The Internationalization of Higher Education and Cross-border Quality Assurance

Workshop Snapshot Report
November 2018

THE COUNCIL OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

CHEA
Council for Higher Education Accreditation
CHEA International Quality Group
CIQG

the Hollings Center
for international dialogue

Workshop Purpose

The workshop was organized by the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), and the Hollings Center for International Dialogue to explore cross-border quality assurance of higher education specifically in Malaysia, Oman, and the United States and more generally in the Arab region and in Southeast Asia. The purpose was to enhance shared understanding and to encourage partnerships—especially expanding international activity and increasing the interaction of institutions, programs, and quality assurance/accrediting organizations. The goals also included having governmentally controlled colleges and universities as well as Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) institutions gain a better understanding of the distinctions among quality assurance mechanisms. Desired outcomes included recommendations for policy and next steps.

Workshop Summary

History: "A Quiet Revolution Is Happening," The Internationalization of Cross-Border Quality Assurance

The internationalization of quality assurance (QA) and of higher education more generally has expanded significantly during the last ten years. This workshop focused on international education as cross-border educational offerings (defined as when student, teacher, or course materials cross national borders) and the processes to assure and improve the quality of educational offerings through national, regional, and international QA constructs.

Two major factors have driven the expansions of both international education and internationalization of QA in recent years. The first is the significant growth and diversification of international student enrollments and mobility, fueled in part by online learning. The second is that since 2000 there has been a "quiet revolution" focusing on accountability in many forms, and in many different places[1]. More countries have developed quality assurance capabilities and have embraced the importance of shared approaches to quality beyond national borders within regions and internationally.

Higher education has become more important to both national economic development and to equity imperatives, as articulated in Goal Four of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2015. In 2000, 97 million students were enrolled in higher education worldwide; by 2015 enrollments had reached 213 million; estimates project 412 million enrollments in 2030 and 522 million enrollments by 2035[2]. Global student mobility also increased rapidly from the 1970s and 1980s when the numbers hovered around a million, until now, when nearly five million students are enrolled in tertiary education outside their home country[3].

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[1] Jamil Salmi presentation, "2017: The Year of Living Dangerously—The Evolving Tertiary Education Landscape and Its Impact on Quality Assurance," CHEA International Quality Group [CIQG] Annual Meeting, 2017.

[2] Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić presentation, Hollings Workshop, September 2018, Istanbul.

[3] Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators,* 2017.

The variety of educational providers has also increased to meet the swelling demand. A 2016 study by Kevin Kinser and Jason E. Lane estimated that branch campuses alone have increased 44 percent in seven years[4]. New issues, beyond student mobility and enrollments, arose as transnational education morphed through the creation of a sometimes-bewildering array of instruments and arrangements. Modalities of cross-border education now include not only branch campuses, virtual campuses, and joint degrees, but also blended degrees, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), nanodegrees, and badges. The workshop referenced many articles by Jane Knight of the University of Toronto, providing a baseline for QA organizations as they seek to sort the terminology in order to, at minimum, give structure to data collection and analysis.

In order to meet their need for greater higher education capacity, many countries have added independent, non-governmental providers to their stable of publicly financed and governed institutions. Most are private, and some are cross-border partnerships that also help provide quality assurance. Oman, for example, established its first and only comprehensive public university—Sultan Qaboos University—in 1986, quickly followed by the establishment of 28 new private higher education institutions. Today, that total has grown to 69 institutions. By law, the private institutions are affiliated with overseas higher educational institutions. Some public

Al Azhar University, Egypt. Photo: Nickolay Vinokurov.

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[4]"International Branch Campuses: Evolution of a Phenomenon," *International Higher Education*, No. 85, spring 2016.

institutions also seek affiliation[5]. In 2015 -2016 in Oman, enrollment in the private sector, at roughly 70,000 students, slightly outnumbered the level in the public sector, at 65,000[6].

The United Arab Emirates has 74 institutions of higher education, including 39 that are branches of foreign universities, marking the largest number of branches in the Arab region. Qatar has a higher percentage, but fewer in absolute numbers, with 15 of its 20 licensed institutions classified as branch campuses. Oman, in contrast, has only one registered branch campus[7]. The import/export of higher education is widespread and not confined to any one region of the world. In 2016, 32 countries exported higher education to 75 other countries; Russia and France are among the biggest exporters, and China and the Gulf States are among the largest importers[8].

In parallel with the growth in international education, the number of countries with developed QA capacity also has risen. To address challenges that affect issues of quality as cross-border education grew, the workshop addressed the issue of expanding programs and organizations concerned with quality assurance. Key issues included accountability, student achievement, transparency, and governance, to name a few. National quality measures needed to be stated and met, and it also was necessary to create convergence and agreement across borders about what indicates high quality. Consensus was needed to strengthen understanding and trust within and among institutions and countries and their higher education organizations—governmental, educational, or otherwise. The workshop emphasized that regional QA networks were also needed to establish solid foundations among institutions across national borders so they could communicate about quality initiatives. Correspondingly, international organizations, including the World Bank, UNESCO, and OECD, provided a common support framework and endorsement for both the national and regional efforts.

In this way, the search for meaningful and shareable quality standards took on great significance. In 2005, UNESCO and OECD issued the "Guidelines on Quality Provision of Cross-border Higher Education" and in 2007–2011 the World Bank sponsored the Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity in Developing and Transition Countries. In 2012 CHEA, the nongovernmental US organization that provides national coordination of US accreditation, created its new entity, the CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG), with an international advisory group of 17 members from ten countries as well as UNESCO, OECD, and the World Bank. CIQG was created to provide thought leadership, build partnerships, and serve as a convener to bring together QA colleagues from around the world.

Of the many regional groups, two of special interest to the Hollings workshop were chartered: the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE) headquartered in Cairo, and the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN), based in Malaysia. ANQAHE was formed in 2007 by ten Arab countries in the quest for improved QA standards within the region. They partner with yet another regional body, the Gulf Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. After a lengthy initial period of unregulated growth of cross-national education, there is now a strong commitment to the examining and improving of the quality of cross-border education, especially for scrutinizing any programs coming in from other countries. Most of the Arab region's cross-border higher education work with foreign institutions had been with US

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[5]Khalid Al Muharrami presentation, Hollings Workshop, September 2018, Istanbul.

[6]*Annual Statistical Report of Higher Education in the Sultanate of Oman*, Academic Year 2015/2016.

[7]Nadia Badrawi presentation, Hollings Workshop, September 2018, Istanbul.

[8]Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić presentation, Hollings Workshop, September 2018, Istanbul.

Aerial view of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). Photo: Khairul Zainal.

and French institutions, followed by Germany and the United Kingdom[9]. In recent years, advances have been made in the progress of mutual understanding and in assessing foreign providers. This progress has been facilitated by participation in QUACHE, a QA project of the European Union (Erasmus Mundus) that operated between October 2013 and March 2016, formed to appraise the activities of European universities offering higher education beyond their borders. The ANQAHE standards have yet to address the status of online education as a form of cross-border education.

AQAN was created in 2008 and accredited by ASEAN in 2016 to serve ASEAN member states (the 13 full member and five associate member nations include 600 million people, ten nations, and 8,000 higher education institutions). The example of Indonesia, an ASEAN member nation, illustrates the magnitude of this grouping. Indonesia has one of the world's youngest and largest workforces within its borders and, with its 254 million inhabitants, has the fourth largest higher education system in the world. With the exception of the Philippines, which remains close to the United States in its approach to QA and higher education, all the ASEAN member states maintain quality assurance as a function of the national government. Both European countries and the United States have supported the growth of QA in Indonesia—through the British Council, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and the EU. The United States

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[9]Nadia Badrawi presentation, Hollings Workshop, September 2018, Istanbul.

Agency for International Development in collaboration with international partners, including the Indiana Alliance, JBS International, University of Kentucky, and Arizona State University[10].

National Quality Assurance Systems: Malaysia and Oman

Both countries are home to noteworthy examples of vibrant country-based higher education sectors engaged deeply in similar issues of cross-border education. Each county, however, manages its approach to quality assessment and accreditation differently.

The Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) has been a standout for being the first AQAN country to create an articulated quality framework. A governmental agency, it was formed in 1997 from a merger of a national accreditation board with a QA division in the Ministry of Higher Education. From the beginning, MQA benchmarked against international standards in the creation of its framework and has a two-step process beginning with program accreditation and proceeding to institutional accreditation. A small percentage of the most selective and distinguished private institutions in the nation, wished to benchmark against international standards rather than the domestic ones, and have been permitted to self-audit and register their programs in the national quality register.

Cross-border education has a long history in Malaysia, which has 12 foreign branch campuses, although current political leadership has said it will suspend expansion until further studying the issue[11]. Although MQA does not encourage international accreditation of programs and generally prefers indigenous standards in, for example, teacher preparation programs, many Malaysian students are interested in or pursue degree completion in the United States. This aspiration requires steady attention to admissions standards and requirements of US institutions, and it may permit opportunities for partnerships.

Oman, by contrast, is more open to international accreditation and collaboration, evidenced in part by it requiring all national institutions to have accredited international partners. Beginning in 2010, it established by royal decree a system with its own standards for both assessment of quality and accreditation, at both institutional and programmatic levels, of higher education institutions. Oman also created procedures for recognizing foreign higher education programs, together with mutual agreements concerning QA with relevant authorities in other counties. Furthering a transparency agenda, along with its accountability agenda, Oman began to publish on the web reports of the results of quality audits at programmatic and institutional levels as well as the recommendations of the Oman Higher Education Council. To an extraordinary degree, Oman has collected and published data, created an evaluation staff, and engaged foreign evaluators in quality reviews. These evaluation and communication measures—in addition to its regional interactions through the Gulf Regional Network, partnership with ANQAHE, and its array of foreign providers and partners—show Oman to be exceptionally active in the international QA endeavor.

Developing Opportunities for Increased Relations among US and Muslim-Majority Nations' Higher Education Institutions

The workshop explored the question of how, given the differences in types of institutions and authorization of programs, expanded relationships among Muslim-majority universities and US colleges and universities, especially the ones represented by CIC, could be developed.

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[10]Concepcion Pijano presentation, Hollings Workshop, September 2018, Istanbul.

[11]Simon Baker, "Second Thoughts in Malaysia on Branch Campuses," *Times Higher Education*, June 7, 2018.

The US institutions that were discussed are represented by the CIC, whose 657 members are mostly smaller colleges and universities in the United States. The institutions embrace collaboration and diversity of students (as measured by race, religion, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity) in their learning outcomes, graduation rates, and many other measures of student success. Surprisingly to many, these institutions have much higher graduation rates (and in shorter time frames) for minority group members, economically underprivileged students, and first-generation students than do public institutions due to their focus on student success. Wishing to expand relationships with Muslim institutions, workshop participants thought that the CIC's institutions, having areas such as teacher preparation and business--which other countries often seek international accreditation for--would be a productive avenue to explore.

The role of international accreditation at the programmatic level was one of the most complicated workshop topics. Workshop participant answers varied as to whether external international accreditation of programs mattered for cross-border collaboration or student transfer. With the exception of Oman, in most cases, it did not. Except for the best-known program accreditors in the United States, which sometimes mattered at the master's degree level, participants generally expected the national standards of the home country to be used for professional programs, such as teacher preparation or business management.

Nonetheless, workshop participants considered additional opportunities for partnerships. To build partnerships, they advised that institutions take advantage of the excellent regional QA organizations that have developed and seek their counsel as to which countries/institutions in each region might be most amenable to collaboration/partnership; to communicate carefully with both the regulating ministry and the potential partner university; and to arrange live visits as part of the initial creation of a partnership. In the past, often mediated by an interested faculty member, an institution might have sought only a relationship with the university with which it wished to partner. A complementary path to that approach would be for an association such as CIC to help US institutions that seek partnerships to understand these new avenues that are developing out of international QA organizations and support them as they take first steps to connect with the intended international partner institution. The workshop's advice was to contact applicable regional network, and/or the national ministry, and the intended university if known, to build a productive and lasting relationship. CIC might lead in these new paths of study/ introduction tours for CIC presidents to the Muslim regions that were represented in the Hollings workshop.

Next Steps: Creating Cross-Border Common Principles of Quality

The internationalization of both education and QA efforts has made significant progress to date and now faces new challenges as the effort advances further. The next challenge is the need for broader international agreements. How can national accreditation and QA, the essential building blocks, become the foundation for or integrated with, parallel international principles of cross-border QA? How can common principles and agreements become so widespread as to create adherence in the absence of enforcement mechanisms? Can regional and international voluntary networks work together with national agencies to adopt principles and bring about educational quality enhancement? The flourishing of activity on the quality agenda during the last two decades shows that progress is indeed underway.

Successful efforts within the many regional QA organizations can continue to advance and expand its work as well as its reach. More regions, both smaller and larger, can create growing networks of understanding and cooperation. Success will require greater knowledge and active collaboration in implementing the work that has been accomplished so far. ANQAHE found, for example, in a study it did with the ten founding ANQAHE nations in northern Africa that many were not aware of the 2005 UNESCO/OECD principles for QA in cross-border higher education,

Sultan Qaboos University, Oman. Photo: EQRoy.

even as ANQAHE itself worked to develop regional cross-border standards[12]. Two kinds of sharing seem especially important to advance: sharing of principles of quality, and sharing information about practice (both processes and practitioners, such as external program accreditors).

Participants in the workshop expressed the view that CHEA and CIC may have significant roles to play, especially in the United States, to help spread understanding and advancement of international QA issues. Because neither organization is a government agency, they must work through the power of logic, persuasion, and colleagueship, similar to the collaborative ethos of the international QA community. As independent, mission-driven nonprofit organizations working within the volunteer accreditation arrangement of the United States, they adhere to values that participants in the workshop already recognize.

CHEA, the largest institutional higher education membership organization in the United States with 3,000 members, is a national advocate and institutional voice for peer-reviewed academic quality and accreditation. It gives formal recognition to approximately 60 of the 85 acknowledged US institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations. The International Quality Group (CIQG), CHEA's international forum for issues of accreditation and QA, focuses on inclusivity, placing it among the top
organizations worldwide for creating the perspective and capacity to grapple with issues of cross-border educational quality.

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[12]Nadia Badrawi presentation, Hollings Workshop, September 2018, Istanbul.

The newest part of CHEA, CIQG, was created to offer a "basis for international deliberation of quality in higher education," and its recently adopted statement of principles provides a useful guide and conceptual framework for the spread of the international effort to create a common dialogue and understanding about quality in tertiary education[13]. Of course, many excellent QA statements have been produced worldwide, including by the regional participants in the Hollings workshop. The effort needs to continue to correlate the philosophy with the practice of QA worldwide through the comparison, harmonization, and use of all these documents.

CHEA, through CIQG, works with colleagues worldwide to focus attention on advancing shared thinking about quality through, for example, its "International Quality Principles" (2015). CHEA provides a vital service to international higher education and QA through its "Database of Institutions and Programs Accredited by Recognized US Accrediting Organizations," the single most comprehensive source of information about US institutions, and programs and their accredited status. CHEA, through its recognition activity, has also addressed US accrediting organizations operating outside the United States, with expectations that the accreditors' review of institutions and programs reflect several areas of good practice:

1. Communicate and consult with appropriate in-country governmental accreditation or QA entities regarding the accrediting organization's current and proposed activities;

2. Provide evidence of the accrediting organization's capacity and competence to engage in international accreditation activities, considering language and cultural difference, ongoing QA activities in the country, local factors that would affect the accreditation process, and attention to the safety of all those involved;

3. Provide evidence of substantially comparable application of standards, practices, capacity, and expectations of results to US and non-US institutions and programs alike; and

4. When describing the accreditation status of international institutions and programs, provide public notice of the nature and content of the accommodations that were made for local conditions and alternative evaluation standards or practices that were used as part of the accreditations process and decision-making.

Workshop participants made the fruitful observation that there were "shared challenges but no shared language" among college and university presidents and accreditors. This pointed to a role for CIC, or CIC and CHEA, or perhaps collaborations with other organizations. The idea was to include more practitioners (administrators, presidents) with QA leaders to reimagine, articulate, and implement the cross-border education projects. Capacity could be added to the QA organizations' efforts to disseminate the principles and practices of cross-border QA. If, for instance, CIC member colleges and universities committed to the principles of cross-border quality assurance and pledged to include them prominently in international agreements they signed, a voluntary effort would expand the application of these principles to practice. This follows the successful model of the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment (now rebranded and expanded as The Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitments), which has led to nearly 700 institutions committing to strive for carbon neutrality on their campuses and in their business practices.

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[13] *The CIQG International Quality Principles: Toward a Shared Understanding of Quality*, Ed. Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić, CIQG Publication Series, 2016.

Recommendations and Next Steps

1. Promote and disseminate existing materials more broadly to create greater understanding and impact of QA standards and activities.

2. Encourage partnership among UNESCO/OECD, CIQG, and other internationally oriented QA groups to continue to collaborate and help spread cooperation on international QA values.

3. Support the ongoing efforts of the regional QA networks to expand regional networks through sub-regional partnerships (for example, China, South Korea, and Japan within the Asia-Pacific Network). CHEA and CIC might facilitate the formation of an Americas sub-region based on other work, such as CIC's work with Mexican universities.

4. Use the annual meetings of organizations, such as CHEA, CIC, and regional associations such as ANQAHE and AQAN, to expand the scope of the conversation and plan for the future of enhanced cross-border higher education and QA.

5. Facilitate more international partnerships between CIC colleges and universities and those of Muslim countries represented at the workshop by organizing trips to develop partnerships.

6. Encourage college and university presidents to undertake efforts to create new cross-border partnerships based on the principles of cross-border educational quality as they have been developed by CHEA and the regional QA agencies and the ministries of the concerned country. Explicit reference to those principles should be included in any agreements that an institution develops with an international partner.

For More Information

Bridging the Disconnect between Education and the Economy (2015)

Six years following the onset of the global economic crisis of 2008, national economies have struggled to make up lost gains. Unemployment remains above pre-crisis levels in many countries, particularly among youth. Throughout Muslim-majority countries, such as Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, and Libya, the high rate of youth unemployment has led to multi-faceted negative consequences. For some countries, the problem has been "brain drain," as well-trained, educated nationals have left for better economic prospects abroad. In other cases, due to a vastly growing labor force coupled with mismatched skills, product market limitations, and a large public sector, there has been economic stagnation and growing instability with no outlook for positive future changes. Likewise in the West, increased pressure has been placed upon higher education institutions to act as engines of economic growth and career preparation. This dialogue looked at the disconnect between institutions and their local economies and looked of solutions to bridge that gap.

Quality Assurance in Higher Education: An International Dialogue on Progress and Challenges (2009)

This dialogue focused on the most recent trends and innovations in evaluation and quality assurance. The dialogue examined quality assurance from different national, cultural, and institutional perspectives, bringing together university presidents, government officials, and higher education experts from the Middle East and North Africa, Southwest and Southeast Asia, Turkey, and the United States.

Independent Universities in the Muslim World: A New Approach, Part II (2007)

Building on the December 2005 conference, participants in this second dialogue delved deeper into topics relating to curricula, standards of excellence, philanthropy, best practices, and international cooperation between independent universities. Participants included presidents and administrators of higher education institutions in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, in addition to the United States.

The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) is an association in the United States of more than 650 independent, liberal arts colleges and universities and more than 100 higher education affiliates and organizations that work together to strengthen college and university leadership, sustain high-quality education, and enhance private higher education's contributions to society. To fulfill this mission, CIC provides its members with skills, tools, and knowledge that address aspects of leadership, financial management and performance, academic quality, and institutional visibility. The Council is headquartered at One Dupont Circle in Washington, DC.

For more information about CIC:
https://www.cic.edu

Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) is the largest institutional higher education membership organization in the United States. A national advocate and institutional voice for academic quality through accreditation, CHEA is an association of 3,000 degree-granting colleges and universities and recognizes approximately 60 institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations. CHEA serves as an outspoken advocate and a comprehensive source of information on accreditation and its value to society. The CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG) provides an international forum to address issues related to accreditation and quality assurance around the world.

For more about CHEA and CIQG:
https://www.chea.org
https://www.chea.org/about-ciqg

The Hollings Center for International Dialogue is a non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to fostering dialogue between the United States and countries with predominantly Muslim populations in the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, Eurasia, and Europe. In pursuit of its mission, the Hollings Center convenes dialogue conferences that generate new thinking on important international issues and deepen channels of communication across opinion leaders and experts. The Hollings Center is headquartered in Washington, D.C. and maintains a representative office in Istanbul, Turkey.

To learn more about the Hollings Center's mission, history and funding:
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