial tensions with "traditional" quality assurance according to the European standards which emphasize that the primary responsibility for quality rests with the individual HEI whereas standardization only applies for the level and scope of the qualifications through the Qualifications Framework of the EHEA.

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Conclusion

Internationalisation and Quality Assurance: Connecting European and Global Experiences

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At the end of last year, INQAAHE joined forces with ENQA to hold a meeting intended to connect European and global experiences in the field of internationalisation and quality assurance.

The meeting was organized as a tribute to Dr. Marjorie Peace Lenn, and as such, it brought together two of Marjorie's main interests: that of international education, and the quality assurance of the professions. She was an indefatigable promoter of internationalisation, and she saw the professions as an especially important field for it. Internationalisation is now one of the most frequent words in higher education vocabulary, but Marjorie started using it when it was not fashionable, and she managed to make it so. This convening was a fitting reminder of her contribution, and an opportunity to focus on issues that are at the core of quality assurance, both in Europe and in the rest of the world.

Internationalisation, mutual recognition, and quality labels are three such issues that have become more and more of a priority for higher education institutions and quality assurance (QA) agencies.

The International Association of Universities (IAU) defines internationalization as the integration of an international or intercultural dimension in the purpose, functions or provision in higher education. While this meaning is often restricted to mobility, it is hard to imagine how quality higher education can be organized without integrating an international or intercultural dimension in its goals, its policies and the mechanisms it applies. The results of a survey recently carried out by the IAU show that most universities include internationalisation as one of their strategic objectives, and have explicit policies in place to make it work. In addition to seeing improvement of student education and their increasing international awareness as priorities for their own benefit, they also note internationalisation as a benefit for all universities.

At the meeting, we were reminded that internationalisation has been recognized as an indicator for quality, and assessed as such, and therefore is essential to discuss the role that agencies and processes assign to it, and the ways in which they can support institutional efforts to improve quality.

Mutual recognition is a basic issue in internationalisation, and quality assurance is often seen as a sound basis for recognizing studies, degrees, or accreditation decisions. It is closely linked with professional certification, which was addressed through the discussion of the quality labels that are being developed in Europe. The experience of quality labels,

which can link subject-specific learning outcomes to quality assurance, is similar to the work that is being done in many parts of the world, where QA has worked in the harmonization of standards and includes subject-specific requirements as a basis for programme reviews; this could be an interesting topic for discussion and exchange among QA agencies.

Quality assurance of professional programmes can also give us significant insight into new ways of dealing with quality assurance: by integrating institutional reviews (which look at the overall managerial and resource base of institutions) with programme accreditation (which can provide information on the work done to provide graduates with the required professional or academic skills), quality assurance may become less onerous to both institutions and governments, and make a better contribution to quality.

Overall, the meeting offered multiple lessons and ideas for our future work.

One of them had to do with *the implications of internationalisation in transnational education, learning outcomes, and quality standards*. We often say that QA is about building trust in the quality of institutions, the provision of education, the knowledge, skills and attitudes summarized in a degree, across institutions within each country, but it is also about building trust across national borders. One of the areas where trust is essential is in the professions, but this carries with it new requirements, both for agencies and higher education institutions. Questions to consider: how do we agree on the basic contents of the curriculum so that we can trust professionals who come from different contexts? How do we ensure that learning will travel well, and make it possible for a graduate from one country to perform effectively in another? There are important developments in this area, some of which are articulated in this book, and which should continue to be discussed and analysed by QA agencies, and in the context of regional networks.

Another key takeaway from this meeting was the recognition of *internationalisation as a significant dimension of quality in the provision of higher education, both at the institutional and programme levels*. Some of the articles in this book provide good examples of useful mechanisms for assessing internationalization processes and their impact on such important aspects as the value added to the student experience, the academic and professional competencies of academic staff, the organization of curricula or the employability of graduates.

This also means that integrating internationalisation in the definition of quality would not only enrich the concept by making it more comprehensive, but also to link it to current developments. Presentations suggested that internationalization can be approached at two different levels: as a basic requirement, applicable to all students and programmes in all institutions, and a more specialized, or “maximum” requirement, which can lead institutions and their programmes towards an increasing link with the global environment, and can involve very different approaches depending on the disciplines and the programmes involved.

Regarding the professions, it seems clear that quality assurance needs to maintain and strengthen the dialogue with professional associations and those agencies and

organizations working to assure the quality of professional degrees. This is a common practice in some parts of the world, where higher education is highly professionalised, but has not been as yet a priority in our discussions within INQAAHE, and maybe we should make it so.

It is possible to find interesting initiatives leading to the harmonisation of standards, core learning outcomes or specific requirements for the QA of the professions, which should be the basis for analysis and may provide important insight for effective and relevant quality assurance processes. I hope this meeting and the valuable discussions we had, as reflected in this publication, will continue to guide our thinking and innovation toward this goal.

International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)

http://www.inqaahe.org

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

http://www.enqa.eu

ENQA
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

INQAAHE
INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION