# DEVELOPING A PAN-AFRICAN QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK

# *Report*

Draft for expert and AUC/EC approval

**Consultants**

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21 October 2014

# Table of Contents

# Table of Figures

# Executive summary

*Note:* *In our reflections we use Quality Assurance as the over-arching term covering quality enhancement on the one hand and accreditation on the other. This approach does not alone facilitate ease of reference but as will become clear in our presentation of the PAQAF, also provides useful terminology in defining two distinct complementary quality assurance functions.*

The African Union committed to improving the quality of higher education on the continent through the development and adoption of the African Strategy for Harmonisation of Higher Education. Two key thrusts of this Strategy currently in development are the establishment of an African Higher Education and Research Space (AHERS) and the development of a continental quality assurance and accreditation framework. Meanwhile the Pan African University (PAU) and the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) have been implemented with continuing success. In addition the current piloting of the European Tuning methodology holds potential for contributing to stakeholders' vision and efforts aimed at improving quality of African higher education.

This study is aimed at reviewing the status of higher education QA in Africa, examining the mechanisms for quality assurance and accreditation of higher education institutions in African countries and regions representing the different geographic regions and education systems with a view to identification of common quality standards and practices.

The study is also aimed at identifying international good practices in QA and accreditation that can provide valuable lessons or be adapted to the African context.

Finally the study makes recommendations for improving QA and accreditation practices in Africa and provides a Draft Pan-African QA and Accreditation Framework based on analysis of the findings and covering the common denominators of QA and accreditation systems in Africa while considering the international good practices.

The study was conducted at six national and three regional sites in Africa. Six countries- Egypt, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa were selected to represent the different systems and regions on the African continent. Two regional Frameworks were studied- African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES) for Francophone African countries; and the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA), representing Anglophone regional efforts at quality assurance and accreditation. The regional qualifications framework of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) covering 15 countries was also studied. Data was also gleaned from other countries in Africa that could strengthen the conclusions as well as provide a pan-African view on the terms of reference. Lessons were learned from relevant international good practices from Asia-Pacific, Europe and North America. The draft of the report benefitted from input from participants at the 6th International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa held in Bujumbura in September 2014. Key stakeholders in quality assurance including chief executive officers of national quality assurance agencies in Africa, the Association of African Universities (AAU), All Africa Students Union (AASU) and the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) shared their views before and after the conference, leading to further refinement of the draft.

**Six major findings gathered from the African study sites** received the endorsement of stakeholders from 26 African countries who were part of the validation phase. It was found that

1. The slight improvement observed in the quality of the higher education in Africa over the last 10 years still falls short of what is needed for catalysing knowledge-driven economies and global competitiveness.

2. In the last 10 years, the number of national quality assurance agencies has tripled which could account, at least in part for some observed quality improvement especially in the quality of student input through improved rigour of the admission process, quality of teachers through elevation of minimum qualifications for employment and promotion within the lecturing grade, quality of curriculum and the quality of the delivery process. Through setting up and enforcement of standards and accreditation, the quality assurance agencies are arresting what would have become a disastrous slide in quality.

3. In spite of these gains, depreciating quality of higher education teachers, research capacity deficit, infrastructural/facilities inadequacies, governance and management inefficiencies and lack of a continental quality assurance framework and accreditation system hampers the quality of higher education in Africa.

4. Even the absence of a continental quality assurance and accreditation system however, the study found that collaboration on quality assurance and accredit programmes in the higher education among African countries is not new. For 46 years, the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES) has had some success in 19 francophone countries. Also in the east African higher education space, since 2009, the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) has brought together, five countries under the quality assurance umbrella set up through legislation. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is also united in several protocols relating to quality assurance in higher education in its 15 Member States.

5. There is agreement among the subjects in the study and stakeholders at the Bujumbura conference on the merit of establishing a Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework as a way of providing; a continental platform for enhancing higher education quality; a mechanism for rapid establishment and sustainability of the African Higher Education and Research Space; a nucleus for catalysing regional quality assurance systems; a basis for rapid implementation of the Arusha Convention; an effective quality assurance of the Pan African University; a continental backdrop for the African Quality Rating Mechanism; and finally the enhancement of Africa's contribution to the global knowledge economy.

6. The predominant view emerged that in developing a continental quality assurance and accreditation framework that Africa should build on existing models of national and regional collaboration in terms processes and products. The proposed Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework therefore includes lessons from the successful practices of the regional agencies such as: (a) endorsement by member countries; (b) establishment of a legal framework; (c) establishment of an implementation mechanism in line with the enabling legal provisions; (d) setting of minimum academic standards; (e) implementation of quality assurance activities based on approved minimum standards; and (f) institutional infrastructure and human capacity-building. All of these are to benefit from the findings of the study on good practices from Asia, Europe and North America.

**The findings from the international study sites** in turn confirm this view and provide an abstract of success factors for such building upon and scaling up of existing models in Africa.

International study emphasises that Continental or regional Higher Education Quality Assurance is deeply interconnected with harmonisation and recognition, whereby Harmonisation facilitates transparency, Recognition facilitates mobility and cooperation, and Quality Assurance creates trust.

Higher Education Quality Assurance cannot be seen as a purely technical issue either. It combines Political, Organisational, and Functional approaches. The Political approach provides legitimacy and common purpose, organisational architecture supports cooperation and implementation, and functional instruments provide the tools for implementation.

In line with African and international examples, the result of such a three pronged process includes:

1. A high-level political cooperation mechanism with a well defined cooperation process, a solid process management structure, and a set of process management and reporting instruments.
2. An institutional architecture made up of high representation of governments, students, HEI, quality assurance institutions at national, sub regional and continental levels, professional organisations, and trade and industry associations.
3. A set of policy instruments developed through such a process would include a 3-Cycle structure, continental and national qualification frameworks, a credit accumulation and transfer scheme, a diploma or degree supplement, continental standards and guidelines for quality assurance, and a continental register for accrediting quality assurance agencies.

Nine success factors stand out from our study of international and African contexts:

1. Existing regional and continental convergence dynamics
2. A high-level cooperation mechanism
3. Shared higher education policies
4. Funding as incentive for performance and quality
5. Broad QA policies, standards and guidelines
6. Coherence between instruments of harmonisation, recognition and quality assurance
7. Decentralised and independent QA mechanisms
8. Quality Assurance defined as combined Accreditation and Quality Enhancement functions
9. Ranking as a transparency tool, not a QA tool

And finally, the resulting quality assurance mechanism is a three stepped process of internal quality assurance anchored in the HEI, verified by external quality assurance agencies, who themselves carry out their own periodic internal quality assurance verified by international peer review of other quality assurance agency experts.


**Applying this abstract as a template on the situation in Africa** demonstrates that there is plenty of fertile ground for the development of the Pan African Quality Assurance Framework.

I terms of **the political approach** a number of questions still remain. For instance while the Harmonisation strategy is important as a continental mobilising policy it stops short of embodying a genuine High-level political declaration committing to AHERS signed by all Ministers of (higher) Education in Africa. Such a declaration, issued at the next COMEDAF meeting could be the answer. Such a declaration needs to be supported by a well-defined cooperation process at Pan African level bundling the many initiatives driven by the academic impulse for more mobility and internationalisation on the one hand, and the AU mandate for more integration within the wider Pan African convergence dynamics on the other. Such a mechanism still needs to be developed together with a solid process management structure -apart from the limited resources of the AUC and the voluntary initiatives from stakeholders- in order to bundle all efforts and drive forward harmonisation, recognition and quality assurance in higher education at a Pan African level. Finally, process management and reporting instruments to monitor progress and achievements must then be designed and established at a pan African level.

In terms of the **inclusive organisational architecture**, our template shows a promising situation. As already mentioned, for high-level Government representation COMEDAF can play a defining role and the African Union can provide support. For Pan African representation of the Students, AASU the All African Student Unions already exists, for the Universities, AAU the Association of African Universities already plays a Pan African role, and the growing number of African higher education Quality Assurance Agencies are united in AfriQAN, the African Quality Assurance Network. A decision was taken at the African Union to establish an additional Agency for Accreditation at Pan African level. Regional representatives such as CAMES IUCEA, SADC and other regions active in higher Education Quality Assurance can play an important role in proving feasibility of a continental

QA framework and catalysing stakeholder cooperation in Higher Education Quality Assurance at Pan African level. Finally, the possible involvement of Professional, trade and industry associations at continental level needs to be further explored.

In terms of **functional instruments** Pan African progress is noteworthy. A 3-Cycle structure is emerging on the back of the LMD reforms. National Qualification Frameworks are established in some African countries and are in the making in others, a sub regional Qualifications Framework is being established in East Africa showing the feasibility for a wider Qualifications Framework for AHERS, the African Higher Education and Research Space. The seeds for an African Credit accumulation and transfer scheme are being sown with the African Tuning project as well as through national and regional efforts in developing such schemes in Africa. So far there is not yet a clear movement towards a Diploma or degree supplement, which is a powerful instrument for driving transparency across systems and countries. While there is not yet a clear and agreed set of Continental standards and guidelines for higher education quality assurance, the African Quality Rating Mechanism has developed an agreed AQRM template and measurement areas for standards of excellence that provides structure for the emergence of a continental standards. Meanwhile CAMES and IUCEA have developed minimum standards. Finally, the AUC is contemplating a Continental Accreditation mechanism, for accrediting African quality assurance agencies.

A three stepped Quality Assurance Mechanism emerges in image of the international and African experiences, anchoring internal quality assurance at the level of the HEI, its Internal QA process and the outcomes it produces to be verified by the fast growing number of National QA agencies, who in turn carry out their own periodic internal quality assurance to be verified by the Continental Accreditation Agency, and/or by sub regional body. In effect, eight African study sites showed similar types of quality assurance and accreditation at Programme/ Professional and Institutional levels. In all sites institutions are obligated to have their programmes accredited and/or the entire institution accredited or audited based on minimum standards, self-evaluation, peer review, site visits, decision making, and ongoing review and improvements. CAMES and IUCEA provide two different approaches in reaching sub regional quality assurance frameworks with CAMES operating a more centralised and operational approach, assessing institutions directly, while IUCEA has a more parametric approach limited to setting standards with stakeholders, and leaving quality assurance to the national agencies who implement the sub regional standards alongside the national ones. In both regions the existence of sub regional standards has a harmonisation effect on the national standards operated by the national agencies and convergence instruments, such as the IUCEA regional qualification framework, can be developed and help to tune the national qualification frameworks of its member states.

In further application of our template we recommend nine success strategies with corresponding key actions to launch the Pan African Framework, and call upon African stakeholders to:

1. Scale up from regional QA mechanisms while building on continental convergence policies

   ⇒ Concretise the Pan African Agenda 2063 and Post-2015 Plan of Action for Higher Education in Africa.

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   ⇒ Strengthen AUC role as a driving force for Higher Education convergence and AAU as a lead Agency
   ⇒ Boost mobility policies and programmes to drive harmonisation, recognition and QA.
   ⇒ Implement the revised Arusha convention with organisational arrangements and follow-up processes for ratification and national implementation.
   ⇒ Build on existing models of national and sub-regional QA mechanisms in developing the continental QA framework while factoring linguistic and socio-cultural contexts into the emerging continental model.

2. Ensure political endorsement from participating countries and establish a high level Continental cooperation mechanism based on inclusive consultation and solid process management.

⇒ Endorsing the establishment of the continental quality assurance and accreditation framework and strengthen the African higher education harmonisation strategy.

⇒ Signing of a AHERS Declaration by African Ministers of (Higher) Education at next COMEDAF

⇒ Ensure inclusive consultation between government, HEI, students, QAA, industry etc

⇒ Agree on implementation modalities and the roles of stakeholders at continental, sub regional and national levels.

⇒ Mobilise African and European technical expertise to set up the process management structure and reporting instruments

⇒ Capitalise on existing initiatives and complete these with Bologna type process management instruments

3. Establish a Pan African legal framework of policies and instruments to address shared Higher Education concerns across Africa.

⇒ Formulate shared continental policies in support of Africa's socioeconomic realities for students, academia and other HE stakeholders (Access, lifelong learning, mobility, technology)

⇒ Complete the Higher education Harmonisation, recognition and QA toolkit

⇒ Define and establish the continental legislative convergence Frameworks needed to make these instruments work

4. Mobilise Pan African funding and align national expenditure on higher education towards more quality and performance based funding.

⇒ Mobilise pan African funding for harmonisation, recognition and QA

⇒ Link national expenditure with the AU Social Policy Framework to enhance HE access and equity for underprivileged groups

⇒ Define the role of AUC in coordinating raising and allocating continental HE funding to improve HE performance and quality

⇒ Define funding modalities of QA Agencies

5. Ensure detailed attention from governments and stakeholder groups for the development and establishment of the quality assurance policy instruments

⇒ African Standards and Guidelines accommodating diversity and promoting convergence and comparability

⇒ Pan African Accreditation system for African QAA

⇒ Ensure coherence of Quality Assurance systems with harmonization and recognition policy instruments such as the Arusha Convention and other regional instruments such as the ECOWAS, East African, SADC type protocols

6. Issue structured and summary policy documents reflecting the spirit, organisation and functionality of quality assurance systems, and build Pan African institutional and networking arrangements

⇒ Describe what types of policies and processes should be in place at each level and

⇒ Define to what degree their contents will be prescriptive or descriptive

⇒ Describe the essential components and procedures of the system and how these work together

7. Ensure decentralisation and independence of quality assurance mechanisms at the national, sub regional, and continental levels

⇒ Anchor prime responsibility for internal QA at HEI level

⇒ Promote independence of external QA agencies at national and sub regional levels

⇒ At continental level ensure external quality assurance of QA Agencies

⇒ Launch a pan African quality assurance programme for the Pan African University programmes and centres of excellence

8. Base quality assurance mechanisms on the distinct and complementary functions of quality enhancement and accreditation at continental and national levels

⇒ Promote quality enhancement as the vehicle for maximizing internal and external quality assurance in sustainable improvement cycles
⇒ Promote accreditation based on minimum standards as the condition for operation
⇒ Ensure that both functions are present and that one cannot be achieved without engaging with the other

9. Use ranking as a tool for institutional improvement rather than national or regional league table comparisons
⇒ Use rankings as a tool for transparency and for promoting flexibility for the user and institutional improvement
⇒ Recognise the limited usefulness of rankings as a policy tool

**As areas for further exploration** for operating Accreditation and Quality Enhancement at Pan African level, we see a potential approach to the two Quality Assurance functions at Pan African level in considering a scale running from minimum standards to standards of excellence whereby a stepped approach first ensures minimum continental standards as a condition for operation under the national accreditation function, and subsequently quality enhancement driven by continental standards of excellence.

At institutional level, AfriQUAN could drive the standards of excellence, while the envisaged Continental Accreditation Mechanism could focus on guiding the minimum standards in cooperation with the National QA agencies and AfriQUAN, while leaving the verification to the national accreditation agencies.

In special arrangement the Pan African University thematic centres of excellence would be driven by the standards of excellence and the envisaged Continental Accreditation Mechanism could accredit them directly at Pan African level on the basis of these standards of excellence.

**In terms of Recommendations** we emphasise that at each level HEI QA institutions and governments need to explore ways for removing impediments to improving the situation.

1. A continental framework, however well crafted, will need underpinning with a higher education institutional culture of continuous quality assurance respecting the enrolment limits of their infrastructure resource and human capacity, fostering teacher commitment, innovation, and a stable academic calendar, providing adequate leadership, and investment in the quality of research.
2. National quality assurance agencies can contribute by fully engaging in capacity building partnerships, incorporating ICT in quality assurance and accreditation processes, share good practices, including non-traditional learning and on line delivery systems in quality assurance, strengthening network such as AfriQUAN and the African Diaspora, providing opportunities and conditions to retain the best brains.
3. African governments attention for adequate funding of national quality assurance mechanisms while reducing political interference in them, investing in quality higher education and centres of excellence, seeking sustained support from development partners, ensuring much better quality of basic and secondary education, focusing on ranking within Africa rather than global rankings, and enhancing participation of woman and other underprivileged groups in quality assurance and accreditation processes.

**In terms of overall conclusions and follow-up,** we reiterate that:

1. The rationale for a Pan African Quality Assurance Framework rests on the assumption that the successful establishments of sub regional experiences quality assurance frameworks have provided sufficient proof that such efforts can be scaled up to the continental level,

and that other sub regions can follow suit building on the rapid establishment of national quality assurance mechanism across Africa.

2. The merits of achieving this include the provision of a continental platform for enhancing higher education quality, a considerable boost to the sustainable establishment of AHERS, a nucleus for catalysing sub regional quality assurance mechanisms, rapid implementation of the Arusha convention, effective quality assurance of the Pan African University, a continental context for AQRM, and the enhancement of Africa's contribution to the global knowledge economy.

Now that this framework has been presented to stakeholders in the Bujumbura workshop providing sufficient input and support enabling us to present this draft for review by a panel of experts whose recommendations will further inform the highest political levels with their conclusions and recommendations, we hope to be able to formulate a final report to conclude this stage and help stakeholders decide on the follow up that is required.

In the assumption that the report is acted upon, Africa should be able to look forward to high-level political commitment, a well-managed process of close and broad based cooperation between all stakeholders to establish the cross border harmonisation, recognition, and quality assurance policy instruments and implementation tools that it needs for providing its booming investment climate with adequate human capacity and ensure that its academic research efforts contribute to the global knowledge economy.

# List of Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| **AAU** | Association of African Universities |
| **AASU** | All African Student Union |
| **ADEA** | Association for the Development of Education in Africa |
| **AHERS** | African Higher Education and research Space |
| **APHEA QF** | Asia Pacific Higher Education Qualifications Framework |
| **APRU** | Association of Pacific Rim Universities |
| **APQN** | Asia Pacific Quality Network |
| **AQRM** | African Quality Rating Mechanism |
| **ARWU** | Academic Ranking of World Universities |
| **ASEAN** | Association of South East Asian Nations |
| **AU** | African Union |
| **AUC** | African Union Commission |
| **AUN** | ASEAN University Network |
| **BCC** | Brisbane Communiqué Countries |
| **BFUG** | Bologna Follow UP Group |
| **CAMES** | Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur |
| **CEPES** | European Centre for Higher Education |
| **CHEA** | Council for Higher Education Accreditation (US) |
| **EAC** | East African Community |
| **EC** | European Commission |
| **ECTS** | European Credit Transfer System |
| **ECOWAS** | Economic Community of West African States |
| **EHEA** | European Higher Education Area |
| **EHEA QF** | European Higher Education Area Qualifications Framework |
| **EI** | European International Pan European Structure |
| **ENIC** | European Network of Information Centres |
| **ENQA** | European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education |
| **EQAR** | European Quality Assurance Register |
| **ESG** | European Standards and Guidelines |
| **ESU** | European Student Union |
| **EUA** | European University Association |
| **EURASHE** | European Association of Institutions in Higher Education |
| **EU** | European Union |
| **DS** | Diploma Supplement |
| **GUNI** | Global University Network for Innovation |
| **HEI** | Higher Education Institutions |

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| **JAES** | Joint Africa-EU Strategy |
| **NARIC** | National Academic recognition Information Centres |
| **PAU** | Pan African University |
| **QA** | Quality Assurance |
| **QA&AF** | Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework |
| **RECs** | Regional Economic Communities |
| **RIHED** | Regional Institute of Higher Education Development |
| **SEAMEO** | South-East Asian Ministers of Education Organization |
| **SOWG** | Senior Officials Working Group |
| **SSA** | Sub-Saharan Africa |
| **ToR** | Terms of Reference |
| **UCTS** | UMAP Credit Transfer Scheme |
| **UMAP** | University Mobility in the Asia and the Pacific |
| **UNESCO** | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| **WB** | World Bank |

# Chapter 1

# The study and its findings

*In this chapter we briefly describe the approach and methodology used in this study and give an overview of its findings. A detailed description of these findings is attached in Annex 1 to 3 respectively.*

## The Terms of Reference

The AUC requested the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) Support unit to recruit the two experts Peter A. Okebukola and Bart Fonteyne to conduct a study on the development of a Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework with the following Terms of Reference (ToR):

1. Review the status of higher education QA in Africa.
2. Examine the mechanisms for accrediting higher education institutions in Africa.
3. Analyse the QA procedures and accreditation mechanisms of five African countries representing the different geographic regions and education systems, with a view to identification of common quality standards and practices.
4. Identify international good practices in QA and accreditation that can provide valuable lessons or be adapted to the African context.
5. Make recommendations for improving QA and accreditation practices in Africa.
6. Draft a Pan-African QA and Accreditation Framework based on analysis of the findings. The Framework is to be prepared in such a way that it covers the common denominators of QA and accreditation systems in Africa and considers the international good practices.

In addition five process milestones were identified for this assignment:

1. Submission of an inception report demonstrating understanding of the assignment and showing a proposed methodology and work schedule.
2. Submission of a preliminary report on initial findings, following Tasks 1) to 5) above
3. Drafting a Pan-African QA and Accreditation Framework with detailed table of contents showing the findings, identified practices, challenges and recommendations.
4. Validation of the findings by presenting the analytical report and Framework to a meeting of stakeholders including national and regional QA / Accreditation agencies.
5. Production of a final document of the QA and Accreditation Framework, incorporating provided comments.

## Changes to the original Terms of Reference

Although the contract for the consultancy demands a study of five African countries, the Consultants agreed with the EC and AUC officials to expand to six African countries and two regional quality assurance agencies, totalling 8 study sites. This was to ensure broader coverage of the linguistic spread of higher education systems in the continent and to include regional accreditation agencies (one Francophone, one Anglophone) with history of successful quality assurance practices.

## Approach and methodology

This assignment was carried out in four main phases. Starting with an inception kick off meeting the Consultants discussed the general framework of the contract together with timelines for the various activities and clarifications on some perceived grey areas with relevant JAES, EU and AUC officials, and provided their proposed methodology and work schedule in the approved Inception Report.

As the framework should first and foremost build on the efforts already made in Africa, it was required during the second phase to bring together Quality Assurance Frameworks sourced from six Countries (Egypt, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa) selected to represent the different systems and regions on the African Continent, two regional Frameworks (a) CAMES for Francophone African Countries; and (b) the Inter-University Council of East Africa, representing Anglophone regional efforts at quality assurance and accreditation, and finally incorporate work invested in developing the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM). Apart from the African experiences it was also primordial to learn from other international regional experiences for which the consultants studied the International frameworks and practices from Europe, the Asia Pacific region and North America. From these findings they derived nine success strategies for the development of a first Draft Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework.

The third phase consists of a three-stepped validation process starting with feedback from stakeholders at the 6th International Conference on Higher Education Quality Assurance in Africa, September 2014 in Bujumbura, which is incorporated in the current draft. This draft will now enter in the second and third phase of validation through peer-review by a panel of experts appointed by the AUC and EC; and finally it will be complemented with feedback provided by the AUC and EC.

The fourth and final phase will be the conclusive write up of the Framework for Pan African Higher Education Quality Assurance which is a Policy document with the purpose of guiding the convergence of African national and regional efforts in Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation towards common standards and harmonisation, while allowing for the level of diversity inherent to the rich variety of language, culture and education systems on the continent.

The primary audiences[1] for this document have been identified as the National and Regional Quality Assurance Agencies in Africa, responsible for technical steering, monitoring and evaluating quality assurance in each country/region, the secondary audiences as the Higher Education Institutions in Africa, responsible for delivering quality Higher Education to African society. Special mention is made of the Pan African University (PAU) for which specific arrangements will have to be made, and the tertiary audiences as the Ministers overseeing and steering the Higher Education system in the respective African nations.

Finally in its presentation and contents this study features three main chapters; one on the approach, methodology and findings of the study (this chapter), a second chapter presenting the Framework itself, and a final chapter presenting the overall rationale for engaging in such a Pan African Quality assurance mechanism together with proposals for the next steps. In annex we provide the study with annex 1 on the status of Higher Education and quality assurance in Africa, annex 2 presenting a comparative study showing commonalities and differences between the African frameworks that have been reviewed, with a narrative on the main findings and conclusions, and annex 3 focusing on international regional convergence, recognition and quality assurance experiences in Europe, the Asia Pacific, and North America, from which we derived a success factor based framework for comparison. Finally, as Europe has taken the international lead and provides many analogies with Africa, we have also provided annex 4 with the European Standards and Guidelines, annex 5 with the overview of the Bologna main themes over time, and annex 6 providing a detailed historical overview of the European experience in higher education harmonisation, recognition and quality assurance.

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[1] Audiences are the stakeholders that will benefit from the study and use it for the purpose of enhancing Quality Assurance & Accreditation in their respective areas.

# Main findings of the study

## Introduction

Since 2000, the African higher education system has been imprinted with two key trademarks. On the positive side, it is known to record the highest growth rate of all the regions of the world (UIS, 2013). The other feature is negative- the depreciating quality of products from the system. In an increasingly international environment – marked by mobility of skilled labour and international competition among universities, the compromised quality of the higher education delivery system in Africa creates more and more tensions for a continent striving to "claim the 21st century" (AUC 2014) that is knowledge driven. In response to this tension, there is a strong need to put in place and strengthen appropriate quality assurance systems and regulatory frameworks to bolster quality in higher education in the region. The establishment of a continental quality assurance and accreditation framework is seen as a potent pathway to addressing this tension.

## The status of Higher Education Quality Assurance in Africa

Rising public demand for better performance of higher education institutions, enrolment pressure, efficiency and accountability demands, the need for better quality graduates to drive the economy, dwindling public resources for higher education and the increasing cross-border provisions are some of the major quality-related issues that African countries are currently grappling with. As enrolment rises, the number of higher education institutions continues to grow and reports on quality of graduates have presented rather dim data. The quality of recent graduates has been reported to be depressed in Egypt (Badrawi, 2014), Nigeria (Okojie, 2012) and South Africa (CHE, 2012). The quest to elevate quality in the face of unabating massification is a key driver of quality in the African higher education system. Globalisation has another key driver of quality which is stimulating the management of the universities to step up their quality assurance practices.

Within the last three years, the findings of several studies on quality assurance in higher education in Africa have converged documenting funding, human capacity deficit, poor policy implementation environment, weakness in institutional governance and enrolment pressure as major challenges (see for example Materu, 2011; Mkunya, 2011; Mohammedbai, 2011, Okojie, 2011; Oyewole, 2011; Saliu, 2012; Ramon-Yusuf, 2012; Uvah, 2012, Okebukola, 2013; Shabani, Okebukola and Oyewole, 2014). Reports from national quality assurance agencies support the findings of these studies.

In an effort to frontally attack these challenges, several African governments have established regulatory agencies to quality assure higher education institutions. With over 15 national quality assurance agencies established in the last eight years bringing the total to 23 in 2014, Africa would appear to have the fastest growing number of such regulatory institutions. There are also two regional quality assurance agencies – CAMES and IUCEA, which together, cover 23 African countries. The Southern Africa Development Community (SADEC) also has a set of protocols binding its 15 Member States on issues relating to quality in higher education. The impact of the aggregate of the efforts of these national and regional agencies in improving quality of higher education delivery in Africa has not been empirically documented. However, the positive, albeit feeble impact can be conjectured.

In sum, higher education systems in Africa have become more complex, increasingly more so in the coming years. At the same time, the system is facing unprecedented challenges arising from the convergent impacts of globalisation, the increasing importance of knowledge as a main driver of growth, and the information and communication revolution. The need to become more flexible and

adjustable to change is now urgent. One of the most effective responses is creating a sustainable quality assurance system at the institutional, national and continental levels. The exploration of a continental framework for quality assurance will need to be quickened to accelerate the continent-wide movement to improve quality especially with the Pan African University and the African Quality Rating Mechanism coming into the delivery picture.

Regional activity has contributed to this trend and yielded instructive results for potential scaling up towards a continental quality assurance mechanism.

The African Union has engaged in close cooperation with the European Union to build more African quality assurance capacity. This joint activity has been a major catalyst for pan African networking, learning and implementing higher education quality assurance activities. In the wake of this activity pan African networks and associations such as AfriQUAN, AASU and the AAU have also been established.

## Mechanisms for Higher Education Quality Assurance in Africa

There is a high degree of commonality among the eight national / regional agencies in the conduct of quality assurance practices including accreditation. All have the same conceptual framework to quality assurance. There is quality assurance of input into the system such as students, teachers, curriculum and facilities. There is also quality assurance of processes of curriculum delivery, administration and governance as well as quality assurance of the products. All implement an external examiner system where experts outside the institution check the international comparability of the curriculum delivery process by moderating examination questions and examining theses and dissertations for quality of scholarship. All have the same mechanism for accreditation including setting minimum standards, self-study, peer review and onsite assessment and finally, declaration of accreditation status. Most subject both programmes and the institution to accreditation while a few focus mainly on institutional audit/accreditation. The thrusts of institutional accreditation are on vision, mission and strategic goals; governance and administration; resources; quality of training, learning and research; efficiency and effectiveness; extension services and consultancies; transparency – financial management and stability; and general ethos. It is to these mechanisms that a continental quality assurance framework is expected to relate.

All nations studied, stimulate institutional quality culture by encouraging the establishment of quality assurance units within institutions. It was also found that the process of accreditation of cross-border and online delivery of higher education is weak. Equally weak is the mechanism for monitoring national accreditation agencies and professional bodies.

The foundation for quality assurance is the minimum quality standards against which programmes and institutions are measured. All national and sub-regional quality assurance agencies and their quality assurance frameworks we studied have minimum academic standards which are periodically reviewed to reflect contemporary developments in higher education, global trends within the discipline and the current socio-economic context of the locality where the institution is located.

IUCEA and CAMES present lessons to be learned in setting minimum quality standards in higher education across nations. This is an important lesson for a proposed continental quality assurance framework affirming that for five countries in the case of IUCEA and 19 countries for CAMES, all 54 African countries have the potential of coming together to agree on minimum academic standards. To scale up to the continental from the sub-regional, the deeper lessons to be learned are from the success stories of the processes and products of the sub-regional agencies.

The process leading to the setting up of minimum standards for quality assurance is similar in both IUCEA and CAMES. Both agencies bring together from member countries, subject matter specialists, professionals, employers of labour and a wide array of other relevant stakeholders. IUCEA and CAMES provide the facilitation platform for the panels to develop minimum standards. There are

three key ingredients in the process. These are representation from member countries, participation of relevant stakeholders and consensus building in setting minimum academic standards. These three ingredients are recipe for setting minimum quality standards for the proposed continental framework. Participation of all countries subscribing to the framework is particularly important. Such scope of participation will guarantee that all voices be heard and peculiarities at the national level factored into the process of consensus building. The product of the exercise has a high chance of acceptability at the national level and in the institutions making up the higher education system. Quality assurance activities at the institutional and national levels of the 24-member African countries making up IUCEA and CAMES confirm that the minimum standards set at the sub-regional level through the facilitation of IUCEA and CAMES are adhered to.

As reported by Nkunya (2014), IUCEA in collaboration with the national councils and commissions for higher education, higher education institutions, and the East African Business Council (EABC) is now developing programme benchmarks, which will be part of the regional quality assurance system. The benchmarks are for harmonization of the content, structure, quality, and delivery of the university curriculum and harmonizing qualifications. The process to develop programme benchmarks started in 2007 at a pilot level, through a project implemented by the national commissions and councils for higher education of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Through that pilot initiative benchmarks for engineering, natural sciences, medicine, and agriculture programmes were developed. Some of the higher education institutions that participated in the initiative are now using the piloted benchmarks. A more comprehensive process to develop programme benchmarks started in 2011. So far benchmarks for business studies have been developed and higher education institutions are currently using them. Development of benchmarks for information technology and computer science is already in progress, and those for teacher education and humanities will be developed starting July 2014 and July 2015 respectively.

IUCEA is now developing East African Principles and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education as a framework to guide operationalization of the regional quality assurance system that has been developed (Nkunya, 2014). It is expected that the EAPG document will be available before the end of 2014. Among others, the EAPG document will safeguard consistency in quality assurance practices across the East African common higher education area, and thus enhance public confidence in the quality of higher education in the region. It will also enhance mutual trust among institutions and national higher education agencies, and strengthen mutual recognition of qualifications among the Partner States. Nkunya (2014) further notes that the EAPG document will be a regionally agreed point of reference for continuous quality enhancement in higher education, for developing shared understanding of higher education systems, and for promoting harmonized regional best practices in quality assurance.

The props on which to rest a sustainable Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework are the quality assurance and accreditation systems currently practised at national and regional levels and to which practitioners have gained some fluency. About 50% of African countries have installed some form of accreditation mechanism some of which have spanned decades in active implementation e.g. Kenya and Nigeria. Many are new e.g. Botswana and Liberia but steadily building capacity by learning from the experiences of older and successful models. Beyond national frontiers, two are sub-regional which pose potent examples for scaling up to a pan-African mechanism.

From the point of view of its name, the proposed Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework is expected to address accreditation as part of its mandate. Lessons from CAMES and IUCEA are valuable in the pursuit of this intention. In the case of CAMES, accreditation at the programme and institutional levels is undertaken by the sub-regional agency in all its 19 member countries. Thus, aside from setting minimum standards across its 19 member countries, CAMES proceeds to assess the degree of fit with the minimum standards through accreditation. However, in the case of IUCEA, all five countries agree on the minimum standards and thereafter, proceed to individually conduct accreditation through their national quality assurance agencies. In both cases,

the accreditation process is similar. It begins with self study followed by peer review and onsite assessment and finally, decision on the standing of the programme or institution with regard to accreditation status.

From our study, the experience of CAMES and IUCEA presents two options for the proposed Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework. One is to adopt the CAMES model of standards setting and accreditation. Interview with CAMES officials and national agencies within it confirm no conflict as the institutions meet national quality guidelines alongside present themselves for CAMES quality and accreditation check. A number of institutions find the CAMES quality assurance intervention to elevate their standing beyond national level and confer international comparability. In adopting the CAMES model as long as the continental framework does not present itself as being superior or overriding of national efforts, it has a high chance of wide acceptability. Higher education institutions in Africa should have the latitude to apply the continental quality assurance and accreditation framework alongside meeting minimum standards set at the national level. In practical terms, a university in Ghana, Nigeria or South Africa, will by national laws subject itself to quality checks by the National Board for Accreditation, National Universities Commission and Council for Higher Education (respectively). On top of this, the university can by choice, elect to subject itself for the continental quality check. Experience from CAMES shows that many institutions, over time will adopt the two-layer quality assurance approach.

The second option within the study of the African examples, is the IUCEA approach. In adopting this option, the proposed Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework will only provide the minimum standards and it will empower the national quality assurance agencies to conduct accreditation in the institutions in their territories. Empowering the national quality assurance agencies denote capacity building and provision of guidelines that will be applied at the national and institutional levels to assure quality.

Despite the successes, the regional experiences provide a warning for the pan African efforts. Both experiences face chronic financial shortages feeding into capacity and organisational deficiencies, in turn impeding the agencies to reach their full potential and effectiveness.

Two other important developments are significant for PAQAF, namely the Pan African University (PAU) and the recent development of the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM).

The PAU thematic centres of excellence provide an opportunity to develop standards of excellence to complement the minimum standards predominant in the African approach to quality assurance, and hence may help in developing brackets (minimum to excellent) scaled standards combining the summative accreditation and formative quality enhancement approaches, forming together a comprehensive Pan African Quality Assurance Mechanism.

The AQRM mechanism, intended as an African ranking instrument aimed at providing competitive quality improvement between HEI across the African continent, is based on comprehensive standards in the areas of Governance and Management, Infrastructure, Finance, Teaching and Learning, Research, Publication and Innovations, Community/Societal Engagement, Programme Planning and Management, Curriculum Development, Teaching and Learning, Assessment, and Programme Results. These standards can provide guidance for PAU quality assurance purposes in particular, and provide the excellence measures at the upper end of the PAQAF scale of standards in general.

The situation in Africa is one of great opportunities in the face of adversity mixed with substantial reason for concern. In our recommendations for institutional quality assurance we call upon HEI to foster a culture of continuous quality assurance, to respect the enrolment limits of their infrastructure, resource and human capacity, to foster a culture of teacher commitment and innovation, ensure the stability of the academic calendar, improve the rigour in the selection of HEI leadership, and invest in the quality of research.

We also call upon national quality assurance agencies to fully engage in capacity building partnerships, to better use ICT in quality assurance and accreditation processes, to share best practices within linguistic groups and beyond, to share good research practices where they find them, strengthen AfriQUAN and its effectiveness, mobilise the African Diaspora in quality assurance, and provide opportunities and conditions to retain the best brains. Furthermore we put forward the need for including non-traditional learning and on line delivery systems in quality assurance.

For African governments attention is called for adequately funding national quality assurance mechanisms, reducing political interference, investing in quality higher education and centres of excellence, seeking sustained support from development partners, ensuring much better quality of basic and secondary education, focusing on ranking within Africa rather than global rankings, and enhancing participation of woman and other underprivileged groups in quality assurance and accreditation processes.

## The international experience

In reviewing the international contexts we chose Europe and the Asia Pacific as regions with similar linguistic, cultural and socio economic diversity we find in Africa combined with a similar great variety of Higher Education Systems. We included North America because while it features multicultural environments and socioeconomic variety, it provides additional complexity through unusual constitutional limits on the powers of governance.

Of all regions, the European experience stands central in two major ways. Not only have European higher education systems historically followed in the wake of western colonisation, affecting the Americas, Asia and Africa in similar ways, but has Europe also recently made the most comprehensive effort towards converging its higher education systems through the Bologna process.

Europe's lead has in turn inspired and provided the incentive to other regions for internationalising their own systems in ways compatible with the EHEA.

In analysing the European experience we could derive a framework of success factors based on the tried and tested policy instruments and quality assurance tools developed by the Bologna process stakeholders and governments, and we used it to review the Asia Pacific and North America.

We distinguished nine success factors; (1) an international context conducive to convergence, (2) a high level international cooperation mechanism based on inclusive consultation and solid process management, (3) convergence instruments and adapted legislation based on shared policies, (4) continental funding complementing national expenditure to align incentives in HE financing systems towards performance and quality, (5) high level detailed attention for Instruments of quality assurance and their interaction with other policy instruments promoting coherence trust and cooperation, (6) broad quality assurance principles, policies, standards and guidelines to safeguard diversity, ensure comparability and allow recognition., (7) decentralised and independent quality assurance mechanisms promote learning and improvement, (8) accreditation and quality enhancement are distinct and complementary components of quality assurance, and finally (9) the use of ranking as a transparency tool rather than a quality assurance instrument.

Our analysis confirms that success in internationally regional higher education quality assurance is built on a set of cross border policy instruments and tools developed and agreed through inclusive consultations by stakeholder networks and governments, providing high-level political commitment and engaging in a well managed process of convergence. These policy instruments and tools include also higher education recognition and harmonisation instruments on which regional quality assurance rests for comparability across systems and cultures. Reciprocally, quality assurance builds trust and confidence making the development of these harmonisation and recognition tools possible.

This explains in part why in the US, because of the constitutional restraints at federal level combined with an extraordinary demand for individual freedom and the refusal of a strong central

government, there has been so little convergence and only a minimal response in relation to international developments in higher education. This stands in sharp contrast to the global leading role Europe has been able to seize for itself as it could capitalise on strong regional integration policies, established institutions, continental funding programmes, solid process management and broad based consultation between well developed stakeholder networks, which have yielded a set of shared higher education policy instruments and tool kits of global exemplarity. The Pacific Asia response has been slower but nevertheless remarkable given its difficulties in territorial definition of the region and the more fragmented landscape of regional integration initiatives, weaker institutional underpinning, and greater socioeconomic disparities between and within countries.

This shows that actually, developing the Pan African framework for quality assurance cannot be limited to a study by two consultants. Indeed, one overarching lesson that clearly emanates from the African, European and other international experiences is that the development of a Pan African Framework for quality assurance can only be the result of high-level political commitment, a well-managed process of close and broad based cooperation between all stakeholders, and a set of cross border harmonisation, recognition, and quality assurance policy instruments and implementation tools.

Such a process needs a political approach to deliver the political will and strategies that put higher education initiatives on the agenda of decision-making bodies, which is crucial in formalising initiatives and launching major programs or funding schemes. It needs an organizational architecture that evolves in the wake of political initiative to deliver the frameworks structures and agencies necessary to help establish and oversee regional level and intra-regional initiatives in a more systematic way and it needs a functional approach to develop strategies facilitating closer alignment or harmonization among national/sub regional higher education systems on the one hand, and programs like student mobility schemes, cross-border collaborative education programs, pan-regional universities and centres of excellence on the other.

# Chapter 2

# A Framework for Pan African Quality Assurance

*In this chapter we build on African and international success factors to outline the framework for Pan African Quality and Assurance and Accreditation.*

*We provide this framework not as a final product, but as a foundation for African governments and stakeholders to further engage in a concerted continental convergence process with high-level political commitment and strong organisational underpinnings.*

*In this framework we also identify the functional instruments for harmonization, recognition and quality assurance that have been successful at sub regional level in Africa and other areas in the world.*

*As noted in Chapter 1, reference to 'regional' in this chapter is to African Union's component Regional Economic Communities (RECs) with Africa being referenced as continent in contrast with UNESCO's label as sub-regions for the component divisions of the Africa region.*

It is a strongly held view among quality assurance stakeholders in Africa that the development of a Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework should build on the success stories of regional frameworks in Africa rather than re-invent the wheel copying models that may not fit local socio-cultural contexts. Therefore the lessons learned from these experiences will be apparent at the different levels of the framework.

From our conclusions on international experience we learned that regional or continental higher education quality assurance should not be seen as a stand-alone project. It is built on a set of cross border policy instruments and tools that include higher education recognition and harmonisation instruments on which continental quality assurance relies for comparability across systems and cultures.

Reciprocally, quality assurance provides the foundation of trust and confidence that makes the very development of these harmonisation and recognition tools possible. This symbiotic relationship is also confirmed by the two African sub regional experiences we studied.

As the sub regional African and international experience also shows, these instruments are developed and agreed through inclusive consultations among governments and stakeholder networks.

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groups is critical, as the systems and policies in the first group are needed to facilitate and expedite the programs in the second.

Our approach to the Pan African Framework reflects these principles and uses the success factors we derived from international and African sub regional experiences in conducting such a three-pronged approach. We will outline a set of success strategies, their key components, the existing building blocks, and a set of proposed actions to ensure the political momentum, the organisational architecture and the functional instruments for implementation.

## The Framework

### Nine success strategies

The Framework puts forward nine main success strategies for Africa.

1. Scale up from regional QA mechanisms building on continental convergence policies

2. Ensure political endorsement from participating countries and establish a high level Continental cooperation mechanism based on inclusive consultation and solid process management.

3. Establish a Pan African legal framework of policies and instruments to address shared Higher Education concerns across Africa.

4. Mobilise Pan African funding and align national expenditure on higher education towards more quality and performance based funding.

5. Ensure high-level and detailed attention from governments and stakeholder groups for the development of the quality assurance policy instruments

6. Issue structured and summary policy documents reflecting the spirit, organisation and functionality of quality assurance systems, and build Pan African institutional and networking arrangements

7. Ensure decentralisation and independence of quality assurance mechanisms at the national, sub regional, and continental levels

8. Base quality assurance mechanisms on the distinct and complementary functions of quality enhancement and accreditation

9. Use rankings as a transparency instrument, not a quality assurance policy

### Method

We will discuss the framework strategy by strategy.

For each success strategy we will lay out the key components. We then identify, describe and discuss the existing building blocks based on experiences and achievements of existing systems and organisations in Africa and in other continents that have successfully implemented such strategies.

We finally provide options and a set of proposed actions for stakeholders to consider and pursue in the process of establishing the PAQAF.

We introduce the framework for step by step for each strategy.

# 1. Scale up from regional QA mechanisms while building on continental convergence policies

Pan African initiatives in regionalising higher education are taking shape at a time where a worldwide trend favourable to convergence is becoming more evident by the day. Indeed, Europe has set a trend towards international convergence in higher education and has inspired other regions to step up their own integration.

Africa has therefore fertile grounds for developing its own response and learning from other experiences. At continental level, Africa's agenda 2063 calls for peace prosperity and unity, potentially the overall political framework for more integration with a growing role for the African Union Commission, strengthened with the support of the African nations and international support through agreements with Europe and other regions.

### *Institutional Back up and Policy Instruments*

In follow up of its Plan of Action of the Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015) which has met substantial participation and engagement from governments and higher education stakeholders in Africa and for which the AUC has received substantial international support to organise the supporting activities; the AUC has now launched its post 2015 agenda in order to sustain this political commitment further in the coming years.

At the functional level, already some continental policy instruments have taken shape, such as the Nyerere African scholarships programme, promoting cross border mobility similar to the European ERASMUS Programme. This programme however is too small to make substantial impact at continental level and needs serious investment in order to boost mobility as a driver of harmonisation, recognition and quality assurance.

### *Complementary international Agreements and supporting networks*

A number of complementary international agreements have been established, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP) financing many projects in the education sector improving the quality of new students enrolling in Higher education, and notably the World Bank financed Africa Centres of excellence project to promote regional specialization among participating universities in areas that address regional challenges and strengthen the capacities of these universities to deliver quality training and applied research.

NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa's Development invests in basic education improving the quality of new students enrolling in Higher Education. It also improves access to and the quality of science and technology across Africa as a key part of improving human resource development, stimulating education and knowledge sharing and increasing exposure for African innovation.

Of high importance to Pan African higher education convergence is the UNESCO revised Arusha Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Africa. An important step is now the implementation of this convention, together with the organisational arrangements and follow-up processes for ensuring ratification in all African states, signatory to the convention.

Notable is also the Joint Africa Europe Strategy (JAES) for which recently, in the 2014 April meeting, Heads of State decided to launch higher education student exchange programmes within Africa and between Africa and Europe. JAES is supported by many programmes financed by the EU in the Higher Education sector with a Pan African perspective.

*Scaling up from Regional QA mechanisms*

Throughout the report reference is made to the achievements at regional levels on the African Continent in the area of higher education Quality assurance. These achievements form important building blocks for scaling up towards the Pan African Quality Assurance Framework since these regions already achieved political endorsement from participating countries, they established legal frameworks and institutional arrangements, they already set transnational minimum standards and implemented quality assurance mechanisms based on these standards, and finally they have embarked on building human and institutional capacities for higher education quality assurance in their respective regions.

The framework therefore extracts common elements in the processes and products of regional and national quality assurance, accreditation and qualifications frameworks already in use in Africa, it foresees a high level cooperation process of with a series of continental stakeholder meetings, mobilises political and technical support for this process resulting in a "home-grown" Framework with considerations for linguistic and other socio-cultural differences in the continent. As will be seen in the rest of the Framework, this cooperation process will also provide the space and means to agree on implementation modalities within the context of the role of AUC, AAU, AfriQAN, CAMES, IUCEA, SADC and national quality assurance agencies and provides the space for integrating AQRM and PAU into the PAQAF strategy.

*Proposed action*

a) Concretize the Pan African Agenda to provide more guidance to Pan African initiatives

b) Strengthen the role of the AUC as a driving force and facilitator

c) Implement the Post 2015 agenda.

d) Invest further in Pan African Policy Higher Education instruments such as the Nyerere African Union scholarship programme in order to boost mobility as a driver of harmonisation, recognition and quality assurance.

e) Implement the revised Arusha convention and ensure organisational arrangements and follow up processes for ensuring ratification

f) Build on existing models of national and sub-regional QA mechanisms in developing the continental QA framework while factoring linguistic and socio-cultural contexts into the emerging continental model.

**Figure 1: Framework for scaling up from regional QA mechanisms while building on continental convergence policies**

| Success Strategy | Key components | Building blocks | Proposed action |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. **Scale up from regional QA mechanisms while building on continental convergence policies** | Continental convergence policies | The African Union Agenda 2053<br>· Unity<br>· Prosperity<br>· Peace | **Concretise the Pan African Agenda to provide more guidance to Pan African initiatives**<br><br>**Capitalize on the broader integration dynamics in Africa** |
| | Institutional Back up | The African Union Commission | **Strengthen the role of AUC as driving force and facilitator** |
| | Policy instruments | Plan of Action of the Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006 -2015)<br>The Nyerere Africa Scholarship Programme<br>Higher education student exchange programmes between Europe & Africa and within Africa. (JAES) | **Follow up to the Plan of Action of the Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015).**<br><br>**Invest further in Pan African Policy instruments such as the Nyerere African Union scholarship programme in order to boost mobility as a driver of harmonisation, recognition and quality assurance.** |
| | Complementary international Agreements and supporting networks | Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP) and NEPAD,<br>The UNESCO revised Arusha Convention | **Implement the revised Arusha convention and ensure organisational arrangements and follow up processes for ensuring ratification** |
| | Existing Regional QA mechanisms | IUCEA, CAMES, SADC, national QA mechanisms and frameworks<br>COMEDAF | **Build on existing models of national and sub-regional QA mechanisms in developing the continental QA framework while factoring linguistic and socio-cultural contexts into the emerging continental model.** |

## 2. Ensure political endorsement from participating countries and establish a high-level Continental cooperation mechanism based on inclusive consultation and solid process management.

The overall aim of a Pan African Higher Education & Research Space (AHERS) is underpinned with the African Strategy for Harmonisation of Higher Education in Africa. In addition the Pan African University (PAU) has been launched with the aim to establish thematic centres of excellence based on joint programmes between African and European universities and this with substantial international support.

### *Inclusive consultation arrangements*

Inclusive Pan African stakeholder networks have emerged from, and engaged with the Pan African higher education convergence processes. The AAU, AfriQUAN, and AASU can develop into the African A3 equivalent of the European E4. If indeed the envisaged Pan African Accreditation Council takes effect, it can also be included to form an African A4.

In addition, strong features of the Pan African landscape are the many layered sub regional organisations of which in this study CAMES and IUCEA are notable examples in the field of higher education. These sub regional organisations can be the building blocks for Pan African convergence and quality assurance in a similar way as in the Asia Pacific sub regional initiatives underpin the broader APEC and ASEAN initiatives.

As we can learn from these African sub-regional experiences, extensive consultations at the political and technical level as well as public awareness campaign of the merit of the sub-regional agency markedly improved stakeholder buy-in. The East African Community was used as a lever for actualisation of IUCEA at the political level. Member States signatures to sub-regional harmonisation facilitated a sub-regional quality assurance agency within this process. Indeed, establishment of IUCEA was seen as a critical step in the harmonisation of higher education delivery systems. Involvement of Vice-Chancellors/Rectors in the initial deliberation to establish IUCEA also improved stakeholder buy-in. For CAMES, the linguistic cohesion (francophone) of the catchment countries and the identical higher education structure following after the French model (LMD) were additional factors in mitigating resistance.

### *Process Management organisation*

The elephant in the room, so to speak, is whether Africa can fulfil its ambitions without a continental cooperation mechanism such as the Bologna/Brisbane type process. We have seen that both in Europe and the Asia-Pacific, governments and stakeholders have engaged through such a mechanism and have underpinned it with organisational arrangements (BFUG, SOWG) and process management instruments (Work programmes, Stocktaking reports) to ensure implementation of the political agreements on higher education recognition, harmonisation and quality assurance issues.

In Europe this process is strong and solidly underpinned with institutional support, in the Asia-Pacific region less so, but it is seems to be gathering critical mass. In the US, the absence of the overarching political framework has so far made even the concept of such a managed process elusive. The degree of achieved regional convergence seems to correlate strongly with the level of political commitment mobilised, the strength of the organisational underpinnings, and the reliability with which process management instruments are being delivered. Europe clearly shows the way, the Asia Pacific region is in development of its own initiative, and the US is left insular with difficulties in mustering adequate responses to global developments in higher education.

International and African sub regional experience shows that an established and specific international cooperation mechanism is needed to foster a higher education space such as AHERS. This cooperation mechanism is the key to mobilising the high political commitment needed.

The sub regional African experiences of CAMES and IUCEA show that countries entered in signing international legislation to frame their process. They defined the key components of a successful cooperation mechanism to be:

1. Ensuring endorsement by all member countries;

2. Establishing a legal framework;

3. Establishing a bureaucratic framework and process in line with the enabling legal provisions;

4. Setting minimum academic standards;

5. Implementing quality assurance activities based on approved minimum standards;

6. Institutional and human capacity building.

From our two African sub-regional study sites we learned what roles such process management organisation entails.

IUCEA facilitates inter university cooperation, strategic coordination and forum for EAC Higher education development and ensures internationally comparable education standards in East Africa so as to promote the region's competitiveness in higher education. IUCEA advises the EAC Partner States in steering higher education in meeting national and regional developmental needs; developing quality assurance processes; identifying and implementing good practices in institutional management and use of resources; developing human resource capacity in all disciplines of higher education in the Community; and promoting equal opportunities for all higher education students in East Africa, including those with special needs.

CAMES leads quality assurance and capacity building of higher education and research systems, in line with the socio-economic development needs of its member States. It promotes and fosters quality in higher education; establishes permanent cultural and scientific cooperation between member States; gathers and disseminate academic or research papers: statistics, information on examinations, books, records, charts, information on vacancies and job applications from all backgrounds; prepares conventions and encourages collaborative higher education projects between member States, and coordinates harmonisation of higher education and research systems.

The degree of achieved regional convergence seems to correlate strongly with the level of political commitment mobilised, the strength of the organisational underpinnings, and the reliability with which process management instruments are being delivered.

The Pan African context has already shown the capacity to enter a dynamic of convergence based on AUC leadership and strong stakeholder involvement, and CAMES and IUCEA show that remarkable results can be achieved at sub regional level. Also here, as indicated before, the sub regional achievements can be the building blocks for PAQAF where through a combined sub-regional and national participation process the 24 IUCEA and CAMES countries can come with 'two aggregated voices' to the continental platform and form critical mass for individual countries not yet part of any sub-regional agency.

Nevertheless, without a Bologna type process based on political commitment at the highest levels, underpinned by solid organisational arrangements and delivered through reliable process management instruments, our international and sub-regional African findings seem to suggest that the Pan African dynamic may be difficult to sustain over time, or else be less productive and too slow to gather momentum, or alternatively, may become donor driven and less genuinely African.

This being said, it is actually remarkable to see how initiatives such as ICQAHEA Workshops on Quality Assurance in Higher Education, ARUSHA implementation activities, the establishment and operation of QA agencies at national and sub regional levels, the Tuning project and the beginning of

a African Credit transfer and accumulation system (ACTA), Quality Assurance of Open Distance learning initiatives (ODL- QA) and LMD Reforms, take place without an African equivalent of a Bologna process to adequately support them.

It is therefore crucial to build on African stakeholder commitment and support it with expertise and experience from both African sub-regional and international experiences, especially European, as the Bologna process is the most established and experienced higher education endeavour in the world.

*Process Management instruments*

We have seen that both in Europe and the Asia-Pacific, governments and stakeholders have underpinned this high level cooperation mechanism with organisational arrangements (BFUG, SOWG) and process management instruments (Work programmes, Stocktaking reports) to ensure implementation of the political agreements on higher education recognition, harmonisation and quality assurance issues. In the US, the absence of the overarching political framework has so far made even the concept of such a managed process elusive. The degree of achieved regional convergence seems to correlate strongly with the level of political commitment mobilised, the strength of the organisational underpinnings, and the reliability with which process management instruments are being delivered. Europe clearly shows the way, the Asia Pacific region is in development of its own initiative, and the US is left insular with difficulties in mustering adequate responses to global developments in higher education.

In contrast, the Pan African context not only seems to hold more potential than the US, but given the elements already in place, has already shown the capacity to enter a dynamic of convergence based on AUC leadership and strong stakeholder involvement.

CAMES and IUCEA also identified the bureaucratic framework and process as being crucial components of success in achieving the results to date.

The AUC can capitalise on its cooperation with the EU and mobilise direct support in the form of Bologna process expertise and experience in the development of instruments for following up on international cooperation for AHERS, and combine it with expertise from its own sub regional experiences.

*Proposed action*

a) Establish a high-level international cooperation mechanism by launching a Bologna type declaration and initiative for Africa towards realising the Pan African Higher Education & Research Space (AHERS).

b) Mobilise combined expertise from IUCEA, CAMES and Bologna process management to help building capacity for setting up the Follow Up Group and developing Stocktaking reports and other process management instruments in order to ensure implementation of political agreements

c) Identify the stakeholder networks to be part of an inclusive consultation process. AAU, the African Association of Universities, AfriQUAN the African Quality Assurance Network, and AASU the African Student Union can develop into the African A3 equivalent of the European E4. Define how to include the newly proposed African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council for Higher Education and include sub regional quality assurance networks.

d) Capitalise on existing initiatives and complete with Bologna management instruments

**Figure 2: Framework for Launching political endorsement and high level cooperation mechanism for AHERS and QA**

| Success Strategy | Key components | Building blocks | Proposed action |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2. Ensure political endorsement from participating countries and establish a high level continental cooperation mechanism based on inclusive consultation and solid process management. | Shared Purpose & Objectives | AHERS<br>African Strategy for Harmonisation of Higher Education in Africa<br>Pan African University (PAU)<br><br>Draft PAQAF<br><br>COMEDAF | **Establish a high-level continental cooperation mechanism by :**<br>**Endorsing the establishment of the continental quality assurance and accreditation framework and strengthen the African higher education harmonisation strategy.**<br>**Signing of a AHERS Declaration by African Ministers of (Higher) Education at next COMEDAF** |
| | Inclusive consultation arrangements | AAU, AfriQUAN, AASU<br>African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council?<br>CAMES, IUCEA, | **Identify the stakeholder networks to be part of an inclusive consultation process. AAU, AfriQUAN, and AASU can develop into the African A3 equivalent of the European E4.**<br>**Agree on implementation modalities and the roles of stakeholders at continental, sub regional and national levels.** |
| | Process Management organisation | To be developed on the basis of CAMES/IUCEA and EU experiences and expertise | **Mobilise combined expertise from IUCEA, CAMES and Bologna process management to help building capacity for setting up the Follow Up Group and developing Stocktaking reports and other process management instruments in order to ensure implementation of political agreements** |
| | Process Management instruments | ICQAHEA Workshops on Quality Assurance in Higher Education. (AMOS, ARUSHA implementation, establishment and operation of QA agencies, Tuning & ACTA, ODL QA, LMD Reforms) | **Capitalise on existing initiatives and complete with Bologna process management instruments** |

## 3. Establish a Pan African legal framework of policies and instruments to address shared Higher Education concerns across Africa.

*Shared Social Policy principles, convergence instruments, and targets*

From international experience we learned that higher education touches upon many transversal issues in society, especially at regional level. In Europe the main policies relevant in support of EHEA concerned the social dimension, lifelong learning, and mobility. In the Asia-Pacific region human development and economic development are two overarching policies underpinning the Asia-Pacific Community, implying the transversal role of higher education in mobility, equality, competitiveness and employability.

The important role of the Social Dimension is embodied in the well-documented existence of equity and access problems to higher education in Africa. If Africa decides to take the social dimension on board, it is advisable to draw lessons from the European experience on

1. The importance of having a clear concept of underrepresentation that is broad enough to encompass the diversity of culture history and context of African countries

2. Establishing the means to study and understand the reasons for underrepresentation

3. Setting targets and benchmarks towards achieving better representation

4. Ensuring monitoring of the evolution of participation,

5. Including measures to enhance it.

The Pan African Social Policy Framework (SPF) already in place may be of help to help addressing these issues, and may achieve more concretisation through enacting a set of social policies accompanying the further establishment of AHERS.

Lifelong Learning is a subject difficult to ignore in the African continent, as socioeconomic conditions often do not allow for a large part of society to follow the typically straightforward learning paths. It would therefore be advisable to take on board the lessons from European experience with respect to the need for conceptual clarity, adapted legislation, funding and funding information, and promotion in order to formalise easily accessible flexible learning paths for all.

The relevance of Mobility for the Pan African Quality Assurance Framework is related to the reciprocal relationship with quality assurance. Mobility, notwithstanding its complex and intertwined nature, must be considered part of the Pan African Quality Assurance Framework. Mobility is indeed an enabler for achieving Pan African Quality Assurance while Quality Assurance in turn functions as an enabler for mobility across different countries and higher education systems.

A genuine Pan African mobility strategy and policy must be at the basis of national strategies. African countries will therefore have to define the nature of the mobility they want to pursue, set targets, collect information, and develop measures to facilitate mobility which also include revisiting immigration policy and paying special attention to immigration legislation in order to create a supportive legal environment favouring mobility.

The AUC may also want to look into ways of replicating the success European mobility programmes had in EHEA, with similar Pan African programmes. As a matter of fact the European Mobility scheme Erasmus was in many ways the catalyst of many other convergence processes and instruments. The Nyerere African Scholarship programme, or similar initiatives may be needed on a grander scale to emulate the European effects in Africa.

Finally, Africa may wish to take note of how the Asia-Pacific is finding ways to harness technology to overcome socioeconomic and geographical limitations comparable to the Pan African situation. Unlike Europe that is in the process of replacing obsolete technologies, Africa can leapfrog old

technologies and find innovative ways, potentially in partnership with the Asia-Pacific region, to modernise its higher education systems faster and make them more accessible at low cost.

*Convergence Instruments*

The Bologna 3-cycle structure provides an open door for other continents to link up internationally. With the first mover advantage Europe has made global comparison and recognition possible by structuring the cycles and expressing them in credits. Even the US is taking notice. The inclusion of professional and vocational higher education in the first cycle is a useful way of boosting the establishment of flexible learning paths, and especially for Africa, where these forms of higher education are gaining profile as important ways of creating employability, the European experience can provide useful examples of how this can be done. As the LMD reforms towards a three cycle structure are taking place across the African continent, albeit unevenly, it can be anticipated that it will be incorporated as a basic reference for Pan African quality assurance.

Credits are becoming globally recognised as the academic currency enabling easy comparability and recognition of programmes and qualifications between systems. They are also the building blocks of the three cycle structure and the two semester academic year and provide a way for students, academics and employees to cumulate a recognised level of qualifications, across borders and systems. This is important for the African context, particularly given trends of thematic specialisation that seem to take shape on the continent as not every country can afford to offer all specialisations at high standards at national level which stimulates mobility and requires recognition. With the harmonisation and tuning pilot projects that are currently taking shape at regional and continental levels in Africa, a basis is being developed for launching the African credit accumulation and transfer system for which we use the ACTA acronym in this report.

The Diploma supplement is an additional tool that organises the credit-based information together with programme descriptions and learning outcomes in an internationally accepted and understood template. The Asia-Pacific, and albeit more tentatively the US, are taking on board Credits and Diploma or Degree supplements. Both tools facilitate internal and external quality assurance by providing quantitative and qualitative well-organised information about courses, programmes and their respective intended learning outcomes against which the reality can be screened, allowing institutions to carry out critical evaluations, and allowing QA agencies to verify whether the institutions do have these instruments in place to enable them to make such internal evaluations. In Europe the Diploma Supplements have become a tool for employers to better understand and compare qualifications of applicants from different member states. In the Asia-Pacific region employers less understand this tool, but it is expected that increasing mobility of students and workers across the borders of a more integrated region, will fast increase its importance in a substantial way. It is certain that adopting such an instrument in line with international standards would boost mobility of students and workers across a the African continent and beyond.

A Continental Qualifications Framework provides a powerful instrument for convergence and alignment of National Qualification Frameworks towards an international model. It also provides national Higher Education systems, and the institutions providing higher education, with a convergence tool for developing their own National Qualifications Frameworks and for moving towards learning outcomes based teaching and quality assurance models. In turn these help the exchange and mobility within and across borders between institutions and systems. In essence these frameworks package the academic cycle structures -expressed in credits- in a higher-level structure of degrees and qualifications which facilitates cross system and cross border interaction, which in itself is a great supporting system for embedding quality assurance systems in comparable ways across borders and systems. Europe has established its continental Framework, and recognising that some member states have struggled to establish their NQF, Bologna has eased its deadline. In the absence of a regional qualifications framework the Asia-Pacific region is struggling with establishing NQF in the less developed countries and creating convergence between the already existing NQF of

the most developed countries. The fact that the US is facing major political difficulties contemplating the concept, let alone developing such a framework, puts great question marks on its future ability to make hard its claims of overall higher education quality based on just a few big league universities figuring high in the international rankings.

These international experiences show that establishing such qualifications frameworks is not an easy path to follow, but it is clear that the importance at both continental and national levels for the Pan African Framework cannot be overstated. Fortunately we do have sub regional experience to draw from. Both CAMES and IUCEA see the importance of the establishment of sub-regional qualifications framework in achieving the goal of regional harmonisation of qualifications. IUCEA, in collaboration with the national councils and commissions for higher education, higher education institutions, East African Business Council and other stakeholders it is developing a regional qualifications framework for higher education. This is a generic instrument for harmonisation of higher education and training systems in East Africa, and for facilitating mutual recognition of qualifications among the EAC Partner States, effectively turning East Africa in a common higher education area, as EAC envisions. IUCEA is also developing appropriate legal provisions in order to guide the qualifications framework and harmonisation of higher education.

Standards and guidelines for quality assurance are at the heart of any quality assurance framework. They provide the agreement on what needs to be in place in a given programme, institution or QA agency in order to be considered capable of assuring quality. In the EHEA it is clear that a developmental and learning approach was preferred over a more summative inspection based approach, in the Asia-Pacific region the dynamic in this direction seems to gather momentum with the CHIBA principles. In the US regional Quality Assurance, a highly decentralised and voluntary activity, remains limited to accreditation based on the CHEA listing, while CHEA is in the early stages of exploring more formative ways through international engagement. The formative approach based on broad outlines of what needs to be in place allows for diverse ways of ensuring quality, and sidesteps the problem of otherwise having to prescribe in great detail the shape and form of quality at all levels and in all programmes, against which narrow conformity would have to be checked in a inspection based system. The three-layered approach of learning based internal and external HEI quality assurance plus internal and peer based international quality assurance of the quality assurance agencies, provides a dynamic of constant improvement and innovation. In Europe, the EHEA wide EQAR, in effect an accreditation listing of QAA, providing transparency on which QA agencies have successfully submitted themselves to a review of their own quality provides continent wide trust and recognition.

The move towards a more formal Accreditation setup extracting some responsibilities from AfriQUAN through the establishment of a Pan-African accreditation and quality council, echo the European experience with the creation of EQAR, and may cause similar political wrangling before all is said and done. These changes are certainly not easy and are extremely political in nature in the run up to the decision-making process. It is however of utmost importance that the decision is made in a politically inclusive way and in favour of the best possible solution that is economically, technically, and politically sustainable.

### *Legislative convergence*

The relevance for Pan African Quality Assurance of legislative convergence is born out by the more advanced European experience, which has demonstrated that a combination of a soft voluntary intergovernmental process with introduction of domestic legislation provides the most solid basis for establishing common ground for continent wide reform and converging of higher education systems.

The African sub regional experience again confirms this. The legal frameworks at the basis of the existence of the two sub-regional agencies we studied and the existence of the sub-regional legislative assemblies helped to overcome the diversity of legal systems across countries and

ensured that the laws of the sub-regional quality assurance agency would not conflict with the provisions of the laws of the national quality assurance agencies.

It is important in the African context therefore to skilfully apply soft power at the continental level in order to engage national governments in understanding and supporting legislative changes where needed and helping them build support nationally by positively engaging with continental higher education stakeholder networks through inclusive consultation processes.

### *Proposed Action*

a) Formulate shared continental policies in support of Africa's socioeconomic realities for students, academia and other HE stakeholders (Access, lifelong learning, mobility, technology), and take on board the lessons from the European and Asia-Pacific experiences
b) Take on board the Bologna type toolkit with for instance a 3 cycle HE structure such as LMD, an African Credit Transfer and Accumulation system, a Degree/Diploma supplement, a Continental Qualifications Framework, National Qualification Frameworks, African Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance, and a Pan African Quality Assurance Agencies register.
c) Define what Pan African legislative convergence would be required to make these instruments work.

**Figure 3: Establishing Pan African legal framework of policies and instruments to address shared Higher Education concerns across Africa.**

| Success Strategy | Key components | Building blocks | Proposed action |
|---|---|---|---|
| **3. Establish a Pan African legal framework of policies and instruments to address shared Higher Education concerns across Africa.** | Shared Social Policy principles, instruments, and targets | AU Social Policy Framework (Employment, Education, Migration) | **Formulate shared continental policies in support of Africa's socioeconomic realities for students, academia and other HE stakeholders (Access, lifelong learning, mobility, technology), and take on board the lessons from the European and Asia-Pacific experiences** |
| | Joint development of mutually reinforcing convergence policy instruments and tools | LMD Reforms, 3 cycle structure? <br> EAC QF, NQF <br> Pilot Tuning project ->African Credit Transfer & Accumulation (ACTA)? <br> Diploma supplement? <br> AQAR? <br> AQRM template? | **Take on board the Bologna type toolkit with for instance a 3 cycle HE structure such as LMD, an African Credit Transfer and Accumulation system (ACTA), a Degree/Diploma supplement, a Continental Qualifications Framework, National Qualification Frameworks, African Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance, and a Pan African Quality Assurance Agencies register.** |
| | Legislative convergence | Examples legislative convergence CAMES/IUCEA | **Define what Pan African legislative convergence would be required to make these instruments work.** |

## 4. Mobilise and use pan African funding to align national expenditure on higher education towards more quality and performance based funding.

### Continent wide funding programmes

Continent wide funding programmes can provide a platform for action. Synergy between convergence programmes of a socioeconomic nature in combination with continental financing of activities to create the instruments and tools in support of the establishment of a continent wide higher education space, has super additive policy effects whereby the result is greater than the sum of its parts. The development of the Bologna type instruments for harmonisation, recognition and quality assurance, and financing the Bologna type process to do this will take a sustained financial effort for which donor support will be needed.

### Continental alignment of social funding priorities

For the alignment of social funding priorities, conceptual clarity on who is targeted and what the desired outcomes are is crucial for achieving coherent action in setting up and funding social policies.

Coherent action funded on the national and continental levels creates super additive results in targeting people's behaviour and eliminating the systemic hurdles they may otherwise encounter.

Higher Education systems that mirror the distribution of social groups in the wider society, provide flexible learning paths and stimulate mobility will make quality gains through increased diversity and interaction between social groups, cultures, knowledge poles and disciplines. Like European Union structural and programme funding instruments which have been successful in boosting implementation, or the Asia Pacific development pillars towards economic and human development community, albeit with less specific higher education funding, the Pan African Social Policy Framework can help guiding such an alignment, provided funding can be mobilised and directed specifically towards the higher education sector across the African continent. Political will needs to be supported with funding, facilitating buy-in from the organisational levels.

### Alignment of national higher education funding policies

The alignment of national higher education funding policies towards incentives that enhance performance and quality are crucial for continental, regional and national convergence. As in Europe, the Asia Pacific and Latin America, Africa is facing mass Higher Education with limited government budgets and increasingly diversified funding sources. In addition many African countries see an explosive growth of private higher education institutions. As in the Asia-Pacific, African countries are moving into cost-sharing financing systems. In continental Europe governments remain the main funding sources for HEI, but do so increasingly on a performance basis.

The incentives built in the various funding systems can be conducive to aligning the performance and behaviour of the institutions with national and continental policies, including quality assurance objectives. The national higher education funding mechanism is an important ingredient in the wider spectrum of governance arrangements. Trends and practices in Europe increasingly point towards more market-based, or performance-oriented and decentralised types of funding mechanisms. European governments have shown a tendency to augment the direct funding of higher education institutions with competitive funding mechanisms and performance-based funding mechanisms such as contractual performance agreements. Alongside this, they have started to grant more autonomy to the institutions, allowing them to make their own decisions about the use of resources and the generation of new and often external resources. Private Universities if not included in public funding systems, are less affected by such incentives and need therefore to be aligned mainly through quality assurance policies and accreditation systems, further emphasising the importance of a

continental Quality Assurance Framework, such as the Pan African Framework for Higher Education Quality Assurance.

Also for PAQAF funding arrangements will provide the crucial link between political ambitions, organisational commitment and functional implementation. The AUC and African nations will have to find responses that maximise performance and quality delivered by the HEI while reducing inequality and improving access for students.

The experiences of CAMES and IUCEA, both facing chronic underfunding, suggest three sources of funding for the proposed PAQAF: statutory contributions by member States, donor support, and internally generated revenue from services. For PAQAF, this would mean mandatory annual contributions from subscribing African countries, fostering further EU engagement and a broad based donor network to ensure a robust funding framework, and revenue from services generated by the roll out and implementation of the PAQAF. These fundraising mechanism should however be considered in conjunction with fund raising activities of national and sub regional quality assurance agencies to avoid multiple burdens on higher education institutions for quality assurance purposes.

*Proposed Action*

a) Maximise the benefits from the privileged Africa-Europe relationship under JAES, in order to mobilise funding for higher education harmonisation, recognition and quality assurance processes, activities and instruments.
b) Build on the growing relationship with the Asia-pacific and translate into growing funding opportunities for harmonising and internationalising Pan African Higher Education.
c) Define the role of AUC in coordinating fundraising and allocating such continental higher education funding with the aim to improve higher education performance and quality

Figure 4: Framework for Mobilising Pan African funding to align national expenditure on higher Education

| Success Strategy | Key components | Building blocks | Proposed action |
|---|---|---|---|
| **4. Mobilise and use Pan African funding to align national expenditure on higher education towards more quality and performance based funding.** | Continental Funding programmes | Nyerere Scholarship programme, JAES initiatives & EU/AU programmes Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP) and NEPAD, | **Maximise the benefits from the privileged Africa-Europe relationship under JAES, and the growing relationship with the Asia-pacific to increase funding opportunities for higher education harmonising recognition and quality assurance processes, activities and instruments** |
| | Aligned national social policy funding priorities | AU Social Policy Framework | **Link national expenditure with the AU Social Policy Framework to enhance access and equity for underprivileged groups in Higher education** |
| | Aligned national Higher Education funding systems | Ongoing financial reforms of Higher Education in Africa move towards more cost sharing and performance based financing | **Define the role of AUC in coordinating fundraising and allocating such continental higher education funding with the aim to improve higher education performance and quality** |

## 5. Ensure high-level and detailed attention from AUC and stakeholder groups for coherent development of the quality assurance policy instruments

The Bologna communiqués reveal high-level attention for technical detail rarely found in other inter-ministerial communications. This detailed attention combined with broad frameworks and policies have been conducive to successful convergence and mutual trust in the face of great diversity, and it has made sure that the spirit of the high level agreements are duly reflected in the implementation modalities of continent wide and national quality assurance mechanisms.

Quality assurance in European higher education stresses stakeholder interest of students as well as employers and the society. It holds up the central importance of institutional autonomy 'tempered by a recognition that this brings with it heavy responsibilities', which provides the justification of the need for external quality assurance to be 'fit for its purpose by only placing an appropriate and necessary burden on institutions for the achievement of its objectives'.

In the Asia Pacific, this detailed attention was not as strong and has slowed the development of regional quality assurance. It is therefore indicative that such high level detailed attention, if it can be mustered and sustained in the Pan African higher education context, will promote coherence trust and cooperation, and provide the best guarantee for the development of widely accepted and workable instruments

Important for our understanding is that this linkage between the political and organisational levels, is made through a common understanding of these policy instruments and their implications at the functional level. The high level attention for and understanding of the nature of the ESG and the need for the EQAR in Europe are a case in point.

As seen in the Asia Pacific region this high level attention must also include challenges caused by high regional diversity, forms of cooperation to support capacity building and sustaining commitment at all levels to ensure the allocation of resources and effort based on common understanding of the benefits to be realised from a collective interest in QA. Both in the Asia Pacific and in Europe the Quality Assurance Networks existed before the Brisbane or Bologna processes respectively.

This is relevant for Africa, as the AfriQUAN has already been established while new institutional arrangements are currently being contemplated, will require high level attention with further inclusive stakeholder consultations. Nevertheless this network can play a significant role in activities relating to the implementation of PAQAF. It can provide a database of human resources from member agencies for use by PAQAF implementation mechanism.

### *Continental Quality Assurance*

Standards and guidelines for quality assurance are at the heart of any quality assurance framework. They provide the agreement on what needs to be in place in a given programme, institution or QA agency in order to be considered capable of assuring quality. In the EHEA it is clear that a developmental and learning approach was preferred over a more summative inspection based approach, in the Asia-Pacific region the dynamic in this direction seems to gather momentum with the CHIBA principles. In the US regional Quality Assurance, a highly decentralised and voluntary activity, remains limited to accreditation based on the CHEA listing, while CHEA is in the early stages of exploring more formative ways through international engagement.

The formative approach based on broad outlines of what needs to be in place allows for diverse ways of ensuring quality, and sidesteps the problem of otherwise having to prescribe in great detail the shape and form of quality at all levels and in all programmes, against which narrow conformity would have to be checked in a inspection based system. The three-layered approach of learning based internal and external HEI quality assurance plus internal and peer based international quality assurance of the quality assurance agencies, provides a dynamic of constant improvement and

innovation. In Europe, the EHEA wide EQAR, in effect an accreditation listing of QAA, providing transparency on which QA agencies have successfully submitted themselves to a review of their own quality provides continent wide trust and recognition.

In Africa, all national and sub-regional quality assurance agencies and the quality assurance frameworks we studied, have minimum academic standards which are periodically reviewed to reflect contemporary developments in higher education, global trends within the discipline and the current socio-economic context of the locality where the institution is located.

IUCEA and CAMES established regional quality assurance frameworks for 5 and 19 countries respectively. These frameworks are based on minimum standards. This experience indicates that it is possible to have all 54 African countries coming together to agree on minimum academic standards. Both agencies used similar processes to reach their respective minimum standards. They brought together a wide array of stakeholders, academic and non-academic alike, and provided the facilitation platform for the panels to develop these standards. Three key ingredients were important in the process; representation from member countries, participation of relevant stakeholders, and consensus building. These three ingredients can serve as a recipe for setting minimum quality standards for the proposed continental framework. They guarantee that all voices be heard, that peculiarities at the national level factored into the process of consensus building, and that the product of the exercise has a high chance of acceptability at the national level and in the institutions that make up the higher education system. Indeed IUCEA and CAMES confirm that the minimum standards set at the sub-regional level are adhered to.

In setting minimum quality standards IUCEA and CAMES followed a three-stage process. They first issued surveys to decide early on what should be quality assured; programme or institution, or both. Second, in all the eight sites studied, the quality assurance agency assembled relevant experts to draft the standards. The experts for programme quality assurance are mainly subject matter specialists and professional bodies and in some cases, students. For institutional accreditation, membership of the experts group is broader to include non-teaching staff since institutional audit assesses the degree to which the entire institutional vision, mission and objectives are being attained, including teaching, research, community service as well as student academic and non-academic support services. Third, they processed the draft benchmark and minimum quality standards through validation, editing and approval by the quality assurance agency.

The product of the exercise is a set of minimum standards for input, process, output and outcome of the higher education delivery system. These include minimum standards for (a) admission of students in terms of quality and quantity; (b) teachers and other personnel in terms of quality and quantity; (c) facilities for teaching, learning, research and support services; (d) teaching-learning processes; (e) governance; (f) curriculum - courses to be taught and their contents, knowledge, skills and values to be acquired and requirements for graduation.

In addition, there is also a movement towards standards of excellence with the so-called African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) project.

The AU Commission developed a framework for harmonising and strengthening the capacity of higher education programmes and systems across Africa. It promotes innovative forms of collaboration to systematically improve the quality of higher education against common agreed benchmarks of excellence and facilitate in this way the mobility of graduates and academics across the continent.

The African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) compares performance of higher education institutions against a set of criteria that taking into account the unique context and challenges of higher education delivery on the continent. It is aimed at facilitating improvements in quality of delivery of institutions across the continent, and at paving the way for African institutions to compete more effectively at a global level. As AQRM has been accepted region-wide as a template for quality improvement it can be a basis for setting the PAQAF quality standards. It also has the elements for developing a continental qualifications framework, which is a key instrument of

harmonisation, recognition and quality assurance in PAQAF. Thirdly, PAQAF can leverage on the anticipated AQRM partnership of regional and national higher education bodies in running the proposed three-stage process of National bodies reviewing the institutional submission sending the endorsed submission to the relevant regional body, e.g. AARU, CAMES, COMESA, ECOWAS, IUCEA, SADC and SARUA, which will in turn process the submission, calculate the institutional and/or programme rating and send the rating and narrative report to the coordinating team at the AAU who will conduct the final review and verification. It is proposed that a team of five people are appointed with responsibility for managing and marketing this quality rating process at a continental level. In addition, the continental level data will be maintained and held by the AAU.

PAQAF stakeholders will have to agree on how to consolidate the AQRM with the sub regional approaches to standards in order to shape the Pan African Quality Framework. As we will see, one way could be to use minimum standards for accreditation purposes, and use the so called AQRM benchmarks of excellence to also stimulate a more formative approach to quality assurance.

It will therefore be necessary to have a fundamental exchange of visions and experiences among African stakeholders in order to consider the various options that other possible models such as the European more open ended and formative approach offer.

In terms of the process, Governments and stakeholders need to contemplate whether they prefer the process to move from principles to standards or the other way round. If minimum standards are the starting point, stakeholders and governments may envisage a developmental roadmap starting off with minimum standards and gradually evolving towards more formative approaches once the essential minimum standards are in place.

### *Certification of Quality Assurance Agencies*

Europe paid specific attention to developing an instrument to regulate external Quality Assurance agencies across the EHEA. This is reflected in the decision to establish a European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) listing the Quality Assurance Agencies operating in EHEA substantially compliant with the ESG. This certification is to be recognised by all countries across the whole EHEA

This certification is based on peer review of Quality Assurance Agencies who first carry out their own internal evaluation process. The peer review mechanism helps putting the responsibility at the decentralised level according to the principle of 'subsidiarity', and builds trust and common interest among Quality Assurance Agencies.

In our two sub regional case studies in Africa, there is of yet no regional certification of accreditation agencies. In the case of CAMES, we see a top down model where accreditation at the programme and institutional levels is undertaken directly by the sub-regional agency on all the institutions in all its 19 member countries. Thus, aside from setting minimum standards across its 19 member countries, CAMES proceeds to assess the degree of fit with the minimum standards through accreditation. However, in the case of IUCEA, all five countries agree on the minimum standards and thereafter, proceed to individually conduct accreditation through their national quality assurance agencies. In both cases, the accreditation process is similar. It begins with self study followed by peer review and onsite assessment and finally, decision on the standing of the programme or institution with regard to accreditation status.

If according to the IUCEA model National Accreditation agencies would be in charge of carrying out quality assurance and accreditation of higher education institutions according to PAQAF standards and guidelines, a Pan African accreditation system will be required for these agencies to ensure that they perform accordingly. This is further discussed under success strategy 6 below.

*Coherence of Quality Assurance with other convergence instruments*

The European experience showed that coherence and interaction between the various quality assurance instruments such as ESG and EQAR and those developed for the creation of free movement within the EHEA such as the 3-cycle structure, the EHEA Qualifications Framework (EHEA QF) National Quality Frameworks (NQF), the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), and the Diploma Supplement (DS), have been crucial to the success of Bologna. Indeed it is easy to see that it would have been difficult to develop an overarching 3-cycle structure to which the diverse higher education systems could relate and adapt without the academic currency provided by ECTS and the diploma supplement, enabling academics to quantify, qualify, and compare across programmes, institutions and systems. Without the 3-cycle structure and the ECTS it would have been tricky to develop the EHEA QF or National qualification frameworks constructively relating to each other. It is also not far fetched to state that without the ECTS, continent wide quality assurance would be hampered, as it would be difficult to ensure that comparisons of levels of quality across programmes institutions and systems were based on the same level of qualifications. In the same vein, the ESG provide a way to ensure that the allocation of credits to build qualifications does reflect a certain level of quality as well. And finally, EQAR ensures that it is verifiable that those who verify externally that internal quality assurance is in place in HEI are also reviewed as to their own capacity to ensure their own quality assurance levels.

IUCEA in collaboration with the national councils and commissions for higher education, higher education institutions, and the East African Business Council (EABC) is now developing programme benchmarks, which will be part of the regional quality assurance system. The benchmarks intend to harmonise the content, structure, quality, and delivery of the university curriculum as well as the qualifications they provide. Some of the higher education institutions that participated in the initiative across a number of disciplines are now using these piloted benchmarks. A more comprehensive process to develop programme benchmarks is ongoing and increasing in scope to encompass all disciplines.

It is clear that such quality assurance efforts at a Pan African levels need to tie in with the ongoing LMD reforms to establish the 3-cycle structure across Africa in line with international developments, with the African harmonisation and tuning project, an African credit accumulation and transfer scheme, the emerging national and regional qualification frameworks, and possibly also recognition tools such as a diploma supplement

*Proposed Action*

a) Develop and agree on a set of African Standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance for both HEI and QA Agencies which broad enough to accommodate diversity while being specific enough to provide comparability across borders and systems.
b) Develop a Pan African accreditation system for Quality Assurance Agencies which would allow cross border operation so that countries have the choice between contracting QA Agencies from the region or building their own.
c) Ensure coherence of Quality Assurance systems with harmonisation and recognition policy instruments such as a 3 cycle HE structure, an African Credit Transfer and Accumulation system, a Degree/Diploma supplement, and a set of Continental, Regional and National Qualifications Frameworks.
d) Make the linkage between the political and organisational levels through a common understanding of these policy instruments and their implications at the functional level.

**Figure 5: Framework for High-level detailed attention from governments and stakeholders for instruments**

| Success Strategy | Key components | Building blocks | Proposed action |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5. Ensure high-level and detailed attention from governments and stakeholder groups for the development of coherent quality assurance policy instruments** | Continental Agreement on a set of Quality Assurance Standards & Guidelines | IUCEA, CAMES minimum standards<br><br>IUCEA Programme benchmarks<br><br>AQRM excellence Benchmarks | **Develop and agree on a set of African Standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance for both HEI and QA Agencies which broad enough to accommodate diversity while being specific enough to provide comparability across borders and systems.** |
| | Continental Quality Assurance and Certification of QA Agencies | Examples ENQA, EQAR<br><br>CAMES Regional QA verifies<br><br>IUCEA National NQA verify | **Develop a Pan African accreditation system for Quality Assurance Agencies which would allow cross border operation so that countries have the choice between contracting QA Agencies from the region or building their own.** |
| | Continental coherence of QA with other convergence instruments | LMD reforms ->3cycle structure<br><br>ACTA in development in Tuning project<br><br>National Qualification Frameworks<br><br>IUCEA Regional Qualification Framework<br><br>Diploma supplement | **Ensure coherence of Quality Assurance systems with harmonisation and recognition policy instruments**<br>**Make the linkage between the political and organisational levels through common understanding of these policy instruments and their implications at the functional level.** |

## 6. Issue summary structured QA policy documents and lay out the systemic components and processes of the QA function

In the European context, the creation of structured and relatively simple and summary documents has helped to bring across the spirit of the chosen quality approach and cast it into a structured process based on widely accepted standards and guidelines, broad enough to allow for diversity, specific enough to safeguard verification and comparability, and accompanied by institutional and networking arrangements to support continent wide implementation.

The Asia-Pacific region is following suit with the CHIBA principles. Both contexts harbour great diversity in terms of culture, systems and economic development; especially the Asia Pacific faces great disparity. Nevertheless the experiences in these contexts have shown that it is possible to devise a set of structured policies and define the essential systemic components and procedures for a regional QA function. In Europe this process has reached maturity, in the Asia-Pacific, efforts are still ongoing in moving beyond principles into the systemic parts of regional quality assurance.

The relevance for the Pan African framework lies especially in the fact that the African continent has a rich diversity of cultures, shows wide socioeconomic disparities and fosters broad variety of higher education systems, which will require an approach that accommodates diversity while stimulating harmonisation and recognition. Both the European and Asia-Pacific approaches provide examples and elements from which the Pan African Framework can benefit.

### *A structured description of definition, principles and policies expressing the spirit of QA*

The spirit of the European standards and guidelines (ESG) is learning and essentially formative in nature. The ESG are principle based, and not prescriptive in the way QA needs to be carried out. They set standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance that do not prescribe how the quality assurance processes are implemented, but provide guidance for establishing successful quality provision and learning environments in higher education, by describing a desired result or outcome that should be in place without predetermining how these should be achieved or what they should look like. The focus is on quality assurance related to learning and teaching in higher education, including the learning environment and innovation. In addition institutions need to have policies and processes to ensure and improve the quality of research and governance.

The four basic principles of the Quality Assurance functions were laid down early on in developing the ESG and have provided the backbone for the developments thereafter:

1. Autonomy and independence both from government and from higher education institutions in terms of procedures and methods concerning quality evaluation;
2. Self-assessment
3. External assessment by a peer review group and site visits
4. Publication of an evaluation report

The ESG apply to all types of higher education regardless of the mode of study or place of delivery, including transnational and cross-border provision, and to all programmes including those not necessarily leading to a formal degree.

The European Consultative Forum for Quality Assurance in Higher Education ensures the consistency of quality assurance across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), through the exchange of viewpoints and experiences amongst agencies and other key stakeholders including higher education institutions, students and labour market representatives.

The ESG cover internal QA (Part 1) and external QA (Part 2) of the HEI, and also of external quality assurance agencies themselves (Part 3) so that the Higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies across the EHEA have common reference points for quality assurance.

The African experience so far shows a more prescriptive approach, with a process that moves in the other direction; establishing minimum standards first and moving up to principles afterwards. IUCEA,

a case in point, has established minimum standards and is now developing East African Principles and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (EAPG) in Higher Education as a framework for implementing the regional quality assurance system. It is expected that the EAPG will safeguard consistency in quality assurance practices across the East African common higher education area, and enhance public confidence in the quality of higher education in the region. It will also enhance mutual trust among institutions and national higher education agencies, and strengthen mutual recognition of qualifications among the Partner States. The EAPG are expected to become the regional reference for continuous quality enhancement in higher education, for developing shared understanding of higher education systems, and for promoting harmonised regional best practices in quality assurance.

It can be expected that standards become more specific as they come closer to operational levels. Given the emphasis on minimum standards at curricular level in the sites we studied, our examples tend to reflect a 'close to the ball' approach. We also saw in the example of IUCEA that there is movement towards a quality assurance approach based on broader principles.

Indeed standards tend to become less specific and more based on principles as they move from course level to programme, faculty, institutional, national, and sub regional levels to finally reach a continental level. PAQAF will naturally manage the big picture and indeed 'frame' the cascade of levels below. We can therefore expect that the standards and guidelines coming from such a level will be broad enough to allow for diversity, specific enough to safeguard verification and comparability, and to be accompanied by institutional and networking arrangements to support continent wide implementation. Such an approach will also avoid prescription conflicts between quality assurance levels. If the higher levels are broader than the levels below in the cascade, each level can more easily adapt to specificity as it comes closer to the operational level.

### *The essential systemic components and procedures of the QA function*

How this is done in practice is illustrated by the ESG. The ESG have been divided in three parts that are intrinsically interlinked and work on a complementary basis covering the higher education institutions and the QA agencies:

1. Internal quality assurance of HEI
2. External quality assurance of HEI
3. Internal and external QA of Quality assurance agencies

The guidelines explain why the standard is important and set out good practice while they recognise that implementation will vary depending on different contexts.

In Part 1, the standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance of higher education institutions require institutions to involve stakeholders in developing and implementing a policy for quality assurance as part of their strategic management, and make it public.

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes to ensure they meet the objectives and intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated referring to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and the EHEA QF.

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that student assessment reflects this approach. They should also consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", throughout admission, progression, recognition and certification.

They should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers and apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

They should collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and publish information which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible. Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action they plan or take as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

In Part 2, the standards and guidelines for external quality assurance require to address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance described in Part 1.

Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement of external quality assurance defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations..

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include self-assessment, an external assessment normally including a site visit, a report resulting from the external assessment and consistent follow-up. A professional system of peer review should be at the core of external quality assurance, carried out by groups of experts that include student members.

Any outcomes or judgements made, as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit, published, and consistently applied criteria, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision. Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report, and complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and be communicated to the institutions.

In Part 3, the standards and guidelines for quality assurance agencies require agencies to undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 on a regular basis.

External QA agencies should involve stakeholders in their governance to have clear and explicit goals and objectives as part of their publicly available mission statement, and translate these into their daily work.

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities from whom they should otherwise be independent and act autonomously. They must have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

Agencies should regularly publish thematic reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities, and they should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

They should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities, and undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

In Part 3 the ESG clearly link up with the EQAR. The European Register Committee acts as a gatekeeper for the inclusion of agencies in the European Register of quality assurance agencies making it easier to identify professional and credible agencies operating in the EHEA. European quality assurance agencies are expected to submit themselves to a cyclical review each five years.

We reiterated the European example to clarify more concretely how broad and principle based continental standards and guidelines can be formulated.

The African governments and stakeholders will have to assess the reality of their context in defining and implementing their own approaches, given the realities of the higher education institutions, QA agencies, and stakeholder networks in place, together with the economic means and human resources capacity they have available.

There is of course also a political dimension to be considered in balancing the acceptability and effectiveness of such Pan African standards and guidelines for higher education quality assurance. While minimum standards may be warranted to establish a minimum acceptable standard it will be important to ensure that their prescriptive nature does not override the developmental potential of quality assurance systems. The PAU thematic centres of excellence provide an opportunity to develop standards of excellence to complement the minimum standards predominant in the African approach to quality assurance, and hence may help in developing brackets (minimum to excellent) scaled standards combining the summative accreditation and formative quality enhancement approaches, forming together a comprehensive Pan African Quality Assurance Mechanism.

African governments and stakeholders may also learn from national experiences such as Mozambique where the new independent formative quality assurance mechanism aimed at continuous quality enhancement driven from within the HEI, is complementing the summative ministerial inspectorate ensuring that institutions have adequate means infrastructure and capacity in place to enable the delivery of quality programmes.

### *Proposed Action*

a)  Describe what types of policies and processes should be in place at each level and define to what degree their contents will be descriptive or prescriptive.
b)  Describe the essential components and procedures of the system and how these work together.

**Figure 6: Framework for issuing structured and summary quality assurance policy documents**

| Success Strategy | Key components | Building blocks | Proposed action |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6. **Issue summary structured QA policy documents and lay out the systemic components and processes of the QA function** | A structured description of<br>· Definition, principles and policies expressing the spirit of QA<br>· The essential systemic components and procedures of the QA function | AQRM Benchmarks of excellence<br><br>IUCEA/CAMES minimum standards<br><br>IUCEA Programme benchmarks<br><br>European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) | **Describe what types of policies and processes should be in place at each level and define to what degree their contents will be prescriptive or descriptive**<br><br>**Describe the essential components and procedures of the system and how these work together.** |

## 7. Ensure decentralised and independent quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms at the national, sub regional, and continental levels

The decentralised approach putting prime responsibility for internal quality assurance at the level of the institutions, with responsibility for external quality assurance (based on HEI internal QA) at the national level, with support for quality enhancement at the continental level, has helped to achieve broad based buy-in and commitment to continent wide convergence in Europe, and has ensured that quality assurance happens, evolves and provides learning at the levels where the action takes place.

In the Asia-Pacific region the variety of national outfits for external quality assurance, often relying on audits, are bound together with the Asia-Pacific network for quality assurance which focuses on quality enhancement, through which more formative approaches are being promoted together with the CHIBA principles.

### *Prime responsibility for Quality Assurance anchored at HEI level*

In the European experience, the ESG clearly put prime responsible for internal QA at the level of the higher education institutions themselves. The importance of stakeholder consultation bringing multiple perspectives to internal quality assurance is certainly an important reason to do so. It is also the Institutions themselves that harbour the highly educated and specialised people close to the core activities of the institution. A second reason to do this is that quality assurance is seen as a formative and developmental process, aimed at building genuine internal capacity for critical self evaluation and improvement, and not as a top down summative inspection system only concerned with compliance. A third reason is the principle of subsidiarity requiring that action is always taken at the lowest and best informed level.

The ESG increasingly stress learning outcomes and signal a shift from traditional research based performance of higher education institutions towards better teaching as well. Indeed, the importance of higher education institutions in building the knowledge society as a core strategy of the European Union has pushed institutions to revisit their mission, strategies, governance, organisation and processes at all levels in order to respond adequately to this challenge. Accordingly internal quality assurance has grown in scope and increased the need for inclusive stakeholder involvement.

Pan African Quality assurance has taken on board the concept of HEI prime responsibility for internal quality assurance, and it has seen the establishment of many newly independent or semi independent agencies for external quality assurance at national level, while at continental level it has been the subject of many stakeholder gatherings, and voluntary convergence. The AUC promoted move towards a more formal setup of for Pan African HE Quality Assurance intends to consolidate these efforts at the political and organisational level.

However, much depends on the Quality assurance approaches taken at the various levels, and at the different stages of the process.

### *Complemented with reviews from independent QA Agency*

In Europe external quality assurance of higher education institutions by quality assurance agencies according to Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), builds on the internal evaluations, emphasising HEI autonomy and their prime responsibility for quality improvement. With this developmental approach external quality assurance will assess the competence with which the institution has carried out the internal quality assurance process; in how far it has covered the components as put forward in the ESG (Part 1), and verify the conclusions with a light touch only. In

this approach external quality assurance is meant to ensure that necessary measures to improve quality have been established within institutions, and avoids interfering too much in the decision making processes at institutional level.

In Africa the level of independence of national quality assurance agencies provides a mixed picture where agencies independent in name, find themselves dependent on funding from government, or from the very ministry that oversees the higher education institutions. In some cases quality assurance is a function of the ministry itself. There is however a clear dynamic towards the establishment of national quality assurance agencies, albeit with various degrees of independence. There is also a trend of existing agencies gaining more independence as they mature and prove their usefulness through broad engagement with a wide group of stakeholders.

A prescriptive minimum standards approach will yield different dynamics from a developmental capacity building approach. Caution must therefore be taken that the minimum standards approach does not become just an inspection type checklist operation.

### QA of QA Agencies ensured through international peer review

In the European experience QA Agencies are also bound to carry out their own internal reviews, which in turn are followed up by an external review. External reviews of QA Agencies (ESG Part 3) complete this third layer of quality assurance, by also verifying the capacity of the QA Agency itself by international peer experts. As this peer review carries no authority, it is by definition developmental in nature, and works as a convergence mechanism for good practice based on EHEA wide exchanges between QA Agencies.

Complementary to these reviews, the more formal listing on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) functions as EHEA wide accreditation, improving transparency.

From the CAMES and IUCEA experiences we saw two options for managing the pan African quality assurance mechanism.

The first option is to adopt the CAMES model of top down standards setting and accreditation for PAQAF. It was reported that no conflict is apparent as the institutions meet national quality guidelines alongside submitting to a CAMES quality and accreditation check, which is seen as elevating their standing beyond national level and conferring international comparability.

Findings seem to indicate a possibility that as long as the continental framework does not present itself as being superior or overriding of national efforts, it can meet wide acceptability whereby higher education institutions in Africa apply the continental quality assurance and accreditation framework alongside meeting minimum standards set at the national level. If experience from CAMES is any guide, over time institutions may adopt such a two-layer quality assurance approach.

The second option is the IUCEA approach whereby the proposed Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework would only provide the standards and empower the national quality assurance agencies to conduct accreditation in the institutions in their territories. Empowering the national quality assurance agencies denote capacity building and provision of guidelines that will be applied at the national and institutional levels to assure quality. It would also entail the need for Pan African accreditation of national or regional quality assurance agencies, possibly by means of a register and procedure such as EQAR in the European Higher Education Area.

A number of questions immediately come to mind.

Both options imply adopting a two-layered approach unless some countries simply adopt the PAQAF as their own. For countries where indeed both a national and a pan African quality assurance process would come in place, the feasibility of such a two-layered approach will depend on the cost and effort it would take for institutions to pass this additional hurdle, and what benefits it would carry to do so.

However, will for instance CAMES affiliated institutions that have already passed the two level national and sub regional level quality assurance processes, still need to do so again at a third Pan African level for PAQAF?

If PAQAF would be implemented according to the CAMES example of direct quality assurance at institutional level, would it be realistic and economically viable to envisage an equivalent Pan African outfit that would be able to process thousands of institutions and counting, across the continent at reasonable periodic intervals?

The IUCEA cascade model seems to provide a more feasible and viable picture. Delegating the task of Pan African Quality Assurance to the regional and/or national QA agencies, and ensuring an accreditation process and register for these agencies would require a far smaller institutional setup at pan African level. It would also allow regional or national agencies to coordinate and rationalise between quality assurance levels in order to minimise additional burden for the higher education institutions.

While the existing sub regional agencies may be high value building blocks in establishing the pan African model, they will have to work out a new role for themselves, as they face a number of options. One option for a sub regional agency is to have PAQAF adopted by member states as the new regional framework, and as such become the effective sub regional representation of PAQAF. Another option is to hold on to the existing sub regional QA framework and potentially expose the members to another layer of quality assurance, unless they adopt the sub regional or pan African model as their own national model. The sub regional agencies can also become the accreditation agency of its member state national QA agencies.

It could indeed be envisaged to create sub regional PAQAF representations to implement PAQAF and accredit national QA agencies in their catchment area. Existing sub regional agencies could opt in to such a scheme and clarify their new role accordingly.

Besides being an important instrument of pan African higher education convergence the PAQAF and its institutional set up needs to respond to the unique challenges posed by the Pan African University (PAU). Indeed, the Pan African University has thematic centres of excellence in five countries. To ensure world-class excellence level programme delivery it needs quality assurance for all programmes offered under its brand and for the institutions hosting its centres of excellence.

Currently no mechanism exists for quality assurance of PAU programmes and centres of excellence. The AUC expressed its wish to use a mechanism that supersedes national quality assurance systems, as there must be consistent quality in the five centres across the continent.

The Pan African institutional arrangements emanating from the proposed Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework would appear suitable for overseeing a continent wide quality assurance programme for PAU. This urgent role represents an additional stimulus for the African Union to launch PAQAF and provide an institutional arrangement for its implementation. The Human Resources, Science and Technology Department of the African Union Commission could envisage hosting an initial PAQAF team with the double role to launch the PAQAF process as laid out in this framework, and set up a PAU quality assurance programme. Such a set up would enable close cooperation with management of the Pan African University and the national and sub-regional quality assurance agencies where the centres are located to initiate the steps towards such a PAU quality assurance programme including needs assessments, establishment of international panels of experts, stakeholder consultations, quality assurance process design, and the development of international benchmarks and standards.

The PAU Quality assurance process may well be similar to what PAQAF stakeholders will establish more generally for the continent, it will be necessary to uphold benchmarks beyond the minimum standards envisaged for pan African quality assurance in order to merit the 'centre of excellence' badge. It would be a fertile learning ground for national and regional QA agencies to carry out the external QA reviews of PAU centres in conjunction with a team of international experts.

Important for both roles of the PAQAF team is to envisage a clear process of internal review by institutions followed up by and external review from a quality assurance agency that itself goes through a similar process of internal review followed up by an external review. There is no reason that such would not be suitable to the PAU centres albeit based on higher-level benchmarks, and external reviews with international support.

Finally it may be useful to consider the standards of AQRM in the areas of Governance and Management, Infrastructure, Finance, Teaching and Learning, Research, Publication and Innovations, Community/Societal Engagement, Programme Planning and Management, Curriculum Development, Teaching and Learning, Assessment, and Programme Results, as potential guides for PAU quality assurance purposes, and provide the excellence measures at the upper end of the PAQAF in general.

**Figure 7: Framework for ensuring decentralisation and independence of QA mechanisms**

| Success Strategy | Key components | Building blocks | Proposed action |
|---|---|---|---|
| **7. Ensure decentralised and independent Quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms at the national, sub regional, and continental levels** | Prime responsibility for Quality Assurance anchored at HEI level | National QA frameworks | **Promote prime responsibility for QA to be at HEI levels based on internal QA** |
| | Complemented with reviews from independent QA Agency | Mixed picture, but growing number of QA agencies, with increasing independence | **Promote independence of external QA agencies at national and sub regional levels** |
| | QA of QA Agencies ensured through international peer review | IUCEA/CAMES AAU, AfriQUAN, AASU African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council? ENQA, EQAR | **At continental level ensure external quality assurance of QA Agencies** |
| | Embedding QA of PAU in PAQAF | PAU AUC AQRM | **Embed a pan African quality assurance programme for the Pan African University programmes and centres of excellence in PAQAF based on similar principles albeit with higher benchmarks, and use it as a learning ground** |

*Proposed action*

a) Promote prime responsibility for QA to be at HEI levels based on internal QA
b) Promote independence of external QA agencies at national and sub regional levels
c) At continental level ensure external quality assurance of QA Agencies at national and sub regional levels
d) Embed a pan African quality assurance programme for the Pan African University programmes and centres of excellence in PAQAF based on similar principles albeit with higher benchmarks, and use it as a learning ground.

## 8. Base quality assurance mechanisms on the distinct and complementary functions of quality enhancement and accreditation

In the European context, Quality enhancement and Accreditation rely on the same continental Standards and Guidelines, albeit with different, and complementary purposes. From this experience we learned that at continental level it is important to clarify the enhancement and accountability functions and balance their role and impact carefully. At national levels the same tension replicates itself. At both levels, the European experience shows us that Accreditation can easily take over and push the developmental aspects of Quality Assurance to the background, as agencies and HEI may view the benefits of being licensed or listed as more tangible in the short term. In the long term however it is clear that they are both sides of the same coin. The European solution of separate organisations is partly decided on the basis of governance considerations and partly the result of history.

In the Asia-Pacific the distinction is not yet fully perceived everywhere, let alone clarified. The regional level is quality enhancement oriented, while at the national levels quality assurance is understood and carried out in various ways.

This shows the importance for the Pan African context, of ensuring coherent understanding of these two functions at both national and regional levels in order to maximise functionality and complementary implementation. The solutions envisaged by the African stakeholders will have to take in account similar considerations as in Europe, but may well result in a different set up.

### *Quality enhancement as a developmental function*

In European systems where QA agencies report on institutions' management of quality, having 'only' an advisory role, they aim to support quality enhancement. In such a construction, the primary emphasis is thus on empowering higher education institutions with responsibility for quality improvement. These are systems that will be more likely to use 'light touch' external quality assurance processes, aiming to ensure that necessary measures to improve quality have been established within institutions, and interfering less in the decision making processes at institutional level.

Despite the growing emphasis on autonomy for higher education institutions in European-level discourse on higher education, three-quarters of countries –including those that have most recently established their external quality assurance system – have constructed their QA systems in the logic of supervision and ensuring minimum standards, while a minority of higher education systems currently follow an improvement-oriented approach, placing the primary responsibility for improving quality at institutional level.

This finding suggests that the development of external quality assurance systems has been a central feature of evolving governance structures in higher education in Europe. Whereas institutions were previously 'supervised' directly by the state, the steering mechanisms now are much more likely to involve quality enhancement agencies, suggesting European convergence towards a particular model of external quality assurance. No doubt this has been facilitated by the increased communication between governments, agencies and other quality assurance actors throughout the Bologna period.

This experience shows that the approach to quality assurance an evolutionary process heavily influenced by history, institutional set ups and cross border cooperation. It is reasonable to expect that a similar dynamic will take place at a pan African level. The AQRM/PAU standards of excellence could provide guidance to developmental processes, while a set of minimum standards can be used for accreditation purposes.

*Accreditation as an accountability mechanism*

Indeed, while Quality Assurance literature shows an academic preponderance for developmental and formative processes, the reality in the majority of European countries shows that quality assurance is most often concerned with the more summative processes of granting permission to higher education institutions or programmes to operate on the basis of threshold quality standards. Only a minority of countries exclusively follow an improvement-oriented approach.

Despite the Bologna external quality assurance success story where nearly all signatory countries have a system of higher education external quality assurance in place, usually based on independent agencies charged with prime responsibility; there are significant differences in the philosophy and approach behind systems making them quite diverse in their orientation. The main element that distinguishes the orientation of systems is whether or not the QA agency or national body is invested with the power to grant permission for institutions or programmes to operate.

Indeed, in systems where responsible QA bodies/agencies have the power to permit or refuse programmes and/or institutions to operate, quality assurance can be perceived as supervisory in character, ensuring that minimum quality thresholds are met. Agencies may of course play other roles like giving advice on the enhancement of quality. This is indeed specifically mentioned in a number of countries, but all these additional roles are likely to be subordinate to the decision of permitting programmes and/or institutions to operate.

This experience shows both the opportunities and trapping related to a Pan African quality assurance mechanism. On the one hand continental quality assurance cooperation boosts the establishment of institutional infrastructure, stimulates the implementation of standards, and provides a learning ground for all stakeholders. On the other, there is a risk that initial minimum standards create a dynamic of inspection type controls with boxes to check, potentially impeding the benefits of deeper capacity building processes for quality enhancement.

Over time however the European experience seems to suggest that the quality enhancement approach takes over, provided that it remains high on the agenda at continental level, and that it is facilitated with institutional separation between quality enhancement and accreditation functions.

Implementing PAQAF will surely be such an evolutionary process whereby these conditions will come in place gradually as stakeholders cooperate more intensely and move forward in their learning process.

*Proposed action*

a)  Promote quality enhancement as the vehicle for maximising internal and external quality assurance in sustainable improvement cycles
b)  Promote accreditation based on minimum standards as the condition for operation
c)  Ensure that both functions are present and that one cannot be achieved without engaging with the other

| Success Strategy | Key components | Building blocks | Proposed action |
|---|---|---|---|
| **8. Base quality assurance mechanisms on the distinct and complementary functions of quality enhancement and accreditation** | Quality enhancement as a developmental function | National Quality Assurance Frameworks<br><br>Quality enhancement mechanisms in Africa and Europe | **Promote quality enhancement as the vehicle for maximising internal and external quality assurance in sustainable improvement cycles** |
| | Accreditation as an accountability mechanism. | IUCEA/CAMES minimum standards | **Promote accreditation based on minimum standards as the condition for operation**<br><br>**Ensure that both functions are present and that one cannot be achieved without engaging with the other** |

Below we illustrate a potential approach to the two Quality Assurance functions at Pan African level whereby the existing building blocks; namely a scale running from minimum standards to standards of excellence whereby a stepped approach first ensures minimum continental standards as a condition for operation under the national accreditation function, and subsequently quality enhancement is driven by continental standards of excellence.

At institutional level, AfriQUAN could drive the standards of excellence, while the envisaged Continental Accreditation Mechanism could focus on guiding the minimum standards to be verified by the national accreditation agencies.

In special arrangement the Pan African University thematic centres of excellence would be driven by the standards of excellence and the envisaged Continental Accreditation Mechanism could accredit them directly at Pan African level on the basis of these standards of excellence.

Figure 9: Organising the accreditation and quality enhancement functions at Pan African level

## 9. Use ranking as a transparency tool, not a QA instrument

Ranking mechanisms are popular tools because of the easy and readable comparisons they seem to offer between institutions. This ease of use may hide inflexible and biased indicators, which are not always well understood by the users. Furthermore it promotes mistaking the ranking itself as a quality rating mechanism.

If Quality Assurance is seen as a developmental process, Rankings should be seen as transparency mechanisms, not quality assurance mechanisms. It follows that Rankings therefore need to be transparent in their underpinnings.

A preference driven multi ranking system aimed at informing users interested in attending a particular type of institution could be of greater help for Pan African mobility, flexible learning paths, and long life learning than the traditional fixed rankings in which most African Universities do not even figure. In this sense it may be worthwhile considering a Pan African policy to promote inclusion of African Universities in U-Multirank.

It may also be indicative of global trends that in the Asia-Pacific, the Shanghai ranking, initially pre-structured on the basis of a fixed set of criteria, is now moving towards a more multifaceted approach and user focused system.

The African Quality Rating Mechanism, mentioned before, aims at three staggered comprehensive evaluations, based on benchmarks of excellence in 11 areas with a total of 85 rating items. This indicates a willingness to build in checks and balances, and to be as comprehensive as possible in covering all dimensions of quality, and within those, addressing all aspects of each dimension. Nevertheless the approach remains based on the paradigm of a fixed quality ranking system, with all the caveats this entails.

In its endeavours to push its best universities towards the top in international rankings, Africa should beware of not falling in the trap of mistaking a high international ranking of the very few, as being indicative of the level of quality of the many; a phenomenon that is currently casting doubts over the relevance of the high rankings of a few top US universities with respect to the overall quality of the US higher education system.

*Proposed action*

a) Use rankings as a tool for transparency and competitive convergence
b) Promote rankings that focus on flexibility for the user
c) Recognise the limited usefulness of rankings as a policy tool

**Figure 10: Framework for using ranking as a transparency tool, not a Quality assurance instrument**

| Success Strategy | Key components | Building blocks | Proposed action |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9. Use ranking as a transparency tool, not a QA instrument | Ranking is as a transparency tool and must be seen to be explicitly separate and different from Quality Assurance | U-Multirank<br><br>AQRM? | Use rankings as a tool for transparency and competitive convergence<br><br>Promote rankings that focus on flexibility for the user<br><br>Recognise the limited usefulness of rankings as a policy tool |

# Chapter 3:

# Overall conclusions and Outlook

## What is the merit in a Pan-African Quality Assurance Framework?

### Assumptions

At least two assumptions undergird the development of a proposed continental framework to which this chapter is devoted. First, if some African countries can collaborate to establish and effectively run sub-regional quality assurance agencies, it can be assumed that scaling such collaboration up to the continental level has a potential to be viable. In the case of CAMES, 19 African countries are involved. Over a 45-year period, the collaboration among these countries continues to strengthen. The 2014-2016 Strategic Plan of CAMES confirms the political and economic pillars erected by the 19 countries for more potent impact of the Council. It is possible for the proposed continental framework to build on this model.

The second assumption is that if two out of the eight regional components of the African Union can set the pace, over time, the gradual evolution of a continental framework can be achieved with other regions following the two existing models. The confidence for this assertion is the encouraging development where over 15 countries in Africa set up national quality assurance agencies between 2005 and 2011. The exponential rate of growth of such agencies signals the importance placed by African countries on improving the quality of higher education. It is therefore possible that the march to establishing a continental quality assurance and accreditation framework can be quicker than hitherto imagined on account of the high enthusiasm for a regional improvement in quality of higher education.

### Merits

There are several merits to establishing a continental framework for quality assurance and accreditation. These merits have been extrapolated from the findings of the study of the six national and two sub-regional quality assurance agencies in Africa, which were reported in the preceding chapters. We summarise the merits as follows:

#### Provision of a continental platform for enhancing higher education quality

The quality of higher education in Africa, relative to other regions of the world is far from encouraging. Reports from the national and sub-regional quality assurance agencies studied converge in suggesting a need for more vigorous attention to improve the quality of the delivery system so that the region can benefit from better quality high-level human resources for the attainment of Africa's Agenda 2063 and subsequent regional development plans. A continental approach to quality assurance has the advantage of setting the tone for Member States of the African Union to be part of the collective effort at improving quality of higher education.

*A Mechanism for rapid establishment and sustainability of the African Higher Education and Research Space*

The Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework will be a key driver for the African Higher Education and Research Space (AHERS) which is aimed at fostering collaboration and partnerships among higher education scholars. The framework will be central to setting minimum academic standards at the continental level. Such standards will be basis for the conduct of teaching and research for all higher education institutions in Africa which subscribe to AHERS. The findings from the study of Europe reported in Chapter 4 especially the activities of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), predict the merit of the continental framework for sustainability of AHERS when established.

*The nucleus for catalysing sub-regional quality assurance systems*

Only two sub-regional quality assurance agencies have presence in the African higher education space. These cover four of the eight regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa. The establishment of a continental quality assurance framework has the potential of stimulating the setting up of quality assurance agencies in the remaining four RECs which in turn will have a reciprocal effect on the efficiency and effectiveness of a continental framework.

*The basis for rapid implementation of the Arusha Convention*

Africa-wide implementation of the Arusha Convention on mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas and mobility of staff and students across the continent will be enhanced with the establishment of a continental quality assurance framework. The slow pace of implementation of the convention is the weak mutual recognition of certificates, in turn, brought about by the variegated curriculum offerings by higher education institutions in different countries which a pan-African framework can streamline.

*Effective quality assurance of the Pan African University*

The Pan African University is set up as a conglomeration of centres of excellence in key programmes with relevance to Africa's development. The trans-national spread of the centres demands cross-border quality assurance. While the centres in the five countries can take advantage of local quality assurance procedures, by its continental nature, PAU can only meaningfully benefit from a broader-scoped quality check and accreditation outside those offered by specific national quality assurance agencies. Thus, the cross-border facility of the proposed Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework will aptly suit the quality assurance and accreditation needs of PAU.

*Provision of a continental backdrop for the African Quality Rating Mechanism*

The African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) has been validated continent-wide. PAQAF can build on the validated rubrics of AQRM as a template for quality improvement and hence be basis for setting regional minimum quality standards.

*Enhancement of Africa's contribution to the global knowledge economy*

Relative to other regions, Africa's contribution to the global knowledge economy is assessed to be low. UIS (2012) ascribes this poor performance largely to inefficiencies in the higher education system and the poor quality of a large number of graduates from the system. The low research output has also been implicated. A system that provides a continent-wide quality check that the Pan-

African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework aims to give, will help in large measure to set and implement minimum standards across the continent and foster the production of better quality graduates and researchers who will contribute more meaningfully to the global knowledge economy.

## Next steps

1. Presentation of the final draft to the AUC and EC for review by the experts

2. Establishment of a high level cooperation mechanism and mobilisation of stakeholders

3. Establishment of the institutional and legal framework for supporting the process and ensuring follow up and implementation with active support from AUC

4. Establishment of a funding framework and mobilise donor support accordingly

5. Work out the immediate actions with respect to PAU quality assurance based on the proposals made in this study

6. Seek international engagement with similar continental, sub-regional and national quality assurance agencies in other regions of the world

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# Annex 1

# The status of Higher Education Quality Assurance in Africa

## Introduction

The opening chapter of this report has three purposes. It is to sketch on a virtual canvas, a picture of the higher education system in Africa, illuminating its structural and product attributes relative to higher education systems in other regions of the world. What is the historical root of higher education in Africa and how has the system evolved over the years? How does Africa's higher education system fare in a globalised world especially within the context of the vision of the African Union for the continent? These are some of the questions that will addressed in the first segment of the chapter.

The second purpose is to examine the impact of quality assurance practices on the delivery of higher education in the continent. What are the trends especially over the last ten years with particular focus on teaching and learning? The third purpose is to set the stage for chapter 2 by highlighting the challenges to quality assurance in higher education in Africa and on-going efforts to break down obstacles to progress within the framework of the African Union Second Decade on Education (2006-2015). We should register early, the limitation in the narrative in the chapter. It does not provide expansive and detailed answers to the questions but ensures that answers provided are ample enough for the purpose of setting the stage for a report on the study on the proposed Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework. We begin with the African socio-economic and higher education context.

With about 1.1 billion people, Africa accounts for close to 15% of the world's human population. It is a continent with the youngest population having over 50% being 19 years old or younger, a phenomenon with implications for the provision of basic and higher education and employment. In spite of vast natural resources, the continent remains one of the world's most underdeveloped, a consequence of a miscellany of factors including high level of illiteracy and corruption. On a bright note, Africa has an unprecedented opportunity for transformation and sustained growth. GDP growth has accelerated from an average annual rate of 2.0 percent during the 1990s to 5.5 percent in the last decade. Even though growth declined as a consequence of the global financial crisis, it has rebounded and in 2013 there is a spurt of improved GDP performance with five African countries appearing in the top league of the fastest-growing economies in the world. This remarkable economic turnaround is the result of increasing macroeconomic stability, of reforms and rapidly increasing global demand for the natural resource-based commodities exported by African countries. As noted by the African Union (2013), the commodity-driven growth has not been inclusive. It has not created sufficient jobs, especially for women and youth, and has not translated into poverty elimination. Income inequalities have increased. There has been a process of de-industrialisation, declining agriculture productivity and lack of food self-sufficiency.

Looking beyond the economic triumphs, the continent has made steady progress in several other areas. Broad gains are been made on the democratic front, with an increasing number of elections that are free and fair, and meeting international standards. Conflicts have diminished substantially

and peace and security are on the upswing. The continental integration process is being fast-tracked with the aim of putting in place a Continental Free Trade Area by 2017.

The socio-economic performance of Africa can be significantly bolstered and sustained if basic and higher education is paid greater attention and the challenge of skills shortage, among others is addressed. African economies face unmet demand for highly skilled, engineers, medical workers, agricultural scientists and researchers, particularly in the growing sectors of extractive industries, energy, water, environment, infrastructure, and in service sectors, such as hospitality, banking and ICT (Materu, 2007). For instance, the extractive industries demand specialised civil, electrical and petroleum engineers as well as geologists, and environmental and legal specialists.

Investment dealing with the development of human capital in Africa- a critical element in socio-economic transformation is still far from optimal. Unsurprisingly, Africa is at the bottom of almost every knowledge economy indicator. For instance, it contributes less than 2% to global patents in 2013 and has the lowest researcher-to-population ratio in the world with less than 120 researchers per million inhabitants compared to about 700 in North Africa, 300 in Latin America, and 1,600 in Central and Eastern Europe. Investment in quality higher education would generate more high-quality professionals with higher order skills, entrepreneurial spirit and high research capacity. Part of the driving force of the East-Asian economic miracle was a relatively rapid build-up of technical and technological workforce stimulated by quality higher education and an ever-improving applied research system. These capacities will also be important for diversifying the African economies by increasing the likelihood of new economic growth sectors with higher value added.

Higher education defined as "all forms of post-secondary education offered in universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and their equivalents", has witnessed impressive numerical growth in Africa since the 1989 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education. The report on Africa at the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education which traced growth trends confirmed a 25% jump in student enrolment into higher education institutions and the high international mobility of African students. In comparative terms, African students may be considered the most mobile in the world, largely due to limited access and lack of comprehensive study programmes in the region. In a number of countries, the outbound mobility ratio is one third of the students. These countries include Botswana (89%), Namibia (61%), Swaziland (58%), Lesotho (48%) and Mauritius (41%). Given that the global average is 1.8%, the outbound mobility ratio is still high in many other African states, such as Malawi (31%), Niger (22%), Central African Republic (21%), Senegal (17%), Cameroon (15%) and Kenya (11%). The lowest ratios for the region are found in South Africa (0.8%), Nigeria (1.6%) and Ethiopia (2.1%). (UNESCO-UIS, 2010). The rate of growth of private higher education institutions especially universities has remained one of the highest in world over the last 15 years.

The higher education systems of Africa are currently not capable of responding fully to the immediate skill needs in the medium term. There are several impeding factors. There is shortage of a critical mass of quality lecturers, insufficient sustainable financing, inappropriate governance and leadership, disconnect with the demands of the economy, and inadequate regional integration, The average percentage of staff with PhD in public tertiary education institutions in Africa is estimated to be less than 20 percent (based on a study of 10 countries in the region by Materu (2007). Most departments do not have more than one or two senior professors. This prevents departments and universities from establishing vibrant research environments. The relatively low salaries of lecturers, lack of research funding and equipment as well as limited autonomy provide disincentives for professors to stay in African universities (Materu, 2007; Okebukola, 2014). Some other issues which the higher education system in Africa is grappling with as summarised by Materu (2007) include (a) efforts to improve educational quality at secondary level are still not yielding desired results, as shown by African countries' performance in international mathematics and science tests; (b) a review of distribution of graduates in 23 African countries shows the predominance of "soft" disciplines: social sciences & humanities (47 percent); education (22 percent); engineering (9 percent); sciences (9 percent);

agriculture (3 percent); and (c) funding for research in African universities is low and is mostly supported by outside organizations.

Shabani (2013) identified challenges to quality in higher education in Africa to include increased enrolment; inadequate facilities and infrastructure; shortage of qualified staff and heavy workloads; outdated teaching methods; weakening of research and publishing activities; mismatch between graduate output and employment; low level of quality management system and limited capacity of governance and leadership; many countries yet to establish regulatory agencies for quality assurance and accreditation; and the problem of comparability (credit transfer).

In a recent regional survey by Shabani (2013), the top ten challenges facing higher education in Africa are listed in Table 1.

**Figure 11: Ranking of challenges to quality of higher education in Africa**

| Rank | Challenges |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | Depreciating quality of higher education teachers |
| 2 | Research capacity deficit |
| 3 | Infrastructural/facilities inadequacies |
| 4 | Lack of a regional quality assurance framework and accreditation system |
| 5 | Slow adoption of ICT for delivering quality higher education including distance education |
| 6 | Capacity deficit of quality assurance agencies |
| 7 | Weak internationalisation of higher education |
| 8 | Management inefficiencies |
| 9 | Slow adoption of LMD reforms |
| 10 | Poor quality of entrants into higher education from the secondary level |

*Source*: Shabani (2013)

The removal of the foregoing challenges to quality higher education is imperative for the actualisation of the vision of the African Union. The vision of the African Union is "to build an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, an Africa driven and managed by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena". One of the major thrusts of AU in the realisation of this vision is the strengthening of the higher education systems in the continent. The AU overarching framework for the development of higher education is the Harmonization Strategy with four key policy objectives. These are (a) to establish harmonised higher education systems across Africa; (b) to strengthen the capacity of higher education institutions to meet the many tertiary educational needs of African countries through innovative forms of collaboration; (c) to ensure that the quality of higher education is systematically improved against common, agreed benchmarks of excellence; and (d) to facilitate mobility of graduates and academics across the continent. At the heart of the five objectives is quality higher education.

The African Union identified quality in higher education as focus in the Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015). In furtherance of this, the AU Commission developed a framework for Harmonization of Higher Education Programmes in Africa, with the specific purpose of establishing harmonized higher education systems across Africa, while strengthening the capacity of higher education institutions to meet the many tertiary education needs of African countries through innovative forms of collaboration and ensuring that the quality of higher education is systematically improved against common, agreed benchmarks of excellence and facilitates mobility of graduates and academics across the continent. One of the key result areas of the Harmonisation strategy is 'Cooperation in information exchange'. This involves the:

- Establishment and maintenance of a central database of African higher education institutions and programmes;

- Establishment of an African system to measure and compare performance of higher education institutions; and
- Representation of African interests in global higher education ranking systems.

The African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) is a product of this Strategy. The aim is to establish an African system to measure and compare performance of higher education institutions. The purpose of this is threefold:

Establishing an African system will ensure that the performance of higher education institutions can be compared against a set of criteria that takes into account the unique context and challenges of higher education delivery on the continent.

Creating a system that allows for comparison can – if well designed – facilitate improvements in quality of delivery of institutions across the continent, and allow for an objective measure of performance.

A continental system will pave the way for African institutions to compete more effectively in similar systems in operation at a global level, while also creating a case for review of the basis on which those global systems operate.

Alongside AQRM, the African Union Commission (AUC) is also running the Mwalimu Nyerere African Union Scholarship Scheme. This Scholarship Scheme is designed to enable African students undertake degree programmes (Bachelor, Master and PhD) in leading African Universities, in science and technology, with a binding agreement that the beneficiaries will work in an African country for two to five years after graduation. This brings us to the second purpose of this chapter- historical root and drivers of quality assurance in higher education in Africa.

## Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa

The history of higher education in Africa dates back several centuries, equally so the process of quality assuring the delivery system. Al-Ahzar University in Cairo known to be one of the earliest universities in the world was at the vanguard of this initial effort. The Fatimid Caliph invited many scholars from nearby countries and paid much attention to college books on various branches of knowledge and in gathering the finest writing on various subjects and this in order to encourage scholars and to uphold the cause of knowledge (Alatas, 2006). Students admitted into the university were selected through a process that ensured a fit with the vision and mission of the institution. There was a master who superintended the junior teachers. Al-Azhar University's Council of Senior Scholars (also known as the *Association of Senior Scholars*) originally founded in 1911 conducted evaluation during and at the end of the training was directed at producing graduates meeting the quality mark established by the university. Decades and centuries after Al-Ahzar, similar scenario was enacted in African universities in the pursuit of the goal of ensuring quality. While the practice was pervasive for centuries, "quality assurance" appeared as a label only towards the close of the 20th century.

The philosophy of quality, quality assurance and total quality management is derived from industrial and commercial practice. By the 1980s, the quality idea was imported from its familiar settings, industrial and commercial, into the domain of higher education. Therefore, the traditional concept of quality is associated with the notion of providing a product or service that is distinctive and special, and which confers status on the owner or user (Ramadan, Zaaba and Umemoto, 2011).

Quality assurance is taken in this report to mean all activities that are aimed at ensuring that the process and product of an educational system are fit for purpose (UNESCO, 1989). These activities cluster around the establishment and enforcement of minimum standards for input, process, output

and outcomes of the education system. It includes and not limited to accreditation which is designed to assess and apply quality label to a programme or institution. The concept of quality assurance emerged strongly in the education lexicon in the mid-1930s. Consensus has built around defining it as fitness for purpose. In the last ten years, an upwelling of interest has grown around it at national and global levels, leading to the establishment of over 2300 agencies and networks which have quality assurance as core mandate.

Quality assurance has components internal and external to the institution. Internal quality assurance includes the internal examiner system and internal academic and management audit. An institution engages in these activities to assure itself that it is on course to fulfilling its vision and mission in terms of quality of input, process and output. External validation of institutional quality assurance is often necessary in the desire to norm that institution with others with the same vision and mission. Agents external to the university are players in the external quality assurance system. The key activities are accreditation, periodic monitoring and evaluation and external institutional audit. The quality assurance process examines the effectiveness and efficiency of the input, process and output elements of the teaching, learning, research and service activities of a higher education institution. For instance, the quality of products can be measured by how well the graduates are being prepared to serve society and for meeting the challenges of the world of work. It can be judged through ascertaining how efficient the teachers are, and the adequacy of the facilities and materials needed for effective teaching and learning. The utility value of quality assurance can be seen through the provision of information to the public and other interested parties about the worth of the higher education delivery system. It equally ensures accountability in respect of the investment of public funds (Okebukola, et al, 2007).

The roots of the aspiration of most African countries to ensure quality in higher education delivery systems seat in post-independence clamour by nationalists. Situated in time, this is about late 1950s and early 1960s when about 30 African countries won political independence mainly from Britain, France, Germany and Portugal. For upward of six decades, this aspiration did not wane on account of impelling forces or drivers such as increased demand for high quality human resources, massification and need to maintain quality, and globalisation. Newly-independent African states needed high-level human resources to replace holders of top government and other public positions vacated by the colonialists. Doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers and other professionals were needed in good numbers. Private sector leaders were needed, so also were political leaders at different levels of government.

Quality of human resources was anticipated to match or surpass graduates trained overseas, especially in colonising countries. The investment yielded fruits but not sufficient to bridge the human resource gap. This gap still persists, indeed, widening in the face of expanding socio-economic demands of fast-growing populations of many African countries. There is an awareness of the heterogeneous nature of high-level human resource needs. Some skills are needed more than others. The low representation of women especially in science, engineering and technology professions has been thorny. Human resource projections for Africa in critical sectors such as agriculture, healthcare and education for the next ten years is double current status. This unmet demand stimulates a thirst for quality products from the higher education system.

Another driver of quality is increased demand for higher education by secondary school leavers and the need to ensure quality in the face of massification. The push factor which hiked enrolment is Universal Primary Education which spread all over Africa in the 1990s. Entrants into the UPE programme were primed for higher education in the early years of the first decade of the 21st Century. The "UPE pump" has increased in pressure even since the Education for All (EFA) movement of 2000 gained momentum. Today, Africa's population of applicants for admission to higher education is the highest in the world. Although the history of quality assurance in higher

education in Africa in contemporary global context is relatively dates back to about forty years, we shall turn attention next to recent trends especially since early 2000.

## Trends in Quality Assurance Since 2000

Rising public demand for better performance of higher education institutions, enrolment pressure, efficiency and accountability demands, the need for better quality graduates to drive the economy, dwindling public resources for higher education and the increasing cross-border provisions are some of the major drivers of this momentum.

As enrolment rises, the number of higher education institutions continues to grow and reports on quality of graduates have presented rather dim data. The quality of recent graduates has been reported to be depressed in Egypt (Badrawi, 2014), Nigeria (Okojie, 2011) and South Africa (CHE, 2012). The quest to elevate quality in the face of unabating massification is a key driver of quality in the African higher education system.

Globalisation is another driver of quality. This presents two faces. On the one hand, it is the mechanism on which global ranking schemes are based which in most cases, have African universities low down on league tables. The scorn by the public of the poor ranking of African universities is stimulating the management of the universities to step up their quality assurance practices so as to move up league tables. The second phase of globalisation is the "snatching away" of good quality students and teachers from African countries to regions especially Europe and North America. If quality within the higher education and socio-political systems is improved, there will be a lowering of the mobility of staff and students from Africa outside the region. What are the trends in quality assurance with regard to students, staff, external examiner system and accreditation in African higher education?

*Trends in student quality assurance:* In most African countries, there are encouraging developments to ensure improved quality of candidates admitted to the higher education system. A more rigorous entrance examination system is common place. In Botswana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda only the cream from the secondary school makes it to the university. The regional average shows that one in 15 of secondary school leavers find a place in the higher education system.

In **Liberia**, the National Commission for Higher Education, created by the office of the National Legislature in 1989 has been taking steps at quality assuring student input into the Liberian higher education system. Standardisation of curricula of freshmen and sophomore started in 2011 to improve quality of students. One of the key goals of the initiative was to ensure that students have basic and broad knowledge for "life's foundation and for career development and advancement" and to ensure uniformity of quality in disciplinary course faculty and smooth matriculation of students between baccalaureate degree-granting institutions. This effort has translated to students improving on their communication, conceptualisation, analytical and critical thinking skills. They also have the opportunities to fulfil core liberal arts courses that are appropriate for general education and foundation. It is also enabling Liberian graduates to compete favourably on international tests (Slawon, 2012).

There is a growing trend especially in **Francophone countries** to admit beyond the carrying capacity of the higher education system. The resultant is gross over-enrolment leading to overcrowded classes and hostels and deteriorated infrastructure. With higher student/teacher ratios, quality of instruction is equally compromised. Efforts by institutional authorities to improve quality standards by matching enrolment with available resources have been stalled by political directives from Ministries of Higher Education to continue with the uncontrolled growth which in turn is spurred by

pressure to please the electorate and win more votes. Recent developments impelled by the action of CAMES present an outlook for the reversal of this trend. CAMES for instance is compelling institutions subscribing to its quality assurance guidelines to trim student enrolment to match available resources. How far this new direction will go in the face of political influence which has not waned is far from certain.

In **Nigeria**, two processes are in place as double check quality of entrants into the university system. Apart from the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) which aspiring candidates for higher education need to take, high scorers are further subjected by the universities to a second-level filter known as the post-UTME. The overall goal is to get the best from the secondary system. Sadly, the output from the secondary system keeps dropping in quality and hence failing to be quality feedstock for the higher education level in spite of the layers of filters.

In **Tanzania**, the growing number of higher education institutions and the subsequent expansion of student enrolment created a number of challenges including multiple students' admission; use of forged certificates during application for admission; multiple loan allocation and disbursements. Other negative impacts are the delayed commencement of academic year due to admission irregularities; and inability for some universities to meet their admission capacity. To increase efficiency and effectiveness of the admission of students into higher education institutions, the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) established on 1st July, 2005 developed an electronic Central Admission System (CAS) to streamline the admission of students into higher education institutions. CAS was used for the first time during the 2010/2011 academic year. In 2012, the system was improved to become more interactive and to eliminate multiple students' admission and use of forged certificates during the application for admission. It also allowed only those who meet the minimum entry requirements to proceed with the admission process. The system has also been designed to track selected applicants through registration in their institutions, their performance and progression in subsequent years until graduation. It has scaled up the quality of input into higher education and eliminated multiple loan allocation and disbursements.

The Tanzanian CAS system is unique since it is able to process the admission of applicants from both the school and TVET systems. It has addressed all the challenges related to forgery of certificates examination results for each applicant are directly obtained from the National Examinations Council of Tanzania (NECTA) and the National Council for Technical Education (NACTE) databases using applicant's index number. CAS has made it possible to determine the actual admission capacity of each institution. This has resulted in an increase in number of admitted applicants more than ever before. Multiple admissions have become a matter of history as the system allocates the applicant to only one programme out of the many programmes applied for. CAS has generated important data and reports to be used by researchers, policy makers and decision makers.

*Trends in staff quality assurance:* In the last ten years in many African countries, staff appointment and promotion processes have hardly improved in a way that will guarantee good quality teachers. The increase in the number of universities especially by private and cross-border providers has continued to depress the appointment and promotion standards to be able to meet prescribed minimum standards for staff mix by national accreditation agencies. More worrisome is the appointment into professorial positions of persons with academic credentials much lower than what obtained between 1970 and 1980. A crop of professors had started to emerge within the last ten years that would hardly merit a lecturer grade 1 position in any of the first generation African universities in the 1960s and 1970s. The claim to research and publications by these "professors" is found in "roadside" journals and self-published, poorly-edited, largely-plagiarised books.

National quality assurance agencies have been taking steps to ensure better quality staff through the raising of minimum standards for teaching and non-teaching staff. In Nigeria for example, the minimum qualification for appointment or promotion to a senior lectureship position was set in

2005 as a PhD. In the Nigerian university system with about 37,000 teachers and 4,102 full professors, no serving teacher of the rank of senior lecturer and above has no doctorate degree or its equivalent as a professional qualification.

Professional bodies especially in accounting, engineering, law and medicine have also installed rigour in their quality assurance practices over the last ten years. Minimum standards for enrolment of members and attainment of fellowship status have been raised. It is doubtful if these standards are enforced in view of numerous reported cases of poor quality professionals.

*Trends in quality of external examiner system*: In the early days of the African university system (1960-70), the external examiner was typically a top-rate scholar from a highly-reputable university outside the country. Many were from European and North American universities who were the household names in their disciplines. They vetted examination questions, moderated marked scripts and sat in judgement over the defence of projects, dissertations and theses. They applied the strict and stringent conditions for curriculum delivery and evaluation that prevailed in their institutions. This translated into adoption of the same culture of quality by the African university of the top-rate university where the external examiner came from. In contrast, the external examiner in contemporary times, is not cut in the same mould. Many are friends of the head of department who are invited not to rock the boat but paper over quality cracks in the curriculum delivery and evaluation processes (Okebukola, 2013). The good external examiner who stands the chance of being invited again (and make some little money on the side), is one who makes positive recommendations on a poor quality process. The "wicked" examiner who will hardly be invited a second time is one who applies the quality rule book and penalises as appropriate. With the ever-growing number of professors appointed or promoted on doubtful research and publication output, the ranks of the mediocre external examiner, if not checked, may swell in the coming years and lead to severe compromise of quality.

*Trends in quality of the accreditation process:* Accreditation as a process is a relatively recent phenomenon in the African higher education system. This is perhaps a consequence of its recency in the global higher education space. In less than 20 years of its implementation, the process has been adjudged to be of fairly respectable quality in Africa (Okebukola, 2013; Ramon-Yusuf, 2013). The accreditation process has continued to undergo refinement in the quest to improve based on lessons learned from one year to the next. In many countries such as Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa, programme accreditation is enriched with institutional accreditation.  We shall consider some country case studies in this chapter. In chapter 2, fuller details will be given in respect of the six study sites.

In **Burundi**, the regulatory agency- the National Commission for Higher Education is about three years old and fast setting up structures for quality assurance including the development of guidelines for accreditation. The accreditation process takes a year and an institution has to go through all the steps in the preparation and implementation phases. The establishment of the EQA gave credibility to higher education in Burundi and has led to the establishment of more better-regulated institutions.

The **Democratic Republic of Congo** (DRC) is a post-conflict country on its way to recovery. For over three decades, DRC's higher education system had an uncontrolled and unbalanced quantitative growth accompanied by quality deterioration. Uncontrolled establishment of public and private institutions of higher education and universities led to decline in graduate quality. Graduates' poor professional performance as noted by public and private employers had raised questions on the relevance of the whole Congolese education system. The number of higher education institutions increased from three during 1954-1960 to 37 in the period 1981-1990 and more than 1300 public and private higher education institutions in 2012.

In order to keep up with international standards and make the education system competitive, organisational audits and surveys of public and private higher education institutions were permanently initiated in 2009 for purposes of updating the database of each institution; setting standards for adequate quality training in educational structures at all levels; cleaning up the system of non-viable institutions; and setting up performance structures at central and decentralised levels to effectively contribute to the implementation of the new vision of the overhauled higher education and university system. The audits are conducted by a multi-sectorial and multi-disciplinary investigation team according to set criteria including infrastructure, educational materials and human resources. As a result, a database of viable public and private sector institutions and universities would be established.

Three quarters of the universities and colleges of higher education in DRC have set up a quality assurance unit in charge of designing the institution's strategic plan, assessing the institution's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges, and suggesting appropriate remedial action where necessary.

In **Ghana**, the National Accreditation Board has been active in prosecuting its accreditation mandate. Beyond periodic accreditation visits, the Board is placing emphasis on ensuring that institutions maintain quality at all times. The process is different from normal accreditation as it is limited in scope and does not target the operation of the entire institution; it requires short notification; it requires limited preparation, if any; and it is random in the selection of programmes or aspects of the institution to evaluate. The process targets both public and private universities and checks among other things the quality of academic staff, relevance of courses, adherence to entry requirements and grading systems. The uniqueness of the process is its short notice where the Board is able to see institutions 'as is" leaving little chance for window dressing. There were concerns that the short notice may compromise the quality of information gathered since information in a university is domiciled in many areas such that the verdict arrived at may not be objective. This argument is faulted since the audit targets specific functions of interest in the institution and therefore the auditors are able to dig deeper and get concise information.

The Higher Education Relevance and Quality agency of **Ethiopia** employs an expansive stakeholder participation in assessment of the status of quality assurance in private higher education institutions. Stakeholders are involved at all stages of assessing quality including the development of assessment criteria. The initiative has had positive outcomes including the establishment of quality status of all universities and increasing the credibility of Ethiopian higher education; establishment of a ranking criteria; and closure of institutions that were not meeting standards. **O**nce all the stakeholders bought into the idea of quality then it becomes easy for the regulatory agency to assure the same.

In **Lesotho**, the mandate for quality assurance and accreditation is held by the Council on Higher Education (CHE). CHE accredits programmes offered by public and private institutions; registers private institutions in consultation with the Ministry of Education and Training; audits private and public institutions; and, monitors and evaluates the performance of private and public institutions.

In **Mauritius** all higher education training institutions are expected to be registered by the Mauritius Qualification Authority. The highlights of the process include the submission of a project proposal, accreditation, and then grant of awarding powers. The authority registers both private and public institutions intending to offer higher education in Mauritius. The authority also registers foreign universities wishing to set up campuses in the country. Education is first viewed as a business and therefore universities have also to acquire business licenses. Registration involves both programme and institutional accreditation as well as post accreditation quality audits. The process has led to the establishment of campuses in Mauritius by 49 foreign institutions. However, the process faces challenges due to the increased number of institute. The Tertiary Education Council (TEC) is

empowered by law to quality assure all higher education institutions in Mauritius through programme accreditation and institutional audits.

In **Namibia**, the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) has been conducting tracer studies of graduates from higher education institutions in the country. These studies have revealed gaps in the quality of student input and processing that needed to be bridged. Steps are being taken by the institutions to bridge the gaps.

**In Uganda, t**he Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions (Amendment) Act, 2006 empowers the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) to accredit over 1000 programmes (and/or) courses as at June 2014, in all the 30 private universities and five government-owned (public) universities. NCHE has developed minimum standards for the courses and made these available publicly.  In 2006, NCHE announced that all academic programmes needed the approval of Council.  Older Universities were at first hesitant to adhere to the requirement but had no choice on account of the legal backing of the order.  On the other hand, NCHE did not have adequate personnel to implement the law immediately. However, since 2006, NCHE has recruited many qualified persons to assist in the implementation of the very important mandate. This accreditation of academic programmes has been particularly timely for the new universities – both public and private.

In the quality assurance process, the academic content of each programme is scrutinised on the philosophy and objectives; curriculum content; admission requirements into the programme; academic regulations; course evaluation; standard of students' practical/project work; and the external examination system. On staffing, the main concerns are administration of the faculty/ department; academic staff – number of staff, student staff ratio, staff mix by ranks, and the competence and qualifications of teaching staff; non-teaching staff; and staff development programme. Physical facilities including laboratories/studio/clinics/farm and equipment; classrooms – equipment and facilities; office accommodation; and safety of the environment are considered. Also considered are library facilities where seating capacity, journals and ICT installations are evaluated.

## Challenges to quality assurance in higher education

The findings of several studies have converged documenting funding, human capacity deficit, poor policy implementation environment, weakness in institutional governance and enrolment pressure as major challenges to quality assurance in higher education in Africa (see for example Materu, 2007; Marmolejo, 2011; Mohammedbai, 2014, Okojie, 2011; Ramon-Yusuf, 2012; Okebukola, 2013; Shabani, 2014). Reports from national quality assurance agencies support the findings of these studies. Many of these reports were presented at the series of UNESCO-led International Conference for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa (ICQAHEA), the sixth of which will hold in September 2014.

The challenge of funding recurs in all national reports on quality assurance in higher education in Africa. Partitioned into two, this challenge applies to higher education institutions as well as to national quality assurance agencies where these exist. Higher education institutions feel severely limited to deliver quality and assure same in the face of funding shortage. Funds required for provision and maintenance of facilities, funds for payment of attractive staff salaries that can reverse brain drain and funds for the modernisation of the delivery system are said to be in short supply. Public providers are short-changed in the volume of government grant and the quantum of fees paid by students. Private providers are inhibited by the level of fees charged to attract good number of students and remain financially able to deliver quality education. Varghese (2012) reports that in Ghana, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda, private universities live in a delicate

world of establishing a balance among fees to be charged, the number of students who can afford such fees and the achievement of minimum standards for university education especially the provision of adequate facilities and payment of staff salaries. The inadequate capacity of managers of public and private institutions to be creative in internally generating funds through endowments, consultancy services and alumni contributions has exacerbated the challenge of funding.

The national quality assurance agencies are equally underserved with funds to effectively discharge their mandate of instilling a culture of quality in the system. Only a few, for example the Namibia Commission for Higher Education and the Tertiary Education Commission of Mauritius, are not hard hit with limitations of funds. Most, for example the national quality agencies in Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Lesotho, Nigeria, Uganda and Tanzania have to grapple with the funding gap between what is needed to run and an effective and efficient agency and what comes in as revenue from governmental and other sources.

Human capacity deficit is another challenge. This deficit relates to knowledge and skills in quality assurance of personnel in the institutions and quality assurance agencies. On account of its relative newness, only a few have training and skills in quality assurance as a concept and disciplinary orientation. Over 80% of persons working in higher education institutions and the national quality assurance agencies have not received formal training in quality assurance. Many are learning on the job. This capacity deficit impacts negatively on how the institutions and the agencies conduct their quality assurance operations. Gladly, the situation is fast fading as training on quality assurance as part of in-service is gaining momentum.

Policies on quality assurance at the institutional and national levels are fairly adequate to address the demand for quality higher education in Africa. However, there is the challenge of inclement socio-political environment for the implementation of such good policies. Pressure of parents for admission of their children to already overstretched universities, interference by political actors in the day-to-day running of the institutions and disruption to academic calendar by strikes called by student and staff unions are examples of inclement socio-political environment. As long as institutional autonomy is not fully guaranteed, the challenge of political interference will persist.

Weakness in institutional governance is another challenge. Contributing to this weakness is inadequacies in the appointment system of vice-chancellors and rectors who are heads of the institutions. Where, as you find in most of the countries such as Ghana, Ethiopia and Nigeria, the vice-chancellor is appointed through a politically-steamrolled process, such appointee will be shackled by the desires of those who have played a part in his or appointment rather than be guided strictly by the vision and mission of the institution. Another contributory factor is the lack of full deployment of the committee system in governance. On paper, all institutions are to be run through a layer of committees. In practice, these committees are largely hijacked by a few powerful persons in the university with the connivance of the vice-chancellor or rector.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we undertook a brief review of the status of higher education in Africa and the trends in quality assurance. We also highlighted the major thrusts of the African Union in higher education and identified challenges to quality assurance in the continent.

Since 2000, the African higher education system has been imprinted with two key trademarks. On the positive side, it is known to record the highest growth rate of all the regions of the world (UIS, 2013). The other feature is negative- the depreciating quality of products from the system

(Obasanjo, Mabogunje and Okebukola, 2010; UNESCO, 2009). In an increasingly international environment – marked by mobility of skilled labour and international competition among universities, the compromised quality of the higher education delivery system in Africa creates more and more tensions for a continent striving to "claim the 21st century" (AUC 2014) that is knowledge driven.In response to this tension, there is a strong need to put in place and strengthen appropriate quality assurance systems and regulatory frameworks to bolster quality in higher education in the region.

The African Union's Plan of Action of the Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015) notes that "Education is a critical sector whose performance directly affects and even determines the quality and magnitude of Africa's development. It is the most important means we have at our disposal to develop human resources, impart appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes. Education forms the basis for developing innovation, science and technology in order to harness our resources, industrialise, and participate in the global knowledge economy and for Africa to take its rightful place in the global community. It is also the means by which Africa will entrench a culture of peace, gender equality and positive African values." In consonance with this belief in the power of education, the Action Plan presents as one of its key guiding principles the "promotion, development and assurance of quality in African higher education in all its dimensions".

One of the most visible manifestations of the commitment to improving quality of the higher education delivery system as provided for in the AU Plan of Action of the Second Decade of Education for Africa is the establishment of the Pan African University (PAU) and the development of the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM). The period covered by the Plan of Action (2006-2015) also witnessed the development of the African Strategy for Harmonisation of Higher Education in Africa, whose implementation was boosted by the pilot use of the European Tuning methodology to develop common curricula profiles, and discussions towards establishing an African Higher Education Space. The period has further seen the early steps of consultations towards the development of a continental quality assurance framework. As the Action Plan period ends in 2015, there is a heightened desire to step up action towards meeting the goal of developing a continental quality assurance framework. This study is a key step in the realisation of this goal.

The study also rests on two more planks. The African Union Commission (AUC) Strategic Plan 2014-2017 reiterates the need to step up action towards bolstering quality of the higher education system in the continent. **Outcome 1** of the Strategic Plan on *Policies and Programmes to Enhance Health, Quality Education and Employable Skills underpinned by Investment in Services, Science, Research and Innovation in Place* indicates as priority for 2014-2017 - *"support* to the harmonization of higher education programmes and implementation of the African Quality Assurance Framework to facilitate recognition of academic qualifications across the continent. The emerging discussion in the build-up to the final formulation of the African Union's "Agenda 2063" is indicative of a strong emphasis on the power of quality higher education in the realisation of the lofty goals of the Pan-African dream. As noted by the African Union (2014), "Agenda 2063" is an approach to how the continent should effectively learn from the lessons of the past, build on the progress now underway and strategically exploit all possible opportunities available in the immediate and medium term, so as to ensure positive socioeconomic transformation within the next 50 years. The thrust of Agenda 2063 is a programme of social, economic and political rejuvenation that links the past, present and the future in order to create a new generation of Pan Africanists that will harness the lessons learnt and use them as building blocks to consolidate the hope and promises of the founding parents for a true renaissance of Africa.

The second plank is derived from the Declaration and Roadmap (2014-2017) of the 4th EU-Africa Summit of Heads of State and Government of the European Union (EU) and Africa, the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, the President of the African Union (AU) and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), held in Brussels on 2-3 April 2014, on the theme of ***"Investing in People, Prosperity and Peace"***. Quality higher education was noted to

play "a crucial role for economic and social development in catalysing sustainable development by producing high quality human resources and in disseminating the results of scientific and technical research. In addition to specific, traditional capacity building actions, mobility in itself is seen to have a strong potential to improve the quality of higher education, by accelerating the use of transparency and recognition tools, and by helping institutions develop better services to send and receive foreign students and researchers." A continental quality assurance scheme has tremendous potential to deliver on this promise.

In pursuant to implementing an agenda for improved quality of higher education in Africa and within the framework of the support mechanism for the Joint Africa-EU Strategic (JAES), a project on *"Implementing the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) for African Universities and Development of a Continental Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework"* was launched, with collaboration of the AUC, the Association of African Universities (AAU), and the European Commission (EC). The AUC spearheaded the development of the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) to establish an African system that will ensure the performance of higher education institutions in a way that can be measured against a set of agreed criteria, and to help the institutions carry out self-evaluation exercises to support the development of an institutional culture of quality. This also provides a basis for promoting harmonization of African higher education and mutual recognition of degrees and qualifications in line with the vision of the African Union. The AQRM implementation supports the work of national, regional and continental QA bodies. It also supports African higher education institutions to take ownership of their own QA processes and use the quality rating mechanism as one means of supporting continuous quality improvement. The development of a Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework is necessary to reinforce effective harmonized system in Africa. Already intra-African academic mobility is gaining currency as African institutions are encouraged by the AU's agenda for regional integration.

As Mohamedbhai (2014) notes it is clear that ensuring quality in all African higher education institutions must now, more than ever, be considered a priority. Over half of Sub-Saharan African countries have already established a regulatory quality assurance agency for higher education, and the remainder are in the process of doing so. But these are nascent bodies and face serious challenges of lack of staff, expertise and funding. The strategy, therefore, must be to encourage institutions to set up their own internal quality assurance systems. This is already happening to some extent. Recalling on-going efforts at improving the system, Mohamedbhai (2014), observed that the German Academic Exchange Service, DAAD, led a programme for establishing quality assurance systems in higher education institutions in East Africa, and has now started a similar initiative in West and Central Africa. The African Union Commission launched an African Quality Rating Mechanism, or AQRM, which through a questionnaire encourages institutions to assess their own quality strengths and weaknesses. The Association of African Universities, with the assistance of the European University Association, undertook a project on institutional evaluation of a few African universities using the European association's Institutional Evaluation Programme model. All these are worthwhile initiatives that need to be supported and extended.

Higher education systems in Africa have become more complex, increasingly more so in the coming years. At the same time, the system is facing unprecedented challenges arising from the convergent impacts of globalisation, the increasing importance of knowledge as a main driver of growth, and the information and communication revolution. The need to become more flexible and adjustable to change is now urgent. One of the most effective response is creating a sustainable quality assurance system at the institutional, national and continental levels. The exploration of a continental framework for quality assurance will need to be quickened to accelerate the continent-wide movement to improve quality especially with the Pan African University and the African Quality Rating Mechanism coming into the delivery picture. In the next chapter, we shall turn to the mechanisms for accreditation of higher education institutions.

# Annex 2

# Mechanisms for Higher Education Quality Assurance in Africa

## Introduction

In the last chapter, we reviewed the status of higher education in Africa and traced the trend in quality assurance across the region. The emerging picture is a continent that is fast gaining traction in quality provisions of higher education although still weighed down by a host of quality-depressing factors. We noted the transformational vision of the African Union for higher education in the coming decades and the efforts of national governments at improving quality. We concluded on the note that the exploration of a continental framework for quality assurance will need to be quickened to accelerate the continent-wide movement to improve quality especially with the Pan African University and the African Quality Rating Mechanism coming into the delivery picture.

The props on which to rest a sustainable Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework are the quality assurance and accreditation systems which are currently practised at national and sub-regional levels and to which practitioners have gained some fluency. About half the number of African countries have installed some form of accreditation mechanism some of which have spanned decades in active implementation, many are new e.g. Botswana and Liberia but steadily building capacity by learning from the experiences of older and successful models such as Nigeria and South Africa. Beyond national frontiers, two are sub-regional which pose potent examples for scaling up to a pan-African mechanism. This chapter addresses the second terms of reference of the study- "Examine the mechanisms for accrediting higher education institutions in Africa." The "examination" of the mechanism was expanded to embed common accreditation practices across the region as well as practices that are specific to the eight study sites. The chapter begins with a general consideration of the accreditation process. This is followed by a detailed description of accreditation practices in the eight study sites. Next we present the elements that are common across nations and sub-regions as well as differences. We conclude with insights into what can possibly be scaled up in our quest for a continental framework.

## General Survey of Accreditation Practices

Accreditation can be broadly defined as a process leading to the granting of approval or authority to a programme or institution after meeting a set of minimum standards or criteria. The process of accreditation begins with the establishment of a set of minimum standards against which programmes or the institutions are evaluated. Secondly, a panel of experts evaluates the performance of the programme or institution against the standards. Thirdly, a decision is taken based on the accreditation status whether to permit continued operation of the programme or institution, make minor adjustments to it or cause the programme or some elements in the institution to be suspended. The process of accreditation can be sketched under three headings: pre-accreditation, on-site assessment and post-onsite assessment phases.

*Pre-accreditation activities:* A major pre-accreditation activity is the setting of minimum academic standards against which to measure the performance of a programme or institution.  Through an

inclusive stakeholder participatory process, minimum standards are set for students input, staff input, facilities input, course content, course delivery and evaluation system. The Minimum Academic Standard document is at the heart of the evaluation instrument used by accreditation panels (see Ramon-Yusuf, 2003).

On receipt of the list of programmes for accreditation from the higher education institution, the accreditation agency forwards self-study forms for online or offline completion. This affords the institution the opportunity to assess its programmes or the entire institution against the minimum academic standards. Completed self-study forms are made available as working document to the accreditation panels.

Running alongside the processing of self-study forms is the composition of accreditation panels, if not already in place. The panel is made up of experts in the discipline with track record of objectivity, integrity and non-compromising of standards. In some instances, there is a student representative. With the panel in place, a coordinating meeting is held to induct new members into and refresh the old about the mechanisms of the accreditation process. A typical induction programme begins with presentations on the philosophical and procedural framework for accreditation, the exercise proceeds into sessions where the assessment instruments are discussed. In a step-by-step manner, accreditors are worked through every item on the assessment instrument. The meaning of each item relative to the minimum standard to be measured and the procedure for scoring are explained in detail. After panel members have attained a high degree of fluency in the use of the instruments, simulation exercises are then carried out. During such exercises, scenarios of hypothetical cases of what can be found on ground during accreditation visits are presented for scoring. Scores of panel members are debated and harmonised. The simulation exercise continues until the differential between the scores of all panel members on each item in the assessment instrument is reduced to the barest minimum. The thrust of the entire exercise is to enhance inter-rated reliability. At the close of the coordination meeting, the panels depart for their accreditation sites.

*On-site assessment*: At the accreditation site, the panel meets with the Vice-Chancellor/Rector and senior officials of the institution including the Dean of Faculty, head of department and staff of the programme to be evaluated (for programme accreditation). After the introductory meeting, the panel settles down to work assessing the programme content, facilities, delivery and evaluation modes. Interviews are held with students and sample lectures and practicals are observed. Each member of the panel scores the performance of the programme during the course of the onsite assessment. At the end of the visit, the panel writes its report which is discussed with the programme staff and the Vice-Chancellor. It is mandatory to secure the comments and signature of the Vice-Chancellor or representative on the report. The report along with the quantitative assessment of the programme and recommendations as to accreditation status earned are sent to the accreditation agency.

*Post-onsite assessment phase:* The panel reports are processed through the management of the accreditation agency in line with the provisions in the enabling law. In some instances, the accreditation decisions on each programme or institution are informally discussed with the Vice-Chancellor/Rector following which results are officially released to the institution and the public upon approval by the Board of the agency. The strengths and weaknesses of each programme or institution are communicated to the relevant higher authorities. The institution in turn uses the information to remedy identified deficiencies. In cases where a Vice-Chancellor/Rector contests the decision of the panel, an appellate system is in place to look at such queries. However, the original decision is in force until upturned by the appeal.

While the foregoing presents the general picture, there are slight variations in the process as we traverse the quality assurance agencies in the continent. The findings which give detailed description

of the practices in our eight study sites will now be presented. In order to set the context, we shall first undertake a broad survey of the national quality assurance agencies in the region, tracing their history and reporting on the scope of their efforts on accreditation.

## Broad Survey of National Quality Assurance Agencies

Twenty-one African countries were found to have legally-established agencies (typically named as "Agency", "Board" or "Council") to quality assure their higher education systems. The countries (see Table 2) are Botswana, Burundi, Cameroun, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe (see Figure 1). Over half of the 34 others are far advanced in the process of establishing such agencies.

**Figure 12: Countries with legally established quality assurance mechanisms**

**Table 1: Summary of National Quality Assurance Agencies**

| Country | Name of QAA | Year established | Main activities |
|---------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| **Burundi** | National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) Burundi | 2011 | Standards setting and accreditation |
| **Botswana** | Tertiary Education Council (TEC) | 1999 | Policy coordination, planning and development, funding and quality assurance of tertiary education in Botswana |
| **Cameroun** | National Commission on private Higher Education (NCPHE) | 1991 | Assesses institutions and /or programmes; approves new private higher education institutions; sets minimum academic standards; carries out annual performance and monitoring; accredits university degree programmes for national and international institutions |
| **Egypt** | Commission for Higher Education (CHE) | 1985 | Carries out accreditation for public and private universities |
| **Ethiopia** | Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQIA) | 2003 | Conducts quality audit of public and private higher education institutions |
| **Ghana** | National Accreditation Board (NAB) | 1993 | Regulation, supervision and accreditation of tertiary education in Ghana |
| **Kenya** | Commission for Higher Education (CHE) | 1985 | To make better provisions for the advancement of University education in Kenya through authentic QA processes |
| **Lesotho** | Council on Higher Education (CHE) | 2004 | Promote quality assurance in higher education; audit the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions; accredit programs and issue certificate of accreditation; monitor and evaluate the performance of academic programs offered in higher education institutions |
| **Liberia** | National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) | 2000 | Accreditation of public and private higher education institutions |
| **Mauritius** | Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) | 1997 | Promote, plan, develop and coordinate post-secondary education; and implement an overarching regulatory framework to achieve high international quality |
| **Mozambique** | National Commission for Accreditation and Evaluation of Higher Education (CNAQ | 2003 | Standards setting for quality assurance |

| Namibia | National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) | 2004 | Accrediting, with the concurrence of the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA), programmes of higher education provided at higher education institutions; monitoring the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions; taking measures to promote access of students to higher education institutions |
|---------|---------------------------------------------|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nigeria | National Universities Commission (NUC) | 1974 | Develop and manage university education and assure quality of all academic programmes offered by Nigerian universities |
| Rwanda | Higher Education Council of Rwanda | 2006 | Ensuring quality control in higher education; upholding international standards so graduates are credible and competitive anywhere in the world |
| Senegal | Senegal Quality Assurance Agency | 2012 (law in preparation) | Setting standards and accreditation |
| South Africa | Council on Higher Education (CHE) | 1998 | Quality assurance in higher education and training |
| Sudan | Evaluation and Accreditation Corporation (EVAC) | 2002 | Ensure the quality of Sudanese HEIs through the continuous development and improvement of the academic standards in accordance with the national goals and to gain the confidence of the community in HEIs graduates |
| Tanzania | Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) | 2005 | Recognise, approve, register and accredit universities operating in Tanzania, and local or foreign university level programs being offered by non-TCU registered higher education institutions. TCU also coordinates the proper functioning of all university institutions in Tanzania so as to foster a harmonized higher education system in the country |
| Tunisia | National Assessment Board, Comité National d'Evaluation (CNE) | 1995 | Encourage universities to re-examine and review their curricula, with a view to strengthening the quality of education and academic attainment in particular through reinforcement of practical work, greater student participation, and learning through experience |
| Uganda | National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) | 2001 | Advise the Minister of Education on higher education issues, establish an accreditation system, evaluate national manpower requirements, set national admission standards, ensure that institutions of higher learning have adequate physical structures (and education facilities) |
| Zimbabwe | National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) | 2006 | Standards setting and accreditation of public and private higher education institutions |

*Source*: Okebukola (2013)

The national agencies are empowered to set minimum standards and evaluate performance of the institutions and their programmes against such standards. Over 60% of the agencies were established less than ten years ago hence are relatively new with attendant challenge of inadequate institutional and human capacity to deliver effectively on their mandate. Some details of all quality assurance agencies are given in Appendix 1.

## North African Initiatives

Two initiatives are noteworthy in northern Africa. The Council for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Arab countries is a recent initiative of the Association of Arab Universities which has an active policy of cooperation to establish an "Arab space for Higher Education" and is associated with the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education.

The Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE) is another north-African quality assurance initiative. According to a July 2013 post on its website, ANQAHE was established in June, 2007 as a non-profit nongovernmental organisation to create a mechanism between the Arab countries to exchange information about quality assurance; construct new quality assurance agencies or organisations; develop standards to establish new quality assurance agencies or support the already present ones; disseminate good practice in quality assurance; and strengthen liaison between quality assurance bodies in the different countries. In a 2007 survey by the Association of African Universities, of eight Arab African and North African countries (Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria, Algeria; Arab Republic of Egypt, Egypt; Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Libya; Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Mauritania; Kingdom of Morocco, Morocco; Republic of Sudan, Sudan,; Republic of Somalia, Somalia; and Republic of Tunisia, Tunisia) it was found that quality assurance of higher education systems is picking up impressive momentum (AAU, 2007).

With Egypt showing leadership in this direction, a number of other countries are taking steps to invigorate their quality assurance activities. The National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE) is the accrediting body for all Egyptian educational institutions (higher education, pre-university, and Al-Azhar education) (about 55,000). NAQAAE was established in 2007 by a Presidential Decree. The main goal is to support Egyptian educational institutes by fostering their quality assurance practices.

In Libya for instance, in 2005 the Executive Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, ECQAHE, was established by decree #80 of the General Secretary of the Popular Committee of Higher Education. ECQAHE was given the following tasks: (a) disseminating quality assurance culture among higher education institutions; (b) following upon the quality assurance activities inside higher education institutions; (c) developing objective standards and benchmarks for quality assurance inside institutions; (d) setting mechanisms and procedures for self assessment and quality assurance; (e) ensuring the availability of minimum standards for quality in higher education institutions; and (f) suggesting viable mechanisms for institutional evaluation. By 3 July 2006, the Centre for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions was established by law to undertake these activities and by 31 July 2010, it commenced external quality assurance activities in Libya.

In Tunisia, the National Assessment Board, Comité National d'Evaluation (CNE), was established in 1995. It worked under the Directorate General for University Renewal (DGUR). DGUR is one of the Directorates General of the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Technology (MoHESRT). CNE's mission is to "provide incentives to encourage universities to

reexamine and review their curricula, with a view to strengthening the quality of education and academic attainment in particular through reinforcement of practical work, greater student participation, and learning through experience, increasing the relevance of teacher training programs, improving the system's internal and external efficiency and reducing the average length of study".

# Continental Initiatives

There is no region-wide quality assurance agency. However, a regional network- African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) was launched in 2007 during the UNESCO Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. In April 2009, the Association of African Universities (AAU) organised a stakeholder's workshop in Dodowa, Ghana which came up with a declaration- the "Dodowa Declaration" that emphasised the importance of the network to foster collaboration and linkage among the quality assurance bodies within Africa. Accordingly, an interim AfriQAN committee was elected whose efforts led to the development of a draft AfriQAN constitution. In order to formalise the Network, the founding members, at the first general meeting in Accra, Ghana, from 25th to 27th November 2009, adopted the Constitution of the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) - 2009.

The objectives of AfriQAN are to:

1. Promote a culture of quality assurance in higher education in Africa;
2. Foster collaboration and linkages among quality assurance bodies within Africa;
3. Advance good practice in the enhancement and maintenance of quality higher education in Africa;
4. Collaborate with quality assurance bodies in Africa in capacity building;
5. Facilitate research into the practice of quality assurance in higher education for purposes of improving the quality of higher education in Africa;
6. Provide advice and expertise for the development of new national and sub-regional quality assurance bodies in Africa;
7. Assist members of the Network to articulate standards of institutions operating in member countries;
8. Foster harmonisation of standards for quality assurance across countries in Africa;
9. Facilitate international recognition of qualifications to enhance mobility of staff and students in Africa; and
10. Promote the interests of Africa in other networks and international organizations with related focus

After this overview of quality assurance of 21 countries, attention will now turn to our eight study sites for details of their accreditation processes.

# National and Sub-Regional Case Studies of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Practices

## EGYPT

Egypt has the largest education system in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. With a population of 80 million, by 2007, the country had a higher education absorptive capacity of 28% for its 18-25-year olds (Barkawi, 2014). In recognition of the importance of higher education, government in 2008 set a goal for expansion to 35% and to include technical education. The national conference on higher education reforms of 2000 underscored quality assurance as one of the six priorities for Egyptian higher education and by 2001, the concept of quality assurance was introduced officially by government into the national education policy.

Government's recognition of the critical role of quality assurance in enhancing quality in the face of rapid expansion was evidenced by the establishment in 2007 by a Presidential Decree, of the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Egypt (NAQAAE). NAQAAE is an independent body reporting to the Prime Minister that is responsible for quality assuring 623 higher education institutions (34 universities, 589 faculties and institutes) with a total of approximately four million students; pre-university education: a total of 49,640 educational institution hosting 18,482,872 students. These institutes include governmental schools, private schools and Al-Azhar institutes; and technical education: a total of 2,063 technical schools.

NAQAAE's mission is "to assure the quality of Egyptian education institutions, continuous improvement and efficient performance consistent with their mission statements and objectives, as well as insuring public confidence through independent, impartial and transparent operations. Its main goals are raising awareness to quality assurance; setting of educational and accreditation standards; supporting self-assessment studies; and issuing accreditation certificates. Over the years, NAQAAE has emerged an internationally recognizsd accrediting body, known for its fair and objective decisions, its  leadership in quality assurance and  excellence  at the national, regional and international levels, while maintaining its Egyptian identity.

Two types of accreditation exercises are conducted in the Egyptian higher education system. These are institutional and programme. Institutional accreditation is mission-based assessment whose two main targets are institutional capacity and educational effectiveness.

Programme accreditation on the other hand is outcome-based assessment, also with two thrusts-programme management and educational effectiveness.

The standards by which assessment is conducted for institutional accreditation are strategic planning, governing policies and their impact and efforts towards sustainable development. For programme accreditation, the National Academic Reference Standards (NARS) is the benchmark for assessment. NARS describes the minimum requirements to accomplish a certain programme. It includes graduate attributes as well as professional, intellectual and transferable skills. The norms include resources (human, library, teaching facilities and infrastructure).

The pre-accreditation phase is an optional process which simulates the accreditation visit. The accreditation phase lasts about nine months which leads to an accreditation decision of three types-accreditation: when the institution has fulfilled most of the standards of accreditation; and postponed- when some of the standards of accreditation (except Education standards) have not been fulfilled; and not – accredited: when the institute fails to fulfil most of the standards. An institution which needs further improvements before it is accredited, is responsible for preparing its improvement action plan after which the authority will arrange further review activity. For re-

accreditation, the authority will invite an accredited institution to prepare for re-accreditation at an interval normally of five years.

## Kenya

Kenya is a country of about 44.7 million people. In 2014, it is served by 22 public charter universities, 9 public university constituent colleges, 17 private chartered universities, 5 private university constituent colleges, 12 private universities with letters of interim authority and two registered private universities with total student population of 251,000, up from 81,000 in 2003.

The roots of higher education in Kenya can be traced back to 1922 when the then Makerere College in Uganda was established as a small technical college which was then expanded to meet the needs of the three East African countries i.e. Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika and Zanzibar, as well as Zambia and Malawi. In the 1940s and early 50s it is only this college that was providing university education in East Africa. This lasted until 1956 when the Royal Technical College was established in Nairobi a school that would in 1970 become the country's first university – The University of Nairobi. (Nyaigotti-Chacaha, 2004). The 1980s and 90s saw the emergence of some private institutions. With the exception of some institutions, such as the United States International University (USIU), most private universities in Kenya are religiously controlled. The majority of these institutions are also limited in capacity with a total student enrolment ranging between 500 in the smallest institutions to 2000 in the largest. The curriculum of most of these institutions is also largely geared towards the arts and commercial courses. Most of them lack the resource capacity to adequately address the needs of courses in ICT and other sciences. They also lack adequately trained manpower to deliver the courses that they provide, thereby making the quality of some of their graduates questionable.

In spite of recent challenges, Kenya is making strides towards successfully reorganising and strengthening its tertiary education sector. By 2020, the number of Kenyans with a university degree is expected to exceed those without any formal education – quite a leap for a country whose first university is only 44 years old. This is attributable at least in part to the quality assurance efforts of the Commission for Higher Education.

The Commission for Higher Education (CHE) came into existence in 1985 following the need to regulate, coordinate and assure quality in higher education as a result of growth and expansion of the university sub sector in Kenya. The Commission was established by an Act of Parliament (Universities Act Chapter 210B), as a body corporate to make better provisions for the advancement of quality university education in Kenya. The mandate of the Commission is to ensure the maintenance of standards, quality and relevance in all aspects of university education, training and research. The Commission mainstreams quality assurance practices in higher education and encourages continuous improvement in the management of the quality of university education. This is mainly accomplished through a peer process of audits and reviews. Both public and private universities remain autonomous, self-governing institutions responsible for the standards and quality of their academic awards and programmes. Individual universities have institutionalised internal procedures for attainment of appropriate standards for ensuring and enhancing the quality of the education provided. To date the work of the Commission has centred on private universities.. The expected enactment of the Universities Bill will extend the quality assurance mandate of the Commission to the public universities (CHE, 2013).

Alongside CHE, quality assurance in higher education in Kenya is undertaken by the higher education institutions and professional bodies. However, the function of accreditation of universities in Kenya is carried out by the Commission through the use of rules, guidelines and

standards. In order to ensure that the process of accreditation is fair, thorough and comprehensive; the Commission has developed and uses the following standards and guidelines:

- Standard for physical facilities
- Curriculum Standards
- Standards for University Libraries
- Guidelines for preparing a Proposal for the Establishment of a Private University
- Guidelines for Preparing Curriculum of Academic Programmes
- Guidelines for Developing Rules and Regulations Governing the Conduct and Discipline of Students
- Guidelines for Preparing Charters and Statutes
- Criteria for Equation of Qualifications
- Standards for Validation of Diploma Programmes
- Standards for Collaboration between Institutions

There are three forms of higher education accreditation in Kenya. These are: Subject Accreditation – focuses on specific matter whatever the programme is; Programme Accreditation – focuses on study programmes and Institutional Accreditation – focuses on the overall quality of the institution.

The Commission recognises that quality and quality control are primarily the responsibility of the higher education institutions themselves, but they partner with the Commission for better results. It respects the autonomy, identity and integrity of the institutions and applies standards that are in line with international developments and best practices and international bench-marking.

In the accreditation process, the Commission uses peer review/consultative mechanism. There is self-study by institution based on institution's vision, mission, philosophy and objectives. This is followed by site visits/inspections to verify available resources. The results from the site visit lead to action/judgment by the Commission which are more of a developmental approach where the Commission works with the institution to reach the desired standards, after which the Commission will:

- Grant a Letter of Interim Authority to a newly established institution;
- Award a Charter to an existing institution;
- Grant a Re-inspection Certificate to an Accredited institution;
- Grant a Certificate of Validation to a post secondary school institution; and
- Grant Authority to a post--secondary school institution to collaborate with other institutions for purpose of offering academic programmes.

Regarding the process leading to grant of Letter of Interim Authority, the Commission ensures that the existing or the proposed physical facilities, human and financial resources and proposed academic programmes and governance structures, are adequate and sustainable for running a university. The process involves evaluation of documentation of resources of the institution by experts and technical persons in the respective areas.

On the process leading to award of Charter, within three years after grant of Letter of Interim Authority or as the Commission may determine, the process of full accreditation will start. This involves a detailed and thorough re-evaluation of the resources of the institution by the Commission. Again, use is made of peer reviewers and experts/technical support. Every university authorised to operate by the Commission is required to undergo continuous supervision and inspection by the Commission, in particular through submission of annual reports of its activities, and after every three years or as the Commission may determine, a re-inspection or evaluation to ensure that appropriate standards have been and continue to be maintained by the institution.

In Kenya accreditation of academic programmes is part of the overall institutional accreditation. It is mandatory for private universities to have their academic programmes approved by the Commission before they are launched. The process involves evaluation of curriculum of the proposed academic programme to ensure that it meets the standards as set by the Commission. This is followed by assessment of available academic resources (physical, academic, equipment and learning materials, and texts and journals) to support the implementation of the approved curriculum. Evaluation of curricula of academic programmes submitted to the Commission is through peer reviewers and Curriculum Accreditation Committee; and the Curriculum Committee

Three overall recommendations are made with regard to a given academic programme. These are:

1. *Minor revamp of the academic programme in readiness for verification of academic resources for the support of the programme:* This recommendation is made in a case whereby minor corrections are required in line with the aspects raised in the comprehensive report. The panel shall also embark on the verification of the academic resources as the institution revamps the programme in focus.

2. *Major revamp of the academic programme for re-evaluation by one peer reviewer*: This recommendation is made in a case whereby major corrections are required in line with the aspects raised in the comprehensive report. The panel shall only embark in the verification of academic resources for the support of the programme once one of the peer reviewers has confirmed that the programme has been revamped in line with recommendations made by the panel in the comprehensive evaluation report.

3. *Re-design the programme for re-evaluation by the panel:* This recommendation is made in a case whereby major structural corrections are required including overhauling and refocusing the programme in line with the aspects raised in the comprehensive report. The programme shall be re-evaluated by the entire panel and once satisfied with the curriculum, shall recommend the verification of resources for the support of the programme through the chairperson of the panel.

Three overall recommendations are be made with respect to the academic resources for the support of a given academic programme. These are:

1. *Recommend for Programme Accreditation:* This recommendation is made in a case whereby the panel is satisfied that minimum academic resources have been provided for the support of the programme. The programme shall then be presented to the Commissioners for consideration for accreditation.

2. *Enhance academic resources for a follow-up visit by one peer reviewer:* This recommendation is made in a case whereby the panel is not satisfied that some of the academic resources are adequate for the support of the programme. The programme shall only be recommended for consideration for approval once one of the peer reviewers has confirmed that the minimum academic resources for the support of the programme have been provided. One major concern shall be the adequacy and appropriateness of the academic staff for the support of the programme and, more specifically, the appropriateness of the academic leader of the programme.

3. *Enhance academic resources for a follow-up visit by the entire panel:* This recommendation is made in a case whereby the panel is not satisfied that the majority of the academic resources are adequate for the support of the programme. The programme shall only be recommended for consideration for approval once the entire panel has confirmed that the minimum academic resources for the support of the programme have been provided.

## Mozambique

With a population of about 26 million, Mozambique has made tremendous progress in higher education in post-independence. After the initial developmental hiccups caused by the exodus of the Portuguese, the socialist interlude, the long years of bitter civil war and then the extenuating efforts required to adjust to a market-driven economy and a democratic political order, Mozambique now possesses a higher education system that offers a wide variety of course options, undertakes first-rate research in some areas, and, although concentrated in the capital city of Maputo, is also present in four outlying provinces (Mário, Fry, Levey & Chilundo, 2003). The 2000 to 2010 Strategic Plan for Higher Education had five key objectives: improve the quality and relevance of higher education; create a reward system for higher education; introduce a system of accumulation and transfer of credits; reform the financial system in higher education; and improve the information system of higher education.

The Education Sector in Mozambique is governed by a set of legal provisions. These include the National System of Education Act nº 6o f 6 May 1992; and the Higher Education Act, of 1993. Besides these legal provisions, the programes of the Education Sector are driven by the Government's five-year programme (2010-2014) and by the Strategic Plan for Higher Education (2010-2020).

Decree No. 64/2007, of December 31, resulted in the establishment of the National Council of Higher Education Quality Assessment (CNAQ), and "implementing of the National System of Evaluation, Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Higher Education ...", an institution of public law, having legal status and administrative and technical autonomy, under the responsibility of the Minister who supervises the area of higher education science and technology. The Council has completed the recruitment of human resources, drafted the rules of procedures of the National Council of quality of higher education assessment and various other documents/manuals of technical guidance on criteria for the evaluation, accreditation and internationally valid standards of measurement of quality of institutions, courses and higher education programmes.

There is currently underway the deployment of devices for management of quality assurance, which comprise the adoption of standards and indicators of education in three dimensions: School Planning, Administration and Management; Infrastructure and school environment; Teaching-learning process; and implementation of internal evaluation system (focused on school and curriculum implementation) and external evaluation system (based on national examinations and of regional quality assessment initiatives.

Higher education institutions are evaluated on the basis of their mission, management, curricula, faculty Staff, students, technical and administrative staff, research and extension, as well as infrastructure. Government created within the Education Ministry the National Directorate of Quality Assurance to assure the coordination of all activities related to the promotion of quality. This directorate is working towards the establishment of a system of standards and indicators, consolidation of internal and external assessment practices and self-evaluation. According to the Mozambique Higher Education Strategic Plan (2010-2020), higher education in Mozambique shall guarantee equitable access and participation of all citizens; it shall respond to the needs of the Mozambican society to ensure its capacity of facing the great challenges of the Country's social, economic and cultural development.. It is expected to further this mission, during the next ten years through: expanding opportunities of access to higher education in consonance with the increasing needs of labor market and society, so that an increasing proportion of Mozambique citizens will be able to acquire and develop high level knowledge and skills needed for rapid economic and social development; improving the quality and relevance of teaching and research; and responding to changes in social and cultural needs, arising from the country's rich diversity of linguistic and ethnic groups, and to economic and technological transformation arising from a rapidly developing market

economy. Other 2020 goals for higher education are increasing social, regional and gender equity by promoting higher levels of participation by disadvantaged or under-represented groups in society; ensuring sustainability by promoting an appropriate balance between public and private finance and management of higher education institutions; and in partnership with Government, the private sector and other stakeholders, supporting the development of the competitiveness of Mozambique in the evolving regional economic block, and ultimately at the global level.

A core goal for 2020 is to develop and implement criteria and mechanisms of accreditation and evaluation of quality at both national and institutional levels. The strategic actions for achieving this are: define and regularly update criteria or minimum quality standards for registration/ accreditation of public and private HEI's, including plans of training and personal development; establish internal and external evaluation mechanisms; and involve other stakeholders in accreditation/quality assurance process.

Mozambique's national quality assurance framework for higher education is in its embryonic stages, and is mostly linked to the establishment of higher education institutions. The System of Quality Guarantee and Accreditation is being implemented, and the new system will require higher education institutions to monitor quality internally on an ongoing basis, using their own quality assurance processes. This system will be applicable to both public and private institutions, and will thus include non-government funded higher education institutions. The Ministry has identified five priority areas in which quality improvements are needed in the higher education system. Quality of lecturers is being addressed through training. Quality of both investigation and laboratories is to be improved through the establishment of the Quality Innovation Fund. Quality of administration and management will be improved through the training of non-academic staff. Finally, quality of academic registration will be addressed through the introduction of an information system. The Ministry provides support to higher education institutions in the development of institutional quality assurance policies and procedures by supporting the training of higher institutions' internal appraisers (SARUA, 2010).

## Nigeria

With 321 higher education institutions including 129 universities enrolling about 2.1 million students, Nigeria has the most expansive higher education system in Africa. The system serves a national population of 171 million with a scant higher education participation rate of less than 12%.

The developmental history of quality assurance in higher education in Nigeria began in 1939 when the colonial administration instituted a panel to review the programmes offered in Yaba Higher College, the first institution of higher learning in Nigeria. In Taiwo's (1982) account, the then Governor–General was responding to public comments about the quality of technical personnel that the college was producing. Fears were being expressed that the colonial government was implementing a deliberate policy to ensure that locally produced middle– level human resource from the college was of poor quality when compared with those trained in equivalent institutions in the UK. The report of the panel led to a review of the curriculum of the Yaba Higher College in 1942 (Okebukola, Shabani, Sambo and Ramon-Yusuf, 2007).

By 1948, the colonial administration opened up the first university – level institution in the country as a college of the University of London. University College, Ibadan was operated with the academic framework of the University of London including its quality assurance practices. To assure equivalence with London degrees, the delivery and evaluation methods at Ibadan were patterned largely after, and regulated by the University of London. After independence in 1960, Ibadan which later weaned as University of Ibadan maintained the internal quality assurance culture that it imbibed from its former parent university.

At independence in 1960, a handful of institutions including University of Ibadan and University of Nigeria, Nsukka with a total enrolment of less than 2000, made up the higher education system in Nigeria.  By 2010, the number of universities had risen to 104 with a pooled student enrolment of about 1.5 million. The total graduate output from the system during the 50-year period is estimated to be about 8.5 million. When combined with research output in the form of published books and articles, patents and inventions as well as community engagement, the system, assuredly, delivered with an eye on quality. While the pursuit of quality was the goal, the extent to which this goal was attained failed to fully meet expectations. The major thrust of this paper is to describe the trend in quality assurance in the Nigerian higher education system over the last 50 years and forecast the future of the process.

The quest for improved quality has developed momentum over the last 50 years. Rising public demand for better performance of higher education institutions, enrolment pressure, efficiency and accountability demands, the need for better quality graduates to drive the economy, dwindling public resources for higher education and the increasing cross-border provisions are some of the major drivers of this momentum.

In Nigeria, three national regulatory agencies are statutorily empowered to quality assure the higher education system. These are the National Universities Commission (NUC)- established in 1964; the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) –established in 1977; and the National Commission for Colleges of Education, established  in 1989. The laws setting up higher education institutions superintended by these agencies accord the institutions concurrent powers to ensure quality of process, products and services.

Quality assurance is an umbrella concept for a host of activities that are designed to improve the quality of input, process and output of the higher education system. It has components internal and external to the institution. Internal quality assurance includes the internal examiner system and internal academic and management audit. An institution engages in these activities to assure itself that it is on course to fulfilling its vision and mission in terms of quality of input, process and output. External validation of institutional quality assurance is often necessary in the desire to norm that institution with others with the same vision and mission. Agents external to the university are players in the external quality assurance system. The key activities are accreditation, periodic monitoring and evaluation by NUC, visitation and external institutional audit. The quality assurance process examines the effectiveness and efficiency of the input, process and output elements of the teaching, learning, research and service activities of a higher education institution.  For instance, the quality of products can be measured by how well the graduates are being prepared to serve society and for meeting the challenges of the world of work. It can be judged through ascertaining how efficient the teachers are, and the adequacy of the facilities and materials needed for effective teaching and learning. The utility value of quality assurance can be seen through the provision of information to the public and other interested parties about the worth of the higher education delivery system. It equally ensures accountability in respect of the investment of public funds (Okebukola, et al, 2007).

The major steps in the NUC accreditation process are:

1. Communication to NUC by the university of intention to mount a programme after feasibility study.
2. NUC checks alignment of programme with national need and global relevance. On satisfactory fit, a resource assessment team is sent to the university.
3. Upon satisfactory resource assessment, NUC grants formal approval for the running of the programme.
4. Two years into the life of the programme, it is deemed mature for accreditation.  An accreditation panel is commissioned to evaluate the programme.

5. Based on the quality of the programme and its delivery in relation to the Minimum Academic Standards, accreditation is assessed as FULL, INTERIM or DENIED.

Beginning from 2009, NUC expanded its quality assurance horizon to include institutional accreditation. Institutional accreditation is a process where an institution is reviewed by a competent body or organisation for the purpose of establishing whether or not the institution meets a particular set of standards. Institutional accreditation considers the characteristics of the institution as a whole. It evaluates the organisational capacity to deliver quality programmes. It does not seek to deal with any particular programme in detail although programmes are reviewed as a part of the consideration of the entire institution. It examines such institutional characteristics as governance, administrative strength, academic policies and procedures, quality of faculty, physical facilities and financial stability. It is an evidence-based process carried out through peer review. Minimum standards have been developed around the following:

1. Institutional vision, mission and strategic goals
2. Institutional governance and administration
3. Institutional resources including learning resources and student support
4. Quality of teaching and research
5. Management of human and material resources and institutional efficiency and effectiveness
6. Extension, relationships with internal and external constituencies and consultancy
7. Financial management and stability
8. General ethos

Figure 13: Standards and data sources

|   | Standards | Data sources |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Institutional vision, mission and strategic goals** | |
|   | Assess the fitness of purpose of the vision, mission and strategic goals of the university in relation to institutional responsiveness to local, national and international development agenda. Assess how overall university curriculum meets labour market, knowledge or other socio-cultural needs. | Completed and validated Self-Study Report University's Strategic Plan; Annual reports; Visitation Panel reports; Faculty and Departmental Handbook |
| 2 | **Institutional Governance and Administration** | |
|   | In relation to vision, mission and strategic goals of the university, assess quality of governance and administration by Council, Senate, Principal Officers (Vice-Chancellor, Registrar, Bursar, University Librarian), Faculty Boards, Departments, and other statutory bodies. Assess effectiveness of the Committee System. | Completed and validated Self-Study Report University's Strategic Plan; Annual reports; Visitation Panel reports; Questionnaire administration and interview of staff, students, parents and other stakeholders |
| 3 | **Institutional Resources including Learning resources and student support** | |
|   | Assess academic infrastructure and facilities (classrooms, laboratories, workshops, library, and staff offices); facilities for sports, games and recreation; healthcare facilities; regularity of water and electricity supply; network of roads; communication (intercom) facilities; toilet facilities; cleanliness of environment (not bushy, walls not defaced with posters); IT infrastructure; student hostels; guidance and counselling services and student support services | Completed and validated Self-Study Report; on-site assessment in relation to minimum standards |
| 4 | **Quality of Teaching and Research** | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Assess general teaching and learning interactions (curriculum delivery) in the university in relation to producing national relevant and globally-competitive graduates;; quality and relevance of research undertaken by staff and students; level of deployment of e-learning and use of new technologies for teaching, learning and research;  research ethics, code of conduct, regulations on plagiarism and intellectual property rights; | Completed and validated Self-Study Report; on-site assessment of teaching and learning; University's Annual Reports; staff CVs; University Policy on research and its implementation; questionnaire and interview data. |
| 5 | **Management of  Human and Material Resources and Institutional  Efficiency and Effectiveness** | | |
| | | Assess students' admission and selection process- compliance with NUC and JAMB guidelines on carrying capacity and quality of intake; ease of registration for courses, staff recruitment process and staff mix in line with NUC guidelines; staff welfare; effectiveness and efficiency of the committee system; internal and external efficiency of the system (progression, dropout and graduation rates); visibility and richness of web presence. | Completed and validated Self-Study Report; admission records; on-site assessment; interview of students |
| 6 | **Extension,  Relationships with internal and external constituencies and  Consultancy** | | |
| | | Assess quality and quantity of external activities of staff of the university; consultancies and virility of linkages with national and international organisations and universities. | Completed and validated Self-Study Report; staff CVs; University's Annual reports; records of consultancies and academic and cultural linkages. |
| 7 | **Financial Management and Stability** | | |
| | | Assess transparency and accountability in funds management; external auditor's reports; funds generation capability | External Auditor's reports; Questionnaire and interview data on Bursary administration. |
| 8 | **General Ethos** | | |
| | | Assess staff and student discipline tone; level of non-manifestation of social vices (cultism; examination malpractice; sale of handouts | On-site assessment; questionnaire and interview data. |

The decision scheme for institutional accreditation is given below.

| Score | Letter Grade | Judgement | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|
| 80% and above | A+ | **FULL** accreditation (10-year life span) | Excellent |
| 70-79% | A | **FULL** accreditation (10-year life span) | |
| 65-69% | B+ | **FULL** accreditation (8-year life span) | Good |
| 60-64% | B | **FULL** accreditation (8-year life span) | |
| 55-59% | C+ | **INTERIM** Accreditation (5-year life span) | Fair |
| 50-54% | C | **INTERIM** Accreditation (3-year life span) | |
| 45-49% | D | **Probation** (for 2 years) | Poor |
| 40-44% | E | **Probation** (for 1 year) | |
| Less than 40% | F | DENIED | Fail |

The foregoing narrative summarises the quality assurance activities of the National Universities. Over the last 50 years, NUC has emerged a respectable agency providing examples for up-and-coming national quality assurance agencies in Africa with some models to adapt.

## Senegal

With a population of about 14 million, Senegal, the Francophone country in the study has one of the most-recently established national quality assurance agency. Education is compulsory and free up to the age of 16 as Articles 21 and 22 of the Constitution adopted in January 2001 guarantee access to education for all children. There are diverse options of institutes for higher education by public and private providers. University-level instruction is only in French. The higher education system is faced with such challenges as over-enrolment, rapid expansion of private universities, gender inequity and inadequacies in facilities. In 2012 the Ministry of Higher Education in cooperation with UNESCO'S Regional Office in Dakar launched a project to improve the quality of higher education. The project will establish various training opportunities, prepare guides for foreign students, research on existing systems of quality assurance, and finally assess employment needs (Alidou, 2012).

Senegal is currently implementing the LMD reform which follows the Bologna process in Europe and aims to harmonise degree structures, credit systems and quality assurance procedures in all of Senegal's higher education programmes, and indeed in all 15 countries in the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS.

The Minister of Higher Education reported that the LMD reform, now being carried out with major financial support from the African Development Bank, will "fundamentally change the system of delivering diplomas" at UCAD, and throughout Senegal and ECOWAS countries. All post-secondary degrees earned in all 15 countries will be mutually recognised. As important as the LMD reform is, Senegal's higher education system faces other serious and immediate challenges the most important being severely high student population and the need for increased funding and resources.

According to Ritter (2011), "Notwithstanding the generosity of the World Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and the African Development Bank, outside funding has been and continues to be difficult to obtain. For example, in the 1980s approximately 20% of World Bank funding for Senegalese education went to higher education. By the end of the 1990s, this funding had dropped to 7%."

The new education reform has seen government addressing the facilities problem. About nine years ago, new public universities were approved to be established throughout the country. In line with LMD reforms, four of these institutions have opened their doors - Bambey, Thiès, Ziguinchor and Dakar, which should relieve congestion at UCAD. There are also plans to open public universities in Kaolack and Louga, and eventually, to create regional university centres or satellite campuses of the main public universities to serve students who cannot travel far from home.

While every university has been taken steps to quality assure its operations through the instrumentality of the enabling laws, institutional quality assurance in higher education is largely still undertaken by CAMES. The new national quality assurance agency is firming up structures and processes for its effective take off.

## South Africa

South Africa presents one of the most promising and amply referenced higher education quality assurance systems in Africa. This credential is earned in part by the hunger for change and transformation which was kindled following the end of apartheid. Since the advent of democratic government in 1994, the country has been building a new education and training system whose goal has been to meet the needs of a democratic society. Policy developments have been aimed at democratising the education system, overcoming unfair discrimination, expanding access to education and training opportunities, and improving the quality of education, training and research.

Important policy instruments have been developed including legislation, White Papers and Green Papers.

Since 1994 there have been numerous changes to the university landscape. A series of mergers and incorporations has resulted in South Africa now having 23 public universities. These comprise eleven "traditional" universities, six universities of technology (what used to be known as technikons) and six comprehensive universities (that combine the functions of traditional universities and universities of technology). There are also two institutes of higher education in Northern Cape and Mpumalanga; they serve as administrative hubs, co-ordinating higher education provision in these provinces through partnerships with universities elsewhere. The institutes are in the process of being disestablished given the two new universities that have been established in the NC and Mpumalanga. Two new universities, in Kimberley and Mbombela, will start offering programmes from 2014. The university system is expansive by way of student numbers. The 2012 student head-count for the 23 universities was 937 455. This represents nearly a doubling from 1994, when the head-count was 495 356. By 2030 the goal is to have head-count enrolments of 1.6 million in public universities. The 2013 government White Paper accents the twin goals of promoting improvement of quality and building appropriate diversity in higher education. The aim is to ensure that a wide range of high-quality options is provided throughout the system, as well as to improve articulation between higher education institutions and between universities and other post-school institutions.

Ensuring quality of education has remained atop development agenda in South Africa. The primary bodies with a direct role in governing quality assurance and certification are the three Quality Councils– the Council on Higher Education (CHE), Umalusi, and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). They are responsible for: defining the three sub-frameworks of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF); quality assuring the provision, assessment and (in the case of Umalusi and the QCTO) certification of qualifications on their respective frameworks; and maintaining a database of learner achievements. In addition, professional bodies such as the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants and the South African Nursing Council have oversight of qualifications in specified areas, subject to the NQF Act. Many professional bodies exist through legislation while others do not owe their existence to legislation (White Paper, 2013).

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) has executive responsibility by law (Higher Education Act (Act No 101 of 1997), as amended, to quality assure the higher education system in South Africa. It is an independent statutory body and it functions as the Quality Council for Higher Education in terms of the National Qualifications Framework Act (Act No 67 0f 2008). CHE discharges its quality assurance responsibility through the establishment of a permanent committee (as required by the Higher Education Act), the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). The main areas of work of the CHE are:

- To provide advice to the Minister of Higher Education and Training on all higher education matters on request and proactively;
- To develop and implement a system of quality assurance for all higher education institutions, including private providers of higher education, which focuses on programme accreditation, institutional audits, national reviews, quality promotion and capacity development;
- To monitor the state of the higher education system in relation to the goals of national policies and international trends; and
- To contribute to the development of higher education through intellectual engagement with key issues in a number of activities (including research, publications and conferences) and in partnership with relevant stakeholders.

There are two types of accreditation processes that are conducted by CHE. These are programme accreditation and institutional audit, the latter now being replaced by institutional quality enhancement. Programme accreditation accredit new programmes offered by public and private

higher education institutions are subjected to programme accreditation while existing programmes offered by private higher education institutions are re-accredited.

New programmes for accreditation go through a candidacy phase during which they are assessed based on input, process, output and impact. In its submission for candidacy status for a new programme, an institution has to demonstrate, firstly, that it meets the HEQC's criteria for the candidacy phase (the input criteria), or, alternatively, that it has the potential or capability to meet these criteria in a stipulated period of time. Secondly, the institution has to submit a plan for the implementation of the new programme. An HEQC panel of peers evaluates applications for new programmes. The peer panel or the HEQC secretariat may also undertake a site visit, if necessary. If the requirements for candidacy status are met, the HEQC will award provisional accreditation to the new programme. In practice the two phase approach has not been used due to capacity constraints. Midway through the programme, the institution will be required to submit a progress report for evaluation by the HEQC secretariat. A site visit will be undertaken only where circumstances warrant it.

The input criteria for a new programme indicate the minimum standards for activities which should take place and resources, which should be available or present in order to offer the programme. Among the assessment criteria is student recruitment which needs to be undertaken as part of the marketing of the programme, and admission and selection policies and practices should be commensurate with its academic nature, within the framework of widening access and promoting equity in higher education. Staff competence and effectiveness are critical for programme quality. An institution should provide incentives, resources and development opportunities for staff to meet professional goals, to contribute to realising the institution's mission through the programme, and to respond to the challenges currently facing professionals in higher education. A strategy for teaching and learning is important in facilitating student learning. It should be appropriate for the institutional type and student composition and make provision for appropriate teaching and learning methods and the upgrading of teaching methods. It should set targets, develop plans for implementation, and find ways to monitor, evaluate and effect improvement in teaching and learning. Other requirements are suitable and adequate infrastructure, including library resources, support and access. Codes for clinical conduct and laboratory practice and safety are also necessary in the relevant programmes. Programme administrative services play an important role in providing information to students on programme issues, managing the programme information system that keeps records of students in the programme, and ensuring the integrity of processes leading to the certification of the qualification.

Next is the accreditation phase. Within a year of the first cohort of students graduating from the new programme, the institution must demonstrate that it has met the conditions set by the HEQC during the candidacy phase, which include conditions relating to the evaluation of the mid-term report from the institution. Acceptable reasons and relevant evidence have to be provided in instances where the conditions have not been met. The institution is also required to conduct a self-evaluation of the programme, using the HEQC's criteria for the accreditation phase, which include those for programme input, process, output and impact, and review. The institution must submit a programme improvement plan to address areas in need of attention as identified in the self-evaluation. A site visit may be conducted, if necessary. If the institution's submission is approved by the HEQC, the programme obtains accreditation status. It should be noted that in both phases of accreditation institutions will have the opportunity to further develop the programme where it does not meet the required criteria, on the expectation that they have the ability to remedy the problem areas and attain minimum standards within a stipulated period of time. The criteria for the re-accreditation of existing programmes are identical to those for new programmes and comprise the same categories of programme input, process, output and impact, and review.

When a new programmes meets or exceeds minimum standards, it is awarded provisional accreditation. If all minimum standards are not met but weaknesses can be addressed in a short

period of time, it is provisionally accredited (with conditions). If the majority of minimum standards are not met, it is not provisionally accredited. With regard to existing programmes, the same award scheme applies except of course that the provisional label is not applied when minimum standards are fully met. If partially met but deficiencies can be remedied in a short period of time, the programme is accredited (with conditions).

In institutional audit (not labelled accreditation) HEQC's audit criteria address the different stages of academic planning and operations at institutional level where quality considerations should play a role. These stages include policy development, resource allocation, policy implementation, the evaluation of the extent and impact of implementation, and the identification of interventions for improvement and enhancement. Depending on the institution's self-evaluation judgements, the audit panel could focus on quality considerations and the requisite evidence at any or all of the stages of academic management, as well as enquire about the coordination and/or integration of quality concerns of the different stages.

The new Quality Enhancement Project (QEP) differs from institutional audits in three important ways. The scope of the Quality Enhancement Project (QEP) will be narrower than that of the first audit cycle. The project will only focus on one of the three core activities of universities, namely, teaching and learning. The project will be limited to the undergraduate level since a large majority of students enrolled in public HEIs are undergraduates. The focus will be on student success, defined as students who graduate with attributes that are personally, professionally and socially valuable. The main thrust is on promoting student success, which is conceptualised as increasing the number of graduates that have attributes that are personally, professionally and socially valuable.

A *Framework for Institutional Quality Enhancement in the Second Period of Quality Assurance,* was approved by the HEQC and Council in December 2013.

The *Framework for the National Review of Programmes* was approved by the HEQC and Council in June 2012, thus paving the way for the first national review, that is, of the Bachelor of Social Work, since the re-establishment of the directorate in December 2010. Furthermore, discussions have also been held with the South African Law Deans Association regarding the possibility of undertaking a national review of the LL.B. Similarly, the *Framework for the Development of Qualification Standards in Higher Education* was approved by Council in March 2013, thus enabling the initiation of pilot projects in standards development. There are two pilots in the planning stage, namely, the development of standards for the Bachelor of Social Work and the MBA respectively. It is envisaged that the QEP will run for approximately five years. Anticipated outcomes of the QEP include benchmarks, codes of good practice, tools and resources for improving undergraduate educational provision, which will lead to improved outputs in terms of the number and quality of graduates.

## Sub-regional Agencies

There are two major quality assurance agencies which operate sub-regionally. These are Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'enseignement Supérieur (CAMES)
and the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA).

## Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'enseignement Supérieur (CAMES)

African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education known by its French acronym- CAMES was established in 1968 and formally constituted in 1972. Its mission is to (a) harmonise academic programmes in higher education institutions in its constituent countries and recruitment of higher education and research staff; (b) harmonise recruitment policies and standards of teachers and researchers in higher education institutions in its constituent member countries; (c) put in place within its member states conventions related to higher education and research; (d) promote among its members a long lasting scientific and cultural cooperation; and (e) collect and disseminate information related to higher education and research among its member institutions.

Its 19 member States are Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Democratic Republic of Congo (RDC), Rwanda, Senegal, Chad and Togo. It also has 52 Universities and research centres as well as several member organisations and partners.

**Figure 14: Countries covered by CAMES**



Figure 3 Nineteen Countries covered by CAMES
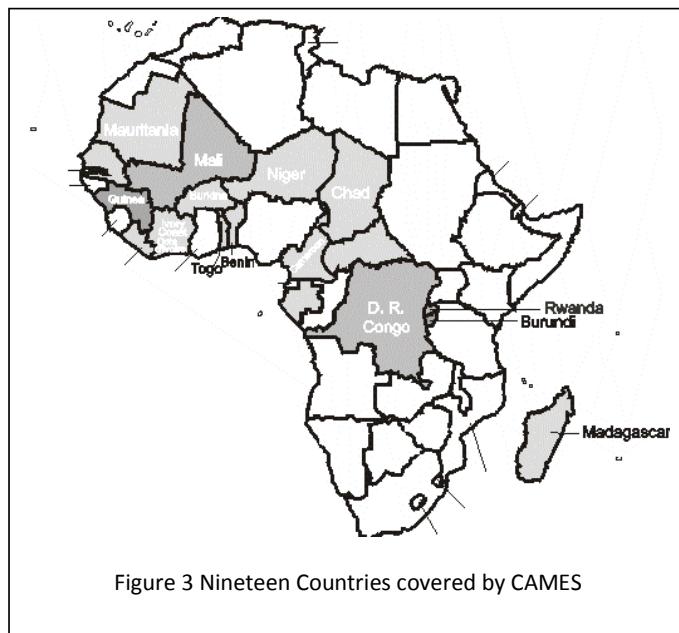
The core programmes of CAMES and year of establishment are: (a) recognition, equivalence of certificates and quality assurance of higher education programme (1972); (b) quality assurance programme (2006); (c) pharmacopeia and African traditional medicine (1974); (d) inter-African

consultative committee: peer review for lecturers and researchers (1978); (e) law and medicine aggregation (1982, 1983) : peer review through competition; and (f) ordre international des palmes académiques du CAMES (2002).

There are several on-going programmes including (a) strategic plan for programmes and institutional development of CAMES (2013-2017); (b) project for quality assurance implementation in UEMOA Countries (2013-2017). This program will be extended to Central African Countries (CEMAC), which are CAMES countries members; and (c) "Programme Silhouette": ICT implementation program in CAMES governance and its programs (2013-2017).

## Inter University Council for East Africa

The Inter University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) serves Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi (see Fig. 4). As narrated on the website of the Council, the decision leading to the establishment of IUCEA was reached in 1980.

**Figure 15: Countries member of IUCEA**
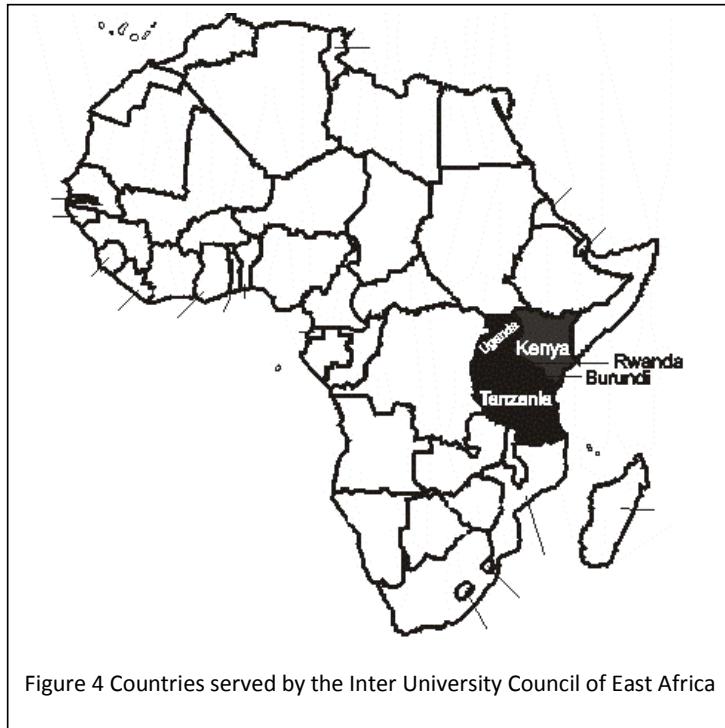


Figure 4 Countries served by the Inter University Council of East Africa

The Treaty for the establishment of the current East African Community was signed on 30th November 1999 and entered into force on 7th July 2000 following its ratification by the original three partner states, namely Republic of Kenya, Republic of Uganda, and United Republic of Tanzania. The Republic of Burundi and the Republic of Rwanda acceded to the EAC Treaty on 18th June 2007 and became full members of the Community with effect from 1st July 2007.

In 2009 the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) enacted the IUCEA Act 2009, thus effectively integrating IUCEA into the EAC operational framework. The Act spells out the objectives, functions, institutional set up and systems of governance and management of IUCEA. According to the Act any university, university college and degree awarding institution may apply for and get admitted to the IUCEA membership as long as it is properly incorporated in the EAC Partner State where it is operating and is pursuing objectives that are consistent with the functions of IUCEA as spelt out in the Act.

The main objectives of IUCEA are to: facilitate networking among universities in East Africa, and with universities outside the region; provide a forum for discussion on a wide range of academic and other matters relating to higher education in East Africa; and facilitate maintenance of internationally comparable education standards in East Africa so as to promote the region's competitiveness in higher education. Its main roles and functions are: coordinate inter-university cooperation in East Africa; facilitate the strategic development of member universities; and promote internationally comparable higher education standards and systems for sustainable regional development.

In 2005 IUCEA commenced a process towards introducing a regional quality assurance system for its member universities, in collaboration with the national higher education regulatory agencies of the founding EAC Partner States in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. IUCEA now include member universities from Burundi and Rwanda after the two countries joined the EAC in 2007.

In order to complement its efforts to introduce a regional QA system, IUCEA sought support from the German Academic Exchange Services (DAAD) for partnering IUCEA with German institutions, including the German Rectors Conference (HRK), German accreditation agencies, as well as several German universities with impressive QA systems, particularly the University of Oldenburg.

IUCEA with the support of DAAD and national regulatory agencies facilitated the training of QA experts from 47 IUCEA member universities as well as QA staff at the national regulatory agencies. The first leg of the training took place at the University of Oldenburg and then continued in East Africa. DAAD support also focused on training trainers (staff and students) in their universities, as well as on sensitization of the university management of the participating universities. Promotion of academic quality was therefore seen as a shared responsibility that included the universities' management and leadership teams, in the process for responsiveness to the maintenance of academic excellence.

DAAD support to IUCEA has also resulted in the publication of a Handbook on QA. The Handbook is based on experiences across the world as well as on developments in the region related to good QA practices. The most important materials that have been taken into account in preparing the Handbook are the documents developed by the national higher education regulatory agencies in the three founder members of the East African Community, namely the Handbook on Processes, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance prepared by CHE in Kenya, the Quality Assurance Framework for Uganda Universities used by NCHE in Uganda, and the Quality Assurance and Accreditation System for Institutions and Programmes of Higher Education used by TCU in Tanzania. The Handbook titled *"A Road Map to Quality: Handbook for Quality Assurance in Higher Education"* was developed into the following four chapters:

**Volume 1**: Guidelines for Self- assessment at program level aims at the faculty/ department to learn more about the quality of the programmes by means of an effective self assessment.

**Volume 2**: Guidelines for external assessment at programme level explains the procedures and processes for an external assessment at program level. The specific target group is the external expert team, but also the faculty/department to be assessed.

**Volume 3:** Guidelines for Self-assessment at institutional level aims especially at the central management of an institution and offers an instrument to discover more about the quality of the institution.

**Volume 4**: The implementation of a Quality Assurance system aims at quality assurance of all levels of an institution.

Volumes 1 and 2 have been published and distributed to all IUCEA member universities. The copyright of the handbook is jointly owned by IUCEA and DAAD.

Among the recent activities of IUCEA relating to accreditation are:

- A Quality Assurance Unit has been established.

- Guidelines on quality assurance for higher education called "The Road Map to Quality" were developed.

- A critical mass of quality assurance coordinators (about 47) was trained to spearhead and mainstream QA processes in the universities.

- Ten officers from Councils/Commissions responsible for Higher Education (National Regulatory Agencies) were trained on regional QA framework.

- A long-term regional strategy for holistic implementation and sustainability of QA being developed.

- Dialogue and QA sensitization workshops were conducted for Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Deans and Heads of Departments.

- Instruments for external evaluation were developed and piloted in 45 programmes.

- A guide for total quality management was developed and piloted in three universities.

- A framework for East African quality assurance system is being finalised.

# Elements for a Continental Framework from IUCEA and CAMES

## Establishing the framework

The two sub-regional quality assurance agencies studied- IUCEA and CAMES, progressed through a series of steps leading to their establishment. The proposed Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework can learn lessons from the successful practices of the sub-regional agencies, which can constitute elements of the PAQAF development process. These include (a) endorsement by member countries; (b) establishment of a legal framework; (c) establishment of a bureaucratic framework and process in line with the enabling legal provisions; (d) setting of minimum academic standards; (e) implementation of quality assurance activities based on approved minimum standards; and (f) institutional and human capacity-building.

### *Endorsement of participating countries:*

Countries signatory to IUCEA and CAMES for the quality assurance of their higher education systems began the process through a series of sub-regional consultations, which enhanced the subscription of the countries to the sub-regional agencies. This lesson suggests that the march to the development of a continental quality assurance framework needs to include the important step of national stakeholder consultations and agreement at the political level. In the case of IUCEA, consultations began in 1980 involving permanent/principal secretaries responsible for higher education in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya, the vice chancellors of the universities in the three countries who met in Nairobi (Kenya) to discuss the future of the cooperation of their institutions. As documented by IUCEA (retrieved August 12, 2014 and personal communications with senior officials of IUCEA on August 15, 2014), the political and top management stakeholders agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) committing them to maintain cooperation between their universities within the IUC framework. The MoU was subsequently signed, which also led to the transformation of IUC into the current Inter-university Council for East Africa (IUCEA). The MoU spelt out the objectives, functions, membership and governance of IUCEA, and, just like IUC, IUCEA continued and still is hosted in Kampala, Uganda.

CAMES proceeded along the same sequence of buy-in by stakeholder countries, which recognised during the early post-independence years, the challenges of coordination in higher education among Madagascar and African French-speaking countries. Several meetings of specialists in charge of higher education in countries wishing to join the league were convened. Subsequently an Advisory Commission of experts was set up to reform higher education, authorised by the resolution of Ministers of Education Conference held in Paris in 1966. The Commission of experts was to undertake thorough investigation of the structures and delivery system of African Universities and Madagascar, in a spirit of broad inter-African cooperation.

The findings of the Commission were submitted to Heads of States of AMCO (African and Malagasy Common Organisation) at the Niamey Conference, held on January 22 and 23, 1968, which decided the creation of "African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education" (CAMES), then combining sixteen Francophone countries of Africa and the Indian Ocean. The Convention on the status and organization of CAMES was signed by sixteen Heads of State or Government, on April 26, 1972 in Lome (Togo). All legal documents were updated in 1998-1999 following which the Council of Ministers of the CAMES countries, at the 17th Session held in Antananarivo (Madagascar) in April 2000, adopted the updated provisions on the establishment of CAMES.

The lesson from the foregoing findings is that in developing a Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework, an important first step is to secure endorsement of stakeholders and national governments. These will include higher education institutions under the umbrella of the Association of African Universities, national and sub-regional quality assurance agencies and

professional bodies, regional student organisations and political leaders at the national level especially ministers in charge of higher education.

### *Establishment of a Legal Framework*

Lessons from how the legal frameworks were established for IUCEA and CAMES – both sub-regional bodies provide some insights into how a continental framework can be put in place; especially the process and elements of the legal instrument. While a "Framework" is not equated with an "Agency" in this report, the major legal elements in setting up the two are not dissimilar.

In setting up a legal framework for IUCEA, the East African Legislative Assembly made up of members from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi processed a draft bill to the IUCEA Act 2009, thus effectively integrating IUCEA into the EAC operational framework. The Act spells out the objectives, functions, institutional set up and systems of governance and management of IUCEA. According to the Act, any university, university college and degree-awarding institution may apply for and get admitted to the IUCEA membership as long as it is properly incorporated in the EAC Partner State where it is operating and is pursuing objectives that are consistent with the functions of IUCEA as spelt out in the Act.  In the case of CAMES, its 19 member States entered into a legal agreement to enact the CAMES law of 1978. These countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Democratic Republic of Congo (RDC), Rwanda, Senegal, Chad and Togo. The lesson from the two sub-regional agencies is that the African Legislative Assembly can be the platform for processing a bill and enacting a law for the proposed Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework.

### *Establishment of a bureaucratic framework and process enabling legal provisions*

In drafting a bill for an Act for the establishment of the continental framework, lessons can also be learned from the sub-regional agencies. Both agencies specify vision, mission, objectives and functions that do not contradict the provisions of the laws of national quality assurance agencies or ministries in charge of higher education. This permits individual countries to set minimum standards and enforce such standards within the ambit of the provisions of the enabling laws of the land. In addition, higher education institutions in these countries are obligated to present themselves for quality assurance based on sub-regional standards. The same principle can apply in the case of the proposed Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework where members subscribing to the framework do not lose the identities of their national quality assurance frameworks but overlays these with meeting continental minimum standards.

Extracts from the legal frameworks of the two sub-regional agencies studied should deepen understanding of how the multi-country quality assurance system works. In the case of IUCEA, its main objectives as provided in the IUCEA Act of 2009 are to (a) facilitate networking among universities in East Africa, and with universities outside the region; (b) provide a forum for discussion on a wide range of academic and other matters relating to higher education in East Africa; and (c) facilitate maintenance of internationally comparable education standards in East Africa so as to promote the region's competitiveness in higher education. The main roles and functions are (a) coordinate inter-university cooperation in East Africa; (b) facilitate the strategic development of member universities; and (c) promote internationally comparable higher education standards and systems for sustainable regional development. The IUCEA Act 2009 also mandates the institution to advise the EAC Partner States on higher education matters, and to contribute towards meeting national and regional developmental needs; developing quality assurance processes in order to ensure that teaching, learning and research in the region achieve and maintain international standards; assisting member universities and other higher education institutions to identify and implement good practices in institutional management and use of resources; developing human resource capacity in all disciplines of higher education in the Community; and promoting equal opportunities for all higher education students in East Africa, including those with special needs.

In the case of CAMES, its laws envisions it to be a leading institution in quality assurance and capacity building of higher education and research systems in its member countries in Africa and Madagascar, in line with the socio-economic development needs of its member States. It is to be a monitoring, facilitation and integration body of higher education and research in the African and Malagasy francophone systems. Its functions are to (a) promote and foster understanding and solidarity between the member States in quality in higher education; (b) establish a permanent cultural and scientific cooperation between member States; (c) gather and disseminate academic or research papers: statistics, information on examinations, books, records, charts, information on vacancies and job applications from all backgrounds; (d) prepare conventions and encourage collaborative projects between member States in the fields of higher education, research and contribute to the implementation of these conventions; (e) design and promote dialogue to coordinate higher education and research systems in order to harmonize programmes.

### *Setting Cross-National Minimum Quality Standards*

The foundation for quality assurance is the minimum quality standards against which programmes and institutions are measured. All national and sub-regional quality assurance agencies and their quality assurance frameworks studied have minimum academic standards which are periodically reviewed to reflect contemporary developments in higher education, global trends within the discipline and the current socio-economic context of the locality where the institution is located.

IUCEA and CAMES present lessons to be learned in setting minimum quality standards in higher education across nations. This is an important lesson for a proposed continental quality assurance framework affirming that for five countries in the case of IUCEA and 19 countries for CAMES, all 54 African countries have the potential of coming together to agree on minimum academic standards. To scale up to the continental from the sub-regional, the deeper lessons to be learned are from the success stories of the processes and products of the sub-regional agencies.

The process leading to the setting up of minimum standards for quality assurance is similar in both IUCEA and CAMES. Both agencies bring together from member countries, subject matter specialists, professionals, employers of labour and a wide array of other relevant stakeholders. IUCEA and CAMES provide the facilitation platform for the panels to develop minimum standards. There are three key ingredients in the process. These are representation from member countries, participation of relevant stakeholders and consensus building in setting minimum academic standards. These three ingredients are recipe for setting minimum quality standards for the proposed continental framework. Participation of all countries subscribing to the framework is particularly important. Such scope of participation will guarantee that all voices be heard and peculiarities at the national level factored into the process of consensus building. The product of the exercise has a high chance of acceptability at the national level and in the institutions that make up the higher education system. Quality assurance activities at the institutional and national levels of the 24-member African countries making up IUCEA and CAMES confirm that the minimum standards set at the sub-regional level through the facilitation of IUCEA and CAMES are adhered to.

As reported by Nkunya (2014), IUCEA in collaboration with the national councils and commissions for higher education, higher education institutions, and the East African Business Council (EABC) is now developing programme benchmarks, which will be part of the regional quality assurance system. The benchmarks are for harmonization of the content, structure, quality, and delivery of the university curriculum and harmonizing qualifications. The process to develop programme benchmarks started in 2007 at a pilot level, through a project implemented by the national commissions and councils for higher education of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Through that pilot initiative benchmarks for engineering, natural sciences, medicine, and agriculture programmes were developed. Some of the higher education institutions that participated in the initiative are now using the piloted benchmarks. A more comprehensive process to develop programme benchmarks started in 2011. So far benchmarks for business studies have been developed and higher education

institutions are currently using them. Development of benchmarks for information technology and computer science is already in progress, and those for teacher education and humanities will be developed starting July 2014 and July 2015 respectively.

*Implementation of quality assurance activities based on approved minimum standards*

IUCEA is now developing East African Principles and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education as a framework to guide operationalization of the regional quality assurance system that has been developed (Nkunya, 2014). It is expected that the EAPG document will be available before the end of 2014. Among others, the EAPG document will safeguard consistency in quality assurance practices across the East African common higher education area, and thus enhance public confidence in the quality of higher education in the region. It will also enhance mutual trust among institutions and national higher education agencies, and strengthen mutual recognition of qualifications among the Partner States. Nkunya (2014) further notes that the EAPG document will be a regionally agreed point of reference for continuous quality enhancement in higher education, for developing shared understanding of higher education systems, and for promoting harmonized regional best practices in quality assurance.

Within the context of a continental framework, the alternative model to individual country participation is a combination of sub-regional and national. The 24 countries currently enrolled in IUCEA and CAMES can come with "two aggregated voices" to the continental platform and other countries outside sub-regional agencies can have individual representations.

Another lesson from the study of the process of setting minimum quality standards by IUCEA and CAMES that can be basis for a similar process for the proposed continental quality assurance framework is the sequence of the process. CAMES and IUCEA took an early decision on what should be quality assured- programme or institution or both through needs assessment surveys. The programme is the unit of the academic department, typically, the degree for which students are enrolled e.g. B.Sc. Biochemistry, B.A. English, Bachelor of Laws or Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery. Institutional accreditation/audit on the other hand is a more composite endeavour, embracing academic and non-academic experiences provided under the guidance of the higher institution.

The second stage is the assembly of experts to draft the benchmark and minimum quality (academic) standards. In all the eight sites studied, the quality assurance agency assembles relevant experts to draft the standards. The experts for programme quality assurance are mainly subject matter specialists and professional bodies and in some cases, students. For institutional accreditation, membership of the experts group is broader to include non-teaching staff since institutional audit assesses the degree to which the entire institutional vision, mission and objectives are being attained, including teaching, research, community service as well as student academic and non-academic support services. The third stage is the processing of the draft benchmark and minimum quality standards through validation, editorial and approval by the quality assurance agency.

## The resulting standards

The product of the exercise is a set of minimum standards for input, process, output and outcome of the higher education delivery system. These include minimum standards for (a) admission of students in terms of quality and quantity; (b) teachers and other personnel in terms of quality and quantity; (c) facilities for teaching, learning, research and support services; (d) teaching-learning processes; (e) governance; (f) curriculum - courses to be taught and their contents, knowledge, skills and values to be acquired and requirements for graduation. Since these are the core elements of the process and product for the setting of minimum standards that national and sub-regional quality

assurance agencies in Africa adopt, it is envisaged that the proposed Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework will benefit from this model.

## Lessons from Accreditation by Sub-regional Quality Assurance Agencies

From the point of view of its name, the proposed Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework is expected to address accreditation as part of its mandate. Lessons from CAMES and IUCEA are valuable in the pursuit of this intention. In the case of CAMES, accreditation at the programme and institutional levels is undertaken by the sub-regional agency in all its 19 member countries. Thus, aside from setting minimum standards across its 19 member countries, CAMES proceeds to assess the degree of fit with the minimum standards through accreditation. However, in the case of IUCEA, all five countries agree on the minimum standards and thereafter, proceed to individually conduct accreditation through their national quality assurance agencies. In both cases, the accreditation process is similar. It begins with self study followed by peer review and onsite assessment and finally, decision on the standing of the programme or institution with regard to accreditation status.

### Two options

From our study, the experience of CAMES and IUCEA presents two options for the proposed Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework.

The first option is to adopt the CAMES model of standards setting and accreditation. Interview with CAMES officials and national agencies within it confirm no conflict as the institutions meet national quality guidelines alongside present themselves for CAMES quality and accreditation check. A number of institutions find the CAMES quality assurance intervention to elevate their standing beyond national level and confer international comparability. In adopting the CAMES model as long as the continental framework does not present itself as being superior or overriding of national efforts, it has a high chance of wide acceptability. Higher education institutions in Africa should have the latitude to apply the continental quality assurance and accreditation framework alongside meeting minimum standards set at the national level. In practical terms, a university in Ghana, Nigeria or South Africa, will by national laws subject itself to quality checks by the National Board for Accreditation, National Universities Commission and Council for Higher Education (respectively). On top of this, the university can by choice, elect to subject itself for the continental quality check. Experience from CAMES shows that many institutions, over time will adopt the two-layer quality assurance approach.

The second option within the study of the African examples is the IUCEA approach. In adopting this option, the proposed Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework will only provide the minimum standards and it will empower the national quality assurance agencies to conduct accreditation in the institutions in their territories. Empowering the national quality assurance agencies denote capacity building and provision of guidelines that will be applied at the national and institutional levels to assure quality.

### Institutional and human capacity-building

For instance in 2005, IUCEA with support from DAAD organised a workshop on curriculum design for staff of the national quality agencies in its catchment. The workshop enhanced the sharing of experiences and concerns on how to take a curriculum as an instrument of quality improvement and quality assurance. By 2006, IUCEA also with the support of DAAD, organised the first visit to Germany by academic staff of East African universities. In January 2006 DAAD invited and sponsored a group of 30 senior university managers, including vice-chancellors, deputy vice chancellors, principals, and chief executive officers of higher education regulatory agencies from the three East African countries (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda). The team visited various German universities and

other institutions for two weeks for greater familiarity with quality assurance frameworks as practised by European countries, as a consequence of the Bologna Process. After the visit the delegation came up with a resolution that supported introduction of an East African quality assurance framework. This visit opened up the process to embark onto the process to introduce the East African quality assurance system. The visit to Germany was followed in June 2006 by a Stakeholders Workshop on Quality Assurance on theme 'Supporting a Regional Quality Assurance Initiative in East Africa.' Since 2006, there have been numerous workshops and meetings to strengthen the capacity at the national level of staff of national quality assurance agencies.

## Establishment of a Regional Qualifications Framework

As part of their quality assurance activities, CAMES and IUCEA see the importance of the establishment of sub-regional qualifications framework in achieving the goal of harmonisation of qualifications offered in higher education institutions in their partner countries. The qualifications framework provides a set of minimum knowledge and skills expected to be attained by persons seeking to attain a particular qualification e.g. a Bachelor's degree, Master's degree or a doctorate degree. This is at a superordinate level to the minimum academic standards which are detailed for each level of qualification and each discipline. It is desirable for the proposed Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework to be set up to incorporate a regional qualifications framework.

Drawing from the two sub-regional examples, in the case of IUCEA, in collaboration with the national councils and commissions for higher education, higher education institutions, East African Business Council and other stakeholders it is developing a regional qualifications framework for higher education. This is a generic instrument for harmonisation of higher education and training systems in East Africa, and for facilitating mutual recognition of qualifications among the EAC Partner States. The process of developing the framework started in December 2011 and will be completed in December 2014. The regional quality assurance system and the qualifications framework once fully developed, together with their operational instruments, will make East Africa a common higher education area, as EAC envisions. IUCEA is also developing appropriate legal provisions in order to guide and safeguard the principles for operationalization of the qualifications framework and overall higher education harmonization systems being developed.

## Funding of a Regional Quality Assurance Framework

The experiences of CAMES and IUCEA suggest three sources of funding for the proposed PAQAF. Statutory contributions by member States is a main line of financing the activities of the two sub-regional agencies. For PAQAF, this will mean mandatory annual contributions from subscribing African countries. The second mode of funding the sub-regional agencies is donor support. For IUCEA, DAAD has been in the vanguard of such donor funding. For PAQAF, it is envisaged that the EU and a broad base of donor network will provide a robust funding framework. The third source is internally-generated revenue from good and services arising from the implementation of PAQAF.

## Lessons from future plans of CAMES and IUCEA

If a continental framework is envisaged, it is useful to learn lessons from the future plans of successful sub-regional frameworks. The plans will be a good basis for reflection in the desire to

establish PAQAF. With respect to CAMES, the plan for the period 2015 to 2019 is for CAMES to play a leading role in higher education and research systems in Africa, in the needs of socio-economic developments. From the diagnosis of the internal and external environment and taking into account the CAMES' vision, missions and values, seven strategic thrusts are to be pursued with vigour. These are (a) strengthen the quality approach in all CAMES' activities and programs as well as in universities and research centres of member countries; (b) support and develop training, research and innovation; (c) develop synergies, partnerships and innovative programmes; (d) strengthen the CAMES' outreach and visibility; (e) establish a CAMES' code of ethics and deontology (f) modernize the CAMES' governance; and (g) strengthen CAMES virtual learning environment.

The strategic interventions of IUCEA 2011-2016 rolling plan focus on the following:

- Enhancing university support systems by developing, promoting and supporting student and staff exchange programmes; enhancing curriculum development strategies and university leadership skills and competences; and mainstreaming ICT into institutional core functions and general support operations;

- Strengthening research support to universities and within the Community;

- Strengthening higher education quality assurance processes in university institutions and eventually establishing an East African system of quality assurance;

- Enhancing regional research management and coordination systems for universities and the Community;

- Supporting higher education research in the Community so as to establish a regional education research repository for supporting harmonization of education systems and education sector reforms;

- Establishing an East African qualification framework to facilitate harmonization of education and training systems, and student mobility across the region, and harmonization of skills, competences and qualifications, so as to simplify mutual recognition of the latter;

- Supporting the EAC regional integration process through various strategies; and

- Supporting establishment of systems for the university of the future by promoting responsiveness of university institutions in the region to both excellence and relevance to the society.

## Potential Threats to the Establishment of PAQAF

The experiences at take-off of CAMES and IUCEA highlight a number of threats or challenges that the proposed PAQAF will need to recognise. Major threats to the realisation of the plan to establish CAMES and IUCEA in their early days are resistance by some stakeholders to a supra-ordinate quality assurance body, initial hitches in the establishment of a legal framework, funding constraints and capacity deficit. On funding constraints, it was reported that "IUCEA has been experiencing cash-flow problems over the recent past, mainly due to delayed contribution from the EAC Partner States. Furthermore, the IUCEA budget has remained static for the last decade despite the growth in staff numbers and operations. In addition to inadequate financial resources, there is inadequate prioritization and allocation of the resources to core activities of the institution, due to the existing cash flow problems" (IUCEA, 2014). CAMES (2014) also reports "non-compliance of financial commitments of member States" and "unofficial withdrawal of some States from the CAMES catchment".

It is useful to provide a listing of the main threats to the operations of each of the two sub-regional agencies.

For IUCEA the main threats are:

- Low financial resource base making it difficult to carry out all the core activities
- Deficiencies in the IUCEA Act 2009 affecting its operationalization and adequate institutional linkage to EAC
- Inadequate human resource capacity at the IUCEA Secretariat
- Inadequate/unavailability of operational policies, such as a human resource policy, etc.
- Inadequate systems to support a corporate culture at the IUCEA Secretariat
- Inadequate systems for prioritization and proper allocation of financial resources to core activities
- Unclearly defined staff roles and functions, and in some cases staff titles not adequately aligned to job functions and institutional responsibilities
- Inadequate institutional visibility to internal (regional) and external (international) stakeholders
- Lack of permanent institutional office premises for the Secretariat
- Lack of resource mobilization policy and strategies at the Secretariat
- Weak support to universities in terms of university leadership and management skills development and re-positioning, curriculum development strategies, facilitation for scholarly publications, access to e-teaching and e-learning materials, and absence of a regional e-library accessible by all member universities

For CAMES, the threats are:

- Tardiness in the process of decision making through the General Secretariat by CAMES political and academic authorities;
- Economic and financial crisis;
- Lack of coordination between CAMES and the other institutions working in higher education and research; and
- Unofficial withdrawal of some States

Initial resistance hurdle was scaled through extensive consultations at the political and technical level as well as public awareness campaign of the merit of the sub-regional agency. In the case of IUCEA, the East African Community was used as a lever for actualisation at the political level. Since member States of the community had signed on to a sub-regional harmonisation, process, it was not difficult to sync the idea of a sub-regional quality assurance agency within this process. Indeed, establishment of IUCEA was seen as a critical step in the grand process of harmonisation of higher education delivery systems. Involvement of Vice-Chancellors/Rectors in the initial deliberation to establish IUCEA also helped to wear down initial resistance. For CAMES, the linguistic cohesion (francophone) of the catchment countries and the identical higher education structure following after the French model (LMD) were factors in mitigating the initial resistance.

The legal framework is the basis of the existence of the two sub-regional agencies. The diversity of legal systems across countries placed some limit in the finalisation of enabling laws. The existence of sub-regional legislative assemblies expedited the process. Even then, this was not without the expected slowdowns brought about by idiosyncrasies in terms of needs and expectations of the different member countries in a way that the laws of the sub-regional quality assurance agency will not be in conflict with the provisions of the laws of the national quality assurance agencies.

Funding constraints were addressed through modest start to match available funds and gradual scaling up. Human capacity deficit is being addressed through training. Both CAMES and IUCEA have been very vigorous in organising training programmes especially workshops, locally and overseas for staff in the institutions they serve and in the agencies themselves. These capacity-building efforts have translated into a sizeable corpus of personnel with knowledge and skills to implement quality assurance at the institutional, national and sub-regional levels. The AU should note the findings of this study regarding these threats with respect to the proposed PAQAF.

## The Pan African University within the Context of the Proposed Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework

The Pan African University has footprints as centre of excellence in five countries (see Fig. 5.1). To ensure programme delivery does not depress below standards expected of world-class centre of excellence, there needs to be the establishment of benchmarks and minimum standards for all programmes offered and for the institutions in which they are located.

No mechanism for setting such standards currently exists. The proposed Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework would appear suited to initiate the setting of these standards as one of its early programmes. If nothing else, the urgency of this role could be the stimulus for speedy establishment of the continental framework by the African Union. If the establishment of PAQAF is slow in coming, a precursor could be located in a Unit in the Human Resources, Science and Technology Department of the African Union Commission. The precursor to PAQAF working in league with the management of the Pan African University and the national and sub-regional quality assurance agencies where the centre are located can initiate action to set the minimum standards using globally-established protocols involving the following steps:

- Needs assessment of Africa in relation to the programme offered in each centre of excellence with particular reference to the AU Agenda 2063 and future global competitiveness of the continent.

- Selection of members of panels made up of national and international experts and relevant stakeholders from catchment countries for the development of benchmark and minimum standards for each programme offered in the centres of excellence

- Collation of standards from globally well-ranked centres of excellence in programmes offered in the Pan African University system

- Collation of Africa's priorities in the focal areas of the Pan African University

- Workshop by expert panels to draft benchmark and minimum standards for input, process, output and outcomes for each programme in each centre of excellence using needs assessment report and collated standards as working documents

- Validation and trial testing of draft benchmark and minimum standards

- Approval of revised draft for use by the quality assurance mechanism for Pan African University.

**Figure 16: Campuses of PAU**
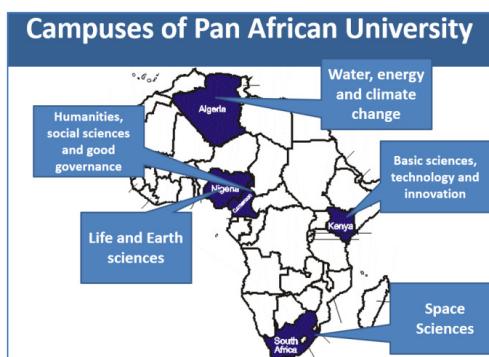
## AQRM within the Context of the Proposed Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework

Higher education has been identified as a major area of focus in the AU Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015), with quality as an area essential for revitalisation of higher education in the region. The AU Commission developed a framework for Harmonisation of Higher Education Programmes in Africa, with the specific purpose of establishing harmonised higher education systems across Africa, while strengthening the capacity of higher education institutions to meet the many tertiary educational needs of African countries. Other actions being promoted are innovative forms of collaboration and ensuring that the quality of higher education is systematically improved against common, agreed benchmarks of excellence which will facilitate mobility of graduates and academics across the continent. In this connection, the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) was instituted to ensure that the performance of higher education institutions can be compared against a set of criteria that takes into account the unique context and challenges of higher education delivery on the continent. AQRM is also envisioned to facilitate improvements in quality of delivery of institutions across the continent, and allow for an objective measure of performance. A continental system will pave the way for African institutions to compete more effectively in similar systems in operation at a global level, while also creating a case for review of the basis on which those global systems operate.

The proposed Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework needs to be built on the validated rubrics of the African Quality Rating Mechanism for at least two reasons. AQRM has been accepted region-wide as a template for quality improvement hence it can be basis for setting regional minimum quality standards within the context of PAQAF. It should be noted that AQRM addresses quality issues relating to:

**Figure 7: Standards of AQRM**

| Standards of AQRM | No of rating items |
| --- | --- |
| Governance and Management | 9 |
| Infrastructure | 8 |
| Finance | 7 |
| Teaching and Learning | 9 |
| Research, Publication and Innovations | 10 |
| Community/Societal Engagement | 7 |
| Programme Planning and Management | 8 |
| Curriculum Development | 7 |
| Teaching and Learning (in relation to Curriculum) | 6 |
| Assessment | 6 |
| Programme Results | 8 |

**Note**: See Appendix for detailed AQRM standards

Secondly, AQRM has key elements for the development of a regional qualifications framework which is proposed as a mandate of PAQAF. Thirdly, AQRM provides a template for partnership which PAQAF can leverage on. AQRM is expected to be implemented in partnership with regional and

national higher education bodies. A three-stage process is proposed, building on the existing roles of national, regional and continental level bodies. This process ensures that institutional ratings are not influenced by individuals or national/regional politics, as review and verification happens at three different levels, thereby facilitating consistency of review across African Institutions. This will also serve to promote harmonisation in the longer term.

Institutions are expected to work with relevant national higher education bodies to prepare their quality rating submissions. To avoid duplication and to support the development of national quality assurance processes across the continent, as far as possible this process is expected to be aligned with national quality assurance procedures. National bodies will review the institutional submission and request additional information as needed. Once the national body is confident that the data is valid, they will endorse the submission which will then be sent to the relevant regional body, e.g. AARU, CAMES, COMESA, ECOWAS, IUCEA, SADC and SARUA. A team of two experts will be appointed within each participating regional body. Their role will be to process the submission, calculate the institutional and/or programme rating and prepare a narrative report detailing areas of strength and areas for improvement. Once completed, the rating and narrative report will be sent to the coordinating team at the AAU who will conduct the final review and verification. It is proposed that a team of five people are appointed with responsibility for managing and marketing this quality rating process at a continental level. In addition, the continental level data will be maintained and held by the AAU.

## AfriQAN and the Proposed PAQAF

The African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) should play a significant role in activities relating to the implementation of PAQAF. Being a network twinning national quality assurance agencies in the region, AfriQAN can provide a database of human resources from member agencies for use by PAQAF implementation mechanism. Hence it is helpful to include the AfriQAN leadership in efforts to set up PAQAF.

## Potential Opportunities for PAQAF

The AU vision for the harmonisation of the higher education space in Africa is an opportunity for the proposed PAQAF to flourish. This vision is captured in the Second Decade of Education and in AU's Agenda 2063. Quality higher education is critical to high-level human resources that are needed for the actualisation of Africa's Agenda 2063. In turn, region-wide quality assurance is important for quality higher education. Since no regional framework exists for assuring higher education quality, this void needs to be filled by PAQAF.

Secondly, the European Union, through the Joint AU-EU partnership arrangement, is providing funds to support higher education in Africa. This is an opportunity that should be seized to initiate a process that could lead to the establishment of PAQAF. Sustainability in funding beyond EU and donor support should also be part of this initial take-off.

**Similarities and Differences in Quality Assurance and Accreditation Practices of the Eight Study Sites**

| Criteria | Egypt | Kenya | Mozambique | Nigeria | Senegal | South Africa | CAMES | IUCEA | Remarks/ Degree of similarity |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Types of Accreditation** | Programme/ Professional and Institutional | Programme/ Professional and Institutional | Programme/ Professional and Institutional | Programme/ Professional and Institutional | | Programme/ Professional and Institutional | Programme | | No difference |
| **Degree of obligation** | Institutions are obligated to have their programmes accredited and/or the entire institution accredited or audited | Institutions are obligated to have their programmes accredited and/or the entire institution accredited or audited | Not obligatory in many cases but institutions feel encouraged to subject themselves to external accreditation | Institutions are obligated to have their programmes accredited and/or the entire institution accredited or audited | | Institutions are obligated to have their programmes accredited and/or the entire institution accredited or audited | | Institutions are obligated to have their programmes accredited and/or the entire institution accredited or audited | No difference |
| **Accreditation process** | Setting of minimum standards Self study Peer Review Site visit Decision On-going review and improvement | Setting of minimum standards Self study Peer Review Site visit Decision On-going review and improvement | Setting of minimum standards Self study Peer Review Site visit Decision On-going review and improvement | Setting of minimum standards Self study Peer Review Site visit Decision On-going review and improvement | Setting of minimum standards Self study Peer Review Site visit Decision On-going review and improvement | Setting of minimum standards Self study Peer Review Site visit Decision On-going review and improvement | Setting of minimum standards Self study Peer Review Site visit Decision On-going review and improvement | Setting of minimum standards Self study Peer Review Site visit Decision On-going review and improvement | Similar |
| **Participants in the accreditation process** | Discipline experts and relevant stakeholders | Discipline experts and relevant stakeholders | Discipline experts and relevant stakeholders | Discipline experts and relevant stakeholders | Discipline experts and relevant stakeholders | Discipline experts and relevant stakeholders | Discipline experts and relevant stakeholders | Discipline experts and relevant stakeholders | Similar |
| **Funding of** | Mainly by | Mainly by | Mainly by | Mainly by | Mainly by | Mainly by | Mainly by | Mainly by | Similar |

| accreditation | government through the national accreditation agency | government through the national accreditation agency | government through the national accreditation agency | government through the national accreditation agency | government through the national accreditation agency | government through the national accreditation agency | government through the national accreditation agency | government through the national accreditation agency | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Maximum Validity of accreditation** | Programme= 3-5 years Institutional= 8-10 years | Programme= 3-5 years Institutional= 8-10 years | Programme= 3-5 years Institutional= 8-10 years | Programme= 3-5 years Institutional= 8-10 years | | | | | No difference |
| **Accreditation labels** | Denied, interim (provisional) and full | Denied, interim (provisional) and full | Denied, interim (provisional) and full | Denied/ Revocation, Probation (provisional) and full | | | | | No difference |
| **Accreditation of non-traditional provisions** | Weak | Weak | Developing | Developing | | | | | |

# Conclusions and recommendations

In this chapter, we presented the mechanisms for quality assurance and accreditation in the eight study sites. We found a high degree of commonality among the six national and two regional agencies in the manner of conducting accreditation. All have the same conceptual framework to quality assurance generally and accreditation specifically.

The effectiveness of practice indicates some variability in the impact since the quality of products from the higher education system in Africa continues to be a matter for worry. From our interaction with the eight study sites, we have derived conclusions and recommendations for institutional quality assurance, national quality assurance agencies, international quality assurance agencies, and African governments.

## Recommendations for good practices in quality assurance and accreditation

*It should be stressed that the report in this section presents the general scheme rather than the specific since a number of national quality assurance agencies and institutions are already implementing some of the good practices.*

### Recommendations for institutional quality assurance

1. ***Lessons on programme and institutional accreditation***: In all eight study-sites in Africa, there is a general trend for institutions to prepare for programme and institutional accreditation literally on the eve of the exercise. African universities need to learn being ready for accreditation in-between seasons. Although improvement planning is part of programme and institutional accreditation in Africa, little attention is paid to the continuous improvement component. Finally the involvement of students and members of relevant professional bodies in the peer-review team is a crucial element in creating legitimacy. Internationally institutions see quality assurance as a continuous process, they implement improvement plans involve a broad group of stakeholders.

2. ***Strict adherence to student enrolment carrying capacities****:* Owing to pressure for the few available spaces, many African universities especially in Francophone countries grossly over-enrol. This impacts negatively on resources for teaching, learning and research and ultimately on the products of the higher education system. In Europe and North America, over-enrolment is the exception rather than the rule since mechanisms are firmly in place not to admit one student more that the resources for delivering quality higher education can support. Institutions and national quality assurance agencies in Africa should strengthen the mechanisms for strict compliance with maintaining their carrying capacities.

3. ***Sustenance of institutional quality culture***: In the US, most countries in Western Europe and some Asian countries, institutions, without external prodding, implement internally-developed quality assurance policies in such areas as curriculum delivery, teacher and student responsibilities in teaching and learning and minimum standards for evaluation. In Africa, whereas many institutions have quality assurance policies, implementation of such policies is weak. Teacher and student absenteeism and lack of accountability in teaching predominate. Cases abound where teachers especially in public universities come to class outside time-tabled periods, merely dictate usually out-dated notes to students, apply compromised evaluation methods and are generally phlegmatic in their teaching duties. Students in turn have poor reading culture and are merely concerned with rote learning to pass examinations. The practice

of students' assessment of lecturers' performance, routine in universities in Europe and North America, is just gaining foothold in a rather sluggish manner in the face of resistance by lecturers. Nigeria presents a case in point. African higher education systems should learn three lessons in this regard- embrace the development of an institutional policy on quality assurance; implement approved policies with a great degree of fidelity; and build internal capacity for quality assurance through a well-established quality assurance unit under the office of the Vice-Chancellor or Rector. In all, the goal is to build a sustainable quality culture in the institution.

ISO 9001:2008, is increasingly being used by universities for quality assurance purposes. Almost all Malaysian universities are ISO certified. In Africa several Kenyan universities and the Open University of Zimbabwe are also ISO certified There is some controversy about whether this is really a quality assurance process - it actually ensures that a quality assurance management system is in place, and does not guarantee that the programmes are of quality. Still, many universities have found it very useful and it should not be ignored.

4. ***Stability of the academic calendar:*** A stable academic calendar, not interrupted by spurts of strikes is one of the key prerequisites to quality. Universities in Asia, Europe and North America are known for stable academic calendars and are able to plan several years ahead, fulfilling curriculum requirements for graduation. Strikes called by staff or student unions stretch for a few hours or days. Not so for universities in many African countries such as Ghana and Nigeria where staff strikes linger for months and graduation dates become unpredictable. After a strike, there is a rush to proceed to another academic year, leading to incomplete semesters and ultimately, poor quality of graduates. African universities need to learn the important lesson of ensuring stable academic calendars through more effective ways of managing staff and student unions. In many cases the strikes are due to national governments reneging on official promises made to these unions or failure to meet the legitimate demands of the unions. In this wise, African governments should be more dexterous in managing crises involving staff and student unions in higher education institutions.

5. ***Improved rigour in the selection of leadership of higher education institutions:*** Improvement in quality assurance and fostering of institutional quality culture cannot be separated from the quality of leadership of the higher education institution or national quality assurance agency. In the US and the UK, there is a high degree of scrutiny in favour of quality of persons appointed to the position of leadership of a university or equivalent such as Vice-Chancellor or Rector. Even when appointed, the system activates a mechanism for ejecting an appointee who does not measure up to quality standards for such leadership position. Between January and May, 2014, about eight Presidents of US universities lost their job on account of failing to meet the quality mark.

Africa had a history of appointing persons of high-quality academic, professional and ethical standing into posts of Vice-Chancellor or Rector. In recent times, cases of praiseworthy appointments are becoming less common which by the logic depicted in the foregoing paragraph is having a depressing effect on the quality of higher education in the region. The lesson that should be learned is to depoliticise such appointments and eliminate ethnicity, parochialism and favouritism in the appointment process. More than ever before, Africa needs its best brains and persons endowed with excellent leadership qualities in running the affairs of the higher education within a system of greater university autonomy.

6. ***Improving the quality of research:*** Recommendations on improving quality assurance in higher education in Africa will be incomplete without a statement on research. We reported in Chapter 2 about the unimpressive profile of Africa, relative to other regions in the quality and quantity of research in the higher education systems. Africa can learn a few lessons from Europe and North America in at least six areas- research capacities of scholars; relevance of research to solving contemporary societal problems; adequacy and currency of research facilities and infrastructure;

use of research output by industry; adequate funding for research; and reward for research excellence. On all six measures, African scholars are poorly served. We make some recommendations hereunder on some of these inadequacies.

Research capacity of scholars working in higher education institutions in Africa is largely weak. We do not take away the sprinkle of bright spots. An intensive regime of capacity building through a multiplicity of ways is recommended. One of such ways is collaboration and partnership with renowned scholars within but mostly outside Africa. Mentoring is another that is between older and successful scholars and the younger "greenhorns" as mentees. The third is North-South collaboration in capacity building and exchange of scholars.

We subscribe to the view of Mohamedbhai (2014) that African governments can take several initiatives to both improve research capacity and boost postgraduate education. In his view, "First, they should abandon the approach of creating new universities in the existing model, or upgrading technical colleges and polytechnics to universities. Tertiary education needs 'mission differentiation'. In practice, this means that governments should support some of their existing universities to become research-strong institutions running Master's and PhD programmes while also offering undergraduate courses. Most staff should have a PhD and should be freed from heavy teaching loads so they can undertake research. The other tertiary institutions should place greater emphasis on the equally important mission of teaching and learning at undergraduate level. Only then can quality research really flourish in African countries. It would be impossible, and unnecessary, for most staff in all tertiary institutions on the continent to have a PhD."

African scholars pay less than acceptable attention to research for solving Africa's contemporary problems. The focus is less on applied research, bringing the regional research ethos into doubtful relevance. We recommend the shift in institutional and national research policies in favour of applied research and the enforcement of the provisions of such policies. The African Union is supportive of this trend through Project 2063. South Africa is well on course in this direction. Other African countries are entreated to be part of this research slant.

We observe that quality assurance has so far concentrated on undergraduate programmes but increasingly, in all regions of the world, processes are being developed for quality assurance of postgraduate programmes, especially at the doctoral level. Doctoral programmes are important for Africa and we should look at what is happening elsewhere, and adapt the quality assurance methods in other parts of the world to suit African conditions.

We conclude this section of the recommendations with a point of view by Mohamedbhai (2014). "African universities need reforms that promote research. But these reforms should extend to putting the research to practical use — research in Africa should not be undertaken merely to generate knowledge but also to help promote sustainable development. Any attempt to boost research in African universities that simply aspire to global rankings would not only waste scarce resources but would also be inappropriate, given the need to address development challenges."

### Recommendations for national quality assurance agencies

7. **Collaboration in building human resource capacity**: In Europe and Asia, there are intensive efforts at national quality assurance agencies, partnering in building capacities of their staff through workshops and other training programmes. For instance, the UK Quality Assurance Agency is active in implementing a scheme of such collaboration with quality assurance agencies in Africa, Asia, Europe and the US. Memoranda of Understanding have been signed with the agencies and these MoUs are not delivered on paper but through active implementation of their provisions.

Only a few national quality assurance agencies in Africa have similar partnerships and linkages for capacity building. Of the 22 national agencies, less than a sixth have MoUs for capacity building and resource-sharing with equivalent agencies within and outside Africa. CHE of South Africa, NUC of Nigeria and NAB of Ghana provide examples of the scant success story. Even with Memoranda of Understanding, the few African national quality assurance agencies that subscribe to this practice have low implementation of the MoUs ostensibly on account of funds limitations.

The advantage derivable from collaboration to build and strengthen human capacities cannot be understated. National quality assurance agencies in Africa are young relative to those in Europe and the US. While higher education systems are different, the process of quality assurance and accreditation have similar, global cross-cutting steps. Hence, there is a lot to learn from countries with greater experience through partnership to build and strengthen capacities of personnel in national quality assurance agencies in Africa.

What is needed is a careful selection of national quality assurance agencies internal and external to Africa and entering into partnerships in areas where they have comparative advantages. Translating the aspirations to a concrete MoU is an important step. More important still is implementing the provisions with a high degree of fidelity. Since human resource is at the heart of the success of the national quality assurance agency, applying scarce funds to human capacity building will be money well spent.

8. *Better use of ICT in quality assurance and accreditation processes:* African higher education systems can learn important lessons from the use of ICT in Canada, Hong Kong, India and Singapore in the quality assurance and accreditation processes. The cost of physical meetings by quality assurance agencies with the institutions is huge. In CAMES, Ghana, IUCEA, and Nigeria, most meetings convened to set minimum standards, agree on modalities for accreditation and review of higher education curricula. They are conducted on-site with participants having to travel long distances and paying to be accommodated in hotels. This can account for a sizeable proportion of the annual budget of the institution and the national agency. For a fraction of the cost and as practised in the referenced countries outside Africa, technology can be used to deliver more or less the same result as the onsite meeting. Virtual meetings through video-conferencing and use of email exchanges can be worked into the process so that if there is to be onsite meetings, it will be fewer in number and more productive.

Only in a few countries such as Nigeria and South Africa is the self-study form for accreditation completed online. In many others, it is the hard copy that is completed by the institution and mailed to the national agency or professional body. The tedium in the traditional way of doing things can be relieved using technology by the adoption of a web-based procedure as practised in other regions of the world.

9. *Sharing of good practices among linguistic groups in quality assurance*: Africa's linguistic diversity into Anglophone, Arabophone, Francophone and Lusophone presents a set of challenges to quality assurance. The national quality assurance agencies in Nigeria and South Africa are acclaimed to be the most-experienced in sub-Saharan Africa. Both are English speaking. Senegal and Mali as exemplars of French-speaking countries find it challenging to fully benefit from capacity-building efforts initiated by Nigeria and South Africa. Yet, Europe with wider linguistic diversity is able to surmount the challenge through better inter-phasing, a lesson Africa should learn. We have provided in Chapter 3, fuller details of how this can be achieved.

10. *Sharing of good research practices:* Africa can learn from the European Higher Education Area in sharing good research practices across borders. Herein lies the merit of the African Higher Education and Research Space (AHERS) being proposed by ADEA and AU.

The African Higher Education and Research Space (AHERS) is the vista of opportunity for members of the higher education community in Africa to seamlessly interact in the quest to fulfil their teaching, research and service functions. The emphasis on research within the "space" underlines the accent placed on the congregation of African scholars to find solutions, through research, to problems inhibiting Africa's development. AHERS is to permit unhindered collaboration among students and staff of higher education institutions in Africa regardless of linguistic and other barriers. We recommend that steps be taken to fast-track the actualisation of AHERS.

11. *Strengthening of AfriQAN*: Almost every world region has an operational network for quality assurance, usually grouping the national quality assurance agencies. So does Africa - AfriQAN However, AfriQAN has been dogged by lack of resources. How to make AfriQAN fully operational is particularly urgent? It has a crucial role to play in quality assurance in Africa, not least in preparing and promoting regional African Standards and Guidelines in quality assurance. In some way this is linked to the creation of AHERS. In Europe the creation of EHEA and the development of quality assurance through the creation of the ENQA went hand in hand.

12. *Mobilisation of African Diaspora in Quality Assurance and Accreditation*: The African Diaspora is one of the world's largest, and growing. The high mobility of African higher education students to Asia, Europe and North America indexes the magnitude of the pump inducing the growth. The power of the African Diaspora in bolstering quality in higher education in Africa is yet to be fully harnessed. Participation of the Diaspora in accreditation has hardly been documented by national quality assurance agencies. Yet, such persons can plough their overseas experiences into local practice and help with setting minimum standards that will be globally competitive, participate in curriculum development and implementation as well as with research.

    **In a recent debate on the benefits and drawbacks of 'brain circulation',** *Nordling (2014) observed that "***u**nfortunately, many African universities do not provide good conditions for young talents. Indeed, many do the opposite. A challenge for African universities is 'inbreeding'—academics spending their entire career from undergraduate to senior posts at the same institution. If brain poaching erodes a country's intellectual elite by removing its talent, inbreeding does the same by strangling curiosity and ambition. Where inbreeding is the norm, promotions are rarely based on performance, but handed down to people based on their age, their titles or connections to the university management." She concludes that "forcing people to stay will not work. Creating opportunities, even if these involve small financial reward, is key to retaining staff. University leaders can make a big difference by reforming institutional structures so that they are better able to give credit where it's due. Good academics will always be curious wanderers. But they, too, love their homes. Their homes simply do not always love them back."

13. *Recognising Non-Traditional Learning in Quality Assessment:* Our study did not show any of the quality assurance practices in the eight sites that accord significant weighting to students' prior learning outside the school system as part of credit earned. There is an ever-growing recognition of prior learning by institutions and national quality assurance agencies in Europe and North America. The recognition extends to assessing such prior learning experiences for the purpose of assigning credit load in favour of the student. For instance, a student who has had work experience in the industry in civil engineering will have such experience assessed by experts and quantified to comparable credit load for the course he or she is taking in the higher education institution.

    In Africa, there are many students who have prior learning experiences that the quality assurance system fails to accord credit weight. Pockets of efforts at giving visibility to prior learning are noticeable in some African higher education systems e.g. in South Africa and

Mauritius. We recommend that the necessary national policy framework be established in all African countries to provide for the recognition of prior learning in the quality assurance system.

14. **Quality Assurance of Online Delivery System:** There is some tardiness by African quality assurance agencies in accrediting online courses especially those delivered trans-nationally. The ICT revolution dictates that the pace of online delivery will quicken in the coming years and we will be left with no choice but to miss out on an opportunity we should have taken earlier. This is an opportunity that quality assurance agencies in the US are taking by setting minimum standards for online providers and accrediting online courses that meet such standards. Africa should learn some lessons from the experience of other regions.

In relation to online delivery, the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) revolution, for good or for ill, will soon swing forcefully to African shores. Daniel (2012) notes that "media frenzy surrounds MOOCs and commercial interests have moved in. Sober analysis is overwhelmed by apocalyptic predictions that ignore the history of earlier educational technology fads. While the hype about MOOCs presaging a revolution in higher education has focussed on their scale, the real revolution is that universities with scarcity at the heart of their business models are embracing openness. The competition inherent in the gadarene rush to offer MOOCs will create a sea of change by obliging participating institutions to revisit their missions and focus on teaching quality and students as never before. It could also create a welcome deflationary trend in the costs of higher education."

The key questions that confront university managers in the conversation about MOOCs really involve certification and credit: How do/should we assess "prior learning" for students who come to us with a certificate of completion from a MOOC provider such as Coursera, edX, or Udacity? Assuming we can assess prior learning, should we give course credit to students who have completed a MOOC? And if so, for what courses and from which MOOCs?

Open Badges is a project of Mozilla. Badges are visual representations of achievements, learning, skills, interests and competencies. They are digital indicators of skills learned outside of the classroom (usually informally). The undergirding philosophy is that learning occurs everywhere. Outside the brick-and mortar school, there are several places where learners acquire knowledge and skills that need to be recognised. The web and other new learning spaces provide avenues to gain such knowledge, skills and experiences. Badges provide a way for learners to get recognition for these skills, and display them to potential employers, schools and colleagues.

It is recommended that steps be taken by national quality assurance agencies in Africa to learn from good practices in other regions notably North America in designing accreditation schemes for online delivery modes.

### Recommendations for African governments

15. **Sustainable Funding for Quality Assurance Agencies:** Over 70% of national quality assurance agencies in Africa are handicapped by funds to effectively implement their quality assurance mandate. There is over-dependence on government rather than on revenues derived from the institutions and other sources ostensibly to preserve the independence of the agencies. Creative funding mechanisms and application of cost-saving measures need to be more forcefully explored to avoid lowering the quality of their work in the face of funds limitations.

16. **Reducing Government Interference:** In spite of laws guaranteeing quasi-autonomy from government, a number of national quality assurance agencies in Africa are manipulated in the areas of student enrolment, staff recruitment and procurement of goods and services by government through the Ministries responsible for higher education. Such manipulation impacts negatively on quality. In the US, the independence from government of quality assurance

agencies guarantees protection from such manipulations. The lack of tie to the financial apron strings of government strengthens this independence. It will be long in coming for African national quality assurance agencies to be self-sufficient in funding without government grants. A promising way to secure financial autonomy is for direct national assembly provision by first charge rather than indirectly through the Ministry of Education. This should be complemented with revenue generated internally from consultancies and endowments. The Nigerian model of Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) and the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) are worthy of recommendation.

17. ***More Active Participation of the Private Sector in the Quality Assurance Process***: As successfully explored in Europe and North America, partnership in quality assurance with the private sector is another lesson for the quality assurance agencies in Africa. There is a growing niche for the private sector for the provision of quality higher education as employers of labour and their participation as members of accreditation teams cannot be downplayed. Accreditation panels, with private sector members for onsite review of academic programme delivery in many African countries is the exception rather than the rule. We recommend that relevant private sector persons be engaged as members of accreditation panels. This, of course, is in addition to the partnership with professional bodies.

In Africa, the rate of growth of private universities is one of the fastest in the world (Varghese, 2012). Many of these universities (as reported by chief executive officers of national quality assurance agencies in Africa attending the 5th International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa held in Abidjan in 2012) are of lower quality relative to public universities. At least two lessons can be learned from Asia, Europe and North America. In these regions, private providers are set strict quality guidelines, which are enforced so that quality is not compromised in the setting up and running of private universities. At issue here is enforcement. All national quality assurance agencies in Africa have elegant guidelines on the establishment of private universities. Enforcement and monitoring of quality standards are persisting challenges. The will to enforce needs to be mustered to halt the downward slide of quality of private higher education.

18. ***Improved investment in quality higher education:*** Compared to other regions studied, African countries have not made significant progress in improving funding to higher education to deliver on quality. In recent years, some countries like Lesotho, Nigeria and Tanzania have increased their higher education budgets in absolute terms; in the case of Nigeria, about 150%. Others like Botswana, Rwanda and South Africa continue to offer attractive working conditions. However, several countries have failed to mobilise adequate financial resources to improve teaching, learning, research and staff working conditions. The worrying angle is the lack of sustainability in funding even in cases where improvements are recorded. Like a sinusoidal wave, funding level goes up one year and is lowered the next. The prompt for an upward rise, being in most cases, strikes by staff and student unions.

The national quality assurance agencies, except Namibia and a few others are underfunded to a point of lowering their efficiency and effectiveness in quality assurance. African countries can learn lessons from China's massive injection of funds into the higher education system (in 2013, about 12% of GDP) with anticipated dividend of boosting high-level human resources for China's economic growth. African countries should learn to provide funding for the higher education delivery system including the national quality assurance agencies if the genuine desire is to propel socio-economic development in the 21st century.

19. ***Support by Development Partners***: The intervention of development partners in North America and Europe in supporting quality assurance efforts in higher education is minimal relative to the volume of such intervention in Africa. Africa is symbolically looked at as the "crippled baby" that needs help of the stronger siblings to rise to the challenge of development in a globalised world.

The stronger siblings of today benefitted from support in the past and are now able to fend, in large part, for their quality assurance needs. This is a lesson Africa should learn in the quest to install a sustainable quality assurance system. The support of DAAD in East and West Africa for the strengthening of the higher education quality assurance system has been positively impactful. The European Union through a joint AUC partnership, has been foremost in intervening continent-wide, leading to perceptible improvement in quality assurance practices at the national and institutional levels. The Tuning-Africa project is one of the flagship interventions as well as support for the development of a Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework. UNESCO has been extremely potent in pushing the agenda of quality in higher education in Africa and providing technical and financial support for numerous capacity building activities such as the series of the International Conference on Quality in Higher Education in Africa (ICQAHEA). In all of these, Africa should realise its huge natural resource endowment which if not frittered away through corruption and bad leadership, should be a major funder of quality assurance projects in other regions of the world and not a chronic cap-in-hand beggar for "financial crumbs from the table of others". In the wise counsel of Yizengaw (2008), we need a new kind of partnership based on listening to voices, on mutual benefit and respect, sense of ownership, urgency and purpose. It should be a partnership that recognises that the diversity of Africa and specific circumstances of each country will have lasting sustainable effect and impact.

20. *Strengthening centres of excellence:* Rapid elevation of quality can be achieved through centres of excellence as they are gradually becoming more respectable in the African higher education horizon. This concept has worked well in Asia, Europe and North America. Since 2013, the AAU has been leading a well-funded project in support of the evolution of such centres paying particular attention to their competitive advantages, experience and expertise, to improve research capacity and share in global scientific outputs. The lesson to learn here is that in other regions, the experiment is sustainable on account of less dependence on donor funding. African governments, through the AU should guarantee sustainable funding for such centres. The Pan African University (PAU) gives hope that this can be achieved.

21. *Improvement in quality assurance at the basic and secondary level*: It is becoming increasingly clear that efforts to boost quality of higher education is handicapped by the poor quality products from the secondary system (Shabani, 2014). We recommend that African countries should pay greater attention to quality assurance at the basic and secondary level so that inputs into the higher education system can be better than what currently obtains.

22. *Re-focusing ranking*: Global rankings are here to stay. Generally, rankings, not so much global but national, provide transparency that can lead to an improvement of quality. In US, Malaysia and Nigeria some sort of national ranking of universities is practised. While global rankings as we know it currently has little meaning for Africa, steps to fast-track the regional application of the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) can be beneficial for the implementation of the PAQAF.

23. *Enhancing participation of women in quality assurance and accreditation processes:* We have not provided evidence in the earlier chapters of this report on the level of participation of women in quality assurance and accreditation practices. The literature is scant in this regard. What is fairly well documented is the under-representation of women in enrolment in higher education in all regions of the world. Within the general picture, under-representation in science, engineering and technology is more acute than in other disciplines.

By its essence, quality should not be a subject that will be coloured by discriminating variables such as ethnicity, gender, religion and other socio-cultural attributes. Even on this premise, it is clear that within the low proportion of women in terms of numbers in higher education, women are holding their own quite high in terms of quality. Of the 22 chief executive officers of national quality assurance agencies in Africa in a community dominated by about 76% male, three are

women. From 2010 to 2013, of the graduating students who made first class in the Nigerian university system, about 45% are women. The recommendation is for African higher education system to give greater visibility to participation of women as members of accreditation panels, staff of national quality assurance agencies, head of higher education institutions and of national quality assurance agencies. If not for anything else, let Africa present a lesson for others to learn.

In the next chapter, we shall undertake a review of practices outside Africa with a focus on Asia, Europe and North America. This is with a view to drawing parallels and highlight good practices that can be learned by quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions in Africa.

# Annex 3

# The international experience

*In this chapter we explore worldwide experience in developing and implementing regional or continental harmonisation, recognition and quality assurance and accreditation practices that can provide valuable insights for the African context. We develop an analytical framework, identify success factors, and formulate conclusions on the main lessons learned.*

## The international contexts

In reviewing the international contexts we have quickly realised that if this study is to be relevant for informing a Pan African effort towards Quality Assurance, we need to look for contexts which provide the cultural and socio economic diversity of Africa combined with a similar great variety of Higher Education Systems. It follows that regional experiences are more relevant than country level experiences, and especially those regions that have made efforts towards regionalisation and internationalisation of their higher education systems.

As it happens the last two decades have seen worldwide efforts towards regional convergence and internationalisation. The European experience stands central in two major ways. First, historically, European higher education systems have followed in the tracks of western colonisation, affecting the Americas, Asia and Africa in similar ways. Second, Europe has made the most comprehensive effort towards converging its higher education systems in the last three decades, and especially in the last 15 years through the Bologna process.

Europe's lead has in turn influenced the direction other continents have taken in their own efforts for regional convergence as these have been inspired by the tried and tested policy instruments and tools developed by stakeholders and governments participating in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Furthermore with the globalisation of world trade and increased interaction between regional economies, the internationalisation of higher education has grown in importance across the world. The lead of Europe has therefore not only provided an inspiring model for regionalisation but also a twofold incentive to other regions to internationalise their systems in ways compatible with the EHEA, and to position themselves in an effort to limit Europe's potential competitive advantage as a knowledge economy.

Jane Knight[2] describes how Europe is investing considerable efforts and funds into promoting the Bologna reforms to other parts of the world through establishing inter-regional mobility programs, policy dialogues, and institutional network projects. Interestingly, a number of these efforts are in fact bilateral initiatives between Europe as a region to a single country or sub-region. This is due to the fact that regional level higher education agencies or frameworks do not exist in other regions as they do in Europe. There is no doubt that Europe is a catalyst and model for regionalisation initiatives. Other regions are benefiting from the Bologna Process, but they are giving careful consideration on how to adapt the European experiences to their own stage of development, their own cultural, historical and political contexts, and most importantly their own reasons for promoting regionalisation. There is awareness of the subtle but evident soft power agenda of Europe's significant investment in promoting Bologna reforms and closer inter-regional cooperation.

In the Chronicle of Higher Education[3], Francisco Marmolejo describes how the third Global Survey Report on Internationalisation of Higher Education[4] shows that worldwide the majority of

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[2] A Model for the Regionalization of Higher Education: The Role and Contribution of Tuning

[3] Internationalisation of higher education; the good, the bad and the unexpected, October 22, 2010

institutions give a high importance to internationalisation, with Europe topping the list, followed by North America, and Asia.

Globally, higher education institutions are turning their eyes first of all to Europe for their internationalisation work, followed by the Asia-Pacific region and then to North America. Nevertheless, in the Asia-Pacific region the first geographic priority for the internationalisation policy in the majority of their institutions is the Asia-Pacific itself, followed by Europe. For European institutions the first priority is placed on Europe itself and the second one on Asia-Pacific. For North America the first priority is Asia-Pacific, followed by Europe. Latin America and the Middle East consider Europe as the key regional priority. Africa considers itself as the principal priority. As we will see however, Africa's regionalisation efforts in higher education are influenced and supported mostly by Europe. At the same time many African countries look towards North America for the development of their national systems, and given the growing economic ties between Africa and Asia, we can expect that cooperation across higher education systems between Asia and Africa will grow as well.

In view of these trends we have decided to review Europe, the Asia-Pacific, and North America to develop our analysis of the international experience. Given its reference role worldwide, our analysis will be more detailed for Europe, from which we will derive the framework to review Asia and North America more summarily.

## The European context

Europe and Africa share a colonial history, which has brought many European features to the higher education systems across Africa. In addition to a large number of African languages Africa features a multi-linguistic setting harbouring the main European languages especially in its higher education systems. It also, like Europe, harbours a multitude of deep cultures with long histories.

Furthermore, just like Europe does Africa face socioeconomic disparity within and between countries, and in its recent history of cooperation with Europe has it aimed for more cooperation and integration within Africa, in part mirroring European institutions with Pan African ones. It is in this context that the AUC and the European Commission have been working closely together under the Joint Africa Europe Strategy (JAES) with regard to Higher Education. Also here we have seen how this joint activity has lead to exchanges of experiences and mutual learning, and a mirroring of high-level agreements, stakeholder networks, and managed processes towards the harmonisation of Higher Education in Africa.  Furthermore these networks and processes at both sides are engaging with each other in a genuine African-European partnership.

We have therefore spent considerable time in exploring, analysing, and synthesising the great wealth of information on the European experience with the aim of drawing lessons for Europe, Africa, and other regions. An overall conclusion we cannot but reach, is that Europe has in a relatively short time span lead a very inclusive and successful continent wide process of higher education harmonisation, linking it to the social, economic and cultural issues of the day, and this in very challenging times.

European policy makers and stakeholders have gathered a wealth of experience with this unique process, and Africa is already doing so as well with its own harmonisation processes in cooperation with Europe. Quality Assurance has proven to be a central and interlinked part of creating an open higher education space where students, academics, and university staff can freely move, be recognised for their qualifications wherever they have acquired them; and where employers can increasingly rely on equivalent descriptions of these qualifications while being assured of their

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[4] International Association of Universities (IAU) including responses from 745 institutions in 115 countries about trends in international higher education on a worldwide and regional basis clustering Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, and North America (the U.S. and Canada).

comparable quality. Higher education institutions increasingly cooperate and take initiatives to further build this space, and increasingly share their experience with other continents as the European Higher Education Area is getting worldwide attention.

In this chapter, we have therefore focused on drawing out the success factors of this European experience, and based on those we present an analytical framework for screening other international contexts. In the next chapter we will apply it to formulate recommendations for the African context and in chapter 5, we will use it as the basis for developing a Framework for Pan African Quality Assurance.

Given the central role of Quality Assurance and its interactivity with all other aspects of creating a continental higher education space, we have taken a broad view to ensure that all contributing elements to the success of Quality Assurance in a continent wide area have been properly captured.

## The Analysis Framework: A success based approach

In our study of the European experience in achieving continent wide Higher Education Quality Assurance we have focused on what works. From this positive and practical perspective we could identify nine success factors each relying on a set of key components for implementation. Together they can serve as a template for structured screening and comparison of international experiences and contexts. This template will also help us to screen African experiences and help us developing the Pan African Quality Assurance Framework. The table below brings together these success factors and their key components.

Figure 17: Success factors and key components in achieving continent wide Quality Assurance

| Success factors | Key components |
|---|---|
| **1. The international Context is conducive to convergence** | Continental convergence policies |
| | Institutional Back up |
| | Policy instruments |
| | Complementary international Agreements and supporting networks |
| **2. A high level International Cooperation mechanism based on inclusive consultation and solid process management is in place** | Shared Purpose & Objectives |
| | Inclusive consultation arrangements |
| | Process Management organisation |
| | Process Management instruments |
| **3. Shared policies produce convergence instruments and adapted legislation** | Shared Social Policy principles, instruments, and targets |
| | Joint development of mutually reinforcing convergence policy instruments and tools |
| | Legislative convergence |
| **4. Continental Funding complements national expenditure to align incentives in HE financing systems** | Continental Funding programmes |
| | Aligned national social policy funding priorities |
| | Aligned national Higher Education funding systems |

| Success factors | Key components |
|---|---|
| 5. **High level detailed attention for Instruments of Quality Assurance and their interaction with other policy instruments promotes coherence trust and cooperation** | Continental Agreement on a set of Quality Assurance Standards & Guidelines |
| | Continental Quality Assurance and Certification of QA Agencies |
| | Continental coherence of QA with other convergence instruments |
| 6. **Broad Quality assurance principles, policies, standards and guidelines safeguard diversity, ensure comparability and allow recognition.** | A structured description of<br>・ Definition, principles and policies expressing the spirit of QA<br>・ The essential systemic components and procedures of the QA function |
| 7. **Decentralised and independent Quality Assurance mechanisms promote learning and improvement** | Prime responsibility for Quality Assurance anchored at HEI level |
| | Complemented with reviews from independent QA Agency |
| | QA of QA Agencies ensured through international peer review |
| 8. **Accreditation and Quality Enhancement are distinct and complementary** | Quality enhancement is a developmental process and Accreditation an accountability mechanism. |
| 9. **Ranking is not promoted as a Quality Assurance tool** | Ranking is promoted as a transparency tool and is seen to be explicitly separate and different from Quality Assurance |

# The European Experience

The European experience with Higher Education Quality assurance is characterised by high- level international political and technical cooperation, broad European institutional arrangements, and the joint development of instruments of implementation. This combination created a dynamic of high-level political commitment providing space for directing and driving a broad consultation process among stakeholders.

## 1. The international context is conducive to convergence

### *Continental convergence policies*

Driven by a deep conviction that Europe could be unified into an area of peace, democracy, and prosperity, the European Union created the overarching context for its member states, and neighbouring countries, and established itself as a major political and economic power on the world stage. The democratisation of post war Europe coupled with the vision of the internal market based on free movement of goods, services, capital and people motivated its growing membership and socioeconomic integration across the continent. The harmonisation of Higher Education was to become a crucial part of the EU vision, and so was its Quality Assurance, without which it would be near impossible to build the environment allowing cross border mobility and cooperation between countries and their Higher Education systems.

### Institutional Back up and Policy Instruments

In the logic of the internal market the European Commission would already be active in the 1980's setting up mechanisms facilitating mobility of workers and students such as the Network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) to ensure Academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study in the Member States of the European Union (EU), the European Economic Area (EEA) countries and Turkey. In 1987 it launched the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) supporting students to study across borders and very soon after, in 1989 it followed up with an early form of credit transfer with the introduction of the European Transfer Credit System (ECTS). Soon this growing importance of mobility and mutual recognition would put Higher Education quality assurance implications on the agenda and in 1991 the European Council launches the European Pilot Projects on Quality Assurance supported by the European Commission and an international expert advisory group, to increase awareness of the need for evaluation in higher education in Europe; enrich national evaluation procedures, transfer experience, and impart a European dimension to evaluation. The outcomes of the European Pilot Projects on Quality Assurance fostered the initiation of experimental projects at the European level and lead to the exchange of evaluation professionals, the development of national databases to facilitate reciprocal use of European experts, and the exchange of information at the European level including national evaluations databases, catalogues of European evaluation programmes, conferences, seminars and newsletters. Gauging the potential benefits, the European Commission & the Expert advisory group started preparing a formal proposal for the establishment of a European Association for Quality Assurance in Europe.

In 1997 the EU states the ambition to strengthen and build upon the intellectual cultural social and technical dimensions of EU Integration and starts to drive the harmonisation of the European Higher Education Architecture in earnest.

In 2000, the European Council adopts the EU Lisbon Strategy calling for the European knowledge economy, giving important political impetus to the harmonisation of Higher Education at the highest levels across Europe and signalling full support to the Bologna Process. The expanding role of Europe is also reflected in the research and innovation agenda. Now that knowledge has become a major means of obtaining a competitive advantage, the EU has emphasised the role of knowledge (and thus of higher education, research and innovation) in its long-term strategies. This was clear in the Lisbon Agenda and will also be apparent in "Europe 2020", the new EU strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Under the umbrella of which, the EU Education and Training 2020 strategy now targets 40% of young Europeans to hold a Higher Education degree by 2020.

### Complementary international Agreements and supporting networks

In 1994 the Council of Europe and the UNESCO European Centre for higher Education (CEPES) launch ENIC, the European Network of Information Centres to develop joint policy and practice in all European countries for the recognition of qualifications.

With the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the Council of Europe and UNESCO enshrined the earlier efforts on recognition across boarders into a high level international agreement, and initiate a period of increased activity at the highest political levels. Soon the 1998 Sorbonne Declaration, signed by France, UK, Germany and Italy called for a common framework improving external recognition, student and teacher mobility and employability and called upon other countries to join them in their effort to achieve objectives such as the two-cycle HE system and standardized ECTS. The Sorbonne Declaration is widely recognized as the basis for the Bologna declaration.

In that same year the European Council approves the proposal of the European Commission and expert advisory group to launch the European Higher Education Quality Assurance network gathering all European Higher Education Quality Assurance bodies and/or Authorities.

## 2. A high level Cooperation mechanism is in place, based on inclusive consultation and solid process management

### *Shared Purpose & Objectives*

While all these efforts created a positive dynamic for international cooperation, it was when the ministerial meeting of 26 countries from within the EU and beyond sign the Bologna Declaration 1999 for the establishment of a European Higher Education Area by 2010 (EHEA), that a sustained platform for international cooperation on higher education in Europe was truly being established.

From 1999 onwards, the Bologna process would gain momentum and enjoy growing participation at the highest political levels from potentially all countries that ratified the European Cultural Convention, namely the 47 member states of the Council of Europe, together with Belarus and Kazakhstan. Other signatories were the European Commission, and the Council of Europe.

Over the period of 14 years, the 7 Prague, Berlin, Bergen, London, Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, Budapest-Vienna, and Bucharest meetings would see increasing international participation and commitment.

The initial 6 Bologna Objectives would be complemented with new priorities and in its wake a growing network of institutional arrangements, stakeholder organisations, and policy instruments would ensure increasing levels of implementation.

### *Inclusive consultation arrangements*

This broad based high-level political engagement reinvigorated stakeholder networks in the EHEA to make their voices heard.

For the Higher Education Institutions (HEI), EURASHE; the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education active since 1990 and today counting about 1100 members in 40 countries within and outside the EHEA, influences International HE policies with studies and projects focusing on internationalisation. In 2001 it was complemented with the establishment of the European University Association (EUA) bringing together the HEI that offer doctoral level programmes, with the mission to promote a coherent European system for higher education and research through guidance in enhancing teaching, learning, research and other HEI contributions to society.

On the side of the students the European Students Information Bureau (ESIB) became the National Unions of Students in Europe in 1991; voicing the concern to include students as stakeholders (and not as mere customers) in shaping Higher Education policy. In 2007 the association becomes ESU; the European Student Union, and today ESU represents about 10 million students from 36 countries in EHEA.

These three stakeholder groups would together with ENQA constitute the E4 group and become crucial Consultative members of the Bologna Process, especially regarding the creation of the European dimension to Quality Assurance.

UNICE, later Business Europe, unites the business associations in Europe.

In its most recent form, the composition of the BFUG reflects this broad based consultative process. It is co-chaired by the rotating EU Presidency together with a non-EU country and includes representatives of all signatory countries together with the European Commission. The Council of Europe, the European University Association (EUA), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the European Students Union (ESU), UNESCO-CEPES, European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the Education International Pan-European Structure (EI) and the Union of Industrial and Business Europe take part as consultative members in the work of the BFUG. Eurydice, EuroStat, and EuroStudent also become important

contributors to the BFUG activities.

These stakeholders such as the E4 created the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance through joint actions while each stakeholder group generated reports of its own showing various unique perspectives on the Bologna process, enriching the dialogue, and raising the critical issues to be taken up in the process for resolution. Meanwhile the instruments emanating from all these interactions were being reviewed, improved and refined. These institutional arrangements in turn, enable stakeholders to jointly develop the policy instruments ensuring implementation of the Bologna commitment to EHEA.

### Process Management organisation

In support of implementing these high level agreements, institutional measures were taken such as the establishment of Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) and the Bologna Secretariat to follow up on the Bologna decisions and prepare next meetings, the formation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee for overseeing the implementation and ratification of the convention, and the creation of the Quality Assurance working group for making a reality of what would in 2000 be known as ENQA, the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, and became the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in 2004.

In each Bologna meeting the Ministers set out the direction and priorities for the coming period and call on BFUG and stakeholders to work towards implementing them. The process is characterised by high level political framing coupled with bottom up consultations and mutual engagement. It entails broadening the vision and increasing the number of priorities, instructing the BFUG with specific tasks, calling upon stakeholders to take on specific joint actions, and committing signatories to creating the enabling environment through national legislation. Together with the institutional arrangements, the tools and instruments used to manage the Bologna Process turned out to be effective process enabling mechanisms for Bologna. In this respect the European experience can potentially be very instructive for establishing a future Pan African Quality Assurance Framework.

### Process Management instruments

After each meeting the BFUG translates the outcome in a BFUG Working Programme for keeping a comprehensive overview of all actions to be undertaken and coordinating all stakeholders involved. The Working Programmes rapidly evolved with the growing needs of the Bologna Process. They typically include a list of the priority topics of the most recent meeting, a set of seminars to be concluded with stakeholders on these topics, specific data collection and reporting objectives, and the overseeing of specific projects carried out by stakeholders. Carrying out the Working Programme is ensured by the ad hoc Working Groups, which the BFUG Board and Secretariat are empowered to set up. As the Bologna meetings have been taking place every two years between 1999 and 2012, these Working Programmes typically require fast-paced efforts and cooperation of all involved to deliver the results in time.

Before each new Bologna Meeting the BFUG Working Programme would deliver a Stocktaking report; considered as the most outstanding policy instrument for the Bologna Process, benchmarking progress made with implementing the priorities in each country. With each issuing comes an effectiveness assessment and recommendations for improvement of the reporting instrument itself. The first Stocktaking Report for the 2005 Bergen Meeting was based on National reports developed through the Eurydice Questionnaire and covered 10 benchmarks for the 3 Berlin meeting priority areas with identified actions to reach 'excellent - very good – good - some progress - little progress' ratings translated in colour coded country score cards. The 2007 Stock taking Report for the London meeting improved practices by incorporating the benchmarks up front in National report templates, making them more specific, and introducing more precise mean values. The 2009

Stock taking Report for the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve meeting was characterised by more stringent practice. It focused more closely on the reality of reported achievements and verified if the reforms covered the whole system or rather partially in each country. While the initial effect was one of lowering previous scores in some areas, it helped shifting the focus from compliance in form, to changing the reality of national Higher Education systems.

**Figure 18: Bologna Scorecards**
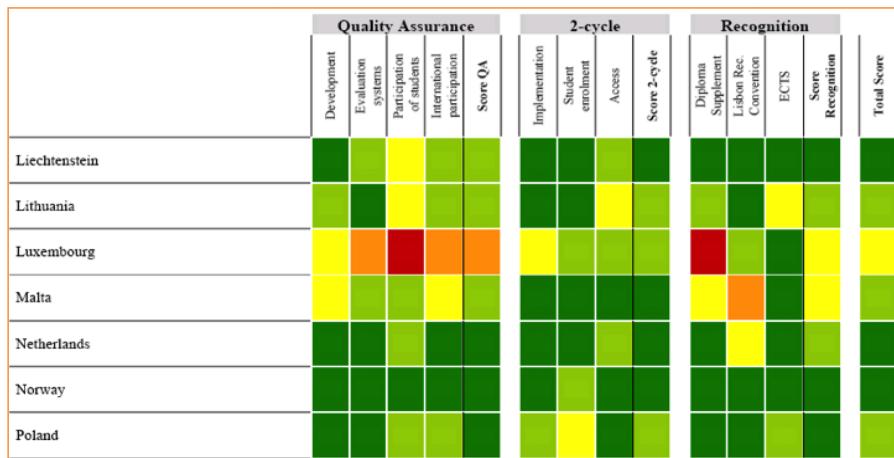


The BFUG recommends further simplifying of procedures and instruments, yet rigorously maintaining reporting deadlines, more effectively integrating data from sources such as Eurydice, EuroStat and EuroStudent to avoid duplication of effort, and broaden the responsibility of the stock taking group to an overall monitoring role which includes proposing the issues, identifying the data required, analysing data from various sources and compiling reports with recommendations at specified intervals.

All in all, the Stocktaking reports have proven to be a very effective instrument, not only in providing a measured perspective on the implementation of EHEA country by country and priority by priority in a comparable way, but also in generating a dynamic within and among participating countries towards the stated aim of EHEA while revealing the complexities underlying its achievement.

While these institutional arrangements and instruments were of crucial importance to conducting the consecutive Bologna Meetings, they do not constitute in themselves the implementation of the EHEA. It is after all the national governments and Higher Education Institutions who do the heavy lifting.

While it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the Bologna process in full[5], it remains useful to look into the Bologna tools and instruments, how they came about, and what the difficulties have been so far in implementing them across the EHEA.

We have organised the information[6] in two parts. In the first part we consider three broad Bologna priorities shaping the European experience, and we review the various policy instruments that have been used to implement them in the EHEA. In the second part we turn to the underlying Bologna

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[5] Please consult Annex x for a synthetic overview of the European Experience elaborated by the consultants during their analysis.

[6] For this section we are indebted to the 2010 Eurydice Report: Focus on Higher Education in Europe, which in our view has brought together in the most succinct and synthetic manner the essential achievements of the Bologna Process.

structures and tools for making higher education systems easier understood and more comparable across the EHEA.

## 3. Shared policies produce convergence instruments and adapted legislation

### *Shared Social Policy principles, instruments, and targets*

#### *The Social Dimension*

While since the first ministerial follow-up meeting in Prague in 2001 the importance of the social dimension has increased, conceptual clarity was only brought about in 2007, when the London Communiqué defined the objective of the social dimension as the *'societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations'*.

To achieve this countries are encouraged to:

6. Define the under represented groups
7. Understand the reasons for their underrepresentation
8. Develop benchmarks and targets for reaching the social objectives
9. Monitor participation of certain societal groups
10. Implement targeted measures for remedying underrepresentation

The European experience indicates that the social dimension of higher education presents the most significant challenge as it is understood so differently from one country to another. The conclusions provide interesting insights.

7. Defining underrepresented groups is historically contingent and potentially stigmatising. Methods to do so vary between self-declaration and administrative sources. Most frequent categories include socio-economic background or parents' educational attainment, minority status, disability, gender (either men or women depending on the country and field of studies), mature age, insufficient formal educational qualifications for entry into higher education, geographical region (particularly isolated rural areas) students with children, war veterans, and foreign students.

8. Reasons for underrepresentation are also often socio economically or culturally contingent in the specific context of each country, ranging from
    a. *Pre university societal failures* such as poor performance at school; lack of motivation, or lack of family experience with higher education.
    b. *Systemic features of pre-university education* such as early streaming and selection of children in secondary schools affecting students from lower socio-economic status backgrounds disproportionally precluding their entry into higher education, lack of attention to stereotyping and ethnically biased perspectives in school curricula, and the negative impact of segregated education for disabilities.
    c. *Systemic features of Higher Education* such as lack of diversified, part-time and flexible learning entry routes to higher education for mature students and people with vocational and other non-traditional educational qualifications, biased selection and/or admissions procedures to higher education, first cycle failure during due to insufficient knowledge of study options or lack of financial support, no disability acceptance culture due to a lack of inclusive higher education environment combined with insufficiently adapted infrastructure, lack of appropriate teaching, learning materials, and funding problems

9. In the EHEA very few countries have developed and linked benchmarks and targets for reaching the social objectives of the Bologna commitment of raising the participation of

underrepresented groups to mirror overall societal distribution. Most countries focus targets and measures on the admission routes and on increasing overall participation in the expectation that the numbers of underrepresented students will diminish. Where specific targets or benchmarks do exist, they mostly include:

    a.  Students with lower socio-economic status and/or

    b.  Students whose parents have relatively low educational attainment levels

    c.  Gender balance with regard to science and technology disciplines,

10. Only about half of the Bologna countries systematically monitor the participation of underrepresented groups in higher education and very few countries have set specific targets to improve their participation. Of those that do however, experience shows how a virtuous cycle of implementing specific measures, monitoring their impact, paying attention to new elements coming to light from monitoring, and using this feedback to stimulate new measures; improves the effectiveness of benchmarks and targets. This does not necessarily mean that countries that have the necessary information to develop appropriate measures towards underrepresented groups automatically do act more effectively than those who lack this basic information, because general measures and support services of the latter may implicitly benefit groups that would be identified and targeted as underrepresented in the former.

11. The majority of countries that monitor participation of underrepresented groups systematically, as well as some of the countries that do not, have developed targeted measures for widening access such as special admission procedures, targeted scholarships and grants, outreach programmes, guidance and counselling services, and information campaigns. However, in many countries, the responsibility for the organisation and implementation of many of these measures is delegated to higher education institutions and, as a consequence, collation of information and reports at national level is often lacking. While overall the use of financial or other incentives for higher education institutions to increase participation of particular groups is not very common, the European continent is experimenting with various ways to direct public funding to underrepresented groups via the Higher Education Institutions including:

    a.  Linking some of the public funding for higher education institutions to the number of students from under-represented groups giving extra weight to those with low socio-economic background or disabilities.

    b.  Extra funding available for structural provisions for diversity within higher education institutions

    c.  Extra funding to help higher education institutions meet the additional needs of disabled students.

    d.  Access weighting to shift resources towards institutions that have achieved greater equality within their student bodies

    e.  Meet some of the additional cost incurred by institutions for outreach activity to raise aspirations and attainment among potential students from under-represented groups.

## Lifelong Learning in Higher Education (LLL)

Lifelong learning ties in with the Social dimension and is seen as an intrinsic part of the European knowledge society. Higher education must be responsive to the demands of European knowledge society and the challenges of demographic change. The promotion of lifelong learning is inextricably linked to increasing and widening participation in higher education on the basis of equal opportunity, which can only become a reality when study paths are more flexible and the world of higher education is closely aligned to societal developments.

Countries were encouraged to:

1. Embed the vision of lifelong learning in their vision on society and higher education
2. Adapt national legislation to make lifelong learning a mission of HEI
3. Provide and stimulate funding for lifelong learning
4. Promote long life learning

While all countries involved have taken up these ambitions, implementation shows mixed results:

1. There is still no widely accepted European or international definition of the lifelong learning concept in the context of higher education. Indeed the term 'lifelong learning' is understood in different ways in different countries and evolves as contextual factors change. It can refer to adult learning, non-traditional students whether in a formal or informal environment, be limited to supplementary (non-degree) study programmes, part-time, distance, 'mixed-mode', adult, e-learning, open learning, evening/weekend learning, community/outreach learning and more. While economic reality has driven the recent push for attention to lifelong learning to high policy levels in many countries, this lack of a common definition may continue to hinder the identification of coherent policies on this issue.

2. While a significant number of countries have adopted legislation towards higher education responsibility for lifelong learning in nearly all countries during the first Bologna decade, it remains a peripheral concern in many of them. These laws either generically define lifelong learning as a mission for higher education institutions or compel institutions to offer special access routes, provide certain types of programmes or engage in activities aimed at the general and working population. Yet the extent to which these programmes and courses are oriented to potential lifelong learners can vary considerably, even there where the mission is acknowledged.

3. Information on the funding of lifelong learning is difficult to obtain, partly as a result of lack of conceptual clarity and partly because diverse funding sources are involved. Where such information is available, investment in lifelong learning appears to be relatively low. The lack of overall data on LLL funding in Europe have 3 main causes:

   a. Most public budgets for higher education do not contain specifically earmarked funding for lifelong learning.

   b. Institutions have become more autonomous and more often receive lump sum funding reducing government information on the specific allocation of funds.

   c. There exists great diversity of funding sources for lifelong learning activities through municipal, regional or national public as well as private funds.

   From a policy perspective comprehensive and reliable data on the amounts and types of spending on lifelong learning is crucial for improving monitoring of how and to which extent lifelong learning is implemented in higher education institutions. It would provide a more coherent picture about the degree to which the goal has been achieved, and in turn, allow for further policy development.

4. Approximately half of the Bologna countries have taken measures to promote cooperation between higher education institutions and business/industry in the field of lifelong learning. These measures include:

   a. Informing the public about lifelong learning opportunities through higher education institutions or local offices of labour agencies,

   b. Central information campaigns and dedicated websites providing information to interested parties

   c. Stimulating the development of lifelong learning programmes curricula in close cooperation between business and industry and higher education institutions.

d. Developing policy implementation measures in close cooperation between governmental institutions, higher education institutions and employers

*Mobility*

Mobility is a central theme at the highest level in the European Union as it is a condition for the achievement of the European market based on the free movement of good, services, capital and people. It was also mobility that was the driving force behind the first attempts in Europe to develop a coherent European Higher education space, even more so since the European Knowledge society strategy came about. The more technical structure and tools for developing EHEA, which we will discuss in the next section, found their origin in their role as facilitators for mobility.

In the Bologna process mobility was one of the first priorities. Countries were encouraged to:

1. Develop comprehensive policy to address higher education mobility at the national level in line with the EU and EHEA requirements.
2. Define the nature of desired mobility and collect information accordingly
3. Set targets for the achievements of their respective mobility policies
4. Collect information to support mobility policy
5. Develop measures to achieve stated policy aims and align with the EHEA mobility policies and targets

Here again, the European experience is providing a rather mixed picture, nevertheless the process has to build on the successes and learn from the setbacks as mobility cannot simply be ignored in the bigger scheme of things, and as a condition for the successful development of the other policies, structure and tools of the EHEA.

1. Mobility in Higher education is rarely addressed with comprehensive policy at national level. Even when given a high priority, mobility policies tend to be incomplete. Some countries have focused on a mobility strategy with specific targets but few linkages to other areas; and other countries have focused on an internationalisation strategy linking various policy elements and measures while remaining vague about benchmarks and targets. The fact that no single country brings all potential mobility measures together in the form of comprehensive mobility policy, suggests that the Bologna commitment made for the EHEA aiming at 20 % of students benefitting from mobility during her/his studies, will require a major push in policy making and implementation of measures.

2. While for a country to be able to have a clear policy on mobility, it must define the nature of mobility flows, giving a sense of how it would like mobility phenomena to change towards a desirable situation, the European experience reveals that countries rarely express clear objectives or preferences related to student mobility. At the same time however countries do enact mobility measures favouring incoming mobility, outgoing mobility or both, and some favour mobility within a degree cycle, between degree cycles or within joint programmes. Sometimes students may be eligible for financial support if studying a part of a degree cycle in another country, but not if studying an entire cycle abroad and very few countries appear to have mounted specific information campaigns to encourage students to study abroad.

3. It does not come as a surprise then that relatively few countries have set targets for mobility as a part of their higher education development strategy, and those that did, as a part of their strategy for mobility have specifically aligned themselves to the 20 % by 2020 benchmark set for the EHEA. Still, some have lower targets, some have higher ones, and some simply aim for a non-quantified increase of mobility. Given the fluid nature of mobility and mobility policy, it may therefore be perfectly coherent for a cumulative target to be set at the continental level without these targets being replicated in national policy, especially

when is difficult to determine all of the factors that would enable realistic numerical targets to be set at national levels.

The collection of information reflects the lack of clear complete and comprehensive national policies. Countries rarely back up mobility policies with comprehensive and reliable information on the reality of student mobility and where they do gather information, very little can be captured about the growing reality of 'free movers' not taking part in any organised mobility programme. In several countries the only data that is systematically collected is data required for participation in European programmes, notwithstanding the known positive correlations between the existence of policy and information and actual growth of student mobility.

4. Where countries have been taking serious measures to develop their own policy, they construct onto the already existing European policies, programmes and actions, which have been an extremely important catalyst for national action on student mobility. In some countries, national policy does not extend very far beyond implementing particular European mobility programmes such as Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus and Tempus, now all gathered under the Erasmus+ umbrella programme.

However, taken together, the European experience shows that mobility is a complex and intertwined theme, and that many measures can and need to be brought into a mobility or internationalisation strategy. Of these the main ones include amending immigration legislation to facilitate visa procedures for students/researchers; financial measures, such as scholarships, grants, fee waivers, and portability of student support; information campaigns encouraging national students to study abroad or attracting international students to the country; bi-lateral or multi-lateral cooperation agreements; support to institutions considering internationalisation in curriculum design; focusing on fair and simple recognition procedures and on the good use of ECT; strengthening implementation of the Bologna measures, support for language learning for both incoming and outgoing students; encouraging language learning among staff in higher education; provision of programmes in other languages; supporting higher education institutions in their mobility strategies; attention to mobility in quality assurance procedures; promotion of joint and double degrees; adaptation of information and counselling services for mobile students; and support for accommodation.

The European experience also shows that the enormous socio-economic diversity within and between countries in the European Higher Education Area makes it a huge challenge for the less wealthy countries to cover costs for a substantial number of their citizens to study in the more wealthy countries. In consequence, it is primarily the host countries financing in the form of scholarships and grants the mobility flows in this direction.

### *Joint development of mutually reinforcing convergence policy instruments and tools*

As is shown clearly from the previous part, the Bologna process has had an important impact on country policies and legislation in pursuit of the establishment of the EHEA. It has taken some time to establish conceptual clarity around these social priorities, and countries are still developing and improving new instruments to support implementation. These overarching priorities have been developed on the back of a deeper, more technical process that was already ongoing inspired by the early mobility initiatives of the European Commission. The inclusion of these efforts in the Bologna process has generated rapid and solid progress, arguably with more tangible results as the approach is more systemic and gravitates mostly (with the exception of the NQF) at the level of the higher Education Institutions themselves.

*The Bologna three-cycle-structure*

Central to the Bologna process is the commitment of countries to establish a three-cycle degree structure in higher education as reflected in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA), adopted by the Ministers in Bergen in May 2005.

The typical Bologna structure first cycle qualifications comprise 180-240 ECTS credits while second cycle qualifications comprise 60-120 ECTS credits.

The European experience shows that the three-cycle structure has been overwhelmingly introduced in most institutions and programmes in Bologna countries, with some exceptions for long programmes in specific disciplines such as medicine and related fields, and sometimes other regulated professions, such as theology, music and fine arts. Despite these exceptions, there has been a fundamental and dramatic change, which has made it possible to identify commonalities between European higher education systems in terms of workload/duration for the majority of programmes at Bachelor and Master Level. At the Doctoral level programmes vary between 3 and 4 years with a slight preference for the 3-year cycle and most countries emphasise that in reality most Doctoral candidates take longer than the foreseen time to complete their doctoral degree.

The European experience also shows that reviewing implementation of the three cycle structure across countries may hide significant aspects of the reality when typical lengths of a degree cycle are consistent within a type of institution, but different between types of institution, so that the reality of degree structures in the numerically smaller higher education institutions will remain hidden.

Nevertheless, EHEA convergence clearly is a fact. The changing reality that has been brought about through the implementation of Bologna reforms shows that the structure of Bachelor programmes in the EHEA can be differentiated into two models: 180 ECTS credits and 240 ECTS credits, with the few programmes differing from these two options all being professionally oriented qualifications.

At the Master level the 120 ECTS credits model is most common, although most countries also offer second cycle programmes of 60 ECTS credits often commonly followed by a 60 ECTS specialist second-cycle qualification. Others fall between these groups as most of their Master degrees are assigned 90 ECTS.

In combining the two cycles, the European experience shows three models of implementing the Bologna structure; namely the 180+120 ECTS (3+2 academic years), the 240+120 ECTS (4+2 academic years) and the 240+60/90 ECTS (4+1/1.5 academic years).

In countries, where there is variation in programme structures, responsibility for their duration rests largely with the institutions and study fields concerned.

A sticky point in introducing the three-cycle model in Europe seems to be the accommodation of professional and vocational programmes in the Bologna model. Depending on the country in question, professional and vocational programmes may or may not be considered as part of the higher education system. Their inclusion in the Bologna structures has been equally variable and not always transparently managed. The reasons for this lie in the many different national understandings of 'professional' or 'vocational' programmes, and the blurring of distinctions between academic and professional programmes in some countries, as the entire higher education sector focuses more consciously on employability concerns and on providing relevant education for the labour market. Several countries have specifically identified problems in linking vocationally oriented programmes to their Bologna model. The most common problem articulated is that many vocational and professional qualifications are offered in short-cycle programmes that require less than 180 ECTS. However, as long as the qualifications resulting from these programmes can be recognised within a Bologna first-cycle programme, there should be no problem of integration within the Bologna cycle system. The problems therefore arise in countries where such progression routes are not a part of the system architecture. The countries that have successfully integrated professional programmes into the Bologna structures, have done so by making all short-cycle programmes (of 120 ECTS duration) part of the first cycle, with the transfer into a second-cycle

programme requiring additional credits, or integrating their professional higher education programmes into the Bologna degree-cycle structure and allowing their graduates access to academically oriented second-cycle programmes, and/or by explicitly referencing their professional programmes to their National Qualifications Framework – illustrating the importance of this tool.

In order to help the development of comparable and understandable degrees and systems, a number of pre-existing 'tools' were introduced in the Bologna process to foster transparency and mutual recognition. These aim to make education systems and programmes more transparent and render them understandable for all.

### The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

Two long established elements of the 'Bologna toolkit' are the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement (DS).

ECTS was developed at the end of the 1980s to facilitate credit transfer in the Erasmus programme and thus to foster student mobility. The decision to establish a European Higher Education Area came a decade later and, since then, ECTS has become a core element in its implementation. In the Berlin Communiqué (2003), ministers stressed that ECTS should not only be used for credit transfer, but also for credit accumulation, and in Bergen in 2005, they agreed on indicative credit ranges for the first two cycles. These steps established ECTS as a cornerstone in the implementation of the Bologna reforms. In 2007and 2009, the ministers noted that 'there has been progress in the implementation' to 'increase transparency and recognition'.

Based on the commitments made by the ministers in the various communiqués, ECTS is regarded as fully implemented when more than 75 % of institutions and programmes use ECTS for credit accumulation and transfer, and when it satisfies the requirements of credits being awarded on the basis of defined learning outcomes and/or student workload. In 2010 the majority of countries/regions, reported ECTS as having been introduced through national legislation, although in many systems this is only the first step towards implementation in reality. However the Eurydice report shows that 24 countries reported using ECTS as a credit accumulation and transfer tool in more than 75 % of higher education institutions, while 29 report this for programmes which leads to the conclusion that ECTS can be shown to have become a strong feature of education systems, gradually replacing more and more national credit systems, even those that are fully compatible with ECTS.

### The Diploma Supplement (DS)

The Diploma Supplement, the second important Bologna 'tool', developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO-CEPES in the 1990s, is a standardised template containing a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies completed by the individual noted on the original diploma. The goal of the Diploma Supplement is to increase transparency of education acquired for the purposes of securing employment and facilitating academic recognition for further studies (Berlin Communiqué, 2003) with the intention to improve understanding of the knowledge, skills and competences acquired by the learner. The Diploma Supplement should be attached to the original national diploma, together with a description of the national higher education system within which the diploma was awarded. In Berlin, in 2003, the ministers agreed that from 2005 all graduates should receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge. The Eurydice 2009 report on higher education showed that it has been implemented in most signatory states and that it is being issued in English and/or the language of instruction.

As the European experience shows, it is also important to keep track of whether countries monitor the extent to which it is being issued and how it is being monitored. Most often the relevant ministries are responsible for data collection, but in many countries also the National Europass

Centre (NEC) is strongly involved. Monitoring may take the form of one-off surveys among universities and higher education institutions, while other countries collect information annually.

For students it is also relevant whether the Diploma Supplement is issued free of charge. Therefore this aspect together with the question whether it has been introduced in the vast majority of study programmes should be integral part of considering the DS to be 'fully implemented' in any given country. In the European experience, a large majority fully implements the two instruments, and in those countries where only one of the two tools has been fully implemented it is invariably the implementation of ECTS that is lagging behind. Overall this widespread use indicates that these two instruments have played an important role in embedding aspects of the Bologna reforms and facilitating the understanding of national higher education systems.

### National Qualification Frameworks (NQF)

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is a tool for describing and clearly expressing the differences between qualifications in all cycles and levels of education. Notwithstanding the many complex alignment issues the development of European level and national level Qualification Frameworks entail, they have proven to be powerful converging instruments, providing crucial structure in close conjunction with the ECTS and Diploma Supplement developments, emphasising the mutually reinforcing nature of these three instruments.

The development of National Qualifications Frameworks has been encouraged in recent years by a range of initiatives and processes in the Bologna Process. In Bergen, in May 2005, European ministers of education adopted the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) and committed to the development of National Qualification Frameworks, which should include a reference to the three-cycle structure and use generic descriptors based on learning outcomes, competences and credits for the first and second cycle. This task was made more challenging by the later adoption in the context of the EU Lisbon strategy of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF), which is structurally compatible to the QF-EHEA, but has different descriptors.

So countries developing or adapting their national qualifications frameworks not only have to shift from traditional input-based approaches to learning outcomes, credits and the profile of qualifications, but should also take care to ensure that national developments are compatible with both overarching European frameworks. In consequence, the 2009 Stocktaking report called the 2010 deadline 'too ambitious' and identified the establishment of National Qualifications Frameworks in all countries as one of the biggest challenges for the coming years. Eurydice data, using a five step model adapted from the BFUG working group on Qualifications Frameworks, supported this assessment by showing that in 2010, eight higher education systems had a fully self-certified NQF, 11 were well advanced, while all other countries were still in the preparatory stages of defining purposes and structures. The deadline was shifted to 2012, after which still a number of countries were called upon to complete the process during the Bucharest meeting.

### European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG)

The ESG have been widely accepted as a basis for Quality Assurance across the EHEA. They were the result of close cooperation between EHEA Quality Assurance Agencies (represented by ENQA), EHEA Higher Education Institutions (represented by EURASHE and EUA) and EHEA Students (represented by ESU) who together formed the famous E4. The converging power of working together on Quality Assurance from these different perspectives has proven to be a success formula, and the results have been brought about rather swiftly, compared to many other priorities in the Bologna process. In this sense ENQA, first as a broad network, and later on as a more structured and more exclusive

associative network has been very successful in bringing together the various perspectives and mapping out an EHEA wide framework for Quality assurance.

Promoting an EHEA wide definition of Quality Assurance, and offering broad principles and guidelines for Higher Education Institutions and Quality Assurance Agencies to implement; has certainly contributed to the success of the ESG. Through their broad nature, the ESG have also been conducive to accommodating convergence, and to building comparability and trust across the rich diversity of a large number of differing countries, cultures and Higher Education systems.

The dynamics behind the ESG are also exhibited by the recent joint proposal of the E4 Group (ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE), in cooperation with Education International (EI), BusinessEurope and EQAR for a revised version of the Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). This wider converging of interests beyond the E4, now also including business, academics and the register, shows how the ESG continue to influence the broader EHEA. The proposal aims at making the ESG clearer and reflect the recent changes in the EHEA, making a more explicit link to the learning and teaching process in the section on internal QA and defining the relationship of QA with other Bologna Process developments that have taken place since 2005, including those relating to Qualifications Frameworks and learning outcomes.

### The European Quality Assurance register (EQAR)

As a convergence instrument, EQAR has contributed to an EHEA wide understanding of what it takes to qualify as a Quality Assurance Agency. It aims at enhancing trust and confidence in European higher education quality assurance by listing quality assurance agencies that operate in Europe and have proven their credibility and reliability in a review against the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG). After less than two years of existence, EQAR already included 17 quality assurance agencies based in ten European countries which has grown to 32 agencies from

EQAR is also notable for being governed and supported by an international non-profit association that comprises all major European higher education stakeholders and European governments. This inclusive approach to governance is a strong symbol of the close partnership that has developed through the Bologna process and offers a model for other world regions wishing to implement models of convergence in Quality Assurance.

### Legislative convergence

The Bologna Declaration is not a treaty or convention, there are no legal obligations for the signatory states. The extent of participation and cooperation is completely voluntary. Nevertheless, the signatory countries have adjusted their national legislation regarding higher education to accommodate the convergence, or 'harmonisation' of their higher education systems across the EHEA. In part this is due to the increased involvement of the EU over time. The European Commission, as a member of the Bologna group, increasingly worked actively to support the convergence and modernisation of higher education systems across EHEA, with the many financing instruments it has to its disposal. Furthermore this EU involvement provided a 'soft law' framework for increased convergence.

In her study, 'The Future of Higher Education in Europe: the Case for a Stronger Base in EU Law, Sacha Garben noted that with the Lisbon strategy the goal to become a European knowledge economy was firmly positioned on the European agenda, with in Barcelona, two years after Lisbon, the European Council making even clearer reference to the EHEA, calling for further action to "introduce instruments to ensure the transparency of diplomas and qualifications (ECTS, diploma and certificate supplements, European CV) and closer cooperation with regard to university degrees".

This increased the mandate of the Commission to act within the EU framework and this was exemplified by the introduction of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in education by the Lisbon Strategy. These OMC's are not legally binding, but as a natural consequence of the momentum behind both the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy it does boost the Commission's influence over the direction in which the European higher education sector develops and evolves.

In is not surprising therefore that many of the goals and ideas expressed in the context of the Lisbon Strategy concur with the overarching philosophy as well as concrete aims of the Bologna Process. The OMC, with its typical activities such as setting timetables, establishing indicators and benchmarks and operating accordingly, setting specific targets and periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review, plays a key role in this merging 'into one policy framework. Most of these elements or characteristics of the OMC can now also be found in the activities around the Bologna Process. As Furlong notes, Bologna has not (yet) been formally incorporated in the EU framework. Therefore it cannot be called a part of the OMC, or the Lisbon Process, as such. But the activities of the Commission in the framework of Bologna are considered to be part of the OMC, or the Lisbon Process.

This strengthened cooperation underpinning the Bologna process has had an important effect of blurring the lines between the voluntary nature of intergovernmental cooperation, and the appearance of hard law, emanating from the EU. Indeed as Sacha further quoted in her study: 'governments want to use Europe to introduce domestic reform. The Commission wishes to extend its competence in higher education. University presidents want recognition. They each bring elements of the solution, as embodied in Bologna.

Nevertheless, this arrangement of convenience as it were, produced the space for the introduction of domestic legislation for Member states to reform their higher education systems in line with the Bologna Process, and accommodate the convergence instruments to do this.

## 4. Continental Funding complements National expenditure to align incentives in HE financing systems

### *Overall Continental Funding programmes*

### *Structural funds and the Cohesion Fund*

The European Funding Programmes have certainly contributed to enhancing convergence among European countries. At the broadest level, in the pursuit of economic, social and territorial cohesion, the two Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund, financial instruments of EU regional policy, have worked to narrow the development disparities among regions and Member States. For the period 2007-2013 alone, the budget allocated to regional policy amounts to around € 348 billion. Together, at 35% of the total budget, they represented the second largest EU budget item.

The two Structural Funds; the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) supporting the creation of infrastructure and productive job-creating investment, mainly for businesses; the European Social Fund (ESF) contributing to the integration into working life of the unemployed and disadvantaged sections of the population, mainly by funding training measures; and the Cohesion Fund intended for countries whose per capita GDP is below 90% of the EU average, funding environment and transport infrastructure projects, respectively serve the EU convergence, regional competitiveness, and territorial cooperation objectives.

*Higher Education Continental funding*

Within that overall converging framework, more specific funding for Higher Education has helped EU & Partner countries to align their systems and institutions to the creation of EHEA. Erasmus, stimulating mobility for students, and later on Erasmus Mundus and Tempus helped higher education institutions to internationalise and to finance the required changes. Since January 2014, all programmes have been collapsed into the integrated ERASMUS+. The new programme has an integrated approach to its objective setting, actions and financing in line with the developments in the EU and in the Bologna process.

It remains instructive to learn how the EU has supported the creation of EHEA all these years.

*Erasmus*

The Erasmus programme is one of the best-known EU actions and addressed the teaching and learning needs of all those in formal higher education including vocational education and training at tertiary level. It supported the achievement of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and reinforced the contribution of higher education and advanced vocational education to the process of innovation.

Erasmus centralised actions to support transnational cooperation among higher education institutions and other relevant stakeholders across Europe through multilateral projects increasing attainment levels, strengthening the social dimension, improving quality and relevance through mobility and cross-border cooperation, forging knowledge alliances, improving governance and funding, and by reaching out to the world of business. Multilateral academic networks were designed to promote European co-operation and innovation in specific subject areas contributed to enhancing quality of teaching in higher education, defining and developing a European dimension within a given academic discipline, furthering innovation and exchanging methodologies and good practices. Accompanying measures enhanced the implementation of Erasmus mobility, supported communication activities and events for the dissemination and exploitation of results of Erasmus projects, or fostered transversal aspects; all expected to produce a better impact of these results in the field of higher education and society at large. Noteworthy was also the Erasmus University Charter, prerequisite for HEI to organise student mobility and teaching, and other staff mobility, to carry out Erasmus intensive language courses and intensive programmes, and to apply for multilateral projects, networks, and accompanying measures. Other actions related to the European Higher Education Area, were the selection of the National Teams of Bologna Experts, the selection of ECTS & DS Labels, and the NARIC Network.

*Erasmus Mundus*

The Erasmus Mundus programme enhanced the quality of higher education and promoted dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through mobility and academic cooperation with Joint Programmes including scholarships; partnerships with Third Country higher education institutions and scholarships for mobility; and the promotion of European higher education.

The Joint Programmes including scholarships fostered cooperation between higher education institutions and academic staff in Europe and Third Countries, creating poles of excellence and providing highly trained human resources through Erasmus Mundus Masters courses and Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorates offered by consortia of higher education institutions, scholarships/fellowships for third-country and European students/doctoral candidates to follow these Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters and Doctorates; and  short-term scholarships for third-country and European academics to carry out Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses research or teaching assignments. The Partnerships with Third Country higher education institutions and scholarships for mobility enhanced academic cooperation and exchanges of students and academics with special

attention to disadvantaged groups and populations in vulnerable situations. The Action provided **s**upport for implementing structured individual mobility arrangements between the European and Third Country partners and scholarships of various lengths for European and Third-Country students, scholars, researchers, and professionals. These activities were funded by financial instruments emanating from the External Relations activities of the Union covering a variety of policy objectives and addressing different needs and priorities, but were nevertheless channelling substantial funds to higher education from instruments for European Neighbourhood and Partnership, Pre-Accession Assistance, Development Cooperation and Economic Cooperation Policy, and the European Development Fund. The Promotion of European higher education provided measures enhancing the global attractiveness of Europe as an educational destination and a centre of excellence, raising the profile of the European higher education sector as well as the relevant cooperation programmes and funding schemes The action funded dissemination of the programme's results and examples of good practice and the exploitation of these results at institutional and individual level. Activities related to the international dimension of all aspects of higher education, such as promotion, accessibility, quality assurance, credit-recognition, mutual recognition of qualifications, curriculum development and mobility were included.

### *Tempus*

Tempus projects for the modernisation of higher education in the EU's surrounding area concerned institutional cooperation on the reform and modernisation of higher education systems in the Partner Countries. It promoted voluntary convergence of the higher education systems in the Partner Countries with EU developments and prepared countries for participation in the integrated Life Long Learning Programme. The Tempus programme was implemented in close coordination with the Erasmus Mundus through Joint Project, Structural measures and the promotion of European higher education. Joint Projects were based on multilateral partnerships promoting the exchange of knowledge and know-how between EU and Partner Countries universities and among Partner Country institutions. Relevant themes for Joint Projects included curriculum development, enhancing university governance and creating better links between higher education and society at large. The Joint Projects supported National Projects implementing national priorities set by the Ministry of Education of Partner Countries, Multi-Country Projects implementing regional priorities, or implementing a national priority common to Partner Countries. Structural Measures contributed to the development and reform of national education institutions and systems in the Partner Countries; reforming governance structures and systems (qualification systems, quality assurance, national laws, organisation, coordination, accreditation, evaluation and the policy of higher education systems), or enhancing the links between higher education and society. They included studies and research, conferences and seminars, training courses, policy advice and dissemination of information. Structural Measures also supported implementing national priorities set by the Ministry of Education of Partner Countries, Multi-Country Projects implementing regional priorities, or implementing a national priority common to Partner Countries. Accompanying Measures comprised dissemination and information activities related to Tempus projects, such as conferences on various themes relevant to the programme, studies, consultation with stakeholders and activities aimed at identifying and making best use of good practice on projects. This Action was also used to support the network of National Tempus Offices (now Erasmus+ Offices) and Higher Education Reform Experts available to provide assistance to potential applicants and help them to monitor their Tempus projects.

### *Aligned national social policy funding priorities*

As described earlier European Countries have responded to the European incentives with national measures of their own, shifting national funding towards implementing the social priority areas,

albeit in relatively limited ways:

## The Social Dimension

Funding for the social dimension suffered from a lack of conceptual clarity hampering the definition of underrepresented groups or the understanding of the reasons for their underrepresentation. In turn the development of benchmarks and targets for reaching the social objectives lagged behind, as did monitoring efforts of the participation of these societal groups. Nevertheless countries have come around to implementing targeted measures for remedying underrepresentation such as:
Linking some of the public funding for higher education institutions to the number of students from under-represented groups giving extra weight to those with low socio-economic background or disabilities.

- Extra funding available for structural provisions for diversity within higher education institutions
- Extra funding to help higher education institutions meet the additional needs of disabled students.
- Access weighting to shift resources towards institutions that have achieved greater equality within their student bodies
- Meet some of the additional cost incurred by institutions for outreach activity to raise aspirations and attainment among potential students from under-represented groups.

## Lifelong Learning

In most European countries information on the funding of lifelong learning is difficult to obtain, partly as a result of lack of conceptual clarity and partly because diverse funding sources are involved. Where such information is available, investment in lifelong learning appears to be relatively low. The lack of overall data on LLL funding in Europe has three main causes:

- Most public budgets for higher education do not contain specifically earmarked funding for lifelong learning.
- Institutions have become more autonomous and more often receive lump sum funding reducing government information on the specific allocation of funds.
- There exists great diversity of funding sources for lifelong learning activities through municipal, regional or national public as well as private funds.

## Mobility

Where countries have been taking serious measures to develop their own policy, they construct onto the already existing European policies, programmes and actions, which have been an extremely important catalyst for national action on student mobility. In some countries, national policy does not extend very far beyond implementing particular European mobility programmes such as Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus and Tempus, now all gathered under the Erasmus+ umbrella programme.

The European experience shows that mobility is a complex and intertwined theme, and that many measures can and need to be brought into a mobility or internationalisation strategy. Financial measures include

- Scholarships, grants, fee waivers, and
- Portability of student support;
- Support to institutions considering internationalisation in curriculum design;
- Support for language learning for both incoming and outgoing students;
- Supporting higher education institutions in their mobility strategies; and
- Support for accommodation.

The enormous socio-economic diversity within and between countries in the European Higher Education Area makes it a huge challenge for the less wealthy countries to cover costs for a substantial number of their citizens to study in the more wealthy countries. In consequence, it is primarily the host countries financing in the form of scholarships and grants the mobility flows in this direction.

### *Aligned national Higher Education funding systems*

Although in the Bologna Process the statement that Higher Education Funding remains a public responsibility combined with other sources of funding, reiterated at various Bologna meetings by the Ministers, the issue of Higher Education funding systems and incentives structures has not been put explicitly forward as a priority. Nevertheless, despite the diversity of systems Europe is seeing some convergence in Higher Education funding systems as well. Beside the direct links we have seen such as funding social policies and the instruments and tools towards achieving EHEA, the shape and form that national Higher Education funding systems as such take, is hugely important for the capacity and freedom of institutions to respond the broader convergence frameworks initiated by the EU and/or through the Bologna process.

In the concluding remarks of his study called, *'Funding Higher Education, A view across Europe'* Ben Jongbloed states that the issue of higher education funding has multiple aspects related to who pays for higher education (including the topics of cost-sharing in higher education and external funding to universities), how public funding is allocated to universities, what incentives the allocation mechanism creates, and how much autonomy universities have in decision-making over financial and human resources.

Jongbloed concludes that the higher education funding mechanism is an important ingredient in the wider spectrum of governance arrangements. Trends and practices in Europe increasingly point towards more market-based, or performance-oriented and decentralised types of funding mechanisms. European governments have shown a tendency to augment the direct funding of higher education institutions with competitive funding mechanisms and performance-based funding mechanisms such as contractual performance agreements. Alongside this, they have started to grant more autonomy to the institutions, allowing them to make their own decisions about the use of resources and the generation of new and often external resources. The introduction or the increase of tuition fees has been one of the most widely debated issues in higher education funding (Teixeira et. al. 2006), but reality shows that, with the exception of UK, undergraduate fees do not yet cover a substantial share of educational costs in European countries (Lepori et al. 2007).

Surveying the funding mechanisms in place across European higher education systems, Jongbloed's study has shown that in most countries the allocation of direct appropriations occurs through a formula that uses a mix of input and, to a lesser extent, output criteria. Often student numbers are the most important criterion in the funding formula.

Overall, Jongbloed finds that institutional budgets depend more on student choice and increasingly less on central planning, while for research budgets he observed that competitive funding has become a key allocation mechanism, accounting already for a substantial share of the universities' revenues. Some governments have also started to work with performance contracts, de facto entering into regulatory agreements with institutions to set mutual performance-based objectives.

The extent to which such moves towards autonomy, performance contracts and performance-based funding have taken place varies enormously across countries. The Modernisation Agenda of the European Commission calls for more autonomy, less fragmentation and stronger ties between universities and private partners. The Commission in one of its earlier communications on 'The role of the universities in the Europe of knowledge' has stated that:

"The European university world is not trouble-free, and the European universities are not at present globally competitive with those of our major partners, even though they produce high quality scientific publications."

And: "European universities have for long modelled themselves along the lines of some major models, particularly the ideal model of university envisaged nearly two centuries ago by Wilhelm von Humboldt in his reform of the German university, which sets research at the heart of university activity and indeed makes it the basis of teaching. Today the trend is away from these models, and towards greater differentiation. This results in the emergence of more specialised institutions concentrating on a core of specific competences when it comes to research and teaching and/or on certain dimensions of their activities." (European Commission, 2003)

The problems identified by the European Commission are the tendency of uniformity and egalitarianism in many national higher education systems; too much emphasis on mono-disciplinarity and traditional learning and learners; and too little on world-class excellence (Dill and Van Vught, 2010). The Commission notes a number of areas where action is needed, and raises a series of questions such as:

- How to achieve adequate and sustainable incomes for universities, and to ensure that funds are spent most efficiently;
- How to ensure autonomy and professionalism in academic as well as managerial affairs;
- How to concentrate enough resources on excellence, and create the conditions within which universities can attain and develop excellence;
- How to make universities contribute better to local and regional needs and strategies;
- How to establish closer co-operation between universities and enterprises to ensure better dissemination and exploitation of new knowledge in the economy and society at large
- How to foster, through all of these areas, the coherent, compatible and competitive European higher education area called for by the Bologna Declaration, as well as the European research area set out as an objective for the Union by the Lisbon European Council, in March 2000.

A clear recommendation, also expressed in other EC communications, is the need for European governments to increase the autonomy of their national universities and revise their governance structures. However, this increased autonomy does not rule out a continuing important role for government. As always, this role lies in providing subsidies, promoting access, organising student support and ensuring quality assurance.

On top of that, through introducing performance-based funding mechanisms and more competition the government will set different incentives that may help to achieve more differentiation in quality, funding and pricing in higher education.

Jongbloed clearly supports the idea that a mass higher education system requires a greater reliance on markets and their decentralised decision-making by individuals and institutions. Compared to many other fields in the economy, the sector of higher education and its students and universities can indeed be trusted to be capable of making good decisions. If we believe the European Commission to be right then competition and greater institutional autonomy will drive higher education institutions to become more sensitive to their varied consumers' demands for relevance.

## 5. High level detailed attention for Instruments of Quality Assurance and their interaction with other policy instruments promotes coherence trust and cooperation

### *Continental Agreement on a set of Quality Assurance Standards & Guidelines*

The growth of external quality assurance in higher education has been one of the most notable features of the Bologna decade. This growth has certainly been boosted by the high level and detailed attention to the development and adoption of Europe wide instruments of Quality Assurance. Indeed the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) were adopted at the Bologna Bergen meeting of 2005, with the explicit request to ENQA to develop the practicalities for implementation. These ESG are currently to be reviewed by 2015, following a decision at the Bucharest meeting in 2012, which clearly shows that the attention for the relevance and effectiveness of the ESG has not diminished.

During this crucial Bologna period, quality assurance in higher education has been clearly linked to establishing stakeholder confidence. The ESG stress stakeholder interest of students as well as employers and the society, the central importance of institutional autonomy 'tempered by a recognition that this brings with it heavy responsibilities', and external quality assurance to be 'fit for its purpose only placing an appropriate and necessary burden on institutions for the achievement of its objectives'.

### *Continental Quality Assurance and Certification of QA Agencies*

In order to further boost trust and recognition in the EHEA, the high level Bologna meetings also paid specific attention to developing an instrument to regulate external Quality Assurance agencies across the EHEA. The decision to establish a European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) was taken at the Bergen Meeting with the request to develop a proposal, which was adopted at the 2007 London Meeting. The Register lists the Quality Assurance Agencies operating in EHEA and substantially compliant with the ESG. This certification is to be recognised by countries across the whole EHEA

This certification is based on peer review of Quality Assurance Agencies who first carry out their own internal evaluation process. The peer review mechanism helps putting the responsibility at the decentralised level according to the principle of subsidiarity, and builds trust and common interest among Quality Assurance Agencies.

### *Continental coherence of QA with other convergence instruments*

Throughout the review of the European experience it has become clear that coherence and interaction between the various quality assurance instruments such as ESG and EQAR and those developed for the creation of free movement within the EHEA such as the 3-cycle structure, the EHEA Qualifications Framework (EHEA FQ) National Quality Frameworks (NQF), the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), and the Diploma Supplement (DS), have been crucial to the success of Bologna. Indeed it is easy to see that it would have been difficult to develop an overarching 3-cycle structure to which the diverse higher education systems could relate and adapt without the academic currency provided by ECTS and the diploma supplement, enabling academics to quantify, qualify, and compare across programmes, institutions and systems. Without the 3-cycle structure and the ECTS it would have been tricky to develop the EHEA FQ or National qualification frameworks constructively relating to each other. It is also not far fetched to state that without the ECTS, continent wide quality assurance would be hampered, as it would be difficult to ensure that

comparisons of levels of quality across programmes institutions and systems were based on the same level of qualifications. In the same vein, the ESG provide a way to ensure that the allocation of credits to build qualifications does reflect a certain level of quality as well. And finally, EQAR ensures that it is verifiable that those who verify externally that internal quality assurance is in place in HEI are also reviewed as to their own capacity to ensure their own quality assurance levels.

## 6. Broad Quality assurance principles, policies, standards and guidelines safeguard diversity, ensure comparability and allow recognition.

*A structured description of definition, principles and policies expressing the spirit of QA*

The spirit of ESG is learning and essentially formative in nature. The ESG are principle based, and not prescriptive in the way QA needs to be carried out. As the new proposal for ESG outlines[7]: the ESG are a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education. They are not standards for quality, nor do they prescribe how the quality assurance processes are implemented, but they provide guidance, covering the areas vital for successful quality provision and learning environments in higher education.

Actually when reading the standards one can easily see that they do not prescribe but describe a desired result or outcome that should be in place without predetermining how these should be achieved or what they should look like. The new ESG proposal also indicates that the focus of the ESG is on quality assurance related to learning and teaching in higher education, including the learning environment and relevant links to research and innovation. In addition institutions need to have policies and processes to ensure and improve the quality of their other activities, such as research and governance.

The ESG promote an EHEA wide definition providing the conceptual clarity as an instrument for alignment and cooperation. In the EHEA, quality assurance is defined as:

*The policies, procedures and practices that are designed to achieve, maintain or enhance 'quality' as it is understood in a specific context.*

The four basic principles of the Quality Assurance functions were laid down early on in developing the ESG and have provided the backbone for the developments thereafter:

1. Autonomy and independence both from government and from higher education institutions in terms of procedures and methods concerning quality evaluation;
2. Self-assessment
3. External assessment by a peer review group and site visits
4. Publication of an evaluation report

The ESG apply to all higher education offered in the EHEA regardless of the mode of study or place of delivery. Thus, the ESG are also applicable to all higher education including transnational and cross-border provision, and to all programmes including those not necessarily leading to a formal degree.

At the European level the aim is to consistently enhance mutual trust among institutions and agencies assisting mutual recognition with strengthened procedures. The European Consultative Forum for Quality Assurance in Higher Education ensures the consistency of quality assurance across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), through the exchange of viewpoints and experiences amongst agencies and other key stakeholders including higher education institutions, students and labour market representatives.

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[7] Excerpt from the new ESG proposal of 18 March 2014

The ESG cover internal (Part 1) and external quality (Part 2) assurance of the HEI, and also external quality assurance agencies themselves (Part 3) so that the Higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies across the EHEA have common reference points for quality assurance.

### *The essential systemic components and procedures of the QA function*

The implementation of those principles is embodied by the mechanism of European Standards and Guidelines on the one hand, and the European Register for Quality Assurance (EQAR) on the other.

The ESG have been divided in three parts:

1. Internal quality assurance
2. External quality assurance
3. Quality assurance agencies

These three parts are intrinsically interlinked and together form the basis for a European quality assurance framework. They work on a complementary basis in higher education institutions as well as in agencies and work on the understanding that other stakeholders contribute to the framework. As a consequence, the three parts should be read as a whole, and in Part 3 the ESG link clearly to EQAR.

The guidelines explain why the standard is important and describe how standards might be implemented. They set out good practice in the relevant area for consideration by the actors involved in quality assurance. Implementation will vary depending on different contexts.

In Part 1, the standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance require institutions to have a policy for quality assurance that is made public, forms part of their strategic management and is developed and implemented involving external stakeholders. Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes to ensure they meet the objectives and intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated referring to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA. Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach. They should also consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", throughout admission, progression, recognition and certification. They should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers and apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff. Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided. They should collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and publish information which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible. Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned. Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

In Part 2, the standards and guidelines for external quality assurance field the requirement to address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance described in Part 1. External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement. External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include self-assessment, an

external assessment normally including a site visit, a report resulting from the external assessment and consistent follow-up. A professional system of peer review should be at the core of external quality assurance, carried out by groups of experts that include student members. Any outcomes or judgements made, as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit, published, and consistently applied criteria, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision. Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report, and complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and be communicated to the institutions.

In Part 3, the standards and guidelines for quality assurance agencies require agencies to undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives as part of their publicly available mission statement, and these should translate into the daily work of the agency while ensuring the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work. Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities from whom they should otherwise be independent and act autonomously. They must have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence. Agencies should regularly publish thematic reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities, and they should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work. They should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities, and undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

In Part 3 the ESG clearly link up with the EQAR. The European Register Committee acts as a gatekeeper for the inclusion of agencies in the European Register of quality assurance agencies making it easier to identify professional and credible agencies operating in the EHEA. European quality assurance agencies are expected to submit themselves to a cyclical review each five years.


## 7. Decentralised and independent Quality Assurance mechanisms promote learning and improvement

*Prime responsibility for Quality Assurance anchored at HEI level*

In the European experience, the ESG clearly put prime responsible for internal QA at the level of the higher education institutions themselves. The importance of stakeholder consultation bringing multiple perspectives to internal quality assurance is certainly an important reason to do so. It is also the Institutions themselves that harbour the highly educated and specialised people close to the core activities of the institution. A second reason to do this is that quality assurance is seen as a formative and developmental process, aimed at building genuine internal capacity for critical self evaluation and improvement, and not as a top down summative inspection system only concerned with compliance. A third reason is the principle of subsidiarity requiring that action is always taken at the lowest and best informed level.

The fact that the ESG increasingly stress learning outcomes reveals the gradual shift in EHEA from traditional research based performance of higher education institutions towards better teaching as well. Indeed, the importance of higher education institutions in building the knowledge society as a core strategy of the European Union has pushed institutions to revisit their mission, strategies,

governance, organisation and processes at all levels in order to respond adequately to this challenge. Accordingly internal quality assurance has grown in scope and increased the need for inclusive stakeholder involvement.

### *Complemented with reviews from independent QA Agency*

External quality assurance of higher education institutions by quality assurance agencies according to Part 2 of the ESG, builds on the internal evaluations, emphasising HEI autonomy and their prime responsibility for quality improvement. With this developmental approach external quality assurance will assess the competence with which the institution has carried out the internal quality assurance process; in how far it has covered the components as put forward in the ESG (Part 1), and verify the conclusions with a light touch only. In this approach external quality assurance is meant to ensure that necessary measures to improve quality have been established within institutions, and avoids interfering too much in the decision making processes at institutional level.

### *Internal QA of QAA + external QA by peer review*

QA Agencies are also bound to carry out their own internal reviews, which in turn are followed up by an external review. External reviews of QA Agencies (ESG Part 3) complete this third layer of quality assurance, by also verifying the capacity of the QA Agency itself by international peer experts. As this peer review carries no authority, it is by definition developmental in nature, and works as a convergence mechanism for good practice based on EHEA wide exchanges between QA Agencies.

Complementary to these reviews, the more formal listing on the European Quality Assurance Register functions as EHEA wide accreditation, improving transparency.

## 8. Accreditation and Quality Enhancement are distinct and complementary

While Quality Assurance literature shows an academic preponderance for developmental and formative processes, the reality in the majority of EHEA countries shows that quality assurance is most often concerned with the more summative processes of granting permission to higher education institutions or programmes to operate on the basis of threshold quality standards. Only a minority of countries exclusively follow an improvement-oriented approach.

Despite the Bologna external quality assurance success story where nearly all signatory countries have a system of higher education external quality assurance in place, usually based on independent agencies charged with prime responsibility; there are significant differences in the philosophy and approach behind systems making them quite diverse in their orientation. The main element that distinguishes the orientation of systems is whether or not the QA agency or national body is invested with the power to grant permission for institutions or programmes to operate.

Indeed, in systems where responsible QA bodies/agencies have the power to permit or refuse programmes and/or institutions to operate, quality assurance can be perceived as supervisory in character, ensuring that minimum quality thresholds are met. Agencies may of course play other roles like giving advice on the enhancement of quality. This is indeed specifically mentioned in a number of countries, but all these additional roles are likely to be subordinate to the decision of permitting programmes and/or institutions to operate.

In other systems, QA agencies report on institutions' management of quality, and although having 'only' an advisory role, aim to support quality enhancement. In such a construction, the primary emphasis is thus on empowering higher education institutions with responsibility for quality improvement. These are systems that will be more likely to use 'light touch' external quality assurance processes, aiming to ensure that necessary measures to improve quality have been

established within institutions, and interfering less in the decision making processes at institutional level.

It is interesting to note that, despite the growing emphasis on autonomy for higher education institutions in European-level discourse on higher education, three-quarters of countries –including those that have most recently established their external quality assurance system – have constructed their QA systems in the logic of supervision and ensuring minimum standards, while a minority of higher education systems currently follow an improvement-oriented approach, placing the primary responsibility for improving quality at institutional level. This finding suggests that the development of external quality assurance systems has been a central feature of evolving governance structures in higher education. Whereas institutions were previously 'supervised' directly by the state, the steering mechanisms now are much more likely to involve quality assurance agencies, suggesting European convergence towards a particular model of external quality assurance. No doubt this has been facilitated by the increased communication between governments, agencies and other quality assurance actors throughout the Bologna period.

At the European level the proposal for a European register of quality assurance agencies based on national review, closely linked to Part 3 of the ESG, gave rise to an intense discussion among the E4 Group about the precise structure and function of such a register. In the 'ENQA 10th Anniversary Publication' Peter Williams, then President of ENQA described two points of view. One was to make the Register an inclusive and voluntary descriptive record to which any agency could seek entry. In this view the register was envisaged mainly as a useful source of reliable and objective information for anyone wanting to know more about quality assurance agencies operating in Europe. The second opinion was that inclusion in the register should be limited to those agencies that could demonstrate that they were compliant with the ESG through the 'peer review on a national basis' procedure. This vision of the register, turning it in effect into a European mechanism for the accreditation of agencies, would need a much higher level of organisational formality, control and financial backing to establish its authority. This 'Accreditation' view won most support, as the option of an inclusive voluntary list without a veto mechanism would have made it impossible to keep bogus accreditors off the list.

Then there was the question whether ENQA would operate this register or a whether a separate organisation was needed. Since the requirements were identical for ENQA as for the Register, namely compliance with the ESG evidenced through an independent peer review, and therefore automatically qualifying full members of ENQA for inclusion on the register; a case was made for keeping the Register in ENQA, with decisions through an associated, but autonomous, Register Committee. Only the few agencies that were not members of ENQA would then have required a separate mechanism. So, in this view ENQA and the register could operate as distinct entities while joined by their common criteria and a shared administration, limiting duplication of costs and effort. It would help avoiding as well that differences of interpretation about compliance with one or other of the criteria would arise, potentially throwing into doubt the operations of both organisations, and reducing the status and authority of the ESG themselves.

On the other hand, to provide the required level of authority and formality, governance of EQAR would have to be fundamentally different in that membership would have to include signatory states plus the E4, and not only QA Agencies, as is the case with ENQA. The main argument for a separate governance of EQAR was therefore that the membership of the signatory countries would give it much more clout in facilitating cross-border operation of listed QA Agencies than ENQA as a purely stakeholder organisation would be able to provide.

So the argument for separate governance of the Register won the day, with the compromise that no agency should be required to submit to two reviews against identical criteria, and full membership of ENQA would be accepted by the register committee as non binding 'prima facie' evidence of compliance with the Register's requirements.

On this basis EQAR was registered as an International organisation in Brussels and came formally into being in March 2008.

The EQAR Membership consists of the Four Founding members; ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE, the Social Partner Members BUSINESSEUROPE and Education International, and potentially all signatory countries of the Bologna Process as Governmental Members of the Association. So far 31 countries have signed up.

Membership is not the same as a listing on the Register. EQAR currently lists 28 Quality Assurance Agencies from 15 countries.

The General Assembly convenes annually, usually in conjunction with the first Bologna Follow-Up Group Meeting and decides on the budget, approves the accounts, elects the Executive Board and Appeals Committee and approves the Register Committee.

The Executive Board is in charge of the overall governance and management of EQAR, including administrative, financial matters and strategic coordination, with the support of the Secretariat.

The Register Committee comprises 11 members with experience in quality assurance and higher education acting as independent experts in their individual capacity. The Register Committee receives, evaluates and decides upon applications for inclusion on the Register. Representatives of five Bologna signatory states, elected by the Bologna Follow-Up Group, attend the meetings of the Register Committee as Observers.

The Appeals Committee considers appeals potentially rising in case the Register Committee rejects an application for inclusion on the Register. An appeal can be lodged on procedural grounds or in cases of perversity of judgement.

The Secretariat supports all other bodies in their work, ensures the information exchange between the different bodies, serves as contact point for third parties and represents and promotes EQAR both within the EHEA (European Higher Education Area) as on international level.

So, while the EHEA has opted for separate governance between ENQA with its Quality enhancement role, and of EQAR with its more formal accountability and recognition mandate, both organisations strive to function 'as one' in their complementary roles. In doing so they need to mitigate the risk of unfair disadvantage for agencies that choose not to be on the Register and for Higher Education systems subject to quality assurance by such agencies, the risk that the current voluntary status of inclusion on the Register eventually become the norm, then an expectation, and finally a requirement, and finally, the risk that the links between national agencies and national higher education systems are loosened in favour of a European listing on the EQAR, potentially diminishing the importance of ENQA with loss of the benefits it offers its members in shared experience and technical know-how.

The European experience shows that the conceptual tension between a formative and developmental process towards maximising the capacity for quality enhancement on the one hand, and the accountability processes of licensing or listing on the basis of compliance thresholds, on the other, is a sticky one. These two complementary functions need to be carefully balanced. Currently ENQA the voice of QA agencies, and EQAR the more formal instrument with governmental backing, work hand in hand equipped with shared ESG to provide the means for comprehensive Quality Assurance in the evolving EHEA.


## 9. Ranking is not promoted as a Quality Assurance tool

Ranking is promoted as a transparency tool and is seen to be explicitly separate and different from quality assurance. The public however is influenced by these rankings and reads them as quality indicators, while most ranking systems do have a narrowed down fixed set of indicators focusing on what the particular ranking mechanism finds important. Users are not always aware of this bias or focus implicit to the different ranking systems.

The European response to initiatives such as the Shanghai Academic Ranking or Times Higher Education World University rankings, is the U Multirank tool, assessing more than 850 HEI, allowing the user to choose criteria according to their own preferences and build a personalised ranking based on their particular needs. This new tool was developed with 2M Euro funding of the European Commission and has been launched very recently. Its ambitions

Proponents of existing Rankings do criticise the new U Multirank for its lack of critical mass and because of this, limited participation from institutions outside Europe, or even from renowned institutions within Europe. U Multirank collects a lot of information on a large number of indicators, requiring a lot of effort from participating institutions, many of which still need to be convinced that it is worth the effort. U Multirank also has the ambition to include a much wider range of different types of higher education institutions than the traditional ranking mechanisms do. Adding up all these ambitions, critics question the feasibility managing such multitude of indicators; growing size of databases, and number of institutions to be included.

In a letter published by EuroScientist magazine on 9 June 2014, Times Higher Education rankings editor Phil Baty states that '*while this admirable ambition gives U-Multirank a huge headache over appropriate, relevant performance indicators, it also gives the project an unwieldy pool of about 20,000 higher education institutions in the world from which to draw data. On this basis, the current figure of around 500 current active participants – with a further 360 or so institutions included in the system with just their publicly available data – is a problem. The target to add just 150-250 new institutions for 2015, giving a total pool of around 1,000 – around one-twentieth of the world's higher education institutions – also seems inadequate*.'

The Success of U Multirank may indeed hinge on a high participation rate, as its usefulness as a search and compare engine for finding institutions on the basis of personalised preferences will increase with its comprehensiveness. Furthermore the feasibility of its data requirements, large variety of indicators, and number of HEI included will demand solid management competencies and infrastructure capacity.

However the focus on ranking by what is relevant for the user does chime with the requirements of a knowledge society with lifelong learning, flexible learning paths, and mobility, and this both within and beyond the EHEA. This approach moves away from rankings as simple quality ratings based on fixed indicators, towards rankings as multidimensional search and compare engines based on preferences of the user, providing a more comprehensive and balanced view on how institutions compare with one another. This in itself, if critical mass can be achieved and the idea proves feasible, would be of great benefit in terms of making comparison of higher education institutions more transparent.

It is still early days to evaluate the merits of this European initiative, but it will certainly be worthwhile to keep an eye on its evolution, albeit for better or for worse.

# Lessons learned

The Analysis framework of the Success factors and Key Components for the European experience provides a summary view

| Success factors | Key components | The European experience |
|---|---|---|
| **1. The international Context is conducive to convergence** | Continental convergence policies | The European Union<br><br>Peace (Political union)<br>Democracy (EU Law principles)<br>Prosperity (Internal market; Free Movement of goods, services, capital people) |
| | Institutional Back up | European Commission |
| | Policy instruments | ERASMUS+, ECTS<br>EU Lisbon Strategy<br>ET 2020 Strategy |
| | Complementary international Agreements and supporting networks | The European Cultural Convention<br>Lisbon Recognition Convention<br>Sorbonne Declaration<br>OECD/UNESCO guidelines international on Quality Assurance<br>NARIC/ENIC |
| **2. A high level International Cooperation mechanism based on inclusive consultation and solid process management is in place** | Shared Purpose & Objectives | Bologna EHEA 2010 + Agenda 2020 |
| | Inclusive consultation arrangements | Member states, European Commission, Council of Europe, Consultative members (ESU – EURASHE - EUA - ENQA (E4), EI, UNESCO, Business Europe |
| | Process Management organisation | BFUG, Bologna Secretariat & Board, BFUG Working Groups |
| | Process Management instruments | BFUG Working Programme, Progress targets, Stocktaking reports, Stakeholder Reports |
| **3. Shared policies produce convergence instruments and adapted legislation** | Shared Social Policy principles, instruments, and targets | The Social Dimension, Lifelong Learning, Mobility |
| | Joint development of mutually reinforcing convergence policy instruments and tools | 3-Cycle structure, EHEA QF, NQF, ECTS, DS, EQAR, ESG |
| | Legislative convergence | Member states adapt legislation to accommodate convergence instruments |
| **4. Continental Funding complements national expenditure to align incentives in HE financing systems** | Continental Funding programmes | ERASMUS+, Structural Funds |
| | Aligned national social policy funding priorities | Shift of national funding towards implementation of social priority areas |
| | Aligned national Higher Education funding systems | HE is public responsibility with diverse funding systems and sources, rewarding HEI performance in tune with ESG, NQF, LLL, Mobility, Social dimension |

| Success factors | Key components | The European experience |
|---|---|---|
| 5. **High level detailed attention for Instruments of Quality Assurance and their interaction with other policy instruments promotes coherence trust and cooperation** | Continental Agreement on a set of Quality Assurance Standards & Guidelines | ESG, developed and approved (2005) and now revised (2015) under Bologna process |
| | Continental Quality Assurance and Certification of QA Agencies | EQAR developed under bologna Process provides QAA certification if substantially compliant with ESG |
| | Continental coherence of QA with other convergence instruments | Coherence between QA (ESG, EQAR) and EHEA QF, NQF, ECTS, and DS |
| 6. **Broad Quality assurance principles, policies, standards and guidelines safeguard diversity, ensure comparability and allow recognition.** | A structured description of <br> · Definition, principles and policies expressing the spirit of QA <br> · The essential systemic components and procedures of the QA function | The ESG are principle based, and not prescriptive in the way QA needs to be carried out. <br> They describe which components and procedures need to be in place without determining in any detail the shape or form they should take on. |
| 7. **Decentralised and independent Quality Assurance mechanisms promote learning and improvement** | Prime responsibility for Quality Assurance anchored at HEI level | HEI is prime responsible for internal QA |
| | Complemented with reviews from independent QA Agency | External QA by Quality Assurance Agencies (QAA) based on HEI internal QA |
| | QA of QA Agencies ensured through international peer review | Internal QA of QAA + external QA by peer review |
| 8. **Accreditation and Quality Enhancement are distinct and complementary** | Quality enhancement is a developmental process and Accreditation an accountability mechanism. | ENQA works mostly on Quality Enhancement, and EQAR, provides the accountability mechanism facilitating cross border operation of QA Agencies. ENQA is a membership association of QA Agencies, and EQAR has government membership and backing |
| 9. **Ranking is not promoted as a Quality Assurance tool** | Ranking is promoted as a transparency tool and is seen to be explicitly separate and different from Quality Assurance | The U Multirank tool, assessing more than 850 HEI, allowing the user to choose criteria according to their own preferences and build a personalised ranking based on their particular needs |

This framework represents the broad lessons learned from the European experience, starting with the need for a broad overarching political framework at the continental level able to steer the dynamics of convergence based on an agenda of integration, mobility, and prosperity. This dynamic needs to be backed up with institutions with a mandate to act and to develop policy instruments for action by others. These continent wide arrangements can also be further reinforced by other international agreements and supporting networks.

Within this context, Bologna, with its frequent high-level international consultation, cooperation and commitment laid down in public declarations and communications, formed a high-level international cooperation mechanism, key in developing the shared purpose of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This mechanism was underpinned with solid organisational arrangements for process management, which in turn produced the instruments to support decision-making.

The shared policies produced convergence instruments in the form of shared social principles, instruments and targets, and enabled the joint development of higher education policy convergence tools and instruments together with adapted legislation.

Continental funding complemented national expenditure and helped aligning the incentives in the national higher education funding systems towards more decentralised and performance based decision-making.

High level and detailed attention for instruments of quality assurance and their interaction with other policy instruments has promoted coherence trust and cooperation which was sealed with the publishing of European standards and guidelines for quality assurance (ESG), a continental wide accreditation mechanism for QA agencies (EQAR), a 3-cycle higher education structure, a European wide Qualifications Framework and aligned National Qualification Frameworks, a European system for credit transfer and accumulation (ECTS), and Diploma Supplements. The high level detailed attention safeguarded the coherence between the spirit and the implementation of quality assurance and other EHEA instruments.

The broad, inclusive and developmental approach to quality assurance produced policies, standards and guidelines accommodating diversity while ensuring comparability and recognition. The development of structured easily accessible policy documents, lying out also the mechanisms and procedures that need to be in place for a quality assurance function, enabled convergence across the EHEA.

Decentralised and independent quality assurance mechanisms promote institutional self-assessment, learning and improvement across countries, even though many countries still focus overly on the licensing function instead. The layered mechanism of internal QA in HEI, external QA of HEI by QA agencies, and finally the internal + peer reviewed QA of QA agencies is aimed at promoting this culture of improvement and mutual recognition.

The clear distinction between quality enhancement and accreditation shows how the complementary nature of the improvement function and the licensing function can act-as-one to fulfil the role of quality assurance in higher education systems. While this distinction has resulted in two organisational setups at the European level; of which one (EQAR) is governmental, and one (ENQA) is stakeholder based with some functional overlap between the two, at the national level many countries choose to merge the quality enhancement and accreditation functions in their newly independent QA agencies.

Finally in the European experience there is a new trend to see Rankings as means to provide transparency in the higher education landscape, and not as a quality indicator per se. A start has been made with an ambitious ranking mechanism based on the preferences of the user and including far more indicators, many more types of institutions in much greater numbers than the traditional established ranking systems that incorporate the best 500 institutions based on a set of fixed criteria.

The Bologna process achieved impressive results in terms of its objectives and priorities, but most of all, despite all the complexities it entails, it created an unprecedented atmosphere of cooperation and readiness for change in the European higher education area.

## The Asian-Pacific experience

In his study[8] Supachai Yavaprabhas the Director of SEAMEO RIHED describes how the Asia Pacific region, consisting of both developed and developing countries with as many similar features in higher education as other regions, seems to be lagging behind in its attempt to promote regional harmonisation and integration in the area of higher education. The cooperation at the level of higher education institutions in promoting research collaboration and staff/student mobility is evident, but he points out that a framework that promotes closer and more harmonised policy interaction between national governments is inexistent. He emphasises the role of globalisation as a major force in transforming the higher education sector around the world showing that many HEIs and national governments, in many parts of the world, have already ventured on to tackle the force of globalisation by reforming their institutional structures, as well as consolidating regional effort to establish a common framework for higher education. Supachai reckons Europe to be the most advanced region in coping with the globalisation phenomenon by attempting to harmonise its member states' higher education policy and practices. The Bologna Process is the model that has been widely observed and adopted by other regions, both by developed countries in the Asia Pacific and in other parts of the world.

Supachai argues that In the Asia Pacific, national governments and HEIs, must focus on an increase of academic excellence and accessibility, as well as assuring the level of quality in higher learning institutions, taking a long view and explore the possibility of promoting higher education cooperation in both the HEIs and between national governments. While the existing cooperation at the level of HEIs is the foundation for mutual higher education development in the region, the next step to be contemplated by national governments is the increase of higher education policy interactions among the governments in the Asia Pacific as well as the establishment of an inter-governmental process which will stimulate the harmonisation of higher education policy.

Supachai identifies the key actors and networks in the region that have been instrumental in advancing two key areas: quality assurance and the promotion of mobility. In this respect, he sees SEAMEO RIHED to be the key actor in raising awareness among policy makers and other stakeholders in the region of the importance of a concerted regional effort that will contribute to the sustainable direction of higher education in the future.

## 1. The international context is conducive to convergence, but not yet focused enough on Higher Education

Vision 2020 adopted by the ASEAN Heads of Government at their Meeting in December 1997, sees ASEAN in 2020 as "a concert of Southeast Asian nations, outward looking, living in peace, stability and prosperity, bonded together in dynamic development and in a community of caring societies. The Asia Pacific region is one of the most economically dynamic parts of the world. Commitment to open trade, investment and economic reform has encouraged many countries in the region to attract international students and become exporters of higher education services. Many Asia Pacific countries have allocated substantial financial and human resources to develop 'world-class' higher education systems. ASEAN integration in the area of trade and services has not translated in the concrete move towards regional integration in higher education, and this while the ASEAN leaders had agreed to launch an Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) in 2000, with the core objective of Narrowing the Development Gap (NDG) between the original six founding ASEAN members and the

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[8] 'Experiences of Asian Higher Education Frameworks and their Implications for the Future', Supachai Yavaprabhas Director SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (RIHED), January 2009

newly admitted CLMV countries, namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam (CLMV), by accelerating economic integration of these newer members and combine efforts among member countries to promote dynamic and sustained growth in the region. These efforts to narrow the development gap are driven mainly by the six-year IAI-Work Plans to assist the CLMV countries as well as ASEAN's other sub-regions to ensure that their economies move at an accelerated pace. The first phase of the Work Plan covered the years 2002 to 2008. The current Work Plan (IAI-WP II) is based on key programme areas in the three Blueprints for the ASEAN Community: ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint, ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint. These three blueprints are in effect the developmental pillars of ASEAN integration.

The ASEAN Security Community is envisaged to bring ASEAN's political and security cooperation to a higher plane to ensure that countries in the region live at peace with one another and with the world at large in a just, democratic a harmonious environment. The ASEAN Security Community members are therefore agreeing to rely exclusively on peaceful processes in the settlement of intra-regional differences and regard their security as fundamentally linked to one another and bound by geographic location, common vision and objectives. The ASEAN Economic Community is the realisation of economic integration to create a stable, prosperous and highly competitive ASEAN economic region in which there is a free flow of goods, services, investment and a freer flow of capital, equitable economic development and reduced poverty and socio-economic disparities by the year 2020. The ASEAN Economic Community is based on a convergence of interests among ASEAN members to deepen and broaden economic integration efforts through existing and new initiatives with clear timelines. The ASEAN Socio-cultural Community, envisages a Southeast Asia bonded together in partnership as a community of caring societies. The Community shall foster cooperation in social development aimed at raising the standard of living of disadvantaged groups and the rural population, and shall seek the active involvement of all sectors of society, in particular women, youth, and local communities.

To accelerate the pace of implementing the IAI, the IAI Development Cooperation Forum (IDCF) was established to serve as the main venue for engaging ASEAN's Dialogue Partners and other donors in a collective dialogue on the IAI Work Plan. Four Forums have been organized since 2002. The IAI Task Force, comprised of representatives of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and its working group from all ten ASEAN member states, is in charge of providing "general advice" and policy guidelines and directions in the design and implementation of the IAI Work Plan. All 10 ASEAN Member States are represented in the IAI Task Force, chaired by representatives of the four CLMV countries. Chairmanship is rotated annually in alphabetical order. The chair for 2014 is Cambodia. The ASEAN Secretariat, in particular through the IAI and NDG Division, supports the implementation and management of the IAI Work Plan and activities of other sub-regional frameworks. This includes servicing meetings, assisting in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and reporting of projects, resource mobilization and overall operational coordination among the various bodies working on IAI. A key activity of the Division is initiating closer cooperation with the Dialogue Partners and international agencies as well as the private sector in ASEAN to develop strategies and programmes to assist in implementing IAI and NDG projects.

The IAI focused mainly on economic integration, human resource development, Information and communication technology, and Infrastructure development. The Work Plan consisted of at least 100 projects to be implemented between 2000-2006, and was funded by dialogue partners and development agencies, such as the governments of Japan, Korea, Australia, JICA and UNIDO. However, of all the programmes and projects funded to promote the above four mentioned criteria, only one project under the human resource development area was designed to promote higher education development in the region, that is, the project on Higher Education Management in CLMV sponsored by the government of Brunei Darussalam and the ASEAN Foundation.

Meanwhile, Southeast Asia has chosen an approach to higher education harmonisation that allows systems to work with each other more effectively. Several frameworks exist that the region could

use to support the development of regional quality assurance systems, while maintaining respect for individual systems.

These include:

1. The Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific (1983) (UNESCO, 1983) for mutually recognition of accreditation decisions, creating transparency in systems. The Convention has been ratified by five nations, leaving ratification by Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Singapore still to be achieved.
2. The UNESCO-CEPES Guidelines on quality provision in cross-border education (OECD UNESCO, 2005), which have also served in the EHEA for strengthening quality assurance, accreditation and recognition of qualifications schemes at both national and international levels through nonbinding international guidelines on "Quality provision in cross-border higher education".
3. The Framework for Higher Education Quality Assurance Principles in the Asia Pacific Region, as discussed in the Paper on Developing an Agreed Set of Quality Assurance Principles in the broader Asia-Pacific (DEEWR, 2008). The Chiba Principles provide quality assurance principles for the Asia Pacific region in three main sections – Internal Quality Assurance, Quality Assessment and Quality Assurance Agency.

Against this background, Supachai Yavaprabhas puts forward a framework for closer harmonisation in higher education in the Asia Pacific, which not surprisingly contains many of the success-factors in the European experience.

## 2. High level International Cooperation mechanisms still miss a collaborative framework based on inclusive consultation and solid process management

### Shared Purpose & Objectives

There are a number of inter- governmental efforts in the Asia Pacific worth mentioning. In the context of ASEAN, higher education in the region has been mentioned in many official declarations as one of the important keys to enhancing human resource development in the region. In recent years, after the consensus among ASEAN countries to establish the ASEAN community, education has been treated as the core action line in promoting the ASEAN-Socio Cultural Community. The SEAMEO Conference and the ASED Meetings have also promoted ASEAN identity and the diverse aspects of the ASEAN community. In parallel, functional cooperation to promote quality in general and higher education have been emphasised through the strengthening of language education, vocational and technical education and school leadership.

Other Asia Pacific countries, such as New Zealand and China, are also interested in cementing their educational ties with Europe by taking steps parallel with the Bologna Process. China, in particular, already secured observer status in the 2007 ministerial meeting in London.

In an Australian attempt to emulate the Bologna Process in the Asia Pacific, the Brisbane Communiqué was the key initiative launched during the inaugural Asia-Pacific Education Minister's Meeting in 2006 aimed at promoting the collaboration on a QA framework, as well as recognition and common competency- based standards for teachers, but it has not yet translated in an overall framework that thoroughly addresses most of the aspects of higher education activities. The initiative is meant to help strengthen the overall education structure in the region, and not higher education per se. It has established a kind of structural engagement and development of QA among Asia-Pacific countries with as main objectives to facilitate the mobility of students and faculties and to collaborate in developing a QA framework that is on a par with international standards.

Unlike the ideas behind the European's initiative as evidenced by the Bologna Process, which aims at establishing compatibility and comparability of QA systems, the Brisbane Communiqué focuses on promoting greater transferability in the region, for which ensuring transparency and mutual trust between countries is essential. However, this can only be accomplished if the QA systems in the region are better developed. The ministries responsible for education in 27 signatory countries are expected to be the prime movers. The primary objectives of these initiatives are to create a QA framework that could be used to better assess courses available on-line, to develop competency standards for teachers, to create a system of recognition of education and professional qualifications and technical skills.

However, as Roger Chao Jr.[9] points out; the Australian-led Brisbane Communiqué lacks an existing overarching collaboration framework such as the European Cultural Convention linking all the participating countries together. Although APEC serves as the common link of the major Brisbane Communiqué participating countries, the lack of an existing working relationship and loose collaboration within APEC alone might not provide the political and economic resources provided by the European Commission in the Bologna Process initiative. Furthermore, Australia, in spite of its economic strength does not have the strength of numbers, especially compared with China. This also contrasts with the Bologna Process experience, where the UK, Germany, France and Italy - the most powerful and populous European countries - were the initiators of the initiative in the form of the Sorbonne Declaration in 1998. The fact that Australia funds the majority of the Brisbane Communiqué-related projects and studies already hints at the challenges of co-operation, implementation and sustainability of such a broad regional higher education initiative without a strong political economy framework.

### Inclusive consultation arrangements

The Brisbane Communiqué, similar to the Bologna Process, involves various stakeholders stressing the rationale of regional integration, and the need for regional and national quality assurance frameworks and mutual recognition of higher education qualifications and degrees. APEC and SEAMEO supports the Brisbane Communiqué as both organizations have been engaged in regionalization projects such as open regionalization and South East Asian higher education collaboration and regionalization, respectively.

Other initiatives emerge by the ASEAN University Network (AUN), Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU), and an independent network of quality assurance agencies (APQN – Asia Pacific Quality Network).

Of these, the key Quality Assurance network is the APQN, which is a part of the IQAAHE international network. In the past, the only QA network in which countries in the Asia-Pacific were members was the INQAAHE. However, many countries in this region perceive the INQAAHE as 'too big', as the number of country members has swelled from 20 in 1991 to 60 in 2003. In order to create a more close-knit network that represents the geographical QA problem and characteristics, the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) was created to work in informal collaboration with the INQAHEE in 2003. The Asia Pacific Quality Assurance Network was established in 2004 and covers 53 countries in Asia. Among its goals is capacity building within nations to establish national quality assurance systems and greater mutual recognition and collaboration among member countries. This gathering promotes good practices and provides advice and expertise to assist the overall running of QA systems in member countries and assists members in the development of credit transfer systems, and improve mobility and standards of cross-border education activities. APQN has been particularly active in promoting a regional quality assurance approach built on principles, values and

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[9] Roger Y. Chao Jr. (2011): Reflect ions on the Bologna Process: the making of an Asia Pacific Higher Education Area, European Journal of Higher Education, 1:2-3, 102-118

practices to facilitate the alignment of quality assurance agencies (Burke et al. 2009) and promoted the Chiba principles, mutual recognition of quality assurance outcomes and regulating the quality of cross-border education.

The sub-regional AUN-QA network has members belonging to one to three key universities in each country in ASEAN. At the geographical level, AUN-QA is the first of its kind in trying to establish sub-regional networking for QA in ASEAN. Their QA objective, which has been embraced by the member universities since its inauguration in 1997, is to 'harmonise' and 'create a general guideline' of IQA for its member universities. Recently, the AUN Secretariat published the first manual for the implementation of quality assurance to support other universities in ASEAN, if they are interested in using AUN-labelled QA guidelines.

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) is a regional intergovernmental organization established in 1965 among governments of Southeast Asian countries (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam) to promote regional cooperation in education, science and culture in the region. The organisation's highest policy-making body is the SEAMEO Council, which comprises the 11 Southeast Asian education ministers. The SEAMEO Secretariat is located in Bangkok, Thailand.

SEAMEO prides itself in its technical and scientific expertise in various fields of specialisation, its strength in governance and management, partnership, networking, and collaborative skills. It sets the pace in research, creativity and innovative programmes in education, science and culture in the region.

SEAMEO has 20 specialist institutions that undertake training and research programs in various fields of education, science, and culture. Each Regional Centre has a Governing Board composed of senior education officials from each SEAMEO Member Country. The Governing Board reviews the Centres' operations and budget and sets their policies and programmes.

### *Process Management organisation*

Following the Brisbane Communiqué, Australia has been responsible for establishing a taskforce and a secretariat of the Senior Officials Working Group (SOWG) composed of Asia Pacific country representatives and a representative from the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and the Brisbane Communiqué task force. The SOWG was established to develop and implement a realistic and achievable work programme and encourage participation in the initiative. The taskforce's major task is also to ensure that there would be no duplication of QA attempts undertaken earlier by other regional networks.

As in Europe, the process towards greater policy harmonisation in higher education will be a voluntary effort, and it will take time for national governments in Asia Pacific countries to overcome the perception of regional diversity as an obstacle to the harmonisation process.

### *Process Management instruments*

During the SOWG meeting in Bangkok on November 2006, the undertaking of scoping studies on each of the Brisbane Communiqué themes, conducting of seminars within the region and establishment of expert working groups were agreed to raise awareness and feedback on the initiative and results of the studies, and design practical and workable options for consideration of the participating countries.

In their first report the SOWG agreed on the importance of information sharing and communication across the region on this initiative, especially through mechanisms such as formal networks and was keen to ensure that the Brisbane Communiqué work does not duplicate work already underway in the region, and to work in partnership, wherever possible, with countries and organisations in the

region where the Brisbane Communiqué objectives and activities overlap or complement each other.

At the meeting two areas of common interest dominated: quality assurance and recognition of educational and professional qualifications. There was also considerable interest in working collaboratively on teaching competencies, especially from countries seeking particular focus on primary education. SOWG members agreed that reform in the area of recognition of technical and vocational skills will be challenging, particularly given that in many countries technical skill matters are primarily the responsibility of labour, rather than education, ministries.

The senior officials agreed on a method for advancing the Brisbane Communiqué work:

1. First, to undertake scoping studies under each of the four Brisbane Communiqué themes to ascertain the current situation in the region and to determine where effort needs to be placed for future action. Each study will be developed in consultation with experts in the relevant fields, and will be overseen by a Consultative Committee consisting of interested countries and multilateral organisations.

2. Build with Seminars held in the region on aspects of the Brisbane Communiqué on the scoping studies to provide a mechanism for clarifying issues and developing recommendations for future action/research, and use these seminars to raise awareness of the Brisbane Communiqué aims and to provide opportunities for stakeholders to actively participate in and shape education policy development for the region.

3. To establish Expert working groups to design, with reference to the scoping studies and outcomes of seminars outlined above, practical and workable options under the four Brisbane Communiqué themes for consideration by participating countries.

Working with other multilateral organisations in the region was an important component of the work of the SOWG and the Taskforce in order to raise awareness of the initiative and the opportunities it presents to the region. It was crucial to the success of the initiative that countries actively participate in shaping the Brisbane Communiqué work to be relevant to their own national requirements and to the region.

The Taskforce Director had a series of meetings with regional organisations to discuss the Brisbane Communiqué work. She met with SEAMEO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, the International Labour Organisation, the World Bank, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Universities Network, and the Southeast Asian Association of Institutes of Higher Learning. The response was positive with organisations enthusiastic about the Brisbane Communiqué aims.

## 3. Shared policies are being defined, but the road to convergence instruments and adapted legislation is challenging

In follow up, a lot of activity took place. As Chao Jr. describes[10]; a number of Australian-funded scoping studies: 'Quality assurance arrangements in higher education in the broader Asia Pacific region' (APQN 2008); 'Recognition of higher education qualifications across the Brisbane Communiqué region' (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR] 2008b); and 'Scoping study on the development of teaching standards in the broader Asia-Pacific' (Erebus International 2008), were conducted to map existing policies and practices within the region. Seminars and workshops were also held including presentations by SEAMEO, International Labour Organization (ILO), UNESCO and other experts on current work in multilateral forums to

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[10] Roger Y. Chao Jr. (2011): Reflections on the Bologna Process: the making of an Asia Pacific Higher Education Area, European Journal of Higher Education, 1:2-3, 102-118

facilitate qualification and skills recognition, raise education quality, studying the Bologna Process and the advantages of multi-lateral action on education and facilitating multilateral cooperation.

In the area of mutual recognition in higher education, discussions to revise the 1983 UNESCO Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas in Asia and the Pacific and establishing a higher education area were covered during the regional seminar on regional harmonization: 'Establishing a common higher education area' held in Seoul, Korea in May 2007 (UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education 2007).

Revisions to the Convention were made during the 'Recognition of higher education qualifications' workshop and a final draft prepared during the 10th regional committee meeting for the Recognition Convention on Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific, both held in Manila, Philippines in May 2009. These were done in conjunction with numerous seminars looking into the Bologna Process, experiences of Asia Pacific and European countries related to development of regional and national qualifications frameworks, regional cooperation in higher education and credit transfer systems, establishment of national information centres, diploma supplements and quality assurance systems. Taking the recommendations of the scoping study 'Recognition of higher education qualifications across the Brisbane Communiqué region' (DEEWR 2008b), workshops on establishing national information centres, promoting regional awareness and cooperation and developing national qualifications frameworks were conducted during the year (DEEWR 2008b; UNESCO - Bangkok n.d.).

The Chiba principles for quality assurance in the Asia Pacific (Appendix 2) were developed in a workshop held in Chiba, Japan on February 2008 covering three components of quality assurance - institutional quality assurance; external quality assurance; and quality assurance agencies - taking into consideration the APQN's scoping study recommendations. The Chiba principles were developed to strengthen regional collaboration and cooperation in higher education and its quality assurance, align and internationalize the region's quality assurance practices, improve transparency and accountability of higher education institutions and facilitate the eventual recognition of higher education degrees and qualifications (AEI n.d.; DEEWR 2008a).

Most efforts towards enhancing higher education regionalization have been within South East Asian sub-region, but not exclusively. The University Mobility in Asia Pacific program (UMAP) is a student mobility project. The Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN) decided in 2003 to embark on a program of strengthening relations and activities among higher education institutions through the establishment of the ASEAN University Network (AUN) gathering 26 leading universities in South East Asia. The AUN in turn has developed a series of thematic networks and projects involving member institutions but is yielding to pressure to include other universities in their regional conferences and projects.

A number of APEC publications from 2007 onwards, seen to be supportive of the Brisbane Communiqué initiative (Appendix 3), have been focused on achieving the Bogor goals, towards open regionalization and free trade, skills standardization, improving teaching and quality assurance showing support for the Brisbane initiative. APQN have been actively conducting research and projects involving mutual recognition of quality assurance in the Asia Pacific region, which includes the mapping of quality assurance frameworks, looking for commonalities, disseminating information, facilitating the development and implementation of mutual recognition of quality assurance in the near future and surveying the development of the Chiba principles in the APQN membership (e.g. The Chiba Principles; Mutual Recognition of QA outcomes), while SEAMEO has been lending its experience in South East Asian regional harmonization of higher education and has recently been looking into East Asian regionalization of higher education.

The fifth APEC human resource development ministerial meeting joint ministerial statement, issued during their workshop in Beijing, China on 16-17 September 2010, reaffirms APEC and implicitly the Brisbane Communiqué Countries (BCC) recognition of the role of human resource development (and higher education) and recommends creating a regional exchange and cooperation framework

supporting a regional workforce needed by the region (APEC Human Resource Development Working Group 2010). A conference on higher education DS followed in October 2010, presenting the scoping study on DS development in the Asia Pacific, presenting a draft of an APEC DS model and discussing the issues and ways of moving forward with implementing the DS within the region (Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne 2010). This shows a strong support base for the Brisbane Communiqué within APEC itself towards building an Asia Pacific Higher Education Area supporting the Bogor goals, sustaining the region's economic growth and increasing its competitiveness in terms of economy and higher education.

Despite an agreement among the BCC on the implementation of a 'Bologna type' process in the Asia and the Pacific region, challenges to implementing the Brisbane Communiqué including real commitment, resources, aligning local and regional education reform requirements, and the development of an intergovernmental process of mutual cooperation have been acknowledged. The need to understand and at least concretise some of the key challenges is needed not only in terms of higher education structure, funding and governance but also in demographics, socio-economic, student mobility and higher education initiatives being undertaken within the Asia Pacific region (UNESCO and DEEWR 2009).

In his 2012 article 'Higher Education in the Asia Pacific, David Barnett Regional CEO Higher Education for Pearson Asia Pacific, described a number of contextual factors in how the importance of higher education to sustain the economic growth in the region brings quality issues and the socioeconomic implications to the fore. These clearly show that like Europe the Asia Pacific region is in need of a coordinated response through alignment of social policies. Some convergence in problems and responses is taking place, but despite the higher-level initiatives within the ASEAN Economic and Socio-Cultural Community Blueprints, so far such responses seem to remain limited to coping mechanisms at the national level, and few of them really address Higher Education as such. Indeed while the AEC stresses above all trade facilitation, marginally touching upon Higher education in its Science and technology strategy, the ASCC emphasises human development and equity issues, with an explicit education strategy which like the millennium goals remains stuck in basic, secondary and vocational education. Actually the success of rising incomes and the achievements of 'education for all' targets puts increasing strain on the Public Higher Education system trying to cope with increasing demand.

## Socioeconomic policies

Growing affluence in the region means that demand for higher education is rising nearly everywhere, with increasing numbers of 18 to 23-year-olds also fuelling this demand (with the exception of Australia, Korea and Japan, because of the lower birth rates in those countries). During the last two decades there has been a vast expansion in higher education across Asia Pacific. In China, the gross enrolment ratio of higher education increased from nine per cent in 1998 to 23 per cent in 2007, with total enrolment rising from 6.23 million to 27 million during that period.

Inevitably, with the number of students increasing and governments no longer being willing and/or able to fully absorb the costs, the issue of funding sustainable tertiary education systems has arisen. Various methods have been used to tackle the funding shortfall but the most popular solution has been to move some of the cost of higher education onto students and their families by either introducing fees in public universities or encouraging private higher education institutions.

Tuition fees have been introduced across the region, and some countries, like Australia, Japan and New Zealand have subsequently increased them further. Some universities reserve a portion of places for applicants who do not qualify for government scholarships but are willing to pay private tuition, and in other cases, universities impose special fees on students enrolling in high-demand programmes of study. In Indonesia for example, some major public universities quadrupled the income that accrued from fees within a matter of years. Similarly, in Vietnam it is now common for

public higher education institutions, or parts of them, to earn 40–45 per cent of their budgets from the collection of fees of various kinds.

Overall, there are significant differences among Asia Pacific countries in the average tuition fees charged for tertiary education, but the fees are only one part of the picture. It is also important to look at broader support that may be available to students, most notably in the form of loans and scholarships. In this context, there are examples of countries that have high tuition fees and well-developed student support systems, such as Australia and New Zealand, whereas others, including Japan and Korea, have high tuition fees but less-developed student support systems. Generally speaking, financial constraints have meant that scholarships have given way to loans and there has been considerable experimentation with various kinds of loan schemes across the region.

The higher education that's being provided must also be relevant to the needs of the labour market. Across much of Asia there are problems with graduates not being suitably trained and lacking the skills sought by employers, resulting in high graduate unemployment rates. Vietnam, for example, has few graduates in the areas of health and welfare, humanities and arts, and service industries. Cambodia has an unbalanced disciplinary structure, with 66 per cent of students graduating in social science, business or law. 80 per cent of Thai firms have said that they experience difficulty in filling job vacancies due to graduates who lack basic and technical skills, and in China graduate unemployment in 2008 rose to 13 per cent – high compared with the official national unemployment rate of 4 per cent.

It could be argued that this issue stems from incoming students lacking the skills to handle the demands of university work due to low quality secondary level instruction and misalignment of secondary curricula with the kind of knowledge that is required for academic success at university level. A key issue is that across Asia admission to higher education is still heavily test based, and so countries (including Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia and China) have increasingly been reviewing and diversifying their university entrance criteria and processes. Whilst overall access to higher education has been expanded, issues of equity to access remain across much of the region. There is concern that the kind of financial issues mentioned above have impacted the ability of students from poorer backgrounds to continue their studies into higher education and also affected the kind of institutions they are able to enrol at. An issue of gender imbalance is also apparent, with the Asian region registering a 26 per cent rate in terms of gender balance enrolment—a larger gap compared to Europe's 70 per cent.

The demand pressure on public universities has been eased and access to higher education further expanded by loosening restrictions on the private sector, allowing provision to be opened up. In Indonesia, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines, private universities enrol the majority of students (in some cases up to 80 per cent), and in Malaysia private colleges and universities have increased in number from about 100 to 690 over the past five years. The expansion of higher education into the private sector has created new concerns about the quality of education being provided, in addition to issues already present in the public sector as explosive enrolment increases put pressure on systems, resources, facilities and teacher/student ratios. A dearth of qualified and experienced instructional staff poses a serious challenge to the continued expansion of higher education institutions, the quality of service that they provide to students, and the quality of research that is undertaken, itself critical to the development of knowledge-based economies and the innovation upon which they depend. Furthermore, corruption is a major problem within higher education institutions in Asia, evidenced by instances of plagiarism, falsification of data, and cheating on examinations, seriously threatening educational quality and the international reputations of institutions where they occur. Other important issues[11] such as lifelong learning and linking the

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[11] Roger Y. Chao Jr. (2011): Reflect ions on the Bologna Process: the making of an Asia Pacific Higher Education Area, European Journal of Higher Education, 1:2-3, 102-118

higher education area with a research area are not yet predominant within the Brisbane Communiqué. This, however, may be because of the early stages of the Brisbane Communiqué, its focus on promoting awareness, developing a regional framework for quality assurance and mutual recognition of higher education qualifications.

*Mobility*

Higher education institutions now operate in a global market and trends in the globalisation of higher education are readily apparent in Asia Pacific, characterised by a degree of intra, inter and extra-regional mobility of tertiary students. Globally, the number of students attending institutions outside their country of origin tripled between 1985 and 2008, 14 with Asians accounting for 52% of all students studying abroad worldwide.

In 2009, China and Korea accounted for the most mobile students from among Asia Pacific countries, at 421,000 and 105,000 students respectively, with most of them heading for North America and Western Europe as well as within East Asia. There is also a unique flow of students between China, Japan and Korea plus a peripheral ASEAN flow into those three major economies. The presence of Asian students is particularly strong in Australia, Japan and Korea, where they account for more than 75% of all international students. 17

International mobility in higher education still operates within a very asymmetrical market, dominated by some strong providers, mostly in English-speaking countries. Globally, the United States hosts the largest number of international tertiary students, while the proportion of such students is highest in Australia. Western institutions are also increasingly engaging Asian universities for franchises, twinning programs, joint or double-degrees and e-learning or distance learning—of which Malaysia and Singapore are notable examples.

Having this international dimension to higher education is important in order to maintain international competitiveness through awareness of, and exposure to other cultures and languages. This has been recognised recently by the Japanese Government who have begun offering substantial grants to universities for study abroad programmes in response to the number of Japanese college students going to foreign universities declining by 28 per cent.

At the same time as maintaining the flow and mobility of their domestic students to study abroad, the challenge for Asia Pacific economies and their higher education institutions is also to attract and cater for international students at home. As shown above, some countries within the region are already successfully doing this, such as Australia, where education is one of the country's largest exports. (Some estimates have put the value as high as Aus$17.2 billion in 2008–09, or about 1.4 per cent of GDP, with growth of over 20 per cent from the previous financial year. The dominance of Australia—or the US, Canada and UK globally—reflects the fact that English is still the global business language of choice, but as Asian economies and trading links to them continue to develop there may be scope for this to change. Many companies in the region now consider Chinese Mandarin language skills, for example, to be extremely important when recruiting new employees. A further way of attracting international students is to ease immigration policies to encourage the temporary or permanent immigration of students from abroad. Australia and New Zealand, for example, make it easy for foreign students who have studied in their universities to settle by granting them additional points in their immigration point system.

*Technology*

One highlight mentioned by David Barnett is the role of technology in reshaping teaching and learning across the education sectors especially in higher education. Improved technology is able to further widen access to higher education through the implementation of open distance learning (ODL). ODL continues to make up an increasing share of the market, particularly in China, Indonesia and Thailand where there is considerable government subsidy for this type of learning. (In China, the

government gives grants of around $10,000 to professors at dozens of universities to help them improve their undergraduate teaching materials and then put them online—more than 10,000 courses from Chinese universities are now available online as a result. Most of the largest open universities in the world can now be found in the region, including the Central Radio and Television University of China, with over 2.6 million students. Within China as a whole, more than 10 per cent of university students are engaged in online learning. In Australia, Open Universities Australia (OUA) owned by seven local universities has grown from a small, distance-based learning provider into the leader in online higher education, having experienced a doubling in enrolments over the past four years. Be that as it may, the scope to which improved technology is able to impact higher education is always going to be dependent on the wider technological infrastructure of a country and digital readiness of its population. Asia Pacific countries differ greatly in these terms, some being amongst the most technologically advanced in the world, whilst others still exhibit major weakness in terms of Internet penetration rates and personal computer ownership. The Internet penetration rate in Cambodia, for example, is just 0.5 per cent of the population, and in Indonesia it is only 10.5 per cent. This needs to be developed in order for distance learning to flourish, although 'm-learning', whereby course materials are made accessible through Wi-Fi and mobile phones, is an alternative being experimented with by some universities (including City University of Hong Kong, Shanghai Jiao tong University, and the University of the Philippines Open University). Taking the example of Cambodia above, the country has the lowest Internet penetration rate in South-East Asia and few landlines, but it also has the highest call rates and the world's highest ratio of telephone users using wireless.

### *Joint development of mutually reinforcing convergence policy instruments and tools*

SEAMEO RIHED proposed the establishment of sub-regional internal QA and external QA Networks, including actions to establish a subject or discipline-based QA system, which could be further developed into a regional pool of reviewers of program-based QA for HEIs in the region, to be extended to other countries in the Asia Pacific. Furthermore, SEAMEO RIHED will further explore the possibility of setting up priority areas, as suggested in the Bologna Process, such as in the areas of degree comparability and the development of a Regional and National Qualification Framework as well as external QA and internal QA Networks. The latter activities are specifically emphasised by the SEAMEO RIHED, as the lack of a sub-regional internal QA and external QA networks are the major factor preventing the process of sharing information and best practices among the countries in developing areas. This sub-region QA network would consist of countries with considerable QA experience that can help advise neighbouring countries, as well as benefit from participation in capacity building opportunities themselves.

Although both the European and Asia-Pacific initiatives have regional harmonization of higher education, quality assurance and mutual recognition as their goals, the Brisbane Communiqué Asia Pacific context and its unique challenges may require a different implementation timeline or even strategy to the Bologna Process. Comparing both the Bologna Process and Brisbane Communiqué initiatives will show the extent to which the Asia Pacific Higher Education Area is emulating the normative effects of the Bologna Process and the establishment of the EHEA.

### *A System of Readable and Comparable Degrees*

In the area of harmonization, the Bologna Process has adopted easily readable and comparable degrees through the use of the DS, adopted the three-cycle system and ECTS, and promoted student mobility through the Erasmus and the Erasmus Mundus programmes. The use of the Diploma supplement, a credit transfer system and the promotion of academic mobility are discussed, developed and promoted in the Brisbane Communiqué; however, both the credit transfer system and the APEC DS model still need further development and promotion, and the promotion of

student mobility in the Asia Pacific region needs to be more institutionalized and promoted, especially when it is compared with the EHEA.

The Asia Pacific, however, has been studying both the European and the South East Asian higher education regionalization experience to gain insights on good practices towards harmonizing and creating its own Asia Pacific Higher Education Area in the near future. Apart from reliable and accountable quality assurance systems that encourage greater mobility, along with better research and teaching collaboration among HEIs in the region, a readable and comparable degree is to be promoted through the development of a comparable qualification framework, in the form of a degree supplement. Given the diversity of degrees awarded in HEIs within the region, effectiveness and flexibility cannot be enhanced, if the degrees and contents of the qualifications obtained by graduates are not easily readable and recognised by other institutions in different countries. The following mechanisms are, to some extent, put forth to accommodate a freer flow and a more sustainable mobility among students, who want to pursue their future education outside their own countries or to seek employment elsewhere. In other words, it does not aim at promoting mobility on a short-term basis as most existing exchange programmes often do. On the contrary, it addresses the structural connection between HEIs within the region, as well as between education and the market sector, by creating a tool that enables both HEIs and employers to recruit students more effectively. These tools include:

*A Regional Credit Transfer System*

The credit transfer system is considered one of the most important components in facilitating a greater degree of mobility among students of the Asia Pacific region. At the moment, the key actor undertaking the task of developing and implementing a credit transfer system is the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP). Founded in 1994, UMAP is currently developing a trial programme to promote student mobility in the Asia Pacific region. Participating universities are now voluntarily taking part in the trial process of implementing the UMAP Credit Transfer Scheme (UCTS). Similar to other endeavours in many parts of the world, the credit transfer system aims at creating a more sustainable mobility programme that enables students to earn credits during their studies in other universities. According to the UMAP, host and home universities are required to complete a credit transfer agreement in advance of the enrolments, both at graduate and post-graduate levels.

The UCTS developed by UMAP consists of 3 key components: the UMAP Study Plan, the UCTS Credit Points Scale and the UCTS Grading Scale. The UMAP Study Plan represents the courses and credits agreed upon by both home and host universities. The UCTS has adopted a 60-credit point scale, which is capable of operating under a 3-term and a 2-semester academic year system. The 60-credit point scale usually represents a full-time student's workload for a full academic year. The workload includes the activities required for completion of a full academic year/semester/term such as lectures, tutorials/seminars, fieldwork, private studies, and examination and so on. The grading scale of the UCTS shares the same characteristics of other credit transfer systems. It consists of seven grades from A to F, with E meaning the lowest passing grade. The scale is aimed at establishing a norm-referenced grading scale and a guideline for member universities, enabling them to make the conversion.

Both the Bologna Process and the Brisbane Communiqué have a UNESCO-initiated mutual recognition convention, both of which had undertaken revisions. The timing of the revision of the mutual recognition convention for the Asia Pacific - revised in 2009 - signified that it was the Brisbane Communiqué and other forces shaping and giving life to the convention, while it was the Lisbon Recognition Convention - revised in 1997 - that actually supported and partly guided the Bologna Process and its developments. Student mobility (Erasmus) and a credit transfer system (ECTS) within the EU had already been successfully implemented prior to the Bologna Process, while the Asia Pacific still have a weak student mobility programme (University Mobility in the Asia and the

Pacific [UMAP]) and a poorly developed credit transfer system (UMAP Credit Transfer Scheme [UCTS]).

*A Regional and National Qualification Framework*

According to the OECD, a National Qualification Framework is 'a way of showing relationships between qualifications in a country or education or occupational sector. It is an instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for levels of learning achieved. In essence, the development of a national, and possibly the future regional qualification framework, is in fact directly connected to the issue of quality assurance. As for national qualification frameworks, they will increase the confidence of the general public, employers, HEIs in other countries, and other stakeholders, in students' and graduates' academic standards and achievements. On the one hand, the framework enables a closer and easier link between 'education' and 'economic/society' sectors, both at the national and regional level. It makes it easier for employers to understand the attributes of the qualifications attained by students, while at the same time creating more opportunities for graduates to obtain transnational employment. On the other hand, a greater flexibility in student mobility among graduates in the region could only be pursued through the development of a better understanding of the body of knowledge and academic disciplines in each individual country. The framework will also assist HEIs in the region in determining the direction of mobility programmes, in relation to other HEIs' programmes and will assist students and learners to identify potential programmes available throughout the region.

The Regional Qualification Framework (RQF), on the contrary, is an umbrella structure that enables an easy and readable translation of different qualification systems in the region. According to the European QF Consultation Process, the role of EQF is to act as a benchmark for the any level of learning recognised in a qualification or defined in the NQF. Inter-governmental processes, in pushing forward the development programme of a RQF, may involve the defining of agreed components, such as:

1. The number of levels: to be determined by reference to international studies and generalised stages in learning across all contexts and across all countries;
2. The types of competencies: relevant to regional learning settings;
3. Qualification descriptors: which exemplify the outcomes of the main qualification at each level and demonstrate the nature of change between levels will provide clear points of reference at each level of the existing qualifications.

In the Asia Pacific region, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam have shown interest in developing NQFs, while Australia and New Zealand have already established such systems. Therefore, the first and more immediate stage in creating a system of readable and comparable degrees among HEIs in the Asia-Pacific region is perhaps to firstly align the classification of qualifications in different systems to be more easily understood via the development of NQFs. This way, flexibility in mobility and the assessment of quality can be achieved. In the near future we may look to inter-governmental processes in the development of a regional QF to improve quality, accessibility and public-private linkages. However, the Brisbane Communiqué's seeming lack of support or initiative to converge the region's higher education system into a similar or equivalent three-cycle structure of the EHEA, its difficulty in developing a regional qualifications framework six years into the initiative, and the questionable implementation of mutual recognition of higher education degrees and qualifications in the Asia Pacific, given its history of non-implementation, tracks a different evolutionary path for the future Asia Pacific Higher Education Area.

*A Degree Supplement*

The Diploma supplement is the concrete measure to move along the process of creating a system of readable and comparable degrees across borders, which in turn, will enable the process of student mobility to be easier and more flexible, especially for continuing education.

Today at the market level in the Asia-Pacific, a degree or diploma supplement attached to a higher education qualification while adding transparency may seem less relevant in the context of the Asia Pacific region, as employers might not be aware of its purpose nor how to interpret the document. In addition, the level of cross-border employment is not as high as it is in Europe. However, a new educated workforce seeking employment outside their homeland can be expected in the years to come, given the globalised environment which encourages the free flow of people. In the future, additional information contained in the degree supplement, will help employers understand more about students' academic achievements, and will allow an easier transition to further employment across the region.

The multifaceted advantages of the supplement, such as promoting internationalisation of higher education, facilitating student exchange and mobility programmes among HEIs, lowering barriers to the recognition of studies, promoting employability and flexibility at the student level, and making further study in other countries a lot easier; will increase in importance as the Asia Pacific region further engages with the wider world.

## 4. Continental Funding covers some regional initiatives but reduced national expenditure forces HEI to find alternative funding sources

### Continental Funding programmes

The South East Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) has established a series of 22 centres throughout the region dealing with specific aspects of education. The Regional Centre for Higher Education Development (RIHED) has undertaken an impressive number and diversity of projects to create a stronger frame of collaboration among the 11 member countries of South East Asia. Examples of initiatives undertaken include the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network, the ASEAN regional research citation index, the ASEAN regional credit transfer system, and the ASEAN Higher Education Clusters. Many of these schemes are in early stages of development and will take time to mature and be sustainable. Interestingly countries outside of South East Asia are starting to be included in these projects. For instance Japan has recently joined the MIT (Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand) Student Mobility Scheme organized by RIHED.[8]

Campus Asia, a program created in 2010, is the most recent project to build closer ties among Korea, Japan and China through student mobility and quality assurance. Campus Asia is a result of the second Tri-lateral East Asia Summit held in 2009. This mobility scheme is still working out the complexities of quality assurance mechanisms, credit systems, and the controversial but central issue of language. Although it is currently focused on mobility for students in Korea, China and Japan, it hopes to expand and include students from other East Asian nations.

### Aligned national funding strategies

The dramatic increase of student numbers in higher education has generated a lot of change and reform in higher education in the region especially in East Asia (Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, China and Japan). In other cases, the total funding pattern shows a steady decline from the state government, which has affected the development of institutions. In this regard, HEIs need structural adjustment to generate resources on their own. Institutions have started to use strategies

to attract more funding from private sectors The cost sharing approach between government and private sources is increasingly adopted in Asia and the trends can be summarised as follows (Global University Network for Innovation, 2009):

i.      The introduction of cost sharing in higher education;

ii.     The introduction of tuition charges;

iii.    Increased competition between higher education institutions for finance;

iv.     Diversification sources of funding;

v.      The introduction of income-generating activities;

vi.     International cooperation contribute to additional funds to higher education; and

vii.    Increase on expenditure from private on higher education.

*Legislative convergence*

If the performance of ASEAN countries in converging competition law by 2015 towards an internal market is any guide, it seems that the development of the ASEAN Community Blueprints is riddled with difficulties.

## 5. High level detailed attention for Instruments of Quality Assurance and their interaction with other policy instruments promotes coherence trust and cooperation

In support of the goals of the Brisbane Communiqué the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training (now the Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations) commissioned a scoping study[12] based on a survey of quality assurance agencies to identify issues, gaps and solutions in relation to higher education quality assurance arrangements in the broader Asia-Pacific region. The survey identified several key challenges to the region realising the benefits from greater alignment or linkage of quality assurance frameworks to international standards.

The first challenge was the level of diversity in the region. The survey found that QA arrangements in the broader Asia-Pacific region have many variations that serve unique national contexts. The establishment, ownership, legal basis, governance, funding and the level of independence of QA agencies vary among the economies. Correspondingly, the scope and the characteristics of quality assurance frameworks differ. Variations are seen in aspects such as the level of quality assurance (institution versus program), the nature of the QA process (mandatory versus voluntary), aspects considered for QA, the role of higher education institutions in constituting the review team, role of agency staff in on-site visit, extent of public disclosure of QA outcomes, implications of QA outcome, appeals mechanism, and post-QA follow-up. Alongside these varied characteristics, the quality assurance systems of the region also have certain common critical core elements such as self-assessment based on a set of transparent criteria, validation by an external team, and the quality assurance outcome that is valid for a certain period of time.

This commonality amidst variation signalled possibilities for convergence and alignment with a regional approach in the region. A regional QA framework that would serve as the common point of reference for the national systems of the region and at the same time not be in contradiction with the international developments could be pursued. It was commonly accepted that this would involve

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[12] Quality Assurance arrangements in Higher Education in the Broader Asia-Pacific Area, 2008, prepared by APQN

endorsement of codes and guidelines already agreed by the international QA community as features of a good QA system. Endorsement of commonly agreed principles, values and codes of practice would therefore provide a platform for the enhancement of QA approaches.

A second challenge was found to be capacity. The report therefore recommended a strategy of co-operation in order to support all QA agencies, with all their variations and similarities, in continuous improvement and better alignment with an agreed regional framework.

This strategy would include different forms of co-operation in the region including support for policy development and training towards ensuring professionalism in QA and higher levels of structured collaboration and joint projects leading to an enhanced understanding and trust. Such co-operation was thought to be of particular benefit for newer forms of education delivery such as distance education. The unprecedented growth of cross border higher education (CBHE) would need particular attention due to the fact that it crosses the jurisdictions of quality assurance agencies. Quality assurance agencies saw the need to cooperate to manage risks such as degree mills, accreditation mills and low quality providers.

The third major challenge mentioned in the survey was commitment. While the commitment of individual quality assurance agencies to their respective missions was unquestioned, the shift to a regional approach would require a high level of commitment not only from individual agencies but also from governments and from other key stakeholders such as education providers, employers and students. Achievement of a regional approach would require resources and effort based upon a common understanding of the benefits to be realised from a collective interest in QA.

As major impediment to collaboration, the lack of mutual understanding and trust among QA agencies was mentioned. Trust building could be driven by mutual confidence in the robustness of policies and procedures, which points to quality of QA becoming relevant to strengthen collaboration. Therefore promoting a regional QA framework in higher education to which QA agencies could demonstrate alignment was found to be a potential measure of 'quality of quality assurance'.

An associated issue from the report was the importance of building awareness of the benefits of collaboration between QA agencies and an understanding of the respective education systems and their clients, which in turn would strengthen advocacy of new and improved QA arrangements if their linkages with improved educational, social and economic benefits can be clearly drawn.

The report pointed to developments in Europe providing some insights into what is possible in the broader Asia- Pacific, although the major differences between the European and Asia-Pacific contexts must be borne in mind. Agreeing on clear goals, setting targets, making explicit commitments, ensuring political will, support at the highest levels, involvement of key stakeholders, improved information sharing are examples of issues that emerged from the European experience for strengthening regional collaboration. Although the Bologna process has shortcomings as a model for the Asia-Pacific, the approaches and processes initiated in Europe provide guideposts for development of a regional quality assurance mechanism. As pointed out by Chao Jr.[13], in the area of quality assurance, the Bologna Process has created new agencies or institutions (e.g EQAR), the European qualifications frameworks, the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance and created a competencies-based academic profile for a number of professions. Although the development of the Chiba principles for quality assurance in the Asia and the Pacific region is a significant move for the Brisbane Communiqué, it still needs fine-tuning and promoting to stakeholders other than the region's quality assurance agencies, and a regional qualifications framework developed and implemented.

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[13] Roger Y. Chao Jr. (2011): Reflect ions on the Bologna Process: the making of an Asia Pacific Higher Education Area, European Journal of Higher Education, 1:2-3, 102-118

## 6. Broad Quality assurance principles, policies, standards and guidelines safeguard diversity, ensure comparability and allow recognition.

The Asia Pacific region is characterised by a diversity of economic, social and political systems, cultural traditions and values, languages and aspirations. This diversity is reflected in the structure and organisation of higher education across the region and national approaches to quality assurance. This is also visible in the considerable diversity in quality assurance arrangements in the Asia Pacific region and shows the need for establishing agreed frameworks that harmonise local approaches. This need motivated the hosting of a workshop under the Brisbane Communiqué in Chiba, Japan on 18 February 2008 in conjunction with the Asia-Pacific Quality Network Annual Conference. The workshop provided an opportunity for more than 35 participants from 17 countries to discuss the establishment of principles applicable to the particular context of quality assurance in higher education in the Asia-Pacific region. An important outcome from the meeting was the development of the draft 'Chiba Principles' for quality assurance in higher education in the Asia-Pacific.

### *Definitions, principles and policies expressing the spirit of Quality Assurance*

The motivation for developing quality assurance principles for higher education was to strengthen collaboration and cooperation in quality assurance in the Asia Pacific region. The principles are envisaged to:

1. Contribute to the establishment of regional alignment in quality assurance issues and practices
2. Provide an agreed reference point for consistency and benchmarking in quality assurance
3. Facilitate regional student and academic mobility and exchange
4. Encourage mutual trust, confidence and understanding of higher education systems in the broader Asia Pacific
5. Improve transparency and accountability of higher education institutions and practices
6. Align the region with international developments in quality assurance.

The Chiba Principles emphasise a generic approach that has relevance for all higher education institutions, quality assurance agencies and quality assessment practices in the region regardless of the level of development, size and national context. It is expected that the principles will be supplemented by context-specific approaches linked to particular national needs.

The Chiba Principles are designed to provide guidance to both higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies interested in enhancing policies and practices. They are intended to complement national quality assurance approaches and frameworks relating to recognition of qualifications (both domestic and international), institutions, courses and programmes and national registers of institutions, courses and quality assurance agencies.

A premise underlying the principles is that prime responsibility for quality assurance rests with the individual higher education institution. The principles are also applicable to the entire higher education sector (both public and private) and are broad enough to be inclusive of different quality assurance dimensions including arrangements at institutional level or at program level or both. Institutions should not consider these principles mandatory or inflexible. They are intended to provide institutions with a source of guidance on best practice principles for assuring quality in operations and outputs.

It is also recognised that each country's higher education system might connect with different elements of the principles and that adjustments and refinements in practices and policies may be necessary for some institutions. The principles should therefore be regarded as an agreed point of

reference for continuous enhancement, for developing shared understandings of each countries higher education systems and for aspiring towards international best practice.

In the interest of bringing the region into alignment with international developments and international benchmarks, the principles are not only informed by the findings of a major study carried out by the Asia-Pacific Quality Network on quality assurance arrangements in higher education in the Brisbane Communiqué region, but also by international codes of best practice in higher education quality assurance.

The purposes of the principles are to:

1. Safeguard and promote public confidence in the quality of higher education in the region
2. Assist institutions in enhancing the quality of their provision
3. Improve the quality of academic programs for students and other beneficiaries of higher education across the region
4. Ensure that there is clarity and transparency in quality assurance processes and outcomes
5. Encourage a culture of quality improvement
6. Provide a measure of accountability, including accountability for the investment of public and private funding
7. Generate reliable public information and reports about the higher education institution, its programs and awards and quality assurance processes that are helpful to potential students, employers, parents, governments, higher education institutions and professional bodies, both nationally and internationally
8. Inform and assist the work of quality assurance agencies
9. Support and enhance the cooperation of quality assurance agencies and other key players across national borders.

## Stakeholders

Internal and external quality assurance processes should be informed and supported by collaboration and engagement of key stakeholders. The range of stakeholders may vary on a national basis but would in most cases include higher education institutions, students, teachers, researchers, professional bodies, employers and government departments and/or ministries. The implementation of the principles should be informed by the needs of the various stakeholders.

## Reporting

Reports on the outcomes or results of quality assurance processes should be transparent and related to the goals of the institution or the agency. For example, institutional reports should reflect the distinctiveness of the institution and its mission in relation to (but not limited to) factors such as graduate employability, community service, research and innovation, culture and tradition.

## Accountability

The 'Chiba Principles', as with other regional principles, standards and guidelines, operate on the basis of individual national responsibility for higher education and autonomy of quality assurance practices.

### The essential systemic components and procedures of the QA function

The Chiba Principles provide the region with a set of quality assurance principles that guide processes to support institutional quality assurance and quality assurance agencies. A basic premise of the Chiba Principles is that each country has a quality assurance framework for higher education in place and these principles underpin the quality assurance elements of that framework.

The Chiba Principles are detailed in three parts:

Internal Quality Assurance listing the key principles guiding institutions in assuring their own quality. Quality Assessment principles outline quality assessment of institutions and/or programs by both

the institutions themselves and quality assurance agencies. They outline the process and content of quality assurance common to the activities of both the institution's internal practices and assessment by external quality assurance agencies. Quality Assurance Agencies show the key principles guiding the structure of quality assurance agencies and their management if they are to effectively conduct assessments for the accreditation and auditing of institutions and programs.

It is recognised that in some Asia Pacific countries the government has responsibility for some of areas of quality assurance. In such, a scenario it is the government's responsibility to ensure that its quality assurance practices are consistent with international best practice.

The broadness of the principles also allows for the differing roles of quality assurance agencies – accreditation, audit; and accreditation and audit – and for the different units of evaluation – institutional; program; and/or both.

### Internal Quality Assurance

1. A quality assurance culture is created, defined, supported, and promulgated.
2. Quality assurance aligns with and is embedded within the institution's unique goals and objectives.
3. Internal quality management systems, policies and procedures are in place.
4. Periodic approval, monitoring and review of programs and awards
5. A strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality is developed and implemented.
6. Quality assurance of academic staff is maintained.
7. Appropriate and current information about the institution, its programs, awards and achievements is made publicly available.

### Quality Assessment

1. Quality assurance activities (at institutional and/or program level) are undertaken on a cyclical basis.
2. Stakeholders participate in developing the standards and criteria for assessment.
3. Standards and criteria are publicly available and applied consistently.
4. Formal procedures are in place to ensure reviewers have no conflict of interest.
5. Assessment would normally include:
   a. Institutional self-assessment;
   b. External assessment by a group of experts and site visits as agreed;
   c. Publication of a report, including decisions and recommendations;
   d. A follow-up procedure to review actions taken in light of recommendations made.
6. An appeals mechanism is available.
7. Inclusive of different foci
   a. Institution
   b. Program
   c. Institution and program

### Quality Assurance Agencies

1. Are independent and have autonomous responsibility for operations; judgements should not be influenced by third parties.
2. Written mission statement, goals and objectives are clearly defined.
3. Human and financial resources are adequate and accessible.
4. Policies, procedures, reviews and assessment reports are fully and clearly disclosed to the public.

5. Documentation that states standards used, assessment methods, processes, decision criteria and appeals processes are clear.
6. Periodic review of activities effects and value.
7. Cooperate with other agencies and key players across national borders.
8. Undertake research and provide information and advice.
9. Are inclusive of different forms:
    a. Accreditation;
    b. Audit

## Reviews

Higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies should as a principle of good practice review their missions and objectives and the efficiency and effectiveness of their approach to quality assurance on a regular basis. The implementation of the quality assurance principles should also be reviewed to ensure that there is consistent application and that they remain relevant to institutional and agency objectives.

## Future work

These principles are merely a starting point for enhancing quality assurance policy and practice. The principles provide a broad overview while there is much detail under each principle that could be further developed to reflect the particular circumstances of each national system. Creation of a glossary of key terminology would also contribute to common understanding in the region.

The promotion of thought sharing and system comparison processes among Asia Pacific countries with regard to the national QA system is necessary for a common understanding of key quality assurance terminologies and systems adopted in the region, so that the best practice in each system can be effectively benchmarked. For instance, the former British colonies in Asia usually adopt the European style of quality assessment, while other countries, such as the Philippines, have been strongly influenced by the US system of accreditation by professional organisations or university associations. In Japan, recent reform since 2000 has suggested the country's interests lie in moving towards quality assessment rather than accreditation through the changing role of the JUAA and the new structure and function of the National Institution for Academic Degrees and Universities Evaluation (NIAD-UE). The extent to which the future direction of regional QA systems could be pursued or harmonised therefore depends on this initial step towards defining a common understanding and a sharing of systems of practice on QA among Asian countries.

In 2012 SEAMEO RIHED initiated a report in support of the agreement made by higher education policy-makers at the 3rd Meeting of Director Generals, Secretary Generals and Commissioners of Higher Education in Southeast Asia (2009). At that meeting, policy makers highlighted their intention to move towards a Southeast Asian Higher Education Quality Assurance Framework. They requested SEAMEO RIHED conduct a research study to collect and update external quality assurance information in the region.

The research identified several areas of quality assurance excellence in the region. It also highlighted the great diversity in the approach, methods and tools used by various quality assurance agencies. Most countries have active external quality assurance systems, and there is a fledgling but practical structure in place upon which to develop a regional quality assurance system.

Three key external quality assurance trends were identified:

1. External quality assurance is primarily assured through the registering or reregistering of institutions or programmes. Often this uses an accreditation approach to a site visit, with a 'yes' or 'no' outcome. However, other approaches such as assessment with a value outcome and audit are also seen.

2. There is a move to rank universities through voluntary or extra accreditation. Such voluntary accreditation is often on a higher education institution pays basis, and maybe linked to extra financial or other benefits.
3. The trend to move responsibility for quality assurance back to education institutions, with a focus on strengthening internal quality assurance process. This focuses on processes aims to strengthen internal systems in order to move institutional accountability towards deregulation and self-accreditation.

The region faces the challenge of ensuring that external and internal quality assurance systems work together productively, and ultimately, that quality outcomes of higher education institutions are improved. These are both common issues seen around the world. Common issues across countries surveyed are a lack of resources to support quality assurance initiatives including insufficient funding, lack of quality experts, limited tools and knowledge and also a lack of awareness of assurance implementation. Restrictions at a policy level also occur as quality assurance development strategies are rare, and quality assurance responsibilities sometimes fell within several government departments. Finally, there is a lack of leadership for respective countries to strengthen their national quality systems. Further collaboration on developing the regional quality assurance framework will need to address these issues.

## 7. Decentralised and independent Quality Assurance mechanisms promote learning and improvement

At the national level, as a result of the massive expansion of higher education, resulting from the liberal economic regime and the force of globalisation, the issue of quality and quality assurance have become major concerns, both among HEIs and national governments In the Asia Pacific region. Australia and Thailand, for example, have launched ambitious initiatives to establish systems of quality assurance. Australia has established the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) to be responsible for academic audits of both universities and those state agencies responsible for accreditation of private providers. The same kind of external QA agencies have also been established in Thailand in 1999, following the revised National Education Act. The Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) was established as an autonomous body and tasked to assess universities, both public and private, every five years. In other Asia-Pacific countries, the number of QA agencies has been on the rise since the first half of the 1990s. As of 2004, 14 countries in the region were reported to have at least 1 national QA agency. There are, however, several types of QA systems depending on the agencies responsibility for the operation of the system. Four predominant modes of organisation include centralised governmental, quasi-governmental, non-governmental and parallel governmental and non-governmental agencies. Australia and China are two major countries that state ministers of education, and they are responsible for overseeing national QA bodies. National QA bodies that are sponsored by national governments, but are allowed certain degrees of autonomy to manage their QA activities, can be seen in Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia. The third type of QA agency in the Asia-Pacific, the non-governmental type, is rarely seen in the region except in the Philippines. The final type of QA system, a combination of governmental and non- governmental bodies sponsored by the profession association or the universities themselves, as seen in Canada or the Netherlands, can be found in New Zealand.

The development of the CHIBA principles and the harmonising effect they have through the APQN meetings is aimed at instilling the three layered internal, external and agency approach in the Asia pacific region.

## 8. Accreditation and Quality Enhancement are distinct and complementary

At the national level, most of the QA systems have been originated by or operated as formal national mechanisms. Half of the countries in the region, including Brunei Darussalam (BDNAC), Cambodia (ACC), Indonesia (BAN-PT), Malaysia (MQA), Philippines (AACCUP, PAASCU, etc.), Thailand (ONESQA) and Vietnam (GDETA) are reported to have national external QA agencies operating either under the umbrella of the Ministries Of Education or the national government or are partly funded by the government. In Japan, the quality assurance system prior to 2000 had been rather fragmented, involving several actors and activities such as supervision from the MEXT, accreditation by the Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA), self-monitoring and evaluation by HEIs and accreditation by various professional organisations, such as JABEE. Unlike other regions where cultural and geographical diversities are not much a problem to QA system development, in the Asia Pacific there are a number of structural impediments.

First, the level of disparity between HEIs and QA development in this region is extremely high. Although many countries in the region have already established national QA mechanisms such as Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam, the rest are still at the stage of developing quality assurance infrastructure; except for Singapore where the government makes use of external QA systems from developed countries and the QA system in education is incorporated within the framework of the Ministry of

Trade. Such disparities have contributed to the inefficiency in developing formal or common QA cooperation within the area, let alone a general QA guideline or framework.

Second, unlike Europe and some other developed countries, in the Asia Pacific, where 'third-party or external evaluation' systems and agencies (such as in Japan via the restructuring of the National Institution for Academic Degrees and Universities Evaluation) are well-developed and have played a key role in developing national QA systems, the status of external QA agencies in the rest of the region is still uncertain. In fact, most external QA agencies in Southeast Asia are said to be operating outside the parameters and the mandates of the Ministries of education. They were mostly established by the governments and are actually state-funded agencies, except for the Philippines where there are non-governmental independent external QA agencies. The status of independent and autonomous external QA agencies is important to the overall development of national QA systems, because of the need for unbiased inputs from external agencies.

The lack of variety in external QA agencies also creates a condition in which these countries must rely solely on internal QA run only by each HEI.

These structural problems can be addressed since many funding agencies such as UNESCO and the World Bank are interested in assisting the region to develop QA infrastructure. The Southeast Asian region also has a strong institutional link with SEAMEO RIHED and the AUN, where QA has been one of the major missions of these organisations and where coordination in the specific area of QA is possible through, for example, the promotion of a common understanding of quality assurance systems in the region and the establishment of internal QA and external QA sub-networks.

At regional level, the Asia Pacific Quality Assurance Network with its goal of capacity building within nations to establish national quality assurance systems and greater mutual recognition and collaboration among member countries is above all a quality enhancement network. It focuses on promoting good practices and providing advice and expertise to assist the overall running of QA systems in member countries and is particularly active in promoting a regional quality assurance approach built on principles, values and practices to facilitate the alignment of quality assurance agencies through the Chiba principles, mutual recognition of quality assurance outcomes, and regulating the quality of cross-border education.

The sub-regional AUN-QA network is trying to establish sub-regional networking for QA in ASEAN with the objective to 'harmonise' and 'create a general guideline' of internal QA for its member universities. Recently, the AUN Secretariat published the first manual for the implementation of quality assurance to support other universities in ASEAN, if they are interested in using AUN-labelled QA guidelines.

At the regional level, the Brisbane initiative has not yet reached a platform for accreditation such as the EQAR in Europe.


## 9. Ranking is not promoted as a Quality Assurance tool

One telling development in the rise of Asia on the global stage is the success of the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), first published in June 2003 by the Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China, and updated on an annual basis. ARWU uses six objective indicators to rank world universities, including the number of alumni and staff winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals, number of highly cited researchers selected by Thomson Scientific, number of articles published in journals of Nature and Science, number of articles indexed in Science Citation Index - Expanded and Social Sciences Citation Index, and per capita performance with respect to the size of an institution. More than 1000 universities are actually ranked by ARWU every year and the best 500 are published on the web.

Although the initial purpose of ARWU was to find the global standing of top Chinese universities, it has attracted a great deal of attention from universities, governments and public media worldwide.

Mainstream media in almost all major countries have reported ARWU. Hundreds of universities cited the ranking results in their campus news, annual reports or promotional brochures. A survey on higher education published by The Economist in 2005 commented ARWU as "the most widely used annual ranking of the world's research universities". Burton Bollag, a reporter at Chronicle of Higher Education wrote that ARWU "is considered the most influential international ranking".

One of the factors for the significant influence of ARWU is that its methodology is seen to be scientifically sound, stable and transparent. In order to better meet the diversified needs for the global comparison of universities, besides ARWU, CWCU developed the Academic Ranking of World Universities by Broad Subject Fields (ARWU-FIELD) and by Subject Fields (ARWU-SUBJECT) in 2007 and 2009 respectively. In January 2011, CWCU started the Global Research University Profile (GRUP) project, which aims to develop a database on the facts and figures of around 1,200 global research universities. The data gathered from GRUP will be used to design more indicators and will be provided through a web-based platform, in which users will be allowed to compare concerned universities with a variety of indicators of their choice.

While the Shanghai ranking was initially pre-structured on the basis of a fixed set of criteria, it is now moving towards a more multifaceted approach and user focused system. In this way it is more of a transparency tool than a quality ranking.

## Lessons learned

The Analysis framework of the Success factors and Key Components for the Asia-Pacific experience provides a summary view. Overall the international context is conducive for convergence. Also in the Asia-Pacific region the need for a broad overarching political framework at the regional level able to steer the dynamics of convergence based on an agenda of transferability, mobility, and prosperity is evident. The initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) to promote dynamic and sustained growth in the region has made a start at more regional cooperation, but higher education has not been a priority in terms of projects. The institutional Back up In the Asia Pacific is weak compared to Europe, as ASEAN, has no executive institution comparable to the European Commission. Nevertheless it has Policy instruments in the three developmental pillars guiding the integration of the region in areas of security, economy and trade, and human development, and two complementary Asia-Pacific framework agreements are in place, one for recognition and one for quality assurance.

Within this context The region has been inspired by Bologna and has made a start with a similar initiative; namely the Brisbane Communiqué with the aim to engage in frequent high-level international consultation, cooperation and commitment laid down in public declarations and communications, in order to form a high-level international cooperation mechanism, key in developing the shared purpose of a Asia-Pacific Higher Education Area. This mechanism is underpinned with the SOWG arrangements for process management, which in turn produced the instruments to support decision-making.

**Figure 20: The Analysis Framework for the Asia-Pacific Experience: Part 1**

| Success factors | Key components | The Asia- Pacific experience |
|---|---|---|
| **1. The international Context is conducive to convergence** | Continental convergence policies | Vision 2020, outward looking, peace, stability and prosperity, dynamic development and community of caring societies |
| | | The Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) and Accelerated economic integration (NDG) |
| | Institutional Back up | The ASEAN Secretariat, IAI Taskforce |
| | Policy instruments | ASEAN Political-Security Community (ASC), Economic Community (AEC) and Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprints |
| | Complementary international Agreements and supporting networks | The Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific (UNESCO 1983) |
| | | The Framework for Higher Education Quality Assurance Principles in the Asia Pacific Region |
| | | The UNESCO-CEPES Guidelines on quality provision in cross-border education (OECD UNESCO, 2005), |
| **2. A high level** | Shared Purpose & Objectives | Brisbane Communiqué 2006 |

| Success factors | Key components | The Asia- Pacific experience |
|---|---|---|
| International Cooperation mechanism based on inclusive consultation and solid process management is in place | Inclusive consultation arrangements | Member States, the ASEAN University Network (AUN), Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU), (APQN – Asia Pacific Quality Network), SEAMEO-RIHED |
| | Process Management organisation | Taskforce and a secretariat of the Senior Officials Working Group (SOWG) |
| | Process Management instruments | SOWG Working Programme, SOWG Reports |
| 3. Shared policies produce convergence instruments and adapted legislation | Shared Social Policy principles, instruments, and targets | University Mobility in the Asia and the Pacific [UMAP] needs more institutionalisation |
| | Joint development of mutually reinforcing convergence policy instruments and tools | HE Cycles to be defined from UCTS<br>NQF, APHEA QF lacks momentum<br>UMAP Credit Transfer Scheme [UCTS]<br>Developing DS<br>No Register at regional level<br>CHIBA principles |
| | Legislative convergence | Mainly focused on ASEAN community policies, in which Higher education is no explicit strategic thrust. |

The shared policies produced convergence instruments in the form of shared higher education social principles, instruments and targets, are still limited and relatively weak, the joint development of higher education policy convergence tools and instruments are in early development, while adapted legislation has yet to find its way to the ASEAN radar.

Continental funding is still weak towards the regionalisation and harmonisation of Higher Education while national expenditure on higher education is under increased strain so that governments are shifting costs towards the households while leaving HEI to find ever more creative ways of financing. This government withdrawal weakens its hand to use its funding to align national higher education funding systems towards more decentralised and performance-based decision-making.

High level and detailed attention for instruments of quality assurance in the form of the CHIBA principles has promoted a framework as a basis for coherence trust and cooperation. The regional implementation of CHIBA and its interaction with other policy instruments are still lacking as they are in early development. No regional accreditation mechanism for QA agencies has yet been established, a regional higher education structure has not yet been defined as a Regional Qualifications Framework lacks momentum and half the ASEAN members still have not developed a National Qualification Framework. The regional UTCS and Diploma Supplement are in the making. Efforts are certainly being made but it is clear that the Asia-Pacific region is taking a slower path than Europe.

**Figure 21: The Analysis Framework for the Asia-Pacific Experience: Part 2**

| Success factors | Key components | The Asia-Pacific experience |
|---|---|---|
| 4. **Continental Funding `complements national expenditure to align incentives in HE financing systems** | Continental Funding programmes | RIHED ASEAN Projects, Campus Asia, ASCC |
| | Aligned national social policy funding priorities | National expenditure contributions to the ASCC Blueprint |
| | Aligned national Higher Education funding systems | Public Responsibility for HE financing is shifted towards households to finance studies and to HEI to find alternatives |
| 5. **High level detailed attention for Instruments of Quality Assurance and their interaction with other policy instruments promotes coherence trust and cooperation** | Continental Agreement on a set of Quality Assurance Standards & Guidelines | Promotion of the CHIBA Principles |
| | Continental Quality Assurance and Certification of QA Agencies | No regional certification initiative of QAA at this stage |
| | Continental coherence of QA with other convergence instruments | Efforts by APQN and QUN to connect QA and Harmonisation instruments such as UTCS |
| 6. **Broad Quality assurance principles, policies, standards and guidelines safeguard diversity, ensure comparability and allow recognition.** | A structured description of<br>· Definition, principles and policies expressing the spirit of QA<br>· The essential systemic components and procedures of the QA function | CHIBA Principles are principle based, and not prescriptive in the way QA needs to be carried out.<br>They describe which components and procedures need to be in place without determining in any detail the shape or form they should take on. They are less complete than the ESG |
| 7. **Decentralised and independent Quality Assurance mechanisms promote learning and improvement** | Prime responsibility for Quality Assurance anchored at HEI level | HEI is prime responsible for internal QA |
| | Complemented with reviews from independent QA Agency | External QA by Quality Assurance Agencies (QAA) based on HEI internal QA |
| | QA of QA Agencies ensured through international peer review | Internal QA of QAA + external QA by expert review |
| 8. **Accreditation and Quality Enhancement are distinct and complementary** | Quality enhancement is a developmental process and Accreditation an accountability mechanism. | The Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) and sub regional AUN-QA network are QA enhancement oriented. No AP QAA Register<br>At national levels, mix of governmental, quasi-governmental, non-governmental and parallel governmental and non-governmental agencies |
| 9. **Ranking is not promoted as a Quality Assurance tool** | Ranking is promoted as a transparency tool and is seen to be explicitly separate and different from Quality Assurance | The Shanghai ARWU is now moving towards a more multifaceted approach and user focused system. In this way it becomes more of a transparency tool than a quality ranking system |

The broad, inclusive and developmental approach to quality assurance produced the CHIBA Principles accommodating diversity while ensuring comparability and recognition. They are not prescriptive in the way QA needs to be carried out and describe which components and procedures need to be in place without determining in any detail the shape or form they should take on. They are however less complete than the ESG and are not provided as structured easily accessible policy documents, but they do lay out to some extent the mechanisms and procedures that need to be in place for a regional and national quality assurance function.

In terms of decentralised and independent quality assurance mechanisms, four predominant modes of organisation include centralised governmental, quasi-governmental, non-governmental and parallel governmental and non-governmental agencies operate at the national level. The development of such agencies is uneven across the region. CHIBA promotes institutional self-assessment, learning and improvement across countries, through a layered mechanism of internal QA in HEI, external QA of HEI by QA agencies, and finally the internal + expert reviewed QA of QA agencies.

A clear distinction between quality enhancement and accreditation at the regional level does not yet exist as the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) and sub regional AUN-QA network are QA enhancement oriented. No regional Register of accredited QA agencies exists. At the national level there is a mix of agencies but not many countries include both the quality enhancement and accreditation functions in their newly established QA agencies, The developmental approach is more present among the well developed ASEAN members.

Rankings as means to provide transparency in the higher education landscape, and not as a quality indicator per se is gaining some foothold as the Shanghai ranking, initially pre-structured on the basis of a fixed set of criteria, is now moving towards a more multifaceted approach and user focused system.

The diverse needs of its member economies, the region's unique needs and gaining a strong consensus and commitment among the Brisbane Communiqué's participating countries may take time but may serve as the strong foundation towards a sustainable regional higher education harmonization project emulating the Bologna Process in an Asia Pacific context. The Brisbane Communiqué's achievements in terms of the Chiba principles for regional quality assurance, revision of the mutual recognition convention for higher education studies, diplomas and degrees in the Asia Pacific, its successful promotion and engagement of 52 participating countries, and the region's strength in population and economic wealth may prove to be important in the evolution of a well-functioning Asia Pacific Higher Education Area in the coming years.

# The North American experience

In their Paper presented at the 22nd IPSA World Congress Madrid, 8-12 July 2012, *'Transatlantic Convergence in Higher Education?'* Tonia Bieber and Kerstin Martens, from the University of Bremen, provide a view on how in the US, higher education policymakers are increasingly orienting on foreign innovations with a view to improve the global positioning of their higher education institutions. In observing how some European countries have completely reinvented their university system and identifying the successes and the drawbacks, the US seems to be stuck in a slow moving reluctant pick and choose strategy. We will use the findings of this paper to review the US situation.

## 1. The International Context is conducive to convergence, but the US is suffering from self imposed blockade

The US as a global leader has strengthened its position through international agreements in the fields of security and trade. The latest attempts to secure comprehensive Transatlantic and Transpacific trade agreements show how deeply its economy is becoming intertwined with the world. As a major knowledge economy the US remains however strangely insular towards the worldwide higher education reforms.

In theory, the US as a federation of States would be in a better position than Europe or the Asia Pacific region to harmonise its higher education systems as it could mobilise federal authority and the institutional means to set up high level cooperation mechanisms based on inclusive consultation and solid process management tools to support shared policies, convergence instruments and adapted legislation for federal higher education development in line with international developments. The US would in theory also be able to mobilise complementary federal and state funding mechanisms to facilitate implementation. However, as we will see below, the particular history and constitution of the US combined with the ideological forces have actually produced a very different situation.

While European higher education systems were massively transformed by Bologna, the US did not experience comparable processes of change because it does not have any "organic" organizational structures that are comparable to those of Europe for implementing Bologna- like changes. In addition, for the US, the argument of mobility across country borders has not been such an important factor for education, as it has been in Europe.

Due to its geographic distance, the US does not partake in the Bologna process while Europe; the former higher education laggard, is increasingly serving as a role model from whom other states such as the US may draw lessons for higher education policy making. As the Bologna process has the potential to transform US higher education by affecting its understanding of recognition, transparency, and accountability there are already signs to its growing reach over the Atlantic. American policy makers are starting to adopt some practices of the Bologna model because they understand the importance of Bologna. Bologna does not only draw on the US degree system but also includes some innovative policy instruments unknown to the US before, such as diploma supplements and qualifications frameworks that foster transparency and mobility. Some US states already started to copy Bologna's qualifications frameworks and stirred debates on establishing the diploma supplements.

The Bologna process does not only provide solutions to European challenges. Between its tentative completion in 2010 and its envisioned conclusion date in 2020, the European reform process has the potential to become a global template for higher education in the world's knowledge societies.

Meanwhile, US higher education is suffering from a self-imposed blockade due to an ideology that stems from an extraordinary demand for individual freedom and the refusal of a strong central government. In addition, the US perception of itself as an independent entity no longer fits the

globalized world and it may hamper its ability to adapt quickly and with clear unified policies at the national level in order to steer these changes. Further inaction does not seem a workable strategy, as the present state of US higher education does not do justice to current political requirements, putting the US claim to global leadership at risk.

## 2. There is no high level cooperation mechanism in place

In Tonia Bieber and Kerstin Martens' view, higher education associations and US universities use a "pick-and-choose" strategy, concentrating on specific instruments of Bologna that improve transparency, accountability, and recognition of degrees. This tendency is reflected predominantly by the TuningUSA project and projects on recognition and also introduction of 3-year B.A. degrees.

On a voluntary basis, the universities concerned started to harmonize their qualification catalogues offered in their degree programs. For this purpose, the participating states in the US Mid-West of Indiana, Minnesota, and Utah are drafting learning outcomes and clarify the relationship between learning outcomes and employment possibilities in six fields of study. This occurs with a view to increase quality and practical relevancy of academic degrees for the labour market, to improve alignment and mechanisms of credit transfer among higher education institutions (Inside Indiana Business 2009). These accountability instruments are developed at the level of each specific educational discipline, and include diploma supplements, national qualifications frameworks, and definition of learning outcome and of student workload.

Whether TuningUSA will finally extend to the US as a whole is still unclear. In the discipline of History for example, the project has already started to expand across the entire country. If the project turns out to be successful, it may serve as a model to be emulated by other states and providers of higher education. Resulting in a possible revolution for the US system, this would shift national guiding principles on education in the direction of outcomes and competencies as opposed to inputs of education. In contrast, the reputation of universities and colleges presently still counts more than concrete information on students' learning outcomes.

Another major field of change in US higher education is the practice of recognition of European-style Bachelor degrees. Due to the pronounced diversity in US higher education, the country lacks a unitary policy in terms of admission of international students to US graduate programs. Thus, in the US, the Bologna process posed novel problems of recognition of European degrees, namely of the new Bologna-style 3-year BA degrees.

In an effort to adapt to the new European Bachelor degrees, US universities themselves also started to introduce 3-year BA degrees. In this context, the question emerges, why would a country like the US introduce components of the Bologna model since it is not formally obligated to do so at all? American higher education has suffered much from the current economic climate, which has affected the sector's financial resources. At the federal and the state levels, fewer resources are being given to institutions. To cover operational costs and make up for the budget shortfalls, American universities try to attract full-paying international students, and increase tuition and fees.

Despite these trends, America has not been very responsive to the international impulses of Bologna (Dobbins and Martens 2010). The decentralized US system is only at the very beginning stages of adapting to Bologna aims, and there is no clear pattern for convergence yet. For example, accreditation of higher education institutions stays optional; national qualifications frameworks and a credit transfer system are still lacking. The slowly paced American response toward coping with international initiatives such as the Bologna process or other international processes in education, such as the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Bieber and Martens 2011) may be attributable to the country's historical legacy. Education is highly connected to the cultural heritage of a nation. Stemming originally from colonial times, traditional hallmarks of US

higher education impede its ability to draw lessons from its transatlantic partner, and thus limit Bologna's leverage on the US.

## 3. High decentralisation and voluntary adherence limit the development of shared policies and instruments

The weak role of the state, the pronounced institutional autonomy, the marked decentralization of governance, the high degree of privatisation, and the political culture of liberalism and individualism characterize the US context.

In times that require major transformations in the area of higher education, these features turn out to be problematic. There is nearly no dictation of these policies by the federal government, and little more at state level—and even then only for public universities. There simply exists no single federal agency that would be responsible for internationalizing higher education. Hence, there is no national strategy for dealing with Bologna. Instead, only "case-by-case evaluation" at the level of single institutions exists for the recognition of Bologna credentials; sometimes even at the level of departments or faculty members. US efforts to recruit international students are initiated by single host campuses' global outreach programs and recruiting events, or by non-governmental organizations.

However, in the 2009 mapping study of National Qualifications frameworks in the APEC Region, by the APEC Human Resources Development Working Group the survey found the response by the United States in relation to questions of implementation and the need for an NQF quite notable. While the US has a federal system where the national government has a relatively small role in education and training and an NQF is unlikely to be introduced, there is considerable commonality in qualifications across the country and extensive registration of providers and accreditation of qualifications. Some of this is via regulated occupations and professional associations. Some is via the state accreditation of education institutions. There are requirements for tertiary colleges to provide considerable information on their websites. The US is taking an active part in the development of recognition tools. Hence some, at least, of he objectives held for NQF are potentially achievable by other means.

## 4. US Higher Education Funding problems may cause alignment with Bologna

Interestingly, the financial crisis may be improving transatlantic convergence toward the Bologna model. Rising costs of higher education are likely to increase US engagement in coordinating its system with that of Bologna in Europe. The American system needs more fee-paying international students. In 2010, international students contributed over $21.2 billion to the US economy, and their enrolment increased 32 percent over the last decade. However, the share of international students in US academic higher education is only 3.4 percent of all enrolled students with most students coming from China and India. Compared to Germany with 9.3 percent and Australia with 20.9 percent the US is lagging behind (OECD 2010). In the global race for talents, competitors particularly from Asia are improving branding techniques and spending more money on keeping their students at home.

In addition, the crisis increases the need to justify the types of spending, and raises questions about accountability. What are institutions delivering? What is the added value of a degree? The orientation of US policymakers on corresponding Bologna objectives is highly advisable in order to ensure understanding of how funding will be directed. This is because Bologna intends to promote transparency and efficiency among universities and their degree programs—a crucial aspect to consider for corresponding future trends in the US. In times of empty state coffers and increasing

pressure for economic effectiveness, comparable and binding quality parameters would be an important factor for cost reduction in the field of education.

## 5. High level detailed attention for instruments of Quality assurance and their interaction with other policy instruments is hampered by the constitution

The United States of America, in forming the Constitution after achieving independence from England, developed a combined federal and state system, whereby "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." As the term, "education" is not used in the Constitution it follows that education in all of its forms, including higher education, is reserved for the states. As a result, the chartering, establishment and operation of higher education and all institutional education activity is a state power and not a federal power. The federal government has oversight responsibility with regard to the District of Columbia and provides for some specialized institutions in the District and for institutes to train military forces needed to defend the country and its borders, but all other activity remains state-chartered and required to conform to state law.

## 6. Broad Quality Assurance principles, policies standards and guidelines can only be developed on a voluntary basis

In his paper on *Quality assurance in Higher education in the twenty-First century and the role of the council For Higher education accreditation (CHEA),* Fred Harcleroad describes the unique Higher Education Quality Assurance arrangements in the US. He investigates why U.S. higher education is often cited as the best in the world, while actually it is not a "system", and there is no central ministry managing it. Nevertheless, it is clearly an identifiable enterprise. Its outstanding stature is in part the product of participation by thousands of diverse collegiate institutions and their skilled faculties in the self-regulatory process of accreditation that has developed in the past century. As society needed new, diverse institutions, higher education changed and adapted, primarily on voluntary basis it has worked to improve and expand programs and degree offerings. Core values of a democratic society have been maintained, along with autonomy of diverse institutions responding to their varying missions.

The two major factors contributing to this are the unique Constitution of the USA coupled with the unique tripartite system of providing goods and services to society.

The United States tripartite arrangement for providing goods and services to society involves business and commerce (profit-making and tax-paying); state and federal governments (funded by taxes) and, finally, thousands of voluntary associations working in the public interest. Governments are totally responsible for legal matters, consumer protection and exerting the powers required to enforce the laws and their associated regulations. The voluntary organizations cannot enforce laws or exert the police powers of the government. The Federal powers for overseeing higher education in the US have remained very limited throughout history, with some clearly delineated exceptions:

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has the power to curb unfair trade practices, including deceptive practices in private vocational and distance education schools of less than two years and not offering degrees and as of 2011, the FTC has detailed legal controls making degree mills illegal and subject to court action.

In order to allow federal financing of veterans to facilitate their access to higher education, Congress passed a number of acts and used accreditation for protecting students and the federal government from fraud. Against the wishes of the Veterans Administration, the Commissioner of Education had to for the purposes of this act publish a list of nationally recognized accrediting agencies and

associations which he determines to be a reliable authority as to quality of training offered by an educational institution.

Swiftly thereafter Congress carefully restrained the officials of the then-Office of Education from going beyond the "listing" power while using voluntary accrediting bodies to do the work. "*Nothing contained in this Act shall be construed to authorize any department, agency, officer, or employee of the U.S. to exercise any direction, supervision, or control over the curriculum, program of instruction, administration, or personnel of any educational institution or school system*."

Most recently, the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act includes similar language: "*Nothing in this section shall be construed to permit the Secretary to establish any criteria that specifies, defines, or prescribes the standards that accrediting agencies or organizations shall use to assess any success with respect to student achievement*." In addition, Congress established a new 18-person committee to advise the U.S. Secretary of Education on accreditation issues with only six appointed by the Secretary. The other twelve are six appointed by leaders of the House and six appointed by leaders of the Senate.

Nevertheless Congress recognized the need to have the US Department of Education authorized to exert police powers regarding financial aid (rather than accrediting bodies) and passed laws authorizing it to conduct audits to insure compliance with regulations. This helped define further the limited responsibility in this area of the accrediting bodies listed by the Secretary of Education and used by the approving agency in each state.

So the combination of powers over education remaining with the States, and tripartite arrangements between those States, private businesses and voluntary organisations has created a highly decentralised and self-regulatory quality assurance environment for higher education in the US.

## 7. Decentralised and independent Quality Assurance mechanisms promote learning and improvement

From the above, we can state that In the US, there is no problem with independence of Quality Assurance agencies. However. Quality Assurance is mostly referred to as 'Accreditation'.

This is further illustrated by the fact that in 1996, an institutional Presidents Work Group, after lengthy consideration, proposed a structure and set of bylaws for a new organization, the current CHEA with the aims to:

1. Provide standards and means for recognizing accrediting agencies;
2. Review recognition denials and withdrawals;
3. Maintain a list of recognized accrediting agencies;
4. Act as the voice for voluntary higher education self-regulation through accreditation at the national level;
5. Be a clearinghouse for accreditation information;
6. Be an advocate for accreditation;
7. Be a centre for discussion and research on ways to improve accreditation and
8. Act as a mediator in accreditation conflicts.

From 1996 through 2010, CHEA has developed all of these functions, accompanied by an extensive publication program. Its Almanac of External Quality Review is published biannually. Many other publications are provided through its Institute for Research and Study of Accreditation and Quality Assurance and include the CHEA Chronicle, Fact Sheets, monographs and Occasional Papers. Its huge Database of Institutions and Programs Accredited by Recognized United States Accrediting Organizations includes information on 7,700 institutions and 18,700 programs as of 2009. The regular Federal Updates keep its membership current on legislative and regulatory developments.

While de tasks for CHEA were initially referred to as 'Accreditation' gradually, the organisation broadened its scope of action and moved into more quality enhancement work. The CHEA Board of Directors encouraged active participation in international quality assurance on a global basis. In response CHEA has developed an extensive program of international activity, including its annual International Seminar connected to its annual conference and regular staff attendance at global quality assurance meetings. CHEA has worked with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on numerous joint statements and quality assurance documents in recent years. The UNESCO Portal on Higher Education Institutions, with its data on higher education institutions in approximately 50 countries, includes CHEA as its general source of information on U.S. accreditation. And, in 2010, CHEA was selected to coordinate the external review and evaluation of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education created by the European Ministers for their cross-border quality assurance.

## 8. Quality Enhancement and Accreditation are distinct and complementary

It seems that in the US there is no explicit distinction between quality enhancement and accreditation. Accreditation seems to be the overarching concept of Quality assurance whereas internationally Quality Assurance is understood to gather the functions of quality enhancement and accreditation. While CHEA is moving in the direction of more quality enhancement, its gravity point remains with reinforcing the Accreditation procedures, and developing studies on improving the Accreditation function. Tellingly, Dennis Jones, in a 2002 CHEA report (Different Perspectives on Information About Educational Quality: Implications for the Role of Accreditation), suggested that regional accreditation Agencies establish three levels of accredited status (meets minimum requirements, exceeds minimum requirements or far exceeds minimum requirements). Some programmatic accreditation agencies have already moved in this direction.

The current CHEA Initiative to date has identified eight general issues for which to determine action plans for future activities, including advocacy for accreditation, relations with federal and state governments and relations with accrediting associations (such as recognition). In his assessment Fred Harcleroad considers international quality assurance as an additional key CHEA activity to be very successful as well as Accountability a topic that has been a with some success board policy effort for several years. However he considers that CHEA attention to the institutions with profit as a major objective to have been limited. As a consequence, he suggests some specific activities and studies that CHEA can consider for future action:

1. Develop policies and practices that accrediting bodies could include in their approval process when a currently accredited college is sold.
2. Respond to the public concern that peer review includes definite conflict of interest.
3. Study of existing codes of ethics for those on evaluation teams and review bodies and develop a national code of ethics.
4. Study of the standards listed by each regional association to determine if there is a set of common core standards for review and what differences are significant. Determine if practices and review guidelines have a comparable core and explore for process comparability and procedures for visiting teams to follow. Examine programmatic comparable data to determine a common data set that all institutions should develop for use on a yearly basis for long-range planning, yearly budgeting and fund allocation. Use the common data set for all accreditation self-studies.
5. Study of CHEA 3,000 member presidents and the ways they use accreditation.
6. Study of the institutional and programmatic accrediting types and recommend common core outcome measures to accrediting bodies.

These suggestions show a need for increased coordination and cooperation, and we start to see a move towards overarching frameworks, which, well understood, will only be implemented on a

voluntary basis given the US context. Nevertheless especially point 4 and 6 seem to indicate a promising step towards a more comprehensive understanding of the Quality Assurance function.

Furthermore cooperative publications with a few critical organized groups, such as the State Higher Education Executive Officers organization and the Education Commission of the States, would be a good follow-up to the NCHEMS 2010 analysis of state uses of accreditation. A few findings that many states have laws and operations using accreditation might lead to expanded use. A common suggested legal/regulatory wording could encourage other states to pass such laws and develop such regulations. Particular areas for such action are:

1. Whether accreditation is needed to operate (40 states);
2. Requiring non-public institutions to be accredited (21 states);
3. Have CHEA recognition for all states with this requirement;
4. Have accreditation (using CHEA) required for out-of state institutions (44 states);
5. Accreditation Agency must be recognized by CHEA as well as USDE (8 states); and
6. Increase state transfer requiring accreditation (8 states)

These follow-up studies also point to a convergence effort and may indicate that in time CHEA will succeed in herding the cats, but as Fred Harcleroad states; the basic group that developed and continues to support CHEA was, and is, the presidents of 3,000 institutions. Therefore the President's Project remains a valuable way of ensuring stakeholder buy-in.  Presidents are key members of the CHEA board and should continue to be heard at each conference or during special sessions so that their analysis of continuing and future CHEA efforts can be taken on board.

However, at the same time it is telling that in his closing remarks he warns that CHEA will have a continuing problem with '*bureaucrats in the executive branch of government continually trying to go beyond the Constitution and legislative limits as the money they control to distribute to students for attendance increases*'. He therefore emphasises the need for maximising services to the presidents of institutions responsible for establishing CHEA and supporting the funding it needs to operate successfully.

If anything, this is a reminder of how deep-seated instinctive distrust of Government as a Higher Education policy maker remains in the US, and of the difficulties this represents for steering the North American Higher education sector as a system in response to international higher education developments.


## 9. Ranking of the best, enhances the rest?

Given the fragmented quality assurance landscape in the US, the temptation to see rankings as indicators of quality is understandable.

However as Tonia Bieber and Kerstin Martens stated; the strong sentiment in both America and some other countries that the US has "the best" higher education system is a limiting factor to its ability to engage with what goes on in higher education in the rest of the world. This has been exhibited in notable sources of university rankings, which boast that eight out of the top 10 universities in the world are in the US (Shanghai Jiao Tong University Institute of Higher Education 2011). However, when one considers the hundreds of universities in America, these few proud examples are clearly not a valid cross- section of the full situation. On the contrary, it would seem that a "halo effect" from the top universities makes higher education in the US appear to be more cutting-edge as a whole—both in America and abroad.

## Lessons learned

The Analysis framework of the Success factors and Key Components for the US experience provides a summary view. While the international context is conducive for convergence, the US is stuck in a self-imposed blockade due to an ideology that stems from an extraordinary demand for individual freedom and the refusal of a strong central government. The US perception of itself as an independent entity no longer fits the globalized world and may hamper its ability to adapt quickly and with clear unified policies at the national level in order to steer higher education changes. The institutional Back up for overarching change is weak in the US, as the constitution does not allow federal policymaking in educational matters. It has no federal Policy instruments, as education regulated by a mix of State policy and tripartite arrangements with private business and voluntary associations. Tuning USA is a voluntary project that may lead to more higher education convergence and international alignment.

Within this context no frequent high-level international consultation, cooperation and commitment is possible. The US Education Department has very limited powers, and those it has can only be exercised through other organisations such as CHEA managing the federal listing powers of accreditation agencies.

Equally there are no grounds for shared policies producing convergence instruments in the form of shared higher education social principles, instruments and targets, or legislative convergence around these. Continental funding is limited to specific target populations to enable their access to higher education and overall higher education financing has a very high level of private funding, limiting the alignment powers State governments can exercise. High level and detailed attention for instruments of quality assurance being structurally barred, the US relies on the CHEA listing and CHEA's voluntary exploration of the international developments in higher education, potentially inspiring its members to follow suit. Therefore the development of broad, inclusive and developmental approach to quality assurance accommodating diversity while ensuring comparability and recognition can only take place in a voluntary way. Responsibility for quality assurance lies squarely with the institutions and accreditation is optional in many states. Nevertheless, the CHEA listing and standards for accreditation do have an influence on the nationwide membership.

The US certainly has a multitude of decentralised and independent quality assurance mechanisms, often exercised by private or voluntary associations listed by CHEA. A clear distinction between quality enhancement and accreditation does not exist explicitly as the US is mainly accreditation oriented, based on the CHEA listing.

The excellent international ranking of the top US universities gives a distorted image of the overall quality of the US Higher Education system, and further obscures the need for overarching quality assurance mechanisms.

The US is definitely an outlier in the global trends towards convergence and despite its structural impediments, it increasingly feel the international pull towards convergence.

**Figure 22: The Analysis Framework for the North American Experience**

| Success factors | Key components | The North American experience |
|---|---|---|
| **1. The international Context is conducive to convergence** | Continental convergence policies | Foreign policies of security alliances, and transatlantic and transpacific trading agreements to build peace and security, prosperity and democracy. |
| | Institutional Back up | The Presidency, Congress |
| | Policy instruments | No Federal constitutional power over education matters. TuningUSA project, voluntary |
| | Complementary international Agreements and supporting networks | The UNESCO-CEPES Guidelines on quality provision in cross-border education (OECD UNESCO, 2005) |
| **2. A high level International Cooperation mechanism based on inclusive consultation and solid process management is in place** | Shared Purpose & Objectives | States and universities opt for a Bologna pick and choose strategy |
| | Inclusive consultation arrangements | Tripartite arrangements between Federal or State governments, business and commerce, and voluntary associations. |
| | Process Management organisation | Department of Education overseen by accreditation Committee appointed mostly by Congress |
| | Process Management instruments | - |
| **3. Shared policies produce convergence instruments and adapted legislation** | Shared Social Policy principles, instruments, and targets | - |
| | Joint development of mutually reinforcing convergence policy instruments and tools | Adapting to European 3y Bachelors No NQF TuningUSA project Credit Transfer Scheme TuningUSA project DS CHEA listing CHEA explores international QA standards |
| | Legislative convergence | No Federal legislation over education matters, only limited to federal funding of target groups to enable their access to HEI |
| **4. Continental Funding complements national expenditure to align incentives in HE financing systems** | Continental Funding programmes | Only Federal funding of target group students |
| | Aligned national social policy funding priorities | Federal funding for targeted groups |
| | Aligned national Higher Education funding systems | High level of private funding, low government influence The desire to attract foreign students has convergence effects |
| **5. High level detailed attention for Instruments of Quality Assurance and** | Continental Agreement on a set of Quality Assurance Standards & Guidelines | CHEA is engaging internationally with Quality enhancement initiatives |

| Success factors | Key components | The North American experience |
|---|---|---|
| their interaction with other policy instruments promotes coherence trust and cooperation | Continental Quality Assurance and Certification of QA Agencies | CHEA listing |
| | Continental coherence of QA with other convergence instruments | - |
| 6. Broad Quality assurance principles, policies, standards and guidelines safeguard diversity, ensure comparability and allow recognition. | A structured description of<br>· Definition, principles and policies expressing the spirit of QA<br>· The essential systemic components and procedures of the QA function | CHEA provides standards and means for recognizing accrediting agencies; reviews recognition denials and withdrawals; maintains a list of recognized accrediting agencies; acts as the voice for voluntary higher education self-regulation through accreditation at the national level, acts as a clearinghouse for accreditation information; is an advocate for accreditation, a centre for discussion and research on ways to improve accreditation, and acts as a mediator in accreditation conflicts. |
| 7. Decentralised and independent Quality Assurance mechanisms promote learning and improvement | Prime responsibility for Quality Assurance anchored at HEI level | HEI is prime responsible for internal QA |
| | Complemented with reviews from independent QA Agency | External QA by non governmental or private Quality Assurance Agencies (QAA) |
| | QA of QA Agencies ensured through international peer review | CHEA Listing |
| 8. Accreditation and Quality Enhancement are distinct and complementary | Quality enhancement is a developmental process and Accreditation an accountability mechanism. | Accreditation is voluntary.<br>Department of Education has only listing powers of Accreditation agencies through CHEA |
| 9. Ranking is not promoted as a Quality Assurance tool | Ranking is promoted as a transparency tool and is seen to be explicitly separate and different from Quality Assurance | The excellent international ranking of the top US universities gives a distorted image of the overall quality of the US Higher Education system. |

# Conclusions from the international review

In summary, our analysis of the international experience shows that regional higher education quality assurance is built on a set of cross border policy instruments and tools developed and agreed through inclusive consultations by stakeholder networks and governments engaging in a well managed process of convergence. These policy instruments and tools include also higher education recognition and harmonisation instruments on which regional quality assurance rests for comparability across systems and cultures. Reciprocally, quality assurance builds trust and confidence making the development of these harmonisation and recognition tools possible.

Conversely also, achieving convergence at a continental or regional scale, requires high-level political commitment, a well-managed process of close and broad based cooperation between all stakeholders, and a set of cross border harmonisation, recognition, and quality assurance policy instruments and implementation tools.

This explains in part why in the US, because of the constitutional restraints at federal level combined with an extraordinary demand for individual freedom and the refusal of a strong central government, there has been so little convergence and only a minimal response in relation to international developments in higher education. This stands in sharp contrast to the global leading role Europe has been able to seize for itself as it could capitalise on strong regional integration policies, established institutions, continental funding programmes, solid process management and broad based consultation between well developed stakeholder networks, which have yielded a set of shared higher education policy instruments and tool kits of global exemplarity. The Pacific Asia response has been slower but nevertheless remarkable given its difficulties in territorial definition of the region and the more fragmented landscape of regional integration initiatives, weaker institutional underpinning, and greater socioeconomic disparities between and within countries. Nevertheless, global convergence at the levels of tools and instruments is clearly happening, ranging from a reluctant accepting of recognition tools such as degree structures, credit accumulation and transfer systems and diploma supplements in the US, to a comprehensive incorporation of these tools packaged in NQF or Regional QF together with national and regional quality assurance and accreditation standards and institutional arrangements we see in other regions.

It shows that actually, developing the Pan African framework for quality assurance cannot be the result of a simple study by two consultants. Indeed, if there is one overarching lesson that clearly emanates from the European experience; it is that the development of a Pan African Framework for quality assurance will have to be the result of high-level political commitment, a well-managed process of close and broad based cooperation between all stakeholders, and a set of cross border harmonisation, recognition, and quality assurance policy instruments and implementation tools.

The experiences described so far in this study also bear out the conclusions reached by Jane Knight[14] in what she calls the 'FOPA model' of three inter-related Functional, Organisational, and Political Approaches. Ideally, these approaches are not mutually exclusive and work in unison complementing and reinforcing each other. As we have seen from the international contexts we studied, this optimal situation clearly does not always happen in practice because conflicting priorities or politics can cause tension among the three approaches. However, while at any one time one approach could be more dominant than another; ultimately all three approaches need progress to ensure sustainability.

The political approach delivers the political will and strategies that put higher education initiatives on the agenda of decision-making bodies, which is crucial in formalising initiatives and launching major programs or funding schemes. As we have seen from the European and Asia-pacific

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[14] Knight, "A Conceptual Framework for the Regionalization of Higher Education: Application to Asia".

experience, declarations of intent, binding conventions, treaties, agreements, and special meetings like summits or policy dialogues are instruments for generating political support and visibility in order to make regionalization of higher education a priority. The fact that this approach can be characterized has having more of a top down, formal and intentional orientation has inhibited its development in the context of the US and hence severely limited coordinated governmental initiative and engagement.

The organizational architecture that evolves in the wake of political initiative delivers the frameworks structures and agencies necessary to help establish and oversee regional level and intra-regional initiatives in a more systematic way. As we have seen from the European and the Asia-Pacific experiences, this diversity of networks and organizations, including government and non-government bodies, professional organizations, foundations, and networks, assume a variety of responsibilities such as policy-making, funding, research, capacity building, regulation, and advocacy among others. In contrast, for lack of an overarching political approach in the US, the multitude of initiatives emanating from state governments, voluntary associations, private enterprise and higher education institutions have not delivered such systematic and coordinated responses.

The functional approach focuses on the practical activities of higher education institutions and systems. Knight puts functional approach initiatives into two distinct groups. The first group relates to strategies facilitating closer alignment or harmonization among national/sub regional higher education systems. The second category includes programs like student mobility schemes, cross-border collaborative education programs, pan-regional universities and centres of excellence. The relationship between these two groups is critical, as the systems and policies in the first group are needed to facilitate and expedite the programs in the second. For instance, as we can see happening worldwide, compatibility among quality assurance systems and academic credit systems will help student mobility programs within and across regions. International experience also shows that generally, it is a more complex and serious undertaking to align national systems within a region, than to establish multi-lateral academic activities.

# Annex 4: European Guidelines for Quality Assurance 2005 - 2015

| ESG 2005 | ESG proposed for 2015 |
|---|---|
| **Part 1: European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions**<br><br>1.1 Policy and procedures for quality assurance:<br><br>Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognizes the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.<br><br>1.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards:<br>Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.<br><br>1.3 Assessment of students:<br><br>Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.<br><br>1.4 Quality assurance of teaching staff:<br><br>Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so. They should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.<br><br>1.5 Learning resources and student support:<br><br>Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered. | **Part 1: Standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance**<br><br>1.1 Policy for quality assurance<br><br>Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders3.<br><br>1.2 Design and approval of programmes<br><br>Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.<br><br>1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment<br><br>Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.<br><br>1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification<br><br>Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.<br><br>1.5 Teaching staff<br><br>Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They |

| ESG 2005 | ESG proposed for 2015 |
|---|---|
| **1.6 Information systems:**<br><br>Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities.<br><br>**1.7 Public information:**<br><br>Institutions should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering. | should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.<br><br>**Proposal for the revised ESG by the E4 Group in cooperation with EI, BUSINESSEUROPE and EQAR**<br><br>**1.6 Learning resources and student support**<br><br>Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.<br><br>**1.7 Information management**<br><br>Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.<br><br>**1.8 Public information**<br><br>Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.<br><br>**1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes**<br><br>Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.<br><br>1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance<br><br>Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis. |

| ESG 2005 | ESG proposed for 2015 |
|---|---|
| **Part 2: European standards for the external quality assurance of higher education** | **Part 2: Standards and guidelines for external quality assurance** |
| 2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures: | 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance |
| External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines. | External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance described in Part 1 of the ESG. |
| 2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes: | 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose |
| The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used. | External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement. |
| 2.3 Criteria for decisions: | 2.3 Implementing processes |
| Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently. | External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include |
| 2.4 Processes fit for purpose: | • A self-assessment or equivalent; <br> • An external assessment normally including a site visit <br> • A report resulting from the external assessment <br> • A consistent follow-up. |
| All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them. | 2.4 Peer-review experts |
| 2.5 Reporting: | External quality assurance should have a professional system of peer review at its core, carried out by groups of experts that include (a) student member(s). |
| Reports should be published and should be written in a style, which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find. | 2.5 Criteria for formal outcomes |
| 2.6 Follow-up procedures: | Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision. |
| Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently. | **Proposal for the revised ESG by the E4 Group in cooperation with EI, BUSINESSEUROPE and EQAR** |
| 2.7 Periodic reviews: | 2.6 Reporting |

| ESG 2005 | ESG proposed for 2015 |
|---|---|
| External quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defi ned and published in advance.<br><br>2.8 System-wide analyses:<br><br>Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc. | Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.<br><br>2.7 Complaints and appeals<br><br>Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions. |
| **Part 3: European standards for external quality assurance agencies**<br><br>3.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education:<br><br>The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.<br><br>3.2 Official status:<br><br>Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.<br><br>3.3 Activities:<br><br>Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis.<br><br>3.4 Resources:<br><br>Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the | **Part 3: Standards and guidelines for quality assurance agencies**<br><br>3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance<br><br>Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.<br><br>3.2 Official status<br><br>Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.<br><br>3.3 Independence<br><br>Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.<br><br>3.4 Thematic analysis<br><br>Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities. |

| ESG 2005 | ESG proposed for 2015 |
|---|---|
| development of their processes and procedures. | 3.5 Resources |
| 3.5 Mission statement: | Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work. |
| Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement. | 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct |
| 3.6 Independence: | Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities. |
| Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations, and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders. | 3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies |
| 3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies: | Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG. |
| The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include: | |
| • A self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process; | |
| • An external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency; | |
| • Publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes; | |
| • A follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report. | |
| 3.8 Accountability procedures: | |
| Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability. | |

# Annex 5: Overview of the Bologna Process and its main themes

| 1998 | 1999 | 2001 | 2003 | 2005 | 2007 | 2009 | 2010 | 2012 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sorbonne Declaration | Bologna Declaration | Prague Communiqué | Berlin Communiqué | Bergen Communiqué | London Communiqué | Leuven Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué | Budapest-Vienna Declaration | Bucharest Communiqué |
| · Europe of Knowledge, Harmonisation of European Higher Education architecture | · European Dimension in Higher Education · EHEA by 2010 | · Attractiveness of the EHEA | · Links between Higher Education and Research areas | · International Cooperation on the basis of values and sustainable development | · Strategy to improve the global dimension of the Bologna Process | · Enhance global policy dialogue through Bologna Policy Fora | · More effective inclusion of HE staff and students in implementing and developing the EHEA. | · Encourage knowledge-based alliances in the EHEA, focusing on research and technology. · Build more bridges between EHEA and ERA |
| | | · Social Dimension | · Equal Access | · Reinforcement of Social Dimension | · Commitment to produce National Action plans with effective monitoring | · National targets for the social dimension to be measured by 2020 | · Equal access to Quality education in a knowledge driven world | · Quality Education for all · pilot project to promote voluntary peer learning on the HE social dimension |
| | | · Lifelong Learning (LLL) | · Alignment of LLL Policies · Recognition of Prior learning (RPL) | · Flexible Learning Paths in Higher education | · Common understanding of the role of Higher Education in LLL · Partnership to improve employability | · LLL as a public responsibility requiring strong partnerships · Call to work on employability | · Graduate employability · Student centred learning | · Enhanced Graduate employability |
| · Mobility of Students and Teachers | · Mobility of Students, Teachers, Researchers Administrative staff | · Social dimension of Mobility | · Portability of loans and grants · Improvement of mobility data | · Attention to visa and work permits | · Challenges of visa and work permits, pension systems and recognition | · Student Mobility Benchmark of 20% by 2020 | · | · Strategy: Mobility for Better learning · Full portability of national grants and loans across the EHEA |
| · Use of Credits | · A system of Credits (ETCS) | · ETCS and Diploma Supplement | · ECTS for credit accumulation | · | · Need for coherent use of tools and recognition practices | · Continuing implementation of Bologna tools | · | · ECTS and Diploma Supplement implementation based on learning outcomes |
| · Common two-cycle degree system | · Easily readable and comparable degrees | · Fair Recognition · Recognised Joint Degrees | · Doctoral level as third cycle · Recognition of Degrees · Joint Degrees | · FQ-EHEA adopted · National Qualifications Frameworks launched | · National Qualifications Frameworks by 2010 | · National Qualifications Frameworks by 2012 | · | · Revise roadmaps for countries NQF beyond 2012 · EAR-manual to advance recognition practices |
| | · European Cooperation in Quality Assurance | · Cooperation between Quality Assurance and Recognition Professionals | · Quality Assurance at institutional, national and European level | · European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance adopted | · Creation of the European Quality Assurance Register | · Quality as an overarching focus for EHEA | · | · Revision of ESG · Allow EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies to perform their activities across the EHEA |

# Annex 6: Historical overview of Harmonisation, Recognition and Quality Assurance in Europe

| Time line | Context & developments | High level international initiatives | Stakeholder networks, associations, institutions | Purposes, Priorities, Programmes and Policy Instruments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1984 | European Integration drives growing mobility internationalisation and mutual recognition of Higher Education systems [Spain and Portugal join the EU in 1986] | Initiative of the European Commission | NARIC[i] Network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres | Academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study in the Member States of the European Union (EU) countries, the European Economic Area (EEA) countries and Turkey. |
| 1987 | | European Commission proposal adopted by EU member states | European Commission, European HEI | ERASMUS: European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students |
| 1989 | | European Commission proposal to support ERASMUS | European Commission, European HEI | Introduction of ETCS as a tool for transfer and recognition of credits providing a simple and broadly defined tool for the measurement of workload and for the recognition of studies abroad. It provides HEIs with a device they can use with considerable freedom to translate their programmes into an understandable, transparent equation for students and other institutions. |
| 1990 | [Germany reunited] | | EURASHE[ii] European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (1100 in 40 countries within and outside EHEA) | Focusing on internationalisation and influencing International HE policies, with studies and projects[iii] |
| 1991 | Growing mobility and mutual recognition put Higher Education quality assurance implications on the agenda [Maastricht Treaty] | European Council of Ministers Decision | European Commission with expert advisory group and management group | The European Pilot Projects on Quality Assurance with 4 main objectives: <br> • Increase awareness of the need for evaluation in higher education in Europe; <br> • Enrich existing national evaluation procedures <br> • Further the transfer of experience <br> • Impart a European dimension to evaluation |
| 1992 | | | ESIB[iv] European Students Information Bureau becomes National Unions of Students in Europe and then ESU | Voice to include students as stakeholders co-shaping Higher Education policy and not as mere customers of Higher Education <br> Representing 10 Million students from 36 countries. |

| Time line | Context & developments | High level international initiatives | Stakeholder networks, associations, institutions | Purposes, Priorities, Programmes and Policy Instruments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | (European Student Union) since 2007 | Influential 'Bologna with Student eyes' Publications |
| 1994 | | Established by the Council of Europe and UNESCO-CEPES | ENIC<br>European Network of Information Centres | Develop joint policy and practice in all European countries for the recognition of qualifications. |
| 1995 | [EU enlargement with Austria, Finland and Sweden] | | Network for Higher Education Quality Assurance takes shape among stakeholders while the European Commission & Expert advisory group prepare formal proposal. | Outcomes of The European pilot projects lead to the establishment of four mechanisms:<br>· Exchange of professionals in the evaluation field<br>· Reciprocal use of European experts facilitated by the development of national databases<br>· Exchange of information at the European level including databases of national evaluations, catalogues of European evaluation programmes, conferences and seminars, a newsletter or bulletin<br>· Initiate experimental projects at the European level |
| 1997 | [Amsterdam Treaty]<br><br>The ambition to strengthen and build upon the intellectual cultural social and technical dimensions of EU Integration drives the harmonisation of the European Higher Education Architecture | **Lisbon Recognition Convention**<br>(Council of Europe and UNESCO) | Special committee was set up in 1999 to oversee the implementation with members from each Party to the Convention, and several other countries and organisations.<br>Ratification of this convention has now become a key benchmark in the Bologna stocktaking Reports. | The Committee adopted 9 points of agreement and 4 documents<br>· Recommendation on International Access Qualifications (1999)<br>· Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment on Foreign Qualifications (2001)<br>· Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Trans-national Education (2001)<br>· Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees and its Explanatory Memorandum (2004) |
| 1998 | | **Sorbonne Declaration**<br>by France, UK Germany and Italy as signatory states, laying the basis for the Bologna | | In follow up of Lisbon Convention calling for a common improving external recognition, student mobility and employability.<br>Mentioned objectives such as two cycle HE system, standardized ETCS and semesters, multidisciplinary education, proficiency in languages, use of IT, and encouraging students to spend at least one semester studying abroad. |

| Time line | Context & developments | High level international initiatives | Stakeholder networks, associations, institutions | Purposes, Priorities, Programmes and Policy Instruments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | declaration | | Called upon other countries to join them in this effort |
| 1998 | | European Council recommends launching of European Higher Education Quality Assurance network | European Higher Education Quality Assurance bodies and/or Authorities ENQA Steering Group | At the First General Meeting on Quality Assurance on 15 February 1999, it was decided to set up a Quality Assurance working group for setting up the future European agency network and drafting proposals for the organisation, regulations and main objectives |
| 1999 | The Bologna Process is initiated | **Bologna 1** Bologna Declaration for the establishment of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010 Signed by 29 countries | Establishment of the BFUG (Bologna Follow Up Group) | Six objectives for the development of the European HE system and its promotion worldwide. <br> · Adoption of system of easily readable degrees, diploma supplement <br> · Two cycles; undergraduate and graduate <br> · Standardised ETCS system <br> · Elimination of impediments to mobility across programmes, institutions and countries <br> · Comparable Quality Assurance methodologies and criteria <br> · Promotion of the European dimension in Higher Education curricular development, mobility schemes, inter institutional cooperation and integration of programmes |
| 2000 | The EU Lisbon Strategy calling for the European knowledge economy gives political impetus to the | European Council adopts the **Lisbon Strategy** | European Commission becomes member of Bologna BFUG | European Commission issues ETCS extension Feasibility Report and <br><br> Lifelong Learning Survey |
| | | | Group of European Universities | The Tuning Project <br> · Development of a framework of compatible and comparable Qualifications described in terms of work load, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile |

| Time line | Context & developments | High level international initiatives | Stakeholder networks, associations, institutions | Purposes, Priorities, Programmes and Policy Instruments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | harmonisation of Higher Education at the highest levels across Europe<br><br>[Nice Treaty] | European Council accepts EC & Advisory group proposal for the establishment of a European Association for Quality Assurance in Europe | Establishment of ENQA financed by the European Commission fostering a large and inclusive membership of all bodies involved with Quality Assurance in Europe | 2001-2003 ENQA increasing leading role in HE QA Europe,<br>· Survey QA procedures across Europe,<br>· Transnational European Evaluation Project (TEEP) testing methods for 1st cycle degree programmes,<br>· Networks with ENIC-NARIC15 proposing QA of QA agencies |
| 2001<br><br>2001 | | | Establishment of EUA<br>European University Association<br>· Members must offer PhD programmes<br>· Consultative member of Bologna Process | Mission to promote a coherent European system for higher Education and research through guidance in enhancing teaching, learning and research as well as HEI contributions to society.<br>· Publication of 'Trends' on the state of European HE<br>· Bologna Handbook |
| | The Bologna Process develops concrete implementation measures | **Bologna 2**<br>Prague Declaration<br>Signed by 33 countries | BFUG is established with representatives of all signatory Countries and the European Commission, and is Chaired by the EUU rotating Presidency.<br>The Council of Europe, EUA, EURASHE and ESIB are identified as key stakeholders that need to be regularly consulted in the Bologna Process, they all become consultative members of BFUG<br>ENQA puts forward a Position paper for an active role in HE QA within the Bologna Process | Assignment of concrete tasks for the implementation of the six Bologna Objectives and called on stakeholders to take advantage of new legislation introduced in signatory countries to move forward.<br>Three more objectives are added:<br>· Lifelong Learning<br>· Involving HEI and students as active partners in the process<br>· Promoting the attractiveness of EHEA<br>BFUG asked to carry out 5 seminars on the topics of:<br>· Quality assurance and accreditation<br>· Recognition issues and the use of Credits<br>· The development of Joint degrees<br>· The obstacles to mobility and other social dimensions<br>· Lifelong learning and student involvement |

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[15] http://www.enic-naric.net/index.aspx?s=n&r=g&d=about

| Time line | Context & developments | High level international initiatives | Stakeholder networks, associations, institutions | Purposes, Priorities, Programmes and Policy Instruments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | Prague Follow up and Berlin Preparations | Bologna 2 Follow Up | Copenhagen conference; establishment of E4 comprising EURASHE, EUA, ESU, ENQA | Bologna website includes links to 24 position papers |
| | | | | EUA third 'Trends' Report |
| | | | | ESIB first 'Bologna through Student eyes' report |
| | | | | ZGAGA Report reporting progress is basis for Berlin meeting |
| 2003 | Bologna Broadens membership and strengthens its coordination and implementation capacity | Bologna 3<br><br>Berlin Declaration<br><br>Signed by 40 countries | Broaden membership to all signatories of the European Cultural Convention<br><br>Creation of BFUG Secretariat and Board. BFUG and Board can establish ad hoc working groups<br><br><br>UNESCO-CEPES joins BFUG as Consultative member.<br><br>Creation of ECA, The European Consortium of Accreditation | Called for Priority action on 3 Bologna Objectives:<br>· Promote effective Quality Assurance systems (Call for E4 to propose a set common standards & guidelines on QA + Peer review system of QAA by 2005)<br>· Effective use of the two cycle system<br>· Improving system of degrees and periods of studies<br><br>Additional Actions:<br>· Add Objective of 3 cycle system to strengthen European Research capacity and mobility<br>· Develop a Stock taking Report on 3 priority actions for the Bergen Meeting |
| 2004 | Berlin Follow Up and Bergen Preparations<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>[EU Enlargement to the East and the | Bologna 3 Follow Up<br><br>First Bologna Secretariat established in Bergen | BFUG establishes its coordination role, issues a Work programme, and Reports back with the work of the Stock Taking Work Group<br><br><br>Reform ENQA into Association with more limited membership to only QA agencies, ESG become sharper, Finances are made more sustainable through membership fees (reducing EU dependency) membership criteria become stricter, consultative member of Bologna and E4 Group | BFUG Work programme:<br>· Ten Bologna action lines<br>· Fourteen Seminars<br>· Establishment of the National Reports<br>· Bologna Projects<br>  · ENQA QA standards, procedures and guidelines<br>  · Overarching Qualifications Framework<br>  · Support new countries in Bologna Process<br>Outcomes:<br>· A Framework of Qualifications for the EHEA<br>· National Progress Reports Bologna Process<br>· E4/ENQA Standards and Guidelines on Quality Assurance in EHEA<br>· Eurydice Report: Focus on the structure of HE in Europe<br>· First Stock taking Report (2005) for the Bergen meeting |

| Time line | Context & developments | High level international initiatives | Stakeholder networks, associations, institutions | Purposes, Priorities, Programmes and Policy Instruments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | [Mediterranean] | | | • Based on National reports and Eurydice Questionnaire<br>• Ten benchmarks for three priority areas with identified actions to reach excellent, very good, good, some progress, little progress ratings<br>• Colour coded country score cards<br><br>Stakeholder initiatives<br><br>• ENIC/NARIC Charter and development of international standards for Lisbon Recognition Convention<br>• ESIB socioeconomic student survey<br>• EU Commission Report on cooperation in Quality Assurance<br>• EUA Project on Doctoral programmes |
| 2005 | | OECD/UNESCO | | Guidelines for Quality in Cross border provision of Higher Education ensuring:<br><br>• Student protection from risks of misinformation, low quality provision and qualifications of limited validity<br>• Readability of Qualifications to enhance their Portability and validity<br>• Transparent, coherent, fair and reliable recognition procedures with as little burden as possible<br>• Increased cooperation and understanding between national QA&A bodies |
| | Bologna takes mid term stock and adopts the first major Frameworks | **Bologna 4**<br>Bergen Declaration<br>Signed by 45 countries | The Declaration emphasises partnerships in the Bologna Process and the central role that HEI play and encourages staff and students to intensify their involvement in the creation of EHEA<br><br>Education International (EI) Pan-European Structure and the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE, later to become Business Europe) join the | Adoption of the 3 cycle EHEA FQ Qualifications Framework, noting with satisfaction that more than half of all student had been enrolled in the 2 cycle programme, expressing the ambition to stimulate the development of compatible national Qualification Frameworks in each signatory country, as well as the need for consultations to ensure compatibility with the EU Lifelong learning Qualifications Framework<br><br>Adoption of the 24 Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in EHEA with request to ENQA to develop the practicalities for implementation.<br><br>Commitment to peer review of Quality Assurance Agencies and the welcoming a European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)<br><br>Noting that 80% of Bologna signatory countries had implemented the Lisbon Recognition Criteria, urges the remaining 20% to do so. All countries vowed to enshrine the provisions of the convention in their national legislation. |

| Time line | Context & developments | High level international initiatives | Stakeholder networks, associations, institutions | Purposes, Priorities, Programmes and Policy Instruments |
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| | | | BFUG as consultative members. | Request to widen the next Stock taking to include 4 new topics<br>· Implementation of the ENQA QA Standards and Guidelines<br>· Implementation of the new national Qualifications Frameworks<br>· Award and recognition of joint degrees at doctoral level<br>· Creating paths for flexible learning and recognition thereof |
| | Bergen follow up and London preparations | Bologna Secretariat moves to London | BFUG six Working Groups | BFUG Working Programme:<br>· 8 Seminars<br>· 13 Discussion topics<br>· 2 projects<br>　· Practicalities of implementing EQAR (E4)<br>　· Basic Principles for Doctoral Programmes -EUA with interested parties<br>· 18 national and stocktaking priorities<br><br>2007 Stock taking Report for the London meeting<br>· Improved practice:<br>　· Benchmarks incorporated in National report templates<br>　· Benchmark items more specific<br>　· Colour codes replaced by more precise mean values<br>· 3 overarching Conclusions:<br>　· Good Progress<br>　· 2010 still challenging<br>　· Stock taking is useful instrument<br>· Recommendations for next Stock Taking:<br>　· Need for setting clear policy goals and targets for 2009 meeting<br>　· Close collaboration with ESIB, Eurydice, etc.<br>· Recommendations for the countries:<br>　· By 2010 Fully implement National Qualifications Framework based on learning outcomes<br>　· Link the NQF to QA, CAT, lifelong learning, flexible learning paths, and the social dimension<br>　· Promote progress on all aspects, also the most challenging<br>　· Make formal links with NARIC/ENIC for national action plans for recognition |

| Time line | Context & developments | High level international initiatives | Stakeholder networks, associations, institutions | Purposes, Priorities, Programmes and Policy Instruments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2007 | Bologna looks forward to completion of a number of key priority actions, identifies remaining sticking points, and looks ahead beyond 2010<br><br>[Lisbon Treaty]<br><br>[Bulgaria & Romania join the EU] | **Bologna 5**<br>London Declaration | The Declaration reemphasises the importance of comparability and diversity in HE systems and reaffirms the important role of HEI in our societies and of partnerships with employers | Welcomed establishment of EQAR as proposed by E4<br><br>Adoption of the Strategy 'The European Education Area in a Global setting'<br><br>Progress towards EHEA:<br>· Mobility still hampered by visa, residence, work permits, financial incentives, pension arrangements, lack of joint programmes and flexible curricula, and the need for more HEI responsibility taking for mobility<br>· Recognition still not ratified by all countries, need for implementation to be more institutional and coherent<br>· Need for implementation of NQF in support of EQF<br>· Lifelong learning need more systematic approach in most countries<br>· QA good progress, need for more student involvement and HEI anchoring<br>· Alignment of ERA and EHEA, more embedded within HEI strategies<br>· Social dimension commitment to achieving equal opportunity and access<br><br>Future:<br>· Focus on mobility and measuring it, Social Dimension, Graduate Employability for all three cycles, Partnerships with employers, Cooperation with ENIC/NARIC and open-mindedness in recognising degrees from other continents<br>· Call for BFUG proposals to support the process beyond 2010, commission an independent evaluation of the process by 2010, provide a stocktaking Report for the 2009 Meeting in Leuven/Louvain-La-Neuve Belgium |
| 2008 | London follow up and Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Preparations<br><br>[The Financial Crisis reaches Europe] | Bologna Secretariat moves to Brussels | | BFUG Working Programme:<br>· Stocktaking on the overall implementation of the Bologna goals, including related issues to the social dimension of the European Higher Education Area, mobility, employability, lifelong learning and recognition.<br>· Dialogue with the world academic community on the Bologna process<br>· Preparation of the evaluation of the newly established European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAR)<br>· Future orientations for furthering the process after 2010<br>2009 Stock taking Report for the Leuven/Louvain La Neuve meeting<br>· More stringent practice lowered the scores: |

| Time line | Context & developments | High level international initiatives | Stakeholder networks, associations, institutions | Purposes, Priorities, Programmes and Policy Instruments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | <ul><li>Focus on achievements of Bologna goals in reality for each country</li><li>Verification if reforms covered the whole system in each country</li></ul><ul><li>Overall Conclusions:<ul><li>Voluntary intergovernmental process works well in creating EHEA</li><li>Bologna created effective tools for wide ranging national reforms</li><li>Peer reviewed national self evaluation & benchmarking good catalyst</li><li>Paradigm shift to outcome based Qualification Frameworks, and action lines added over the years combined with countries joining at different times, has lead to good but uneven progress across countries and parts of their systems</li><li>Therefore 2010 is too ambitious for full implementation ->2012</li></ul></li><li>Recommendations for next Stock Taking:<ul><li>Simplifying procedures and instruments,</li><li>Rigorously maintaining reporting deadlines,</li><li>More effectively integrating data from sources such as Eurydice, Eurostat and Eurostudent to avoid duplication of effort.</li><li>Broaden the responsibility of the stock taking group to a broader monitoring role proposing the issues, Identify the data required, analyse data from various sources and compile reports with recommendations at specified intervals.</li></ul></li><li>Recommendations for the countries:</li></ul> |
| 2009 | The Bologna process becomes more embedded in the wider socioeconomic policy arena, and is encouraged to build partnerships with other policy areas and stakeholders. | **Bologna 6** Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué Signed by 46 countries launches the Bologna 2020 Agenda | The Bologna structure is found fit for purpose and supplemented with co chair of EU country holding EU presidency together with a non-EU country. The BFUG will interact with other policy areas liaising with experts and policy makers from other fields, such as research, immigration, social security and employment. The First Bologna Policy Forum was held in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, on 29 April 2009, and brought together all | Identifies the challenges of aging populations, fast paced technology developments, the impact of the financial crisis, and the broad societal role Higher education can play in coping with those challenges Call for further adapting the Higher Education Systems in pursuit of the EHEA, launching the Bologna 2020 agenda<ul><li>Widening participation and reducing underrepresentation through the removal of barriers to access or continuation of studies</li><li>Embedding lifelong learning and flexible learning paths as integral part of the national Higher Education systems, and support through partnerships with public authorities, HEI, students, employees and employers.</li><li>Ensure learning outcome based national qualification Frameworks to be developed and self certified against the EHEA Qualifications Framework by 2012</li><li>Close cooperation between public authorities HEI social partners and employers</li></ul> |

| Time line | Context & developments | High level international initiatives | Stakeholder networks, associations, institutions | Purposes, Priorities, Programmes and Policy Instruments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 46 Bologna ministers in association with "Australia, Brazil, Canada, P.R. China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Tunisia, and the US as well as the International Association of Universities." | ensuring employability and career guidance together with student centred curricula at al three cycles to empower students in their development |

· Increasing high quality disciplinary research and complementary interdisciplinary research in more attractive doctoral programmes
· Further pursue International openness and mobility to make EHEA attractive for cooperation within Europe and with other continents. Facilitate mobility through the Quality Assurance ESG and the UNESCO/OECD cross border quality provision and ensure that by 2020 20% of graduates have studied a period abroad by eliminating administrative, financial and academic hurdles for student and teachers.
· Public responsibility for sustainable funding coupled with Increased HEI autonomy, transparency, accountability, and diversified funding sources, should provide more institutional sustainability and more equitable access to HE.

Future

BFUG Working Programme to concentrate on:

· Defining the indicators used for measuring and monitoring mobility and the social dimension in conjunction with the data collection;
· Considering how balanced mobility could be achieved within the EHEA;
· Monitoring the development of the transparency mechanisms and to report back to the 2012 ministerial conference;
· Setting up a network, making optimal use of existing structures, for better information on and promotion of the Bologna Process outside the EHEA;
· Following-up on the recommendations of analysis of the national action plans on recognition.

Reporting on the progress of the implementation of the Bologna Process will be carried out in a coordinated way.

· Stocktaking will further refine its evidence-based methodology.
· Eurostat together with Eurostudent and in cooperation with Eurydice will be asked to contribute through relevant data collection.
· The work of reporting will be overseen by the Bologna Follow-up Group and will lead to an overall report integrating the aforementioned sources for the 2012 ministerial conference.

| Time line | Context & developments | High level international initiatives | Stakeholder networks, associations, institutions | Purposes, Priorities, Programmes and Policy Instruments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | The E4 group (ENQA-EUA-EURASHE-ESU) was asked to<br><br>· Continue its cooperation in further developing the European dimension of quality assurance<br>· Ensure an external evaluation of the European Quality Assurance Register, taking into account the views of the stakeholders. |
| 2010 | At the Bologna 10 year anniversary meeting the signatories express their commitment to the Bologna 2020 agenda<br><br><br>ET 2020 Strategy calls for 40% of young Europeans to have completed Higher Education | **Bologna 7**<br><br>Budapest – Vienna<br><br>Signed by 47 countries | | Presentation of many reports:<br><br>· Independent assessment of the Bologna Process shows good but uneven process on all benchmarks across countries and/or areas of implementation. No country was excellent in all areas<br>· Bologna at the finish line; a 40 point critical review produced by ESU carrying many lessons with respect to form and spirit of implementation, mission creep from wider political considerations, lack of financial support and the risk that uneven implementation can undermine the very idea of EHEA<br>· Trends 2010 by EUA proposed a 4 point agenda for the future of both the Bologna Process and the EHEA. It calls for a vision of the society of the future and its educated citizens to link the student centred curricular and pedagogical renewal within a lifelong learning perspective with the goals of widening and increasing access. The report highlights that the current stress on ESG indicators in the Bologna Process should not overshadow the importance of balancing between accountability and improvement, quality measurement and quality assurance, and articulating between what needs to be done internally at the level of institutions and externally by governmental or quasigovernmental agencies.<br><br>The report assesses the growing European identity in the world to be strong at policy level but questions whether it leaves practical aspects of institutional behaviour unaffected. Despite the "Global dimension strategy" adopted at the 2007 Bologna Ministerial meeting, the report sees little joint European cooperation outside Europe, with each European country pursuing its own internationalisation possibly diluting European cooperation. Finally it sees the opportunities and responsibilities the EHEA and the ERA create for European HEI and highlights the importance of strengthening the links between the European higher education and research areas and enhance the unique role of universities in ensuring a close interface between education, research |

| Time line | Context & developments | High level international initiatives | Stakeholder networks, associations, institutions | Purposes, Priorities, Programmes and Policy Instruments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | and innovation. (Knowledge triangle) |
| 2012 | | **Bologna 8**<br><br>Bucharest | | Priorities<br><br>At the national level,<br><br>· Take into account conclusions and recommendation of the 2012 Bologna Implementation Report<br>· Strengthen policies of widening overall access and raising completion rates, with measures targeting participation of underrepresented groups<br>· Foster student-centred learning, innovative teaching methods and a supportive and inspiring working and learning environment, and involve students and staff in governance structures at all levels<br>· Allow EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies to perform their activities across the EHEA, while complying with national requirements<br>· Enhance employability, lifelong learning, problem-solving and entrepreneurial skills through improved cooperation with employers, especially in the development of educational programmes;<br>· Ensure learning outcomes based qualifications frameworks, ECTS and Diploma Supplement<br>· Countries that cannot finalise QF-EHEA compatible NQF with by the end of 2012 redouble efforts and submit a revised roadmap<br>· Implement the "Mobility for better learning" recommendations and implement full portability of national grants and loans across the EHEA<br>· National legislation to fully comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and use the EAR-manual<br>· Encourage knowledge-based alliances in the EHEA, focus on research and technology.<br><br>At the European level, by 2015:<br><br>· Eurostat, Eurydice and Eurostudent monitor progress of implementation of the Bologna reforms and the strategy "Mobility for better learning"<br>· By 2013 a system of voluntary peer learning and reviewing and initiate a peer learning pilot project on the social dimension of higher education<br>· Develop a proposal for a revised version of the ESG for adoption<br>· Promote quality, transparency, employability and mobility in the third cycle, build |

| Time line | Context & developments | High level international initiatives | Stakeholder networks, associations, institutions | Purposes, Priorities, Programmes and Policy Instruments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | additional bridges between the EHEA and the ERA<br>· Ensure that the ECTS Users' Guide fully reflects learning outcomes and recognition of prior learning;<br>· Coordinate ensuring that qualifications frameworks work in practice, emphasising their link to learning outcomes and explore how the QF-EHEA could take account of short cycle qualifications in national contexts<br>· Pathfinder group of countries exploring ways to achieve the automatic academic recognition of comparable degrees;<br>· Dismantle obstacles to cooperation and mobility embedded in national legislation and practices relating to joint programmes and degrees<br>· Evaluate the implementation of the "EHEA in a Global Setting" Strategy;<br>· Develop EHEA guidelines for transparency policies and continue to monitor current and developing transparency tools. |
| 2014 | | | | EU launch of U-Multirank<br>· A new global university ranking, set up with €2 million in funding from the European Union, which assesses the performance of more than 850 higher education institutions worldwide, avoiding simplistic league tables by producing multi-dimensional listings rating universities on a much wider range of factors than existing international rankings, which can mislead comparisons between institutions of very different types or mask significant differences in quality between courses at the same university. Individual users will be able and to choose criteria according to their own preferences and build a personalised ranking based on their particular needs |

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i http://www.enic-naric.net/index.aspx?s=n&r=g&d=about

ii http://www.eurashe.eu/about/

iii http://www.ipv.pt/millenium/Millenium21/21_9.htm

iv http://www.esu-online.org