The CIQG International Quality Principles:

Toward a Shared Understanding of Quality

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CHEA International Quality Group CIQG

The views expressed in these essays are those of the respective authors bringing perspectives from different parts of the world. The essays are presented as ideas, reflections and considerations that we hope may be of interest to e.g., quality assurance or accrediting bodies, higher education providers or other constituents in relation to the CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG) *Principles*.

Adoption or use of the *Principles* by any constituent is not connected in any way to the essays in this publication.

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Introduction

The idea of developing International Quality Principles emerged from a dialogue and debate among colleagues from many countries at the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) International Quality Group (CIQG) 2014 Annual Meeting. The discussion focused on whether a single set of international standards for academic quality in higher education was either desirable or feasible or, alternatively, whether other approaches to international quality were more appropriate. Following the meeting, the CIQG Advisory Council, a group of 19 colleagues from ten countries representing all continents that provides guidance to CIQG, pursued this conversation and eventually decided that, rather than a single set of standards, it would be more effective to develop a set of commonly accepted international quality principles.

A first draft prepared in January 2015 was refined through a broad consultative process among the Advisory Council members. CIQG released a final version in May 2015 with the hope that these seven succinct principles would be a useful point of reference for many around the world who are looking for clear and straightforward holistic statements of the elements of quality.

The primary purpose of the principles is to develop a common understanding of quality by creating a framework that can be used at national, regional and international levels. The principles are addressed to various audiences: academics, students, employers, government, quality assurance and accreditation organizations and the public at large. They also highlight issues of quality and accountability, especially that our understanding of quality must respond to changes in higher education. Their intent is to inspire an ongoing quest for effectiveness and excellence.

To further the quality dialogue around the principles, CIQG has commissioned essays on each of the seven principles from authors in different parts of the world. This volume presents the principles and the accompanying essays. The papers seek to extend the internationally shared understanding of quality embodied in the principles by an analysis of the meaning and challenges associated with each as well as identification of issues raised by their implementation.

It is a pleasure, as editor, to thank the authors of the papers, the members of the CHEA/CIQG Advisory Council and the President and staff of CHEA for making this publication possible.

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Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)
Mission Statement

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) will serve students and their families, colleges and universities, sponsoring bodies, governments and employers by promoting academic quality through formal recognition of higher education accrediting bodies and will coordinate and work to advance self-regulation through accreditation.

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CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG)

The CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG) is a forum for colleges and universities, accrediting and quality assurance organizations, higher education associations, governments, businesses, foundations and individuals worldwide to address issues and challenges focused on quality and quality assurance in an international setting. CIQG provides service designed to assist institutions and organizations in further enhancing capacity for academic quality and advancing understanding of international quality assurance.

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(May 2015)

Context

The growing international activity within higher education – greater student mobility, expanding faculty exchanges and research collaboration, more cross-border partnerships among institutions and the growing reliance on online or Web-based education – has created a sense of urgency for a shared understanding of educational quality. While any single worldwide regimen of educational quality would be difficult and perhaps undesirable, a shared understanding about the dimensions of quality would be useful. These guiding principles are one effort to move toward such understanding while acknowledging and respecting the many differences of history, culture, beliefs and values that shape our systems of higher education and our perspectives on quality.

Purpose

The guiding principles are intended to serve as a framework for international deliberation about quality in higher education. Their aim is to seek common ground and establish a foundation for understanding quality. The principles may be used to inform discussions of quality, quality assurance and qualifications at the country, regional or international level. The intended audiences include academics and other higher education professionals, students, employers, government officials and the public. They are invited to affirm and use these principles in the ongoing quest for effectiveness and quality in higher education[1].

Principles

- **Quality and higher education providers: Assuring and achieving quality in higher education is the primary responsibility of higher education providers and their staff.**
- **Quality and students: The education provided to students must always be of high quality whatever the learning outcomes pursued.**
- **Quality and society: The quality of higher education provision is judged by how well it meets the needs of society, engenders public confidence and sustains public trust.**
- **Quality and government: Governments have a role in encouraging and supporting quality higher education.**
- **Quality and accountability: It is the responsibility of higher education providers and quality assurance and accreditation bodies to sustain a strong commitment to accountability and provide regular evidence of quality.**
- **Quality and the role of quality assurance and accreditation bodies: Quality assurance and accreditation bodies, working with higher education providers and their leadership, staff and students, are responsible for the implementation of processes, tools, benchmarks and measures of learning outcomes that help to create a shared understanding of quality.**
- **Quality and change: Quality higher education needs to be flexible, creative and innovative; developing and evolving to meet students' needs, to justify the confidence of society and to maintain diversity.**

[1] These principles are consistent with existing international standards and guidelines such as the 2005 UNESCO-OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education (http://www.unesco.org/education/guidelines_E.indd.pdf); the 2007 INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice for Quality Assurance (http://www.inqaahe.org/main/professionaldevelopment/guidelines-of-good-practice-51); the 2008 Chiba Principles: Higher Education Quality Assurance for the Asia Pacific Region developed by APQN (https://internationaleducation.gov.au/About-AEI/Policy/Documents/Brisbane%20Communique/Quality_Assurance_Principles_pdf.pdf); 2015 Revised European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (http://www.ehea.info/news-details.aspx?ArticleId=355).

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Principle 1: Quality and Higher Education Providers

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Quality and Higher Education Providers: Assuring and achieving quality in higher education is the primary responsibility of higher education providers and their staff.

Action on the principle of quality and higher education providers will involve providers in:

- Undertaking self-improvement efforts that include broad participation in quality improvement processes and procedures.
- Taking timely steps to improve, reform or change in response to varying social needs.
- Sustaining a commitment to quality as an ongoing major undertaking – part of building and maintaining a quality culture.

1. Introduction

As institutions try to improve their effectiveness through a variety of strategies, we hear stronger calls for well-structured mechanisms to assess the quality of higher education. There are many different types of institutions in the fast-changing, globalized higher education space, so the quality of providers should be judged in terms of particular missions and purposes. The overall quality of higher education must improve while remaining aligned with the distinct aims and objectives of each provider. This means that achieving quality in higher education is the primary responsibility of providers and their staff, as stated in the first of the seven quality principles that the Council for Higher Education Accreditation/CHEA International Quality Group (CHEA/CIQG) has developed. This first principle is the subject of this essay.

The principle means, essentially, that a provider should determine the education it will offer and how this education will be presented. The provider has first to develop the fundamentals of quality that match these aims – how well things will be done and what results are expected. Second, the provider must have a commitment to quality that is fully articulated as part of its culture and values, not simply taken for granted or assumed. The provider should take full responsibility "for the quality of every course of study, which leads to the higher education award it is accredited to award" (TEQSA, 2015).

Recent decades have witnessed the massification of higher education in Asia. Enrollments have increased by over 50 percent in East Asia and the Pacific, and the gross enrollment rate has reached the world-average level (Calderon 2012, Marginson, et al., 2011). Because of variations in demographic and economic development, national higher education systems are vastly different in size and growth rates. For example, China with its population of 1.3 billion, has more than 2,300 higher education institutions, while Timor-Leste, with a population of 1.2 million has only one university. Asian higher education providers are generally divided into public and private sectors (e.g., in China, South Korea, Japan and Taiwan). The number of private higher education providers is three times larger than that of public universities and colleges. Public universities, however, usually receive more resources from government and industry than private institutions. China, for example, has invested heavily to establish a number of so-called *world-class universities*, all of which are public.

In order to build capacity, more and more international branch campuses are being set up in Asia. Malaysia, Singapore, China and South Korea aim to become educational hubs for Asia and have used the influx of foreign universities to support this development. Although international branch campuses are regarded as private higher education providers, local governments fund some of them. The United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and France are the home countries of the biggest providers of offshore education in Asia, enabling Asian students to receive an international education in a domestic or regional setting.

Massification is expanding access to higher education in Asia but is also increasing public concern about the quality of institutions and students, posing challenges to quality assurance and management. In response, Asian governments have developed national quality assurance systems for higher education, including national or professional accreditors. Public and private institutions are required to take responsibility for assuring and achieving quality in higher education following national quality codes.

2. Quality in various types of providers

A. Universities and colleges

Universities offer a four-year higher education (six years for medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and veterinary medicines, and admission requires graduation from upper secondary schools or the equivalent. Students who graduate from universities are awarded a bachelor's degree (NIAD-EU, 2007). Most universities are not-for-profit providers. In order to ensure good quality, universities should have effective quality assurance mechanisms. These are intended to manage the overall quality of teaching and learning, as well as other specific aspects such as the admission and support of students and the delivery of the course of study. The objective is to ensure that learning outcomes are equivalent to those for a similar course of study elsewhere. National quality assurance agencies usually conduct periodic reviews of local universities and their programs.

B. For-profit providers

For-profit higher education institutions are typically operated by private, profit-seeking businesses. In the United States, some for-profit institutions are subsidiaries of large companies, such as the Apollo Education Group. For-profit providers usually have open admissions for nontraditional students and often offer vocational programs rather than the academic courses found in public universities and colleges. Some reports indicate that for-profit higher education is accompanied by high dropout rates and low student performance. However, for-profit providers are usually expected to ensure learning outcomes related to specific skills, knowledge, competencies and behaviors that are directly employment related.

C. Transnational higher education

According to the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE, 2015) transnational higher education (TNE) is "higher education provision that is available in more than one country." The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)/Council of Europe TNE *Code of Good Practice* gives a broader definition, namely, "all types of higher education study programmes, sets of study courses, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based" (Council of Europe, 2013). There are various types of transnational education—twinning, franchising, joint and double degrees, distance education, branch campuses, the virtual university, and others (Knight, 2007).

Given the need to assure the quality of transnational higher education, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UNESCO developed guidelines titled *Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education* to strengthen quality assurance, accreditation and recognition of qualifi-

cations at both national and international levels. In the guidelines, higher education providers are expected to ensure that "the programmes they deliver across borders and in their home country are of comparable quality and that they also take into account the cultural and linguistic sensitivities of the receiving country" (UNESCO/OECD, 2005). The guidelines note that students/learners should be protected "from the risks of misinformation, low-quality provision and qualifications of limited validity." In other words, TNE students should experience the same quality of teaching-learning process as at the home institution. For example, Murdoch University states "students, irrespective of location, are governed by University legislation including, but not limited to, the Coursework Regulations, Assessment Policy Student Appeals Policy, and Units Policy. In addition, TNE students are Murdoch students "in all respects and it is not necessary to distinguish them from the general student body" (Murdoch University, 2015). Hence, it should be understood that TNE students are entitled to benefits comparable to those enjoyed by onshore students.

3. The quality assurance responsibilities of providers

All types of higher education providers are supposed to "ensure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning resources are provided for students; that the learning opportunities provided are monitored; and that the provider considers how to improve them" (QAA UK, 2015). The Malaysian Quality Assurance Agency's Code of Good Practice for program accreditation Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation (COPPA) and Code of Practice for Institutional Audit (COPIA) also states that higher education providers need to attain at least benchmarked standards in each aspect of higher education and continuously to improve their programs. The following nine items figure in the quality agenda of practically all types of providers:

- Vision, mission, educational goals
- Leadership, governance and administration
- Curriculum design and delivery
- Assessment of students
- Student selection and support
- Academic staff
- Educational resources
- Program monitoring and assessment
- Self- enhancement mechanism

Quality mechanism and quality culture at the institutional level

In order to achieve the provider's educational objective, quality should be part of the institutional mission and vision in carrying out all activities of teaching, learning and research. This means putting internal quality management systems, policies and practices in place based on bylaws and statutes. A quality culture will emerge through effective institutional management and a well-structured internal quality system.

Recommendations:

- The provider's leaders should initiate the process and support all quality activities, including processes and procedures.
- Quality assurance should be an integral part of institutional governance and clearly identified within the overall institutional management structure and system. This requires the collaboration and engagement of administrators, faculty and staff across all levels of academic sectors and disciplines, with the functions and responsibilities of all administrative sectors and academic units with regard to quality being clearly defined.
- The functions and responsibilities of the quality assurance office should be clearly articulated. It should develop a quality assurance manual for faculty and staff and provide training for them.

- A healthy and balanced quality assurance system should express both educational objectives and social expectations. Public accountability should be built into the quality plan, in particular the provision of information to the public.
- To ensure the provider's long-term sustainability the quality assurance system must be able to adapt to change through feedback mechanisms and consultation with stakeholders, including faculty and staff representatives, student bodies, government, industry and other external agencies.

In addition to institutional-level review, the provider should also do program assessments to ensure the quality of teaching and learning, particularly student learning outcomes. Generally speaking, program assessment is "an ongoing process designed to monitor and improve student learning" (Allen, 2004). The framework of program assessment should focus on the program objectives, curricular design, pedagogy and student development. Faculty involvement is vital. Faculty should develop explicit statements about what students should learn in line with the provider's mission and program objectives; they should design curricula to foster student learning and assess their performance; they should collect empirical data that demonstrate student achievement and use the data to improve student outcomes. The alignment between pedagogy and curriculum is an important component of program assessment that should be examined in the review process. We suggest the "Plan-Do-Check- Act" Plan-Do-Check-Action (PDCA model) for consistent improvement of program quality.

Recommendations:

- Faculty should be involved in defining the learning objectives of the program.
- Learning objectives and curriculum should be aligned closely with institutional purpose.
- There should be a plan for assessment of learning outcomes, including examination of methods, strategies and process.
- Assessment data should be collected and analyzed to drive initiatives for improvement.
- A continuous improvement mechanism should be established for the review process and procedures.

Self-assessment and peer review

Self-assessment and peer review, the backbone of internal quality assurance, should be implemented at both institutional and program levels in order to foster continuous improvement. Self-assessment examines whether the objectives are being achieved. Peer review brings an independent and objective perspective into the process. Both assist universities and programs to understand their strengths and weaknesses and note the opportunities and threats they face. During the self-assessment process, faculty and staff should discuss the challenges, shortcomings and developmental strategies for self-improvement. This should result in a self-assessment report that describes the current situation, comments on challenges, suggests areas for improvement and makes recommendations for further actions.

In addition, a periodic self-review on a cyclical basis should be implemented at institutional and program levels with external examiners and site visits.

Recommendations:

- Self-assessment should be an ongoing process built into all quality activities within the institution in order to enhance quality activities by identifying good practices.
- Peer review is a key to self-assessment; therefore the qualifications and background of the reviewers must be acceptable and conflicts of interest avoided.
- Periodic self-assessment reports should identify strengths and weaknesses, suggest areas for improvement and make recommendations for further action.

Development Indicators and Data Analyses

The quality of educational outcomes can be assessed through standards, criteria and various quantitative and qualitative indicators, the development of which should involve stakeholders, particularly faculty and staff. Both quantitative and qualitative data should be collected and analyzed. Institutions often set up an Office of Institutional Research (IR) to gather evaluative data and information on a longitudinal basis. Based on such data analyses, the institution's strategic plan and its self-assessment reports can be aligned closely.

Recommendations:

- Higher education providers should regularly collect, analyze and use data and information for effective management and program quality enhancement. This will provide a basis for defining key performance indicators of student achievement, teaching quality, faculty resources, financial sustainability, educational outcomes, etc.
- Quality assurance systems should employ a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators, and the institution should set up an institutional research office for evaluation and data analysis, which can feed into the strategic plan.

4. Learning outcomes assessment

In order to meet the public demand for more accountability, institutions are encouraged to develop initiatives for enhancing student employability. Many took action by developing core competencies and contemporary skills in broader ways. These included establishing clear statements of student learning outcomes, collecting and interpreting evidence of student performance and routinely modifying the standards, policies, curricular structure and learning support systems based on the opinions from graduates, employers, student e-portfolios, etc.

Taiwan's Fu Jen Catholic University, for example, has focused on student learning outcomes and international mobility through three major approaches: developing a new curriculum assessment system; setting up a university-wide internship program and building a Master plan for Global Talent Cultivation. Since traditional teaching assessment cannot reflect what students actually learned in class and the core competencies they acquired, Fu Jen decided in 2010 to transform teaching assessment into course assessment, which was expected to incorporate course content with core competencies directly to determine whether students would be equipped with professional skills. The survey consists of three major sections: student self-assessment, course evaluation, and reflections and suggestions. In section one, after course completion, students are asked to do a self-assessment of their participation and acquisition of competencies. Based on their self-assessment, they are asked in the second section to assess how teachers helped them learn successfully. Finally, students are encouraged to suggest any good teaching strategies to improve their learning outcomes and skills acquisition.

Many Asian higher education institutions are adopting e-portfolio systems to assist students in developing self-directed learning skills. For instance, eight Hong Kong public universities collaborated in 2010 to formalize an e-portfolio platform in order to record students' learning experiences and to enhance their employability in a job market. Following Malaysian Quality Assurance Agency (MQA) standards, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) in Malaysia also practices e-portfolio as an important tool in assessing students of humanities and arts faculties to show "how they manage their visual art and design projects, researching, relating knowledge, and become committed to ongoing professional development and critical thinking, as they learn to collect, display, articulate, evaluate and communicate their ideas in this technical platform" (Mohamad, et al., 2015).

This emphasis on learning outcomes has been widely accepted by institutions. The competencies that the students should have after the completion of their programs include professional knowledge, generic

skills, and attitude and values. It is worth noticing that most institutions are starting to regard values and attitudes as a most important core competency that students should develop in a study program.

Hence, to be successful, a university should design student attributes and competencies in three domains: general education, social and interpersonal skills and professional knowledge. This way, the intended generic and professional competency indicators are embedded into curriculum design, which stresses the connectivity between theory and practice. Finally, three domains of student learning outcomes and competency indicators are built into the customized student e-portfolio system, which helps students appreciate the quality of their learning outcomes and also provides advice to them. Institutions can then adopt capstone courses at the final level of undergraduate education and are also encouraged to put emphasis on the development of a curriculum map to help learners select core and elective courses in order to cultivate their core and professional competencies required for job seeking.

Recommendations:

- The provider should have clear procedures and criteria for student assessment and progression, which are included in the *Quality Assurance Manuals.* Faculty and students have access to the assessment procedures, regulations and information.
- Teaching and learning activities and assessment methods should be aligned with intended learning outcomes, which should include subject knowledge, generic skills and attitudes and values.
- Learning outcomes assessment should include direct and indirect approaches, such as tests, assignments, laboratory works and reports, practicum, interviews, portfolios, surveys, reflective essays, focus groups, etc.
- The provider should develop a monitoring system to ensure quality of learning and academic standards.

5. Challenges for implementation: Being a learning institution

The core value of quality assurance is continuous improvement. Hence, an institution is expected to become a learning organization through a well-established quality assurance mechanism. But there will be challenges of implementation in some areas.

- *Shared responsibility between administration and academic sectors*
  Sometimes the roles and responsibilities of administrative sectors and academic units for assuring quality are not clearly defined. This can create misunderstandings and hamper implementation.

- *Inclusion of faculty*
  In some institutions, faculty members do not take much part in quality assurance activities due to their heavy responsibilities in teaching and research. Engaging them more fully is a major challenge.

- *Development of indicators and learning outcomes measures*
  Developing criteria and quality indicators needs the engagement of various stakeholders; reaching consensus can be time consuming.

- *Time and expenses*
  Faculty and staff should accept that a quality culture means more administrative work and this extra burden may create resistance on campus.

- *Large gaps in the feedback cycle*
  A functioning feedback cycle enhances the quality of the whole institution. However, it is not easy to develop a systematic alignment between review results and strategic quality goals.

6. Contribution to the enhancement of quality

The key aim of a quality culture is continuous enhancement of quality. This means:

- *Understanding notions of continuous and self-improvement*
  Institutions undertake institutional review and program assessment for two major reasons: self-enhancement and benchmarking. Through the whole process, institutions come to understand notions and values of continuous self-improvement more clearly.

- *Institutional management: academic development and administrative resources*
  Institutional review and program assessment help providers identify strengths and weaknesses in terms of educational objectives, governance, curriculum design, financial resources, student learning and support, faculty and staff development, etc. Most importantly, the institution can analyze data collected through the review process for self-enhancement and develop an institutional strategic plan.

- *Teaching practices: learning outcomes assessment focus*
  Providers pay more attention to student learning outcomes and assessment, which leads to significant improvement in teaching and learning quality through curriculum reform, extra resources and services provided to faculty and greater attention to student needs. However, it is likely that faculty members will feel pressured on how to develop appropriate measures for student learning outcomes.

- *Internationalization*
  Quality assurance will have positive impacts on campus internationalization, including increasing international reputation, strengthening the provider's global competitive edge, attracting more international students, helping graduates to study abroad and to get a job in a foreign country, and so on.

7. Conclusion: Contribution to the overall effectiveness of the seven principles

Institutional self-improvement should engage a broad participation in quality assurance process and procedures. It creates opportunities for institutions and programs to develop an internal quality system and also enables them to forge strong links between administration and academic units in the implementation process.

Quality assurance systems are designed to achieve quality improvement. Therefore, institutions need continuously to strive for the improvement of their systems through a cyclical review process. Institutions need to know what to improve, how to reform the system and when to change in response to varying social needs.

Most importantly, institutional self-improvement can help build a quality culture within the campus. All faculty and staff should perceive that quality assurance is in their hands and therefore implement it in their daily lives. When quality issues become the major task of everyone in the institution, an institutional quality culture will be naturally embedded into the core functions and management of the provider.

The first of CHEA's seven quality principles states the importance of responsibilities of university and faculty and staff in quality assurance. Being the first principle, it is the basis of the other six principles: *Quality and students, Quality and society, Quality and government, Quality and accountability, Quality and the role of quality assurance and accreditation bodies and Quality and change.*

Compared with other higher education stakeholders, providers must play a key role in quality assurance and furnish support and infrastructure to help faculty and staff understand their role in quality improvement and to face its challenges vigorously. The level of faculty engagement will determine the success of implementation of the whole system.

The seven principles represent a shared understanding of quality by institutions, but there are variations and differences in implementing the principles due to cultural, educational and political contextual factors. Although practices may vary between institutions, these principles should inspire positive developments. For example, National Qualification Frameworks are seen as reference points for higher education providers in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Therefore, external control is likely to affect quality activities. In contrast, higher education institutions in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan integrate internal quality assurance mechanisms into their strategic plans and embed them into organizational structures. The University of Hong Kong's quality manual, for example, clearly states the roles and responsibilities at all levels—administrators, faculty members, program directors, course coordinators—underlining that all should be responsible for quality enhancement of teaching and learning at the University.

Currently, higher education systems are undergoing big changes and reforms due to the emergence of new technologies in a globally competitive world. Assuring quality and achieving excellence have been always a core value of universities, but the rising demand for accountability from governments obliges institutions to make their outcomes more explicit. The implementation of quality assurance in institutions will vary according to local context, but these seven principles will help check whether they have appropriate and flexible systems.

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Principle 2: Quality and Students

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Quality and Students: The education provided to students must always be of high quality whatever the learning outcomes pursued.

Action on the principle of quality and students will involve providers in:

- Acknowledging that quality encompasses the entire education experience of the student, both academic and pastoral.
- Identifying and using key indicators by which to judge success with teaching and learning research as well as the social experience of students, as guidelines for future activities.

Overview

The expectations, realities and reflections of the higher education (HE) experience today are as diverse as the communities of higher learning and learners themselves. Yet despite the increasing diversity of type, size and mission of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) now operating globally, there is universal acknowledgment that engendering the quality of the *entire* education experience for students is paramount to the effective and relevant functioning of the modern higher education learning institution. This whole experience can be divided into two interrelated experiences: *the Academic Experience*, involving teaching, learning and research endeavours, and *the Pastoral Experience*, addressing personal and social development and support.

Likewise, there are now normative expectations, standards and indicators by which to measure the relevance and success in meeting these two experience expectations. One proposal for such a set of indicators within the parameters of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) International Quality Group (CIQG) Principle 2 is presented in Part Two of the current paper. This is followed by some observations of the CIQG challenges for the implementation of such indicators as well as their place in the wider context of the other International Quality Principles (IQPs). However, Part One will first explore the themes, aspects and issues falling under the umbrella of "Quality and Students" as seen by various international researchers, higher education institutions and their leaders, HE system promoters and, most importantly, by students. These themes, aspects and issues must inform the expectations of indicators that follow.

1. An Expanding Universe of Expectations: International stakeholder views of what constitutes "Quality and Students"

International views on the relevance and importance of tertiary education reflect the recognized global trends of delivering quality higher education to students. Sir David Watson, former vice-chancellor of the United Kingdom's University of Brighton, spoke recently of the need for higher education programs and degrees to be relevant for labour market realities:

> All over the world, as higher education systems grow, not only do issues of quality and standards loom large, but students look to projected economic returns and choose subjects and courses accordingly. This is, of course, rational behaviour. In the more elite, restricted system of the past, graduates achieved market salience simply by having a degree, especially from a prestigious institution. In a world where a third of new workforce entrants are graduates, the nature of the degree and its immediate purchase on the requirements of employers is obviously more central. Student assessment of the labour market has always been more acute than policy-makers and many employers would like to think.

There are of course innumerable voices bemoaning the over-consumerization of, or interference of the labour market on, higher education, perhaps best summarized by Maureen Corrigan in her book *Leave me Alone*: "Given the consumer-pleasing politics of today's universities, I have, in effect, seventy new bosses each semester; they're all sitting at the desks in front of me."

A similar critique of labour market interference in HE is more forthrightly put by University of Melbourne lecturer Stefan Popenici with his call that "universities can't and shouldn't educate to suit employers." Overcoming the traditional mutual mistrust between the labour market and the university is of utmost importance in assuring that students are engaged by quality, relevant, learning outcomes-based curricula with input from employers. It is often forgotten that the labour market is not just about a "business agenda" as it is comprised of both public and private sector employers and includes activities as wide ranging as the programs of study offered at the university – from opera singer to social worker and university lecturer. Collaborative relationships between the two fields of activity that are mutually beneficial to both will contribute immeasurably to the whole education experience for students.

Turning his attention to the quality of teaching and learning, Watson goes on to make it clear that critical thinking in teaching and learning pedagogies is – well, critical:

> Generation by generation universities serve to make students think. They do so by feeding and training their instinct to understand and seek meaning. True teaching disturbs complacency. They are taught to question interpretations that are given to them, to reduce the chaos of information to the order of an analytical argument and to seek out what is relevant to the resolution of a problem. […] When leavened by deep technical understanding, these skills create a powerful alchemy that ensures an annual flux into society of skilled and creative graduates who continually refresh its technical excellence and its economic, social and cultural vitality. They are crucial to its capability to take bold, imaginative and principled action in the face of an uncertain future, rather than cowering in fear of it. They are the qualities that every society needs in its citizens.

Indeed, students around the world have themselves been consistently calling for more problem-solving and relevant curricula coupled with a more student-centred approach to higher education learning and teaching:

> The paradigm shift towards a student-centered learning approach relates to both a mind-set and a culture within a given higher education institution. It is characterized by innovative methods and interaction between teachers and students to support the achievement of intended learning outcomes, where the students are viewed as corresponsive and active participants in their own learning process. Through the use of active learning and linking learning and teaching with research, students develop transferable skills, such as problem-solving and critical and reflective thinking. (European Students Union, 2013)

A Canadian survey went further, eliciting student perspectives on what they considered effective teach-

ing in higher education (Smyth, 2011). This resulted in a hierarchal framework of expected competencies for face-to-face and online lead learning:
Such enquiries into student expectations and their input into the whole education experience are now universally regarded as a key and vital element of the quality assurance/enhancement processes for teaching, learning and curricula development. As Lefroy, et al. (2014) concluded, it is only by collating such data that areas for improvements can be identified: "Student expectations of receiving high levels of feedback, regular access to lecturers, the amount of study they expect to do and the responsibility for learning have been identified as areas where expectations do not match experiences."

ONLINE	FACE-TO-FACE
1. Respectful	1. Respectful
2. Responsive	2. Knowledgeable
3. Knowledgeable	3. Approachable
4. Approachable	4. Engaging
5. Communicative	5. Communicative
6. Organized	6. Organized
7. Engaging	7. Responsive
8. Professional	8. Professional
9. Humorous	9. Humorous
Source: Smyth, 2011	

Yet student expectations go beyond only learning and teaching to the greater education experience, including recruitment, enrollment, and academic and social support functions. An Australian university study on the expectations of first year undergraduate students revealed a need for more support information both pre-enrollment and afterwards:

> Those who indicated that they felt something was missing from their preparations identified enrollment issues as the most important factor. Additional information students sought included access to course information and booklists, the timing of information sessions and tours, and general information about the university. These responses were consistent concerns across all age groups. Students also wanted more general information about university, but indicated a preference for some material not to be presented online. Students suggested that understanding basic university terminology was a barrier to their preparation as well as the need to receive more one-to-one advice on enrolment and course selection. One particular finding which could have a bearing on expanding the demographic of intakes at various universities is the importance ascribed to meeting existing students, finding friends or having support from family and/or friends as preparation.

This holistic role and function of the university has not been missed by institutions themselves. Writing in the *University World News*, on the topic of "What are universities for?" Geoffrey Boulton opined,

> Universities deal with the universality of knowledge; they are concerned with human beings in all their manifestations - biological, mental, emotional, objective and subjective - and their social, cultural and economic organisations and interactions with each other; they are concerned with the physical world within which human beings find themselves, and the physical world we have created for ourselves (2009).

Reflecting this trend, we increasingly find modern universities around the world broadening their core philosophies and missions to encompass both academic and social aspects of the student experience: "Because of our belief in the redemptive nature of education, Middle East University will be regarded as the premier University in Lebanon for the holistic development of students, mentally, physically, spiritually and emotionally." (MEU, 2015)

Institutions are likewise very cognizant of the need to address not only the individual needs of students but also those of the local communities and national priorities, and they also make this clear in their mission and values statements:

> Universidad de Santiago is not only a university of excellence, leader in technology and knowledge management and innovation, based on sciences and humanities, with national impact and international recognition: it also has a social responsibility. Therefore, it is committed to principles and values to form socially responsible citizens and contribute to a fairer and more sustainable society. (UDS, 2015)
>
> Its mission is to advance knowledge and produce relevant graduates with entrepreneurship skills for agricultural growth, food security, wealth creation and sustainable natural resources management; to promote practical university education, research and training so as to respond to the needs of Malawi, Africa and the World. (Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, 2015).

With institutions around the world acknowledging that a quality student learning experience is multi-faceted and tied to many factors, Watson (2002) offered a timely reminder that "Individual institutions need to remember how much their own reputations are wrapped up in the reputation of the system as a whole"—a fact of particular relevance when it comes to the all-important internationalization of their systems. The South African education service, for example, offers advice to students on how to fund their study programs through its network of national and international institutional bursaries, study loans, and financial aid mechanisms, etc.

Finally, and arguably also firstly, HE systems and institutions around the world are being encouraged to widen access to a tertiary education to new, nontraditional learner cohorts and to offer alternatives to full degree programs and fixed courses. The revision of the university as a lifelong-learning, open community is now the priority of all HE systems, demanding a diversification of learners, teachers, curricula and learning outcomes. In Australia, "[…] there has been a recent focus on widening participation and increasing the number of non-traditional, mature-age and low socio-economic status (LSES) students" (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales, 2008; Stone & O'Shea, 2013). Students from a range of non-traditional backgrounds are entering tertiary study.

All of the above research, commentaries, surveys, policy papers and opinions serve not only to build an emerging common choir of what students can expect from a higher education but also make it quite clear that the social aspects and support functions are as important as a robust academic environment. Part Two below is an attempt to unpack Principle 2 by way of some key indicators which might guide our understanding and appreciation of a quality higher education experience *whatever the learning outcomes pursued*.

2. A Big Bang: Turning Principle 2 into a higher education supernova

The realization of Principle 2 requires us first, to clearly articulate what we explicitly understand by the principle, second, to convince stakeholders that these are generally held as international good practices and third, to convince stakeholders that implementation of such "standards" is achievable in all institutions and systems around the world. If explanations and expectations are too vague or non-descriptive, the Principle is in danger of serving as little more than another leitmotif in the higher education quality assurance (QA) literature. For the principle—and indeed for the other six—to be seen as a bold, innovative, and a bright light shining on the practical application of quality assurance in higher education, and for it to gain international credibility and traction, it needs to be explicit and challenging. The CIQG Principles offer an opportunity to stand up and promote the three pillars of Learning and Teaching, Research, and Community Engagement (see UNISA, 2015) across all higher education provision and to reverse the convenient trend of the three HE monkeys approach to "see no evil, speak no evil and hear no evil."

What this will mean and how it can be done are still however a delicate issues. In terms of interpreting what the *Principle* in fact means, it will seem to many on the face of it, as rather self-evident in that "the education provided to students must always be of a high quality whatever the learning outcomes pursued may see it" leaves no room for discussion in the modern higher learning psyche. Yet, as we have seen in part one, depending on individual viewpoints and national experiences and expectations, qualifying this inherent truth becomes more complex. And such complexity becomes ever more so the further one looks beyond the central threads and examines more closely their respective strands in detail – something that the IQPs must do if they are to be correctly understood, adopted and implemented. As for the implementation of these complex relationships and expectations within the context of the IQPs as a whole, there seems to this author to be at least two very clear and very different approaches.

FIGURE 1: *Key Indicator Areas for Principle 2*

1. Students and the Quality Academic Experience

1.1 Teaching and Learning

- Relevant and clearly defined learning outcomes
- Responsive and individualized curricula
- Differentiation of courses and learners
- Accreditation and benchmarking
- Appropriate learning and research resources
- Appropriate ICT infrastructures
- Appropriate and innovative assessment methodologies
- Multiple modalities of access to learning
- Appropriately qualified and diverse teaching faculty
- Teaching pedagogy based on innovative best practices
- Open and inclusive admissions practices
- Internationalization of the student body
- Active support to student progress and course/program completion
- A robust monitoring and quality enhancement practices

1.2 Research

- Firm commitment to original research
- Appropriate dissemination of research results
- Appropriate student researcher support
- Appropriate preparation for academia
- Relevant scientific research policies and procedures

2. Students and the Quality Social Experience

- Careers guidance/counseling
- Health care and personal wellbeing
- Accommodation services
- Support for students with learning difficulties
- Financial support services/advice
- Physical learning and recreational environment
- Student representative bodies
- International student support services

Source: The Author

One option is to promote an individual interpretation of the Principle at the national and/or institutional level of the truth(s) behind the Principle, determined by local factors and realities. This naturally has its benefits, not least in assuring that Principle 2 does not iron out the heterogeneous characteristics of higher education systems and their respective institutions. It does, however, run the risk of hiding inaction behind a façade of pseudo-individualism.

Another approach would be to promote a common set of indicator areas within the framework of Principle 2 for which HE systems and their institutions elaborate their own policies/actions under each of the proposed areas. Figure 1 suggests these possible Key Indicator Areas (KIAs) for achieving Principle 2 by way of example only.

3. The Pull of a New "Quality and Students" Orbit: The challenges of implementing Principle 2.

Before considering the explicit challenges of implementing the above KIAs, some form of a post-script of explanation in their purpose is required. What these indicators are designed to do is bring together some key aspects and areas considered to be important by and for students when working towards a quality

higher education which inclusively addresses the whole student learning experience regardless of their chosen field of study.

What KIAs should not be seen as is a set of rules, but rather a set of implementation guidelines underlying Principle 2. They are something that institutions and systems can grow into over time, approaching each area delicately yet decisively, secure in the knowledge that each sub-principle is regarded by their peer institutions and international HE systems as inherent markers of quality when defining a quality student experience.

Turning these indicators into realities requires higher education institutions, supported by national policymakers, to establish processes and procedures. In some instances this may require additional funding or perhaps reallocation or redirection of funding. For example, the establishment of a system of student feedback (electronically or manually) will require human resources to collate and disseminate this information to the right people. Likewise, effectively attracting international students and visiting professors requires an established office of professionals to coordinate this, addressing everything from work visas to health care and accommodation and spousal support, etc.

Other implementation implications for the indicators are less funding dominated and more mindset shifting. All institutions of higher learning are dedicated to ensuring that their graduates are of the highest caliber and can contribute to the future of their respective countries and that their research output makes a valuable contribution to knowledge in the field and/or to socio-economic development of humanity in some way. In order to do this, engagement with local communities, employers and student stakeholder groups is now imperative for any quality HE system. This requires a different approach by the traditional academic community in how it designs, delivers and denotes its higher learning programs and qualifications. It requires an open approach to the establishment of, for example, Programme and/or Course Committees comprising employers, students and graduates to review curricula.

In any case, here is not the place to detail how each area should be implemented at the systemic or institutional level. The above indicators are given purely by way of an indication of what may be involved since such indicators demand careful consideration and a measured individual approach to working towards achieving the objective, a methodology that might be considered a heterogeneous approach to a homogenous principle.

The challenge, as touched on in part two, will be for higher education systems and institutions to understand that the benefits in terms of their investments in human and financial resources far outweigh the costs in the long term. Indeed, the very survival of the institution or even the system may depend on such investments. It is the opinion of the author that this can be best achieved by several lines of action. Firstly, compile a series of "success stories"/case studies from different types of institutions from different countries and regions around the world which have successfully transformed their student experiences, having embarked on implementing policies which address issues common to those behind Principle 2. Such studies need to show not only what was achieved but how it was achieved and what the meta-level benefit to the institution or system as a whole has been. CIQG would also need to consider the effective dissemination of such "success stories".

Secondly, the CIQG consider establishing a consultancy network to assist individual institutions in developing action points and policies under the KIAs. And thirdly, CHEA and the CIQG establish an institutional partnering program to connect institutions that are implementing the CHEA Principle for mutual support, and sharing experience and good practice.

As was mentioned previously, the largest hurdle may still lie in convincing HEIs and systems that there is no hidden agenda behind the IQPs and that their sole purpose is to support the interna-

tional higher education communities in addressing its own concerns about quality and the student experience.

4. A Constellation of Principles: The contribution of Principle 2 to the overall effectiveness of the seven IQPs

Stated quite bluntly, without students in higher learning there can be no higher education institution. Likewise, without a quality student learning experience, both academic and social/pastoral, there can be no quality higher education system of institutions. Therefore arguably, Principle 2 may be considered the epicenter of the CIQG Principles, since even so self-labeled "research intensive" institutions do not exclude student learning, at least at the undergraduate level.

Turning to the interaction with the other Principles, there is evidently considerable cross-referencing with each of the principles embedded in the indicators proposed for Principle 2. The establishment of Program Committees or Boards to inform the constant review of curricula, learning outcomes and assessment methods clearly addresses the need for Quality and Society bound up in Principle 3. This in turn is linked to Principles 4 and 5 in that the implementation of each indicator area provides the evidence of accountability required by governments to continuously support and justify public funding not only of a public good but for the good of the public and society.

Globally, the processes of quality assurance and accreditation of higher education programs and institutions have now moved away from vague and general passing glances at what goes on in a nation's higher education institutions to a more rigorous and detailed accountability framework. The days of perfunctory tick-box quality checks are over. If institutions do not ask themselves how they are addressing the demanding questions prompted by Principle 2, they can rest assured that very soon a national or international quality assurance or accreditation body will. Failure to take a look in the mirror will undoubtedly lead to consequences in national public funding, international recognition and international credibility.

Finally, if Principle 2 is at the centre of the quality solar system, then Quality and Change (Principle 7) is the gravity that draws together all the Principles, including Principle 2 on Students. Higher education is fundamentally about change – changing and developing programs and courses of study; updating received knowledge, perceptions, understandings and research in order to change lives and societies. To do this, to serve their students, institutions need to continually re-think how they learn and teach, for whom and why. The indicators for the student learning experience detailed previously are all equally indicators for change. If they weren't, then they would be meaningless.

In conclusion, the author is aware that the current paper goes into considerably further detail than was possibly envisaged for the articulation papers of the CIQG *International Quality Principles*. Nevertheless, ever cognizant of the need to be respectful to different HE systems, the time has now come for the international higher education community to come together and agree on a detailed set of indicators that can lead to an effective realization of overarching umbrella ideals.

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Principle 3: Quality and Society

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Quality and Society: The Quality of Higher Education Provision Is Assessed by How Well It Meets the Needs of Society, Propagates Public Confidence and Maintains Public Trust.

Action on the principle of quality and society will involve providers in acknowledging:

- The importance and centrality of higher education institutions as socioeconomic actors.
- That quality assurance needs to include accountability for social engagement.
- That quality assurance needs to embrace society's needs – institutionally, nationally and internationally.

Higher Education and Society: The Third Mission

The public service mission of higher education and its challenges

There is an implicit understanding between higher education institutions (HEIs) and society: Society grants universities autonomy in exchange for providing a public service and universities operate as independent institutions having their own rules, codes and stakeholders. Universities have recruitment strategies for both students and staff; they have their own programmes, academic standards, examinations and governance. However, higher education (HE) is usually considered to have two core missions: (1) education (teaching and learning) and (2) research. Hence, over time, higher education's goals have attracted less public interest. Universities have pursued institutional prestige and excellence in education and research with such zeal that they have become distanced from their host societies. The public wants higher education to embrace its social purpose again, as all institutions should. Higher education's third mission is greater involvement with society. As Wendy Purcell of the University of Plymouth, United Kingdom, noted in *Balancing the Needs and Expectations of Society with the Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions (*2008*)*, "the role of the university is to further the knowledge of the community and to encourage and develop scholarship and learning." Higher education institutions need to move from "the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake" to "the pursuit of knowledge for cultural, economic and social benefit" (Purcell, 2008) She pleads for demand-led universities, with demand coming from students, businesses and the public sector.

This third mission is not a list of objectives but rather a description of how education and research are carried out. It is about fostering technology transfer and innovation to generate positive externalities for society and developing lifelong learning and training in a rapidly changing economy. It is also about social engagement, i.e., how universities can be directly involved with society, for example, by organizing cultural events or building partnerships with businesses. Higher education's public service mission implies that society's needs are taken into account in conducting education and research. The relationship should be mutually beneficial. For example, applied research can respond to some of society's demands by involving businesses in the process; for students, it means being better prepared for professional life.

[1] http://www.learningavenue.fr

The relationship between higher education and society requires commitment. HE's third mission aims to support society better to face economic, social and demographic challenges. Some of the most important changes affecting society—and therefore universities' missions—are set out below, as well as higher education's role with respect to these changes.

- The transition to a knowledge-based economy has made higher education a requirement for attaining a middle-class lifestyle. Universities must teach skills that society considers useful to remain competitive and relevant within a globalized context.

- Demographic changes mean that there are fewer 18-to-20-year-olds in western societies (14 percent decrease in Europe between 2006 and 2027, Eurostat) (Purcell, 2008). Higher education institutions should emphasize lifelong learning and training in the workplace so that the skills of the workforce remain relevant.

- Higher education not only prepares students to contribute to the economy; it is now increasingly expected to shape citizens capable of participating in a democracy. The success and efficiency of a democracy is enhanced by higher education and its ability to encourage and motivate students to participate as active and engaged citizens and take on civic responsibilities. Hence, the third mission cannot be overlooked.

- Universities are facing a great many challenges. Thanks to globalization, institutions are now competing globally to attract the best students and staff (teachers, researchers) while trying to remain solvent. Thus the cost of higher education has risen sharply, especially tuition fees. Many students from modest backgrounds take on considerable debt in order to obtain a higher education degree. Institutions need to find ways to ensure that everyone has access to higher education, not just the elite. Universities must combine self-interest with public purpose and find new revenue streams.

In summary, higher education institutions have become socioeconomic actors in the same way as businesses and/or the public sector. They are no longer just teaching and conducting research; they act as operators within a socioeconomic system and interact with other operators such as corporations, local authorities, the state, associations, etc.). Thus they have new responsibilities and new commitments to society.

Higher education under pressure

Various stakeholders apply three types of pressure on higher education institutions, making it more difficult for institutions to pursue their third mission: internal, external and rankings.

Internal pressure comes from within the institution, i.e., what is valued financially and/or intellectually. Greater incentives and resources are allocated to exemplary research than to research on how to best provide for society. There is a conflict between what is rewarding financially and generates prestige versus what is useful to society. Institutions usually value financial rewards and prestige and reflect this in their policies. By contrast, there is little reward for HEIs to be more involved with society. Furthermore, there is often a lack of coordination or of an explicit policy concerning social engagement. Institutions would benefit from a clear global vision of how they could be involved with society, which could clarify their social purpose. A dedicated center could help improve efficiency and pool individual efforts instead of each department or group working independently without coordination. Benneworth, de Boer and Jongbloed (2008) refer to higher education institutions as "loosely coupled communities" in this sense.

External pressure leads universities to compete for prestige and revenue rather than for graduate skills and knowledge. Institutions feel obligated to their donors, which are mostly corporate actors. Indeed, according to Newman, Couturier, and Scurry (2005), corporate giving in the United States grew from

$850 million in 1985 to $4.25 billion in 1995. Corporations apply pressure for research that they believe will further their corporate goals. Donors also compromise universities' function as a platform for public debate. University presidents may be unwilling to take certain positions of which their donors might not approve; they behave more like CEOs reporting to investors and obligated to satisfy them. For example, publishing research with undesirable results may be delayed, therefore compromising the institution's integrity, independence and transparency.

Students may apply similar external pressure as they increasingly behave as consumers. They pay the tuition fees to attend a higher education institution and are therefore more demanding about the quality of education, the services provided and the value of their diploma on the job market. Education is an investment from which they expect a return.

Academic rankings have gained greater importance and reach over the years; this has exacerbated these trends. Universities strive to reach high rankings although these rankings give a distorted view of university performance as only teaching and research are measured. How can the social engagement of higher education institutions be evaluated and on what criteria? As there is no easy way to measure a university's involvement in society, emphasis is then placed on research and prizes. For example, the Shanghai academic ranking of world universities focuses on quantitative criteria such as publications, leaders in research, Nobel Prizes and Field Medals. It does not assess the quality of education or learning outcomes. Institutions are enticed to develop research programmes, even if they are not very good, instead of focusing on their strengths and the need to form skilled workers and educated citizens. There should be ways to measure the social engagement of higher education.

How do the mechanisms that guarantee the quality of education assess the third mission?

Quality Assurance: The difficulty of assessing the third mission, engaging society

Quality assurance (QA) is sometimes viewed as necessary to justify the investment of tax dollars in higher education. But QA should be much more than just improvement and accountability. In the light of higher education's third mission, quality assurance should ensure that universities are accountable for their social engagement. However, assessing quality in the third mission is neither easy nor obvious. Few countries have taken into account society's opinion of what constitutes quality in higher education. Some groups such as students and employers, are consulted, but rarely is there a nationwide debate on the quality criteria of higher education and on how to best match society's needs with the objectives of higher education. Therefore, the issue of social engagement is unclear and will depend on the importance that QA agencies give it as they accredit institutions and their programmes. Programmes that are academically sound yet have little social relevance and need may be accredited because QA has little interest in criteria and standards for social engagement.

The criteria and indicators used in the QA processes cannot be considered as fixed, quantitative standards that are reached objectively. There is an international consensus that QA agencies must understand the purpose and function of the institution or the programme in order to evaluate its performance. Only after these aspects are well understood can higher education engage effectively in society. The question is not only how many PhDs an institution can produce but also whether the skills learned are relevant to the corresponding industry and if the staff is qualified to teach the course. With few clear indicators of higher education's social purpose, it is very difficult for QA agencies to assess institutions' involvement in society. Funding and reputation are what often drive quality assurance, while accountability is most important to society.

Higher education's involvement in society is also rarely taken into account in internal QA. Very few internal QA provisions integrate this third dimension (higher education's involvement in society). An analysis of the majority of self-evaluation reports indicates that usually an institution addresses teaching/

learning, governance, research and life at the university. The social purpose of the institution is rarely explored, and few QA systems require an institution to show how its achievements match societal needs.

Building trust

Improving communication

The first step towards reclaiming the public's trust is to improve the relevance and transparency of information that QA agencies provide to society. International consensus requires that QA agencies make their reviews and evaluation public and available to society and provide information regarding the performance of higher education institutions. The literature (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) reviews, for example) reveals two types of QA agency reports: comprehensive reports and summary reports.

According to Bach, Dragojevic, et al. in ENQA's *Transparency of European Higher Education Through Public Quality Assurance Reports, (*2014), the comprehensive report consists of "an extensive review report, which documents the full analytical outcomes of a given external QA assessment procedure." It is a long and detailed in-depth analysis using complex vocabulary. It is primarily designed for higher education institutions for feedback and to help official authorities with the accreditation decisions. These reports may thus be hard to comprehend for a student and his parents who would like to know about a university.

A summary report is much easier to read and much shorter. It is a "descriptive or schematic (report)" (Bach et al., 2014) of the outcomes of an external QA evaluation. The issue is that, while comprehensive reports are published by more than three-quarters of agencies, only 31 percent of them make summary reports public (Bach et al. 2014). Yet these are the ones directed towards the public to assure transparency, with concise, easy-to-read information. QA agencies should therefore promote and increase the visibility of reports that can actually provide society (students, parents, employers, media) with the right information about an institution's performance in an understandable way. The goal is to increase general public readership.

Another option would be to publish only a comprehensive report, considered by QA agencies as the most important, which would include a section that targets the public. The accessibility and availability of such documents must be improved and their reading encouraged. QA agencies should develop a voluntary communication strategy to raise awareness of their work and of how it is useful to society. They have to make themselves known and available to the public to gain social recognition, for example, by holding conferences or being present on campuses. Universities should also be obligated to publish reports on their website. Building trust in higher education begins with making the public familiar with QA agencies and their procedures.

Improving the understanding of the interplay between HEIs and their environment

The relationship of higher education institutions to their local community is important as trust is built on visible results and initiatives. Universities should take into account local public policy agendas and be responsive to public demands, e.g., when there is a requirement for more nurses or teachers. A shift is needed from resource- and process-based QA to a more inclusive focus on quality that would integrate known public needs. According to Eckel and Couturier in *Toward Higher Ground: Reclaiming Public Confidence in a Competitive Environment* (2006), one university leader states that they "need to address the public agenda directly, show that [they] understand it, and that [they] are advancing it, and that [they] are demonstrating [their] progress toward it."

The public agenda cannot control the strategies of higher education institutions, but at the same time, it should incorporate higher education's contribution, given that HEIs provide clear economic value to the community (workforce development, worker training), as well as a societal value. There needs to be another attitude shift from what the higher education institutions can do (create and transfer knowledge) to what they can contribute to the public.

Involving the stakeholders' role in quality assessment

The public should be involved in the evaluation of higher education. Students are the largest group of higher education stakeholders. They provide the learners' insight to QA agency assessments. Their student experience enables them to envision consequences that other stakeholders may not consider. Their background and approach to the evaluation brings another perspective, and they have diverse points of view and other challenges, helping the evaluation process to cover all the aspects of quality. The immediate result is a better evaluation and, in the long term, better learning outcomes and a better education. Students share the QA agencies' interest in ensuring the quality of education, especially in the case of internal reviews. Hence students should be full-fledged members of evaluation committees, even if they lack academic experience or organizational knowledge regarding the institution. In the end, they want the best-functioning higher education institution.

Employers are another group of stakeholders that can contribute to quality assurance in higher education. Their involvement focuses on improving students' employability by making sure that they learn the relevant skills. Employers have an overall view of their labor market and can assess the opportunities students may have to gain work and experience, professional accreditation and qualifications (for vocational degrees), through internships and/or apprenticeships. Involving employers should go beyond the quality assurance process. Institutions should include employers when designing their programmes so as to ensure that the student leaves higher education with the relevant skills and qualifications that are valued in the job market and in the related industry. Employer participation in the design, review, evaluation and monitoring of programmes should be encouraged internally and externally.

Student and employer involvement in QA agency committees has increased over the years. The literature largely recognizes and strongly recommends their engagement as equal partners in decision making and quality management. Documents such as the *European Standards and Guidelines* (ESG) endorsed by the Bologna Process underscore this. As Leisyte, Westerheijden, Epping et al. note in *Stakeholders and Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (2013), "The view of the stakeholders held in the ESG is that of definitive stakeholders who are fully engaged as legitimate participants and who hold urgency and power in decision-making processes around quality of education". However, in practice, this level of engagement is rarely implemented. The actual role of stakeholders varies greatly depending on the country, the context, the discipline and the institution (for internal processes). Employer involvement is particularly patchy in some countries and may not promote diversity. Students are young and are studying full time while employers are working for large firms. The stakeholder pool needs to be diverse to include mature, part-time, international and disabled students, as well as employers from small and medium-sized businesses, to ensure that society as a whole is represented. Without the involvement of all levels of society, the evaluation process could lead to bias and undue influence from certain interest groups defending particular views.

Working towards an international understanding of QA

Internationalizing QA requires mechanisms to obtain society's trust. Bachman and Inkpen (2011) identify four such mechanisms: i) legal regulation, ii) certification, iii) reputation and iv) community norms, structures and procedures. The use of legal means can help establish the importance of higher education's third mission (involvement in society) and its assessment (QA). A legal framework has the power to make the social purpose of higher education and QA explicit and internationally recognized. The various

stakeholders must demonstrate motivation to promote higher education's involvement in society or the third mission, which will therefore lead to certification of their validity as stakeholders. Various tools can be used for certification: international standards, performance indicators or benchmarks between countries. Again, enforcement is essential to ensure that standards are met and procedures are followed. An agency's reputation is highly important to stakeholders: Higher education institutions, students and employers want to be sure of the service they obtain. Higher education greatly relies on reputation and this now needs to be broadened to QA so it is more transparent and understood by the public. Finally, community norms, structures and procedures "create a collective control of the behavior of individual actors" (Bachman and Inkpen, 2011). It consists of monitoring by a third party, e.g., society, where interactions are properly conducted and standards are respected. Agencies need to feel committed to the public. Building trust in an internationalized QA requires a change in mentality and attitude.

There is evidence that these changes are already occurring. We observe a convergence of QA systems in several regions, such as Europe, through ENQA. ENQA is an umbrella organization, regrouping agencies from member states of the European Higher Education Area. Its goal is to develop good practices and foster cooperation. In practice, it implements the *European Standards and Guidelines* (ESG) that define common QA principles. Thus there is a regional convergence on criteria, standards and self-assessment, among other topics. The QA international community already shares principles considered necessary in any effective QA procedure. They are comparable; although they still vary in the way they are expressed, their base is the same. Bollaert (2014) points out that quality is defined by many experts as a "continuous process and not a static goal." Criteria, standards and practices will always be discussed and changed. This should also take place at the international level and benefit the entire QA community. The emerging regional coherence of QA is a step towards an international debate and system. A "detailed common international genetic code for QA in higher education" (Bollaert, 2014) is needed. It should respect the diversity of national contexts and institutions. Standards must include higher education's involvement in society, or the third mission, and ways for it to be evaluated. The ultimate objective is to achieve an international agreement guaranteeing the best service to society.

Conclusions

Why should quality principles be associated with QA and society's needs?

The analysis presented above shows that students' aspirations have changed, following developments around the world in terms of economic models, undergoing or benefiting from globalisation and facing new challenges like massive unemployment in certain countries. The massification of higher education has also given students overwhelming choice and possibilities open to them and there are more education models than ever before (e.g., distance learning and modularisation, international mobility).

Governments and HEIs have difficulty understanding the aspirations of an increasingly diverse student body and foreseeing higher education's future in a rapidly and uncertainly evolving world. Consulting employers has helped gain a mutual understanding, and many bridges have been built between the two sectors. However, most governments, HEIs, quality assurance agencies and employers realize they are unable to foresee the mid-term and long-term future of higher education.

A major obstacle for QA agencies is the style of communication that they provide to society, whether it be students, employers or other stakeholders. As the information disseminated is complex (reflecting the difficulty in understanding the concept of quality in higher education), it is unlikely to help identify the criteria for quality. This makes it difficult for QA to gain society's trust. QA is a tool that helps governments gain a better understanding of the institutions and whether or not they can be trusted to deliver quality programmes and quality education, but there is no direct link between QA and the average citizen.

Debates in many countries focus on the credibility of QA and the reliability of the methods used to assess or improve quality (depending on the QA model implemented in the country). International standards or principles have emerged with a view to improving the reliability and strength of QA within the country, as well as internationally (e.g., the advent of the European Quality Assurance Register, the INQAAHE QA principles, the ESG and other guidance provided by umbrella bodies like the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)). Over the years, the competency of quality assurance has improved. However, it still does not permeate society:

- Society does not know of QA's utility. Only international labels are recognized.
- QA results are overshadowed by international rankings that dominate the media.
- HEIs all use marketing strategies that do not rely on QA as an element to demonstrate trust. Rather, they sell their university brand instead of demonstrating their strengths in quality.
- Employers and students are increasingly involved in QA structures and processes but not as consistent influential bodies (with the exception of umbrella bodies that have become professional, like the European Students Union). They have a very small role in many countries and QA remains as academically led peer reviews, therefore focusing on some issues of quality but not all the issues of quality in higher education.

To conclude, QA bodies are trying to improve QA methods, and some are seeking greater exposure, so far with limited success.

Above all, QA is not the property of QA agencies. All stakeholders should be involved in the issues surrounding quality. QA agencies alone will not be able to better respond to the society's needs; society must be involved and contribute actively.

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Additional Sites:

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education : http://www.enqa.eu/

Academic Rankings of World Universities http://www.shanghairanking.com/

Principle 4: Quality and Government

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Quality and the Role of Government: Governments have a role in encouraging and supporting quality higher education.

Action on the principle of quality and the role of government will involve government in:

- Furthering the establishment of quality assurance bodies through the development of legislation that both assures the autonomy of these bodies and avoids interfering with their decision-making.
- Taking steps to assure the effectiveness of quality assurance bodies by making sure that other government functions do not inhibit these bodies, establishing information systems for benchmarking and monitoring the performance of quality assurance bodies.
- Acknowledging the political framework, demographic and technology challenges that need to be faced when establishing and maintaining their quality assurance bodies.

Introduction

Globally, higher education (HE) has witnessed drastic changes in the last two decades, during which many interacting factors, both old and emerging, have impacted the quality of higher education institutions (HEIs) and their operations.

There has been an expansion in the number of HEIs, particularly private for-profit ones. This is particularly true in developing countries where governments have been less able to support the escalating needs for HE opportunities for ever-growing populations. For example, in Arab countries the number of HEIs has increased by more than 250 percent in the last two decades (Aboul-Ela, 2015). Many of the new private for-profit HEIs were established in countries where no regulatory authority or rigorous standards exist to control their operation. This has raised concerns about the quality of their graduates and their preparedness for the job market.

Technological innovations such as smart learning and open online courses which are accessible to hundreds of thousands of students have created an additional burden and further challenges to existing quality assurance (QA) authorities.

In addition, financial instability has forced governments, particularly in the United States and Europe, to significantly cut their support to HEIs, and this has forced them to seek other sources of revenue via different means such as recruiting more international students, increasing their online programs, or opening overseas branch campuses. On the other hand, cross-border education has been also faced by regulatory challenges from either Quality Assurance Agencies (QAAs) or governmental legislators in host countries.

Recently, the increased public awareness and, to some extent, anxiety with world or national university rankings have also pushed some QAAs to pay more attention to increased transparency and accountability to the communities they serve. However, this has led in some cases to governments taking a more selective approach in providing support to top HEIs.

Regional collaboration, primarily politically based, has also impacted the way governments influence HE and quality assurance (QA).

The complexity of various political, economic, social and demographic factors also influenced in various ways the role of governments in encouraging, supporting and monitoring the quality of higher education.

Implementation of the Principle by Governments

1. Governments should facilitate the establishing of quality assurance agencies

The expansion of HEIs, the emergence of nontraditional education systems and the increased competitiveness among HEIs have forced governments of most countries in the world to establish a quality assurance system or authority. Governments should develop the necessary legislation for establishing and supporting the national QA authority. A good example of this is the power given to the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) in the UAE to close 26 substandard HEIs in the first four years of its operation. Similar actions were noted in Romania, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Bahrain. In the UAE, all programs offered by licensed institutions have to be accredited by the CAA.

Only a few countries have no QA body. In some countries, such as Lebanon, the internal political situation has delayed the establishment of a national QA agency.

In fulfilling their role, governments should ensure an acceptable degree of autonomy for the QAA

Independence of QAA is an essential good practice, as defined by both the International Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). Although it is agreed that there is no absolute independence for QAAs, since their funding comes from one source or another, governments should not interfere with the decision-making process of QAAs.

In some European countries, such as Hungary and Sweden, the national QAA came under criticism due to strong governmental interference in its operation.

In most Arab and African countries, national QAAs were established as independent authorities. However, in some counties, such as UAE, Nepal and Vietnam, the national QAA is placed under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education to reinforce its power to implement decisions.

2. Governments should avoid creating systems that hinder the efficiency of national QAAs

In some countries, the government has taken decisions that influence the operation of its national QAA. There are many examples of such actions. In India, the University Grants Commission (UGC) took decisions that stopped leading universities from changing four-year bachelor's programs back to three-year programs (Narayan and Sharma, 2014). In Australia, the action of changing Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) in 2011, which later in 2013 suffered significant cuts in its funding, was likely to have a negative impact on its operation as a national QAA (Hare, 2014).

In most Arab countries, the decision for licensing HEIs is in the hands of Ministries of Education, independent of the national QAA. For example, in Bahrain, some of the criteria developed by the Education Council contradict good practices applied by the national Quality Assurance Agency for Education and Training (QAAET). On the other hand, in some other countries, total governmental

support is given to the national QAA. In the UAE, all programs offered by licensed institutions have to be accredited by the CAA (CAA, 2011). Similarly, in Saudi Arabia, both institutional and programmatic accreditation by the national authority (NCAAA) are compulsory for all HEIs operating in the country.

3. Governments should maintain updated regulation to cope with changing modes of education systems

In some countries, the changing mode of delivery, with ever-increasing technology-based programs, faces obstruction from government authorities. This has raised barriers to recognition of on-line programs or the number of credits a student can earn through e-learning. Vocational education and recognition of prior learning and professional accreditation have become more global issues that require collaboration among higher education institutions in many countries and require quality assurance agencies to update their standards and systems of recognition and accreditation. Governments should attempt to update their systems and criteria to cope with such changes in higher education systems.

4. Governments should support international collaboration to ensure quality of higher education

The internationalization of higher education has become more global than ever. It has taken various forms, such as branch campuses, joint degree programs, articulation agreements, study abroad programs and open online courses. These, along with the increased trend of graduate mobility across countries, necessitated international collaboration among countries to support the quality of higher education.

The first network of quality assurance in higher education was International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), established in 1991, with over 250 members to date. Over the last two decades, several regional quality assurance networks have been established, covering almost all regions of the world. The last network was the Gulf Network for Quality Assurance, which was established in 2014, a decision endorsed by the Heads of State in the six Gulf countries. In many countries, governments granted support to QAAs to join quality assurance networks, realizing their benefits to the quality of higher education. Government authorities and national QAAs share information and good practices through their involvement in regional or international networks. For example, INQAAHE services include a database of good practices and the publication of fake accreditation agencies, which is much-needed information for consumer protection. Similarly, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) worked together to produce in 2005 guidelines and proposed tools to monitor and improve the quality of cross-border education (UNESCO and OECD, 2005). They address relevant stakeholders, including governments, quality assurance agencies, higher education institutions, faculty and students, with the ultimate goal of protecting students from substandard providers.

5. Governments should support the establishment of national higher education information systems

Information on higher education institutions and their programs is needed to increase transparency and public awareness. Such information should be systematically gathered and updated and made readily available to the public. It is used for student guidance, comparison among various higher education institutions, and national benchmarking or ranking systems. Results of rankings either nationally or regionally, such as the QS Arab Region, can increase levels of competitiveness among HEIs, leading to enhanced quality. The Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) issued in 2012 a recommendation to its member states to establish national information systems.

Furthermore, governments should encourage the publication of lists of fake or substandard higher education institutions and programs as a consumer protection measure, which would also force such

institutions to cease their operation.

6. Governments have a role in monitoring the effectiveness of national quality assurance agencies

While governments should support quality assurance agencies, the latter should be made accountable to the communities they serve. It is important that governments balance between the two roles of supporting quality assurance agencies and monitoring their performance.

In many countries, the national quality assurance agency is left without a clear system for evaluating its performance. Government officials sometimes blame QAAs for not fulfilling their duties in assuring the quality of HEIs and their output. As indicated earlier in this report, changes made to both AUQA and TEQSA in Australia are clear examples of direct interference by government that was supposed to be aimed at improving the quality of education. In the United States, in 2013, the Senate questioned the effectiveness of accrediting agencies and the rigor of their operation and warned of potential conflicts of interest between peer reviewers and the higher education institutions they assess (Field, 2013).

In the UAE, the Cabinet has developed certain indicators to assess the efficiency of the national accreditation commission, the CAA. The government was keen to externally review the CAA operation to ensure that its standards and procedures are internationally recognized good practices.

There are other different examples, however, where governments have been more aggressive in their interference with the national quality assurance agency operation. In Russia, the government began to have the Attorney General's office follow up on the operation of public universities after realizing that the quality assurance function of the Ministry of Higher Education was not satisfactory. In Hungary, after the national quality assurance agency lost its full member status with ENQA, it only plays a consultative role in the accreditation of new higher education institutions and programs.

7. The role of government in outcomes-based assessment

The shift in evaluating the quality of higher education to focus more on its outcomes has led governments to attempt to measure the level to which the intended learning outcomes of academic programs have been achieved in terms of knowledge, skills and competencies. Governments have been the driving force behind such activities. This was the case in some Latin American countries such as Brazil and Colombia (Salmi and Saroyan, 2007) and in Jordan, where national exams were given to graduates of all universities. In Jordan's case, some of the private universities surpassed some of the governmental public universities. This led the government to halt this initiative for a time. The OECD supported a global project (Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes, AHELO) to assess educational outcomes of engineering and economics majors (OECD, 2013), but the project, which was completed in a small number of selected universities in 17 countries, is still far from being completed on a larger scale, partly because many countries and institutions could not afford the relatively high cost involved.

Recently, the national quality assurance agency in the UAE, CAA, encouraged all medical colleges in the country to subject their graduating students to international comprehensive examination to compare their performance and increase competitiveness among all colleges, which would contribute to quality enhancement.

In recent years, other means of assessing the value of educational outcomes have been developed through student engagement and satisfaction surveys and labor market observatories. Labor market surveys have been done at different levels: regional, as in European Union Employment Observatory; national, which is followed in many countries in Latin America and Europe; or institutional as part of institutional research carried out by most higher education institutions.

In the United States, in September 2015, senators introduced a bill that would establish an alternative, outcome-based quality review process to authorize "innovative, high-quality education providers," to undertake quality review based on stipulated performance measures of student learning, completion and affordability/benefit to students (CHEA, 2015). Innovation authorizers would have to meet measures established by the U.S. Department of Education for student outcomes and undergo a review similar to but less complex than the current federal recognition process for accrediting organizations.

Benchmarking, as the process of comparing the institutional or program performance at a national level without relying on rank order has been noted as a more meaningful alternative to ranking (Salmi, 2013).

Support for establishing national benchmarking systems is an important role which governments can play to promote competitiveness and enhance quality in higher education. The implementation of nationwide benchmarking, however, requires the development of appropriate national HE information systems in which governments should take a leading role, as mentioned earlier in this report.

8. Challenges in the implementation of the principle

There are many challenges in implementing the role of governments in encouraging and supporting quality higher education. These challenges vary from one country to another, depending on the prevailing political, cultural, demographic and socio-economic circumstances and the maturity of the educational system.

a. Political challenges

The internal political situation of a country may hinder the development or updating of legislation required to establish quality assurance agencies, as in the case of Lebanon, or contribute to creating mistrust in the quality assurance agency effectiveness, as in the case of the United States and Russia.

In some countries, such as most Arab countries, there is separation between the national quality assurance agency and the Ministry of Higher Education in the licensing of higher education institutions and legislation regulating their operation. This has sometimes created difficulty for the national QAAs in implementing standards of quality.

Internationally, some political decisions taken by the national governments limiting the quality assurance agency's independence may be in conflict with the quality assurance agency's power and membership in regional and international quality assurance networks.

b. Financial challenges

The government's capacity to financially support public higher education institutions has been a real challenge in many countries, in both the more developed ones, such as the United States and United Kingdom, and the developing countries. This is sometimes augmented by cycles of economic downturns.

Funding of review visits, particularly for program accreditation, constitutes a considerable challenge to many QAAs and HEIs. This has led some countries to limit its quality assurance system to institutional review. However, in many developing countries, where the higher education system is still in the maturing process, there appears to be a need to continue for some time with program-specific reviews.

c. Demographic challenges

In some heavily populated countries, such as Egypt, it is a challenge to meet the ever-increasing demand for higher education and the massification of enrolments in public universities, particularly in

humanities and social studies, particularly when coupled with financial constraints.

The provision of higher education opportunities for populations in remote areas is a challenge to many developing countries, augmented by inadequate technological infrastructure to implement nontraditional systems of program delivery.

d. Challenges resulting from advanced technology

As explained earlier, the expansion in using technology in higher education, particularly e-learning, smart-learning and MOOCs, has been a real challenge for governments and quality assurance agencies as they attempt to react to these technological advancments and their implications. QAAs need to be more active than reactive in meeting such challenges.

Governments also have a challenge in dealing with fake quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions, most of which operate online. International cooperation in this regard would help minimize the negative impact of such fake entities, and in turn, improve quality.

e. Challenges caused by inadequate expertise in quality assurance

In many developing countries where new quality assurance agencies were established in the last two decades, the lack of expertise in various areas of quality assurance, either within institutions, or in quality assurance agencies (such as being reviewers or developing standards) remains a major challenge, despite efforts by governments to build internal capacity. Projects to build capacity started recently, with the help of regional quality assurance networks. However, even with that, the use of peer reviewers, which has been practiced in many countries, may be subject to criticism by state authorities, such as that by the Senate in the United States, as mentioned earlier. On the other hand, depending mainly on international reviewers—acceptable by INQAAHE as Good Practice for small states, such as the UAE—imposes a financial burden on institutions and governments. A more balanced approach of using a mix of national peer reviewers and international reviewers has been recently adopted by some countries, such as Oman, Bahrain, and more recently by Saudi Arabia.

Conclusions

With the complexity of various political, economic, social and demographic factors which influence higher education systems, governments have an important role in ensuring the quality of higher education, as they are accountable to the communities they represent. In doing so, the government should facilitate the establishment of a quality assurance agency and ensure it has an acceptable degree of autonomy by not interfering in the QAA's decision-making process. Governments should balance between the two roles of supporting quality assurance agencies and monitoring their performance. Governments should support the establishment of national higher education information systems, which would be the basis for benchmarking. They should maintain updated regulations to cope with changing modes of education systems and should support international collaboration to ensure that quality for higher education is in line with the ever-growing trends of higher education internationalization. Governments may be faced with political, financial, demographic and technological challenges in addition to inadequacy of expertise, in their endeavors to achieve and maintain quality higher education.

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Principle 5: Quality and Accountability

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Quality and Accountability: It is the responsibility of higher education providers and quality assurance and accreditation bodies to sustain a strong commitment to accountability and provide regular evidence of quality.

Action on the principle of quality and accountability will involve:

- Valuing the goal of placing primary responsibility for accountability with higher education providers.
- Developing responsible quality practices based on:
    - Balanced relationships between government and quality assurance bodies.
    - Commitment to a constructive – not retributive – purpose driving quality assurance bodies.
    - Mutually agreed-upon accountability expectations for quality assur ance bodies and higher education providers.

Introduction

A recent review of international trends in quality assurance revealed several noteworthy aspects of the evolving relationship between the State and quality assurance agencies (Salmi, 2015). The country examples analyzed in that report showed a mixed picture, with some countries tightening up the supervisory role of the State at the risk of compromising the independence of their national quality assurance agency, others moving to grant more autonomy to their quality assurance agency and/or their higher education institutions and others carrying out significant structural changes with the aim of improving the effectiveness of their quality assurance system.

At the same time, new accountability mechanisms have emerged in recent years, complementing the traditional evaluation/accreditation role of quality assurance agencies. For example, student engagement surveys, learning outcomes assessments, labor market observatories and rankings are meant to provide relevant additional information for quality assurance purposes.

Against this background of changing role of the State and rise of multiple accountability mechanisms, the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and its International Quality Group (CIGQ) released in May 2015 a document defining seven quality principles as a framework to inform discussions of quality and inspire practices at regional or international level. The fifth principle, focusing on quality and accountability, affirms that "it is the responsibility of higher education providers and quality assurance and accreditation bodies to sustain a strong commitment to accountability and provide regular evidence of quality." The purpose of this paper is to explore how this quality and accountability principle could be implemented in an effective manner.

The Weight of External Accountability Pressures

It is often said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Grievances about excessive accountability requirements have come from many quarters lately. In the United Kingdom and Australia, for example, universities have complained of performance indicators overload, stressing that too much energy and time are wasted on mining and reporting the data monitored by their respective governments (Salmi, 2009). In the United States, higher education institutions have expressed concern about the voluminous accountability information that they must produce, including for regional and specialized accreditation associations, the U.S. Department of Education, state legislatures, and state higher education commissions. The 2005 Report of the U.S. National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education (NCAHE) acknowledged that:

> [A]ccountability for better results is imperative, but more accountability of the kinds generally practiced will not help improve performance. Our current system of accountability can best be described as cumbersome, over-designed, confusing, and inefficient. It fails to answer key questions, it overburdens policy makers with excessive, misleading data, and it overburdens institutions by requiring them to report it" (NCAHE, 2005).

In addition, the new instruments of accountability mentioned in the introduction are increasingly being used to complement the pool of information available to measure the performance and operation of higher education institutions, thereby affecting the work of national quality assurance and accreditation agencies. Of particular relevance in this context are the following modalities: (i) student engagement surveys, (ii) assessment of student learning outcomes, (iii) labor market observatories and (iv) rankings.

Student engagement surveys

Following the example of the United States, where the first large-scale survey of student engagement (National Survey of Student Engagement NSSE) took place in 2000, a number of countries have developed and implemented their own version of a survey aimed at ascertaining how students assess the quality of teaching and learning in their institutions. Today, student engagement surveys are carried out regularly in Australia, Canada, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Pilot surveys have also been undertaken in recent years in countries as diverse as China and South Africa.

Continuing a movement that started in the 1960s with student evaluations of their teachers, student engagement surveys not only include subjective indicators, such as the level of satisfaction of students, but also attempt to measure more objective aspects related to the degree of active engagement of students in interactive and collaborative learning activities. In countries where surveys of student engagement are conducted regularly, high school graduates tend to be better equipped to choose which college or university they would like to attend (Ramsden and Callender, 2014).

Student engagement surveys face two challenges (Klemencic and Chirikov, 2014). First, some observers have questioned their validity and reliability with respect to (1) the ability of students to make informed judgments when asked to report learning gains and (2) the selection of the key factors that are supposed to determine student learning (Porter, et al., 2011). Second, not all stakeholders are ready for the kind of transparency that these surveys imply. For instance, many U.S. universities, including top-tier universities, are not releasing their NSSE results.

Assessment of student learning outcomes

Unlike what happens at lower levels of education—primary and high school—the world of higher education does not have a long tradition of measuring learning outcomes. However, promising initiatives have emerged in recent years. In the United States, a growing number of institutions have been using one of

three assessment instruments to measure added value at the undergraduate level: the ACT Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP), the ETS Proficiency Profile (EPP) and the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). Similar instruments have been in use in other industrialized countries, such as Australia's Graduate Skills Assessment.

A few Latin American countries—Brazil and Colombia for example—have also been pioneers in measuring the acquisition of knowledge and competencies of undergraduate students. In Brazil, for example, when the late Paulo Renato, then Federal Minister of Education, introduced the Provão in 1996 as a voluntary test designed to compare the performance of similar programs across all universities, it was the first such national assessment system in the world. The Provão consisted of a final course examination for undergraduate students that did not count towards the graduation of the students themselves but served to evaluate the results of their program and institution. The Provão was replaced in 2004 by a new test (ENADE), applied every three years to a sample of students, which examines the test scores of both first-year and last-year undergraduate students as an attempt to measure the added value of undergraduate programs (Salmi and Saroyan, 2007). Similarly, the Colombian Assessment Institute (Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación) has implemented two tests (SABER-11 and SABER-PRO) that measure students' abilities at the start and end of their undergraduate education.

In the United States, policymakers have suggested using student learning outcomes for quality assurance purposes, but the higher education community met this proposal with strong opposition. The 2006 Spellings Commission report recommended measuring learning outcomes to complement the existing accreditation system.

> . . . by law, student learning is a core part of accreditation. Unfortunately, students are often the least informed, and the last to be considered. Accreditation remains one of the least publicized, least transparent parts of higher education—even compared to the Byzantine and bewildering financial aid system (National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity, NACIQI, 2007).

Similarly, initiatives to measure students learning outcomes in an international perspective have met with little enthusiasm. In 2012, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Develpment (OECD) conducted a pilot experience to measure the achievement of generic competencies and the acquisition of professional skills in the areas of economics and engineering in the context of the AHELO project (Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes). Even though seventeen countries participated in the feasibility study and pilot trial, the OECD has just announced that the project would not go ahead because of lack of support from the U.S. and U.K. administrations.

Labor market observatories

Another noteworthy development has been the establishment of Labor Market Observatories (LMOs) in a growing number of developing and transition countries, following the example of OECD countries that have employment observatories either at the supra-national level (European Union employment observatory), the national level (e.g., Bureau of Labor Statistics in the United States, university-based AlmaLaurea observatory in Italy), and the sub-national level (e.g., Learning and Skills observatory in Wales, Observatoire régional de l'emploi et de la formation OREF in France, Education-Employment Information System in Florida). The examples of Bulgaria, Chile and Colombia are worth mentioning in this context.

Since 2012, the Bulgarian government has published detailed data on the labor market results of university graduates. Using data from the Registry of Tertiary Students and statistics from the National Social Security Administration, the Ministry of Education is able to provide a wealth of information on the types of jobs and levels of remuneration of graduates who left university in the previous five years. The

database indicates, for instance, if the graduate found a job, if the position corresponds to the field and level of study, what type of employer she/he is working with, if the graduate has a permanent or temporary job, and the level of salary based on social security contributions.

Supported by the Chilean Ministry of Education and jointly run by the School of Government of the private University Adolfo Abánez and the University of Chile's Department of Industrial Engineering, *Futuro Laboral* aims to equip youths and students with academic orientation tools. *Futuro Laboral* provides information on the occupational situation of graduates in hundreds of professional and technical careers that represent 75% of technical and professional graduates. The information available to the public includes detailed data on salaries and employment opportunities. The portal displays, for each program of every higher education institution, detailed information on dropout rates, average time to degree, average earnings of the graduates four years after graduation, current tuition fees for the program, and accreditation status of the program. Employment and earnings data are not self-reported but gathered from the database of the national tax revenue authority. Earnings are matched to the databases of graduates provided by the higher education institutions.

Graduados Colombia (Observatorio Laboral para la Educación) was launched in 2005 and is managed by the Ministry of Education. It collects and presents information on the demand and supply of graduates. Students, families, tertiary education institutions, researchers and the productive sector have access to statistics on the academic level of the graduates of technical institutes and universities, the salaries they receive and the average time for finding the first job, as well as the cities where they work. The website serves as a tool for students trying to choose a career, and it is also useful for tertiary education institutions intent on renewing and adapting the programs they offer according to labor market needs. *Graduados Colombia's* site provides links to job offers in Colombia and in other countries; visitors are able to look for the results of the graduate and employer surveys.

Rankings

The power of public opinion is nowhere more visible than in the growing influence of rankings. Initially launched in the United States, university rankings and league tables have multiplied in the past decade, existing today in more than 40 countries.

> The U.S. News [& World Report] rankings have become the nation's de facto higher education accountability system—evaluating colleges and universities on a common scale and creating strong incentives for institutions to do things that raise their ratings (Carey, 2006).

While fully acknowledging their methodological limitations, it is undeniable that the rankings have often played a useful educational role by making relevant information available to the public, especially in countries lacking a formal system of quality assurance. In Poland, for example, when the transition to the market economy started in the early 1990s, the *Perspektyvy* ranking responded to a thirst for information about the quality of the rapidly proliferating private education institutions. Similarly, for many years the annual ranking published in Japan by the *Asahi Shimbun* fulfilled an essential quality assurance function in the absence of any evaluation or accreditation agency.

Some of the rankings include information from student engagement surveys and/or labor market observatories as key indicators. In Chile, for example, the country's main weekly magazine (*Que Pasa?*) uses the results of *Futuro Laboral* to rank universities and programs every year on the basis of the labor market outcomes of their graduates. The ranking prepared by the German Centre for Higher Education (CHE) offers a large number of indicators of inputs, process and outcomes—including the results of student and employer satisfaction surveys.

The proliferation of rankings has provoked intense reactions, ranging from disagreements about the

very principle of rankings to criticism about the methodology used to produce them, boycotts, political pressure and even court actions to stop their publication.

> The expansion of league tables and ranking exercises has not gone unnoticed by the various stakeholders and the reaction they elicit is rarely benign. Such rankings are often dismissed by their many critics as irrelevant exercises fraught with data and methodological flaws, they are boycotted by some universities angry at the results, and they are used by political opponents as a convenient way to criticize governments (Salmi and Saroyan, 2007).

Despite several attempts to boycott the *U.S. News and World Report* and the *MacLean* rankings in the United States and Canada, respectively, they remain very popular among students and parents trying to figure out how to choose among universities, colleges and study programs.

Recently, some governments have designed their own ranking as part of the national quality assurance framework. In Colombia, for instance, the Ministry of Education launched MIDE in July 2015, a ranking relying heavily on labor market results and graduate salaries to assess the quality of higher education institutions. In September 2015, the government of Vietnam announced a three-tier classification of universities to promote better quality programs and institutions (Pham, 2015).

Implementing a Quality and Accountability Approach

Implementing a quality and accountability approach means that, instead of shaping their quality improvement strategy in response to external pressures, higher education institutions would take the lead in defining themselves the performance indicators that are most appropriate to measure their progress towards the vision and goals adopted in their own strategic plan. This perspective would imply three complementary courses of action: (i) integrating a relevant set of accountability measures, (ii) adopting a benchmarking approach, and (iii) reflecting the institutionally driven accountability approach in the quality assurance/accreditation criteria and process.

Institutionally-defined indicators

The first step in implementing a quality and accountability approach consists of defining appropriate indicators that are aligned with the mission, vision and overall goals of the institution. As much as possible, the indicators should not focus mainly on how the institution operates but on the educational results that it actually achieves. To use the distinction proposed by Stein (2005), procedural accountability, which is primarily concerned with rules and procedures, is less meaningful than substantive accountability, which focuses on the actual outcomes of the research, teaching and learning that take place in higher education institutions. While it may be easier to monitor the first type of accountability, it is without doubt more relevant to concentrate on the second, notwithstanding its complexity and the difficulties involved in measuring the impact of research, the acquisition of competencies, student learning outcomes and added value. Higher education institutions all over the world could emulate the experience of institutions in the United States, which have developed a strong tradition of institutional research allowing them to monitor key indicators to inform their strategic planning and improvement efforts.

In selecting the most relevant indicators for their purpose, higher education institutions should not shy away from incorporating data from existing accountability instruments that may be relevant to their institutional mission. For example, in countries where data on student satisfaction and/or labor market results are available, it would make sense to make them an integral part of the performance indicators that inform the regular monitoring and quality improvement efforts of higher education institutions.

Benchmarking

To guide their development strategy, institutions may prefer benchmarking as a more appropriate method for quality improvement purposes than relying on the indicators imposed by the rankings. Benchmarking is the process of comparing the performance of specific university programs or entire higher education institutions to similar programs or institutions, (Salmi, 2013). Benchmarking enables users to make comparisons against a series of performance indicators without relying on rank order numbers to designate the "best" among peer institutions. Unlike rankings, which tend to lead to a 'race to the top', benchmarking can provide a more tempered assessment of performance and be a more useful tool to understand institutional performance and inform quality improvement decisions.

The German CHE prepares one of the most comprehensive sets of data that can be used for benchmarking purposes, even though people somewhat mistakenly refer to the information available on the CHE website as the German ranking. CHE offers a large number of indicators of inputs, process and outcomes—including the results of student and employer satisfaction surveys—distributed into three broad bands of universities: the top 25%, the middle 50% and the bottom 25%. Users can select which universities and indicators they want to combine in order to conduct a customized data search and comparison.

Elements of benchmarking have also reached the U.S. higher education scene in recent years. In September 2007, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) announced that they would start publishing key performance indicators through a Voluntary System of Accountability Program called College Portrait. The program, which was developed as a reaction to the recommendations—and perceived threat—of the Spellings Commission report mentioned earlier, provides key data on costs, transfer and graduation rates, student satisfaction, and student learning[1]. Interestingly, the sponsors of this proposal were the same university presidents who had decided to boycott the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings (Fischer, 2007).

Alignment with Quality Assurance Methodologies

In a scenario where the higher education institutions are the primary actors in defining and sharing accountability measures aligned with their educational purpose, it is important to establish a compact with the relevant quality assurance agencies to ensure full convergence between the external assessment methodology and criteria, on the one hand, and the accountability efforts of the higher education institutions, on the other hand. This requires agreement on a set of common indicators to measure quality, equity and efficiency dimensions and a shared notion of the needed shift from the traditional focus on input measures to a broader approach that encompasses a comprehensive set of standards, including process indicators (e.g., student satisfaction, time to completion), outcome indicators (e.g., labor market returns, learning outcomes), and indicators of institutional capacity. This mutually agreed approach is indispensable no matter what type of quality assurance system a country has in place, whether using audit (Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom), accreditation (United States), evaluation (France, Netherlands), or other methodologies.

Conclusion: Principles of Sound Accountability

The 2005 report, *Accountability for Better Results* (NCAHE), called for a new accountability philosophy based on "pride, not fear, high aspirations, not minimum standards." The quality principles proposed by CHEA and its International Quality Group are fully aligned with this approach, which aims to put the primary responsibility for accountability back with the higher education institutions themselves, instead of reluctantly submitting to cumbersome reporting requirements or yielding to the opaque criteria im-

1 http://www.collegeportraits.org/

posed by some of the rankings.

Translating this approach into responsible quality practices requires adherence to three fundamental principles of good accountability: (i) balanced relationship between the State and quality assurance agencies, (ii) constructive purpose of quality assurance and (iii) mutually agreed accountability criteria between quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions.

First, the relationship between the state and quality assurance agencies must reflect a healthy balance between accountability and independence, with clear rules of engagement defined and agreed on both parts. While the State and society at large have a legitimate interest in ensuring the quality of higher education, especially in countries where private providers and/or cross-border providers have multiplied, quality assurance and accreditation agencies must enjoy sufficient freedom to carry out their responsibilities in an autonomous manner. Excesses should be avoided on both sides. Governments must not allow politics and lack of trust to color their relationship with quality assurance and accreditation agencies, and the latter should not be lenient towards below-standards providers or rigid towards innovative institutions.

Second, accountability works better when it is experienced in a constructive way rather than in a retributive mode. Higher education institutions are more likely to appreciate the value of reporting obligations if their relationship with stakeholders, especially government authorities and quality assurance agencies, is based on positive incentives built on trust rather than punitive measures reflecting lack of confidence.

Finally, the most effective accountability mechanisms are those that are mutually agreed between quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions. Agreement in the context of a collaborative approach ensures a greater sense of shared responsibility and stronger ownership of the quality assurance instruments and criteria by the institutions. This, in turn, ensures that the institutions willingly take the lead in setting stretch goals, monitoring performance and reporting their results. In this perspective, the main aim of a quality and accountability approach is to drive the institution's strategic choices for improving its performance and shaping its future.

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Principle 6: Quality and Quality Assurance Bodies

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Quality and Quality Assurance Bodies: Quality assurance and accreditation bodies, working with higher education providers and their leadership, staff and students, are responsible for the implementation of processes, tools, benchmarks and measures of learning outcomes that help to create a shared understanding of quality.

Action on the principle of quality and quality assurance bodies will involve:

- Acknowledging that the current quality assurance system is too burdensome for higher education providers.
- Focusing additional attention on outputs.
- Strengthening the interdependency between quality assurance bodies and higher education providers.

Introduction

Although universities have existed for over a thousand years, external quality assurance (QA) is much more recent. An attempt was made in the early part of the 13th century in Paris to establish some sort of external judgment when the Chancellor of Notre-Dame Cathedral, acting on behalf of the Bishop of Paris, exercised academic control over the University of Paris. The University resented this attempt at external control and was successful in its campaign to remove it when, in 1231, Pope Gregory IX issued a papal bull ending the dominance of the Bishop and Chancellor over the University. The notion of external quality assurance then remained dormant for some six hundred years.

One reason for this, which may still have some subconscious impact today, is a respect for the expertise of universities, as captured in the term "ivory tower," which creates a reluctance to question universities' ways of doing things.

The introduction of external quality assurance followed the expansion of higher education. The creation of the University of Durham in 1832 increased the number of universities in England by 50 percent—from two to three—and led to the introduction of the external examiner system.

The external examiners were mostly drawn from the University of Oxford and, while their main purpose was to increase the local "examining capacity," they also provided some evidence to the outside world of the acceptability of Durham's degrees. Thus, in the 19th century, a policy issue was identified which has continued to concern the academic community: how to achieve comparability of standards across institutions.

This important element of quality assurance has been in place in the U.K. system for a considerable period. However, it deals with only one aspect of the learning-teaching process, namely the comparability of standards in the various disciplines across the system. This is an important objective, and the external examiner system when applied properly is an extremely powerful tool. It is therefore perhaps surprising that, as a comprehensive system, its application is confined to the United Kingdom and a number of

Commonwealth countries, with limited use in some other countries.

There was, however, one major change in that faculty became the most significant group in the external quality assurance process.

In the United States, the initial purpose of the regional associations, which later developed as regional accreditation agencies, was to establish closer links among colleges and schools and to set standards for adequate preparation for college study. The growth in student numbers and in the number of schools and higher education institutions towards the end of the 19th century meant that informal and personal links among the institutions and the administrators were no longer sufficient, and the system became more formal.

Meanwhile, very little was happening in the rest of the world. In many countries governments did exercise considerable control over publicly funded universities, including the appointment of staff, but these controls, which avoided any reference to the quality of the educational provision or of the educational output, were a long way from being quality assurance systems.

Recent history

The evolution of the membership of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) demonstrates well the growth in the number of external quality agencies over the last 25 years.

INQAAHE was established in 1991. Its core membership is comprised of regional and national quality assurance and accreditation agencies, but it also has a number of associate members that are organisations with a strong interest in quality assurance in higher education. At its foundation, INQAAHE had members from only 11 countries, which most likely represented all the countries that then had systems—in some cases partial—of external quality assurance in higher education. INQAAHE now has nearly 200 full members, and very few countries are not represented. This is a massive change in only 25 years.

What is quality?

In the literature (Harvey and Green, 1993), there are a number of different concepts of quality. They include:

- *The notion of excellence.* This is a slippery path to follow as institutions cannot all be excellent all the time, and even if they were, it would debase the term. We should remember that the best can be the enemy of the good.

- *Quality is value for money.* This may sound too commercial an approach but we have to accept that resources are limited. Perhaps it is best to think of resources as a constraint within which we seek to assure and enhance quality.

- *Stakeholder satisfaction.* In other words quality is achieved when everybody is happy. However, although stakeholder satisfaction is important, it does not really provide an effective measure of quality, principally because stakeholders, such as students, employers and academics, may have different notions of quality.

- *Fitness for purpose.* This is probably the most generally accepted measure of quality. Do the outcomes demonstrate that the activity achieved what it was meant to do? But that notion in itself is not sufficient because the objectives might not be appropriate to the world of higher education in

general or to the mission of the institution in particular. Hence, to fitness *for* purpose we should add fitness *of* purpose. Are the outputs appropriate, given the circumstances?

This last concept can be expressed more succinctly as three questions:

- Are you doing the right thing and are you doing it right?
- Who decides what is right?
- How does one prove that it is being done right?

This brings us to the role of quality assurance and accreditation bodies and their shared responsibilities for quality with higher education providers.

The meaning of Quality Assurance and Accreditation

"Quality assurance" and "accreditation" are often used interchangeably, especially in countries where English is not the primary language. "Quality assurance" is an all-embracing term covering all policies, processes and actions through which the quality of higher education is maintained and developed, while "accreditation" is, to use the words of the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), "a form of quality assessment where the outcome is a binary (yes/no) decision that usually involves the granting of special status to an institution or programme."

Using the above terminology, an accrediting agency may decide that a programme is sub-standard, but other bodies have a role in deciding which programmes should be offered. These are often government agencies, either national or regional, that give institutions the right to offer programmes leading to higher education qualifications.

The nature of the relationships between QA bodies and the governments of the countries in which they operate varies for historical reasons. In some countries, governments keep their distance while others adopt a more directive posture, but in virtually all systems, governments do exercise oversight and act if they believe that the system of external QA is not effective.

Programme or institutional QA

In some countries, external QA was mainly applied at the institutional level while in others, QA was applied at the programme level or at both institutional and programme levels. However, even in the institutional QA countries, certain programmes leading to a professional or vocational qualification would also be subject to programme accreditation, which would normally be carried out by or on behalf of the professional association.

As external QA developed, the focus in many countries became institutional rather than programmatic. However, in conducting institutional quality assurance, the emphasis was on how the institution quality assured its own programmes.

More recent changes

As external QA developed, one model became fairly standard across the world, although with substantial national differences. Under this model, an external QA body would review programmes or institutions at regular intervals, typically every five years.

In the 2000s, there was general agreement that most agencies followed what was then described as a "traditional" model, which had the following characteristics:

- Sets of regulations and guidelines produced by the agency
- A self-evaluation prepared by the institution
- The appointment of a peer group whose review of the institution or programme would start with a review of the self-evaluation
- Site visits by the peer group
- The publication of a report or, in some cases, only the decision.

While virtually all agencies claimed that the self-evaluation, or self-study as it was sometimes called, was an essential part of their process, it seemed that very different views existed across the world as to how the self-evaluation should be completed.

While virtually all accreditation agencies specified the format of self-evaluations, there was considerable variation in the way in which questions could be answered. In some countries, institutions were given a fair amount of discretion in the way they could tell their stories while on others, notably in Asia, the term "self-study" was a misnomer in that the agency essentially provided a form to be completed, often including many quantitative questions and giving little space for the institution to present its own case. This difference in approach still prevails in many ways, but a number of changes are in process.

Emerging trends

In its early days, external quality assurance relied heavily on two main elements:

- The intuitive judgment of the academic reviewers, based not on explicit requirements but on their experience and
- Relatively crude quantitative input measures, such as the qualifications of academic staff, the ratio of academic staff to students and the number of books in the library.

Since then, external quality assurance has changed and continues to do so, with a switch in emphasis from quality assurance for accountability to quality assurance for enhancement.

Accountability requires the institutional programme to demonstrate that it is operating at or above the basic minimum standard, while quality enhancement is concerned with a continuous process of quality improvement.

One of the factors that led to this positive change was that, as QA systems matured, established institutions were visited many times, even though it was pretty evident that they would not fail the basic minimum test.

Quality enhancement is clearly important, but the most significant imperative for a quality assurance body is to ensure that even the worst programme offered by an institution that comes under its purview is of acceptable standard. This comment is of particular relevance to the new forms of learning experience – especially employment-based learning – so a bit of old-style testing against minimum standards is still relevant.

From inputs to outputs via process

For many years before the introduction of external quality assurance, the key, or perhaps only, indicator

of quality was an input measure: the ability of the teaching staff. When external quality assurance was first introduced, input measures retained their primacy. To the quality of teaching staff was added such factors as the number of books in the library. It is perhaps not surprising that in those early days there was a focus on input measures. They had a nice comfortable feel about them – they were objective and relatively easy to measure. What was often overlooked was that the actual input was measured only rarely; some proxy was used instead. A prime example was that the qualifications of the teaching staff were used as a measure of their quality as teachers.

There appear to be a number of factors that encouraged the switch from inputs to outputs, including a greater degree of professionalism on the part of quality assurors. But another significant reason was the increasing diversity of higher education. Historically, the simple input-based method was based on the traditional higher education model: properly qualified students sitting in classrooms taught by properly qualified staff. The world of higher education, however, is now much more diverse, an example being students studying at a distance without the traditional qualifications.

Before discussing outputs, we should mention the important role of process, as some would argue that it is wrong to concentrate only on outcomes. This is because some of the outputs of a period of higher education, such as intellectual honesty, rigour or the recognition of the need for continuing lifelong learning, cannot be measured directly. In such cases, an assessment of the learning experience might provide an acceptable proxy measure. Some learning processes may be more conducive to the development of these attributes than others, and hence the quality assurance procedures need to consider the likely effectiveness of the teaching and learning process in helping the development of these important but not easily measurable attributes.

Different types of output measures

There seem to be two fairly distinct groups of outcome measures, one relating to student performance, often referred to as learning outcomes; the other set being indirect measures which may be related to institutional performance, often measured by performance indicators.

Learning Outcomes

The student learning assessment movement has gained considerable strength within the United States accreditation community in recent years.

We may quote the advice CHEA gives to accreditors in the United States. CHEA is one of the two bodies that have the responsibility for the recognition of accreditation agencies, the other being the U.S. Department of Education.

CHEA's advice is set out in a document entitled "Statement of Mutual Responsibilities for Student Learning Outcomes: Accreditation, Institutions, and Programmes":

Accrediting agencies should place upon institutions the following expectation that they should

- Regularly gather and report concrete evidence about what students know and can do as a result of their respective courses of study, framed in terms of established learning outcomes and supplied at an appropriate level of aggregation (e.g., at the institutional or program level).

- Supplement this evidence with information about other dimensions of effective institutional or program performance with respect to student outcomes (e.g., graduation, retention, transfer, job placement, or admission to graduate school) that do not constitute direct evidence of student learning.

- Prominently feature relevant evidence of student learning outcomes—together with other dimensions of effective institutional performance, as appropriate—in demonstrating institutional or program effectiveness (CHEA 2003).

Note that the above statement covers both direct student learning outcomes and the more indirect performance indicators.

Indirect measures - Performance indicators

The CHEA reference just quoted requires institutions to consider other dimensions of performance that do not constitute direct evidence of student learning, such as graduation and employment rates. These measures are also recognised as key indicators in many countries (OECD, 2008).

However, unless there is something to compare it with, an indicator is only a number. An institution can use time-series analysis to compare current to past performance, but it is also very useful to compare its performance with that of other institutions. A feature of the last two decades is the development of national statistics relating to higher education. A good example is the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in the United Kingdom. HESA publishes annually programme-level data from institutions relating to student progression, qualifications awarded and the record of employment or admission to graduate programmes.

Quality culture

In the early days of quality assurance the emphasis was placed on reviewing how an institution or programme had performed. As quality assurance developed, this was usually done on an annual basis internally and typically every five years by the external agency. The key element of quality assurance was looking back and checking. In the last five or six years, the view has developed that quality assurance is not just about checking but should also have a more proactive function in the everyday activities of the institution. The term "quality culture" is often used to describe this development (EUA, 2010 and 2011).

The adoption of the notion of quality culture impacted quality assurance bodies in two ways. It affected both their relationship with the institutions under their ambit and also the way they conduct external quality assurance. As regards the relationship, it encouraged QA bodies to move from an inspectorial role to more of a partnership relationship—in particular, to encourage its institutions to adopt those procedures that would enhance their quality culture. It also had an impact on the way that the quality assurance bodies conducted their programme and institutional reviews by paying more attention to the ways in which the institution assured and enhanced quality, rather than simply attempting to measure quality itself.

The future

Although universities have been around for a millennium, external quality assurance has only been common in most countries for about 30 years. That relatively short period has seen considerable changes, including moving from the concentration on inputs to more emphasis on outputs and from an inspectorial stance to greater elements of partnership. Is the system now stable and settled system, or is more change on the way?

Change is certainly on the way. The two main drivers of change seem to be:

- The present system is too burdensome, and
- Even more emphasis should be placed on outputs.

From various examples from around the world, we note here developments in the United States and the United Kingdom.

In the United States, two senators introduced a bill in September 2015 to create a voluntary, alternative accreditation system for U.S. colleges and universities as well as other providers of higher education. Under the proposed legislation, which would see the end of the dominance of the established accreditation agencies, much greater attention would be given to the outcomes of a higher education system in which the traditional four-year college degree track would only be seen as one part.

In the United Kingdom, there is a growing belief that the present external quality assurance system is too burdensome. The main higher education agency in England, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), published a consultation paper on how quality assessment might develop in June 2015 (HEFCE, 2015). The paper proposed placing greater trust in institutions so that quality assurance would:

"Be based on the autonomy of higher education providers with degree awarding powers to set and maintain academic standards, and on the responsibility of all providers to determine and deliver the most appropriate academic experience for their students wherever and however they study."

Basically it suggests that, for established providers (that is, not new institutions), quality assurance should be based on what is called a "risk-based" approach. In the words of the discussion document:

"Not repeatedly retest an established provider against the baseline requirements for an acceptable level of provision necessary for entry to the publicly funded higher education system, unless there is evidence that suggests that this is necessary."

This would mean that the external reviewers would not go through the same procedures every five years. The actual external quality assurance process would be very much lighter for established providers unless there was some indication of problems.

Many other countries may move in a similar direction, which can be viewed either negatively or positively. The negative perception is that quality assurance would be weakened, while the positive interpretation would be that this would strengthen quality assurance by having a greater impact on the day to day work of the institution, with the external quality assurance body exercising a less burdensome but nevertheless effective oversight.

We conclude that quality assurance and accreditation bodies are moving towards a more interdependent relationship with their higher education providers and taking a more holistic view of the components of quality.

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Principle 7: Quality and Change

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Quality and Change: Quality higher education needs to be flexible, creative and innovative, developing and evolving to meet students' needs, to justify the confidence of society and to maintain diversity.

Action on the principle of quality and change will involve acknowledging:

- The four current external drivers of change: weak economies, unemployment and underemployment of graduates, technology, public attitudes.
- The big issues that these drivers highlight about students; they:
    - Are not studying in modern, online ways.
    - Are not working hard enough.
    - Are not learning the right things.
- The decisive role of faculty.
- The need, in the immediate future, to increase the use of online learning, to place more emphasis on developing generic skills and to improve students' grasp of the academic knowledge in their subject areas.

Background

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) International Quality Group (CIQG) considers that the growing international activity within higher education has created a sense of urgency for a shared understanding of educational quality. It has developed seven quality principles to contribute to such understanding whilst respecting the many differences that shape our systems of higher education and our perspectives on quality.

To stimulate discussion of the principles, CIQG has asked a number of scholars and practitioners to write commentaries on each of them. Although the principles themselves are articulated briefly so as to be as universally relevant as possible, these commentaries aim to inspire debates about their application in local contexts.

Principle #7 calls for flexibility, creativity and innovation so that higher education can develop and evolve to meet students' needs, to sustain the confidence of society and to maintain diversity. This commentary will address three questions:

- What would it take to implement the principle?
- What challenges would implementation involve?
- How can this principle enhance quality?

Implementing change: Drivers and actors

Change usually requires a combination of *drivers of change* bringing pressure from the external environment and internal actors pushing for change within institutions. We shall identify four drivers of change and consider that academic staff (faculty) and students are the key internal actors.

External drivers

Higher education is in a state of turbulence in many countries. Four drivers of change are particularly important: weak economies, graduate unemployment and underemployment, Internet technology and public attitudes as expressed through the news media. These four drivers combine to set directions for change, so we shall first describe each one succinctly before exploring the directions for change that they exert together. What will be the quality implications of these changes?

Economies

The global economy is still struggling to recover from the 2008 recession as new shocks appear, such as the slowdown in China. This economic uncertainty is making governments cautious about public spending, notably on higher education. Real incomes are stagnant in many countries, making it hard for universities to balance budgets by raising fees.

Unemployment

There is a scourge of unemployment and inactivity among young people, dubbed 'generation jobless' by *The Economist* magazine (2013). Nearly 300 million young people, one quarter of the world's youth, are not in employment, education or training. Yet employers complain that they cannot find graduates with the right skills and competences to fill some jobs.

Moreover, countries as different as the United States and China have serious problems of graduate underemployment. Many graduates in these and other countries are taking jobs that do not require university education – such bartenders or retail clerks. Education and the job market seem to be out of sync.

Technology

Technology has enabled us to increase efficiency, effectiveness and quality of the products and services we depend on in everyday life. There is no good reason why technology could not similarly improve the impact of higher education and cut its costs, but this is only happening slowly. Open universities in various countries have shown that lower cost and higher quality can be combined, but their methods have not yet had much impact on conventional campuses.

News media

Media coverage is our fourth driver of change. This relates to Quality principle #3, which states that the quality of higher education is judged by how well it meets the needs of society, engenders public confidence and sustains public trust. Media coverage is a reflection of a certain lack of public confidence in higher education rather than its cause. In many countries, news reporters have become markedly less respectful of higher education than they once were, with much of their criticism being about failure to adapt to changing times. Here are three examples.

The global media covered enthusiastically the MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) frenzy that elite U.S. institutions started in 2012. Early coverage hailed a revolution in higher education that would allow everyone to study free online. This was followed by a backlash when teaching methods on most campuses continued much as before.

In the United States, the book *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses* (Arum & Roksa, 2011), which reported that students are not learning much, attracted extensive commentary. One review (Jaschik, 2011) cited the finding that "36 percent of students did not demonstrate any significant improvement in learning over four years of college." It continues: "the main culprit... is a lack of rigor... 32

percent of students each semester do not take any courses with more than 40 pages of reading assigned a week, and half don't take a single course in which they must write more than 20 pages over the course of a semester... Students spend, on average, only about 12-14 hours a week studying, and that much of this time is studying in groups."

Stimulated by youth and graduate unemployment, the media are the voice for public concerns about whether higher education is giving graduates the skills and knowledge they need for today's and tomorrow's worlds.

Summary

This brief assessment of four external drivers of change highlights three big issues in higher education that must be addressed to improve its quality:

- Students are not studying in modern, online ways;
- Students are not working hard enough;
- Students are not learning the right things.

Change requires internal actors to act on these issues. What are the attitudes of the key actors: students and faculty?

Internal actors

Students

If students are prepared to shop around, they already have a wide choice of study options. Some are based on face-to-face contact, others are fully online and many are a blend of both. The learning opportunities that institutions offer will inevitably evolve to meet student preferences. What do students look for?

In preparing its report, *Driving the skills agenda: Preparing students for the future*, the Economist Intelligence Unit (2015) conducted research in countries across the world (Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Finland, Ghana, India, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States). It found that at the school level, "Increased use of technology tops the list of the changes students aged 11 to 17 would most like to see in their school, by a margin of 14 percentage points. This is particularly true in Spain, Russia and Mexico, where respectively 68 percent, 63 percent and 58 percent of young students call for more technology to be used in schools." Findings at the level of higher education were similar: "Only 23 percent of 18-25-year-olds think that their country's education system is very effective at making full use of the technologies now available."

Student attitudes, of course, vary across the world as the following examples reveal. Some prefer the face-to-face option, some like blended learning and some are happy with courses purely online.

Wong (2015) reported on surveys in Hong Kong showing that traditional face-to-face learning remains the preferred mode of study there despite the fact that Hong Kong has high availability of personal computers and high penetration of broadband access. His investigation concluded that the most important barrier to the adoption of online learning was poor self-discipline and self-motivation in learners. This results from a teacher-centred and utilitarian learning culture with a tradition of rote learning that is contrary to the self-directedness and student-centredness that online study requires. Hong Kong institutions have done little planning for online learning and the students' utilitarian aim of getting through the course with minimal effort is often mirrored in the teachers, who also seek to instruct with least work.

Attitudes are different in North America. A study of blended learning at York University found high-achieving students to be particularly enthusiastic (Owston, York & Murtha, 2013). They report: "a remarkably strong relationship was found between perceptions and grades. Compared with low achieving students, high achievers were the most satisfied with their blended course, would take one again, and preferred the blended format more than fully face-to-face or online. High achievers also found blended courses more convenient, more engaging, and they felt that they learn key course concepts better than in other traditional face-to-face courses they have taken."

The Learning and Teaching Office at Ryerson University conducted a literature survey on online learning for the benefit of its faculty (Schwartz, 2013). Her research found that the quality of online learning is only as good as the pedagogy underlying it and that course structure has the greatest influence on student perceptions. The instructor's role is also a crucial factor in student perceptions of quality in online learning. Students "want their faculty to be partners in the learning process by providing content expertise, scaffolding learning experiences, helping students make connections, and providing prompt feedback… they expect to have a professor" (Barcelona, 2009).

Schwartz noted other studies where a majority of students found the online course more challenging than a traditional course and a better learning opportunity in which they were more likely to do their assigned readings. She found evidence that older students and women had somewhat more favourable views of online learning than younger students and men. Finally, she found that people who have already experienced an online course were more likely to take another one successfully.

This roundup of students' views shows that five factors influence their attitudes to technology-based learning and working harder.

- A cultural tradition of rote learning and reproducing the knowledge thus acquired through conventional tests is not a good environment for introducing change that could improve quality.
- High achievers take to blended learning more readily than low achievers. The more students experience blended learning the better they perform.
- Both blended and online offerings stimulate students to work harder and engage more fully with the course, which enhances the quality of learning.
- Sound pedagogy, especially clear signposting, is essential to the quality of online teaching.
- Where technical standards are not met, students have a very negative experience of the quality of the course (Uvalić-Trumbić & Daniel, 2013).

What skills and knowledge?

Unsurprisingly, students' views on the "right things" to learn are general rather than specific. After surveying students as part of its strategic planning process, Concordia University (2015) reported: "Students tell us they want purpose-driven, hands-on learning. They want to develop multidisciplinary ways of thinking and collaborating. They benefit from digitally enhanced pedagogy that directly helps them practice, connect, and achieve their academic goals, rather than teaching technology used for its own sake."

Students around the world sense weaknesses in institutional offerings. The *Economist* Intelligence Unit (2015) notes: "Students appear to lack confidence in the relevance of their education: just 44% of students aged 18 to 25 believe that their education system is providing the skills they need to enter their country's workforce." However, the report, which was based on research across the world, also notes that students are learning more on their own: "Despite a minority of 18-25-year-olds reporting that their education had provided them with the skills needed in the workplace, a large majority are confident or very confident about their career prospects. Similarly, there is a significant difference—in several cases of over 20 percentage points—in the number of students who believe that they have become good or very

good at certain skills without receiving much formal education in them."

Summary

In the light of the three big issues identified above, research suggests that most students would be pleased to receive more instruction online, provided that it is based on sound pedagogy and technology. They find that online study requires more work but welcome this if it leads to deeper learning. Students' views on the "right things" to learn are more a sense of unease about the relevance of their current higher education than a specific prescription for change.

Faculty

Quality principle #7 calls for "flexibility, creativity and innovation so that higher education can develop and evolve to meet students' needs, to sustain the confidence of society and to maintain diversity." There must be a desire for change welling up within institutions to stimulate implementation with quality in mind.

Who decides about change?

Academic staff (faculty) are valued for the diversity of their views, so it is futile to expect them to express a common perspective on desirable directions of change. Nevertheless, change will not be implemented without the support—or at least the tacit consent—of the faculty.

Writers about change in higher education today owe a huge debt to Professor Tony Bates for his magisterial work *Teaching in a Digital Age: Guidelines for Designing Teaching and Learning* (Bates, 2015). It is a pleasure to acknowledge this debt here and refer those wishing to explore these topics further to his excellent book.

In an important passage, he argues that "If universities are to change to meet changing external pressures, this change must come from within the organization, and in particular from the professors and instructors themselves. It is the faculty that must see the need for change and be willing to make those changes themselves."

His reasoning is that universities have been around for over 800 years because they are deliberately designed to resist external pressure. "They have seen kings and popes, governments and business corporations, come and go, without any of these external forces fundamentally changing the nature of the institution." Any change that threatens the way that universities make their contribution to society through their core values, which are independence and freedom, will be strongly resisted by academic staff.

Quality principle #4 states that governments have a role in encouraging and supporting quality higher education. In discharging that role, they do well to remember first, that the basic functions of universities are the creation, evaluation, maintenance and dissemination of knowledge and, second, that to perform that role they need a good deal of autonomy, not least because the potential value of specific knowledge is hard to assess in advance. In other words, the core values of academe underpin its quality.

As Bates puts it, "universities provide society with a safe way of gambling on the future, by encouraging innovative research and development that may have no immediate apparent short-term benefits, or may lead nowhere, without incurring major commercial or social loss. Another critical role is the ability to challenge the assumptions or positions of powerful agencies outside the university, such as government or industry, when these seem to be in conflict with evidence or ethical principles or the general good of society."

It is for this reason that academics are free to choose what they study and, more importantly, how best

to communicate that knowledge. University teaching is bound up with this notion of academic freedom and autonomy. Therefore, Bates says, "it is the faculty that must see the need for change, and be willing to make those changes themselves... If government or society... tries to enforce changes from outside, especially in a way that challenges the core values of a university, there is a grave risk that the very thing that makes universities a unique and valuable component of society will be destroyed, thus making them less rather than more valuable to society as a whole."

Summary

Highlighting the decisive role of faculty is not an argument against change in universities, simply a reminder that, in implementing Quality Principle #7, academics must see the "need for flexibility, creativity and innovation' to allow higher education to develop and evolve to 'meet student needs, to justify the confidence of society and to maintain diversity."

This brings us back to our third big issue. What are the "right things" that academics should be sharing with their students? These choices cannot readily be imposed from outside; they must attract consensus from within the institutions. But if quality is "fitness for purpose" then teaching a curriculum relevant to the times is basic to quality higher education.

We saw that students, unsurprisingly, do not have clear views about the skills and knowledge they need in particular domains. It is the task of faculty to articulate those needs and respond to them. We start with skills.

Skills

There is a lively debate about the "21st century skills" that people need for life and work in today's world. A report cited earlier (EIU, 2015) asked employers to name the most important skills they sought in their employees. The top five responses were problem solving, team working, critical thinking, creativity and leadership. Basic skills like literacy and numeracy came lower down the list, possibly because the employers surveyed took those skills for granted. They may also have assumed that graduates will have the subject knowledge that they need to make a start in their jobs, even if they require further training for the specific professional tasks they will be required to perform. Where should institutions find the balance between fostering skills and teaching content, and what type of content do graduates need?

Teaching in a Digital Age (Bates, 2015) begins by reflecting at some length on the skills and knowledge that people will need for living and working in today's and tomorrow's worlds. What are its conclusions?

Bates agrees that certain skills have acquired greater importance in a knowledge society, but his analysis goes deeper than the EIU (2015) report. Adapting work on the topic by the Conference Board of Canada (2014), he emphasises the importance of the following skills:

- communication skills (including the use of social media)
- the ability to learn independently
- ethics and responsibility
- teamwork and flexibility
- thinking skills
- digital skills
- knowledge management (which he calls perhaps the most over-arching of all the skills," adding that the skill of how to find, evaluate, analyse and disseminate information within a particular context is a skill that graduates will need to employ throughout their careers).

He also stresses that these skills mostly need to be embedded within a particular knowledge domain, so developing them is often context specific. Writing mainly with higher education institutions in mind, he stresses that content and skills are tightly related and that as much attention needs to be devoted to skills development as to content acquisition for a quality education. This imposes constraints since "although content can be transmitted equally effectively through a wide range of media, skills development is much more tied to specific teaching approaches and technologies."

Academic knowledge

In discussing the acquisition of content, Bates (2015, p. 59) swims against the stream by attacking the view, often heard outside higher education, that academic knowledge is less relevant in the Internet age. Building on the work of Laurillard (2001), he emphasises the difference between academic knowledge and knowledge or beliefs based on direct personal experience.

Without denying the importance of the experiential component of study, Bates argues persuasively that academic knowledge, which is 'a second-order form of knowledge that seeks abstractions and generalisations based on reasoning and evidence', is likely to be more future-proof than much experiential learning. He stresses that the concept of academic knowledge is equally applicable to both pure and applied knowledge. Both have the four fundamental components of academic knowledge: transparency, codification, reproduction and communicability.

Academic knowledge also applies to all levels of higher education, to community colleges as well as to universities. One reason why some institutions are moving more material online in professional and vocational programs is because the cognitive learning element in many professions and trades has rapidly increased. For example, trades now require more academic learning, such as increased ability in mathematics, electrical engineering and electronics.

It is not an accident that the societies that have prospered in both the industrial era and the knowledge age attach importance to rigour, abstraction, evidence-based generalisation, rationalism and academic independence. Academic knowledge has been the foundation of quality higher education. Depreciating the importance of academic knowledge is tantamount to cutting off the branch on which advanced societies are sitting.

What does this imply for how we blend the means of learning? The key point, according to Laurillard (2001), is that university teaching must mediate between students' experience and its symbolic representation. We cannot expect students to construct academic knowledge simply through independent study or discussion with their peers. The teacher's role is to help them master the conventions and rules for acquiring and validating knowledge in that subject within a dialectical environment, in which argument and discussion within the rules and criteria of the subject discipline are encouraged and developed by teacher. Conversation and discussion are critical if this is to be achieved. (Bates, 2015).

The classic example used to make this distinction between experiential and academic knowledge more concrete is Newton's Third Law of Motion, which states that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Two decades ago, Howard Gardner showed that even the Massachusetts Institute of Technology physics students adopt the practices of naive elementary students when studying Newton's Laws of Motion (Gardner, 1991; Brown, 1992). The Website of the American Psychological Association (2015) gives other examples of "Common Alternative Conceptions (Misconceptions)" in Science, Mathematics and Language Arts' that show where students have difficulty grasping academic knowledge.

Summary

This summary of the skills and knowledge that graduates will need for the 21st century has clear implications for changing higher education while improving its quality. It reveals two rather different areas in which faculty should invest special effort. The first is to give more attention to developing skills while embedding them in the appropriate context. The second is to ensure that students grasp the academic knowledge that underpins their areas of study.

Challenges of implementation

Our analysis of the drivers of change and the attitudes of students and faculty indicate that change will occur in three directions in particular:

- Increasing use of online learning;
- More emphasis on developing skills in various knowledge domains;
- Improving students' grasp of the academic knowledge in their subject areas.

Probably the greatest challenge in implementing progress in all three of these directions is the need to introduce greater specialisation and division of labour in the teaching function of higher education—as is already the practice in research.

Compared to most modern organisations, teaching in higher education is still a cottage industry where one individual is responsible for all stages of production and delivery. All the changes proposed above will require division of labour and specialisation. This is already well under way for the development of online learning materials, where most institutions have web designers, software programmers and media specialists who can help faculty design and develop courses.

This same principle will also need to be implemented in support of the interactive components of all three directions of change: personal support to online learners, skills development and the tutoring required to embed academic knowledge. This teamwork will demand a substantial change in working practices for faculty. Yet as student numbers increase, it becomes essential for the lead faculty member to have help with the vital functions of supporting individual online learners, holding apprenticeship sessions to develop skills and reviewing student assignments (which will become a more important teaching tool).

Instead of dividing large classes into smaller sections and having adjunct faculty teach each one semi-autonomously, it will be more effective to make courses available online and use the adjunct faculty for these interactive components. This approach changes the demands on both students and faculty but can give greater satisfaction to both groups once they are familiar with them.

Enhancing quality

The changes outlined in this paper on change flow in the direction of the evolving discourse on quality in higher education. The focus of assessments of quality by governments and their quality assurance agencies is moving steadily towards learning outcomes. This, for example, is the core criterion for the "Quality Platform" being developed by CHEA for post-traditional (non-institutional) higher education providers (CHEA, 2014).

Indeed, the three key areas of change we have described make older approaches to quality assurance, such as reviewing library holdings or faculty qualifications, seem quaintly out of date. Today the Internet is the library and the effectiveness of teamwork among faculty and their supporting adjuncts and professionals will be more important than their individual CVs. This presents a great opportunity for institu-

tions that are ready to redesign their teaching in a technology-rich manner to equip graduates with 21st century skills and knowledge.

Applying modern principles of division of labour and specialisation to teaching will enhance quality, as has happened in other areas of life.

Much help is available to institutions as they move more teaching online. *Teaching in a Digital Age* (Bates, 2015) is an important resource. Two guides focussed on quality issues are also available as *Open Educational Resources: A Guide to Quality in Online Learning* (Uvalić-Trumbić et al., 2013) and *A Guide to Quality in Post-Traditional Online Higher Education* (Uvalić-Trumbić et al., 2014).

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