Regional cooperation and QA in HE in the Latin American/Caribbean region

Guy HAUG
Valencia University of Technology
Bologna as a European model?

- Came after 20 years of cooperation/mobility in HE as part of European integration (ERASMUS). Capitalizes on strong previous bases
- Not an EU initiative, but strong support from EU institutions, policies, tools and budget and structured follow-up process
- Not mainly an academic process, but one driven by social/economic factors: single European labour market, Europe of Knowledge
- Dual focus:
  - internal cohesion within EHEA: degree structure, curriculum development (content, methods, competencies, LLL), credits, diploma supplement, QA mechanisms, joint programmes, easy recognition for high level of mobility
  - external attractiveness/competitiveness in the world
A very different context in LAC

- Nothing comparable to EU integration process:
  - no vision for integration at continental level
  - no common tools, policies, budget, labour market
  - no tradition of cooperation / mobility in HE within LAC

- A highly different HE landscape:
  - in spite of apparent similarities, strong national differences
  - highly rigid, elitist, stratified, fragmented, island systems,
    in spite of recent massification
  - strong competition, many private HEIs and multicampus HEIs
  - limited power of Ministries (very different from Europe)
  - not geared towards research, nor LLL (few exceptions)
  - limited internationalisation
Impact of Bologna in LAC

• Early signals of interest in some circles/countries, + European effort to foster the «external dimension » of Bologna
• Bologna has stimulated a debate about the role of HE in LAC and LAC integration: rhetorical declarations, Bologna as a utopia, a source of inspiration (more than a « model »), an alternative to US model
• Competing versions of « HE Areas»: subregional ( Mercosur, Central America), LAC, Ibero- American, Euro-LAC…
• Mismatch between the series of governmental declarations (with/without EU, Spain/Portugal) and HEIs’ associations
• Little impact on concrete measures, common tools, policies, programmes: TUNING and curriculum development, UEALC 6x4, ALFA Puente, InfoACES, etc.
QA in LAC – standard setting

- Accreditation started in some LAC countries before Bologna, after US model, usually at HEIs’ initiative, with a deep divide between public / private HE.

- Not same rational as in Europe:
  - QA signals a move in opposite directions: less ministerial interference in Europe, more ministerial power in LAC;
  - main aim is to guarantee minimal quality: private QAAs and branch campuses, national student evaluation schemes in e.g. Brazil, Mexico, Colombia;
  - mainly for national audiences: little impact of quest for external recognition, more attention to overseas than intra-LAC mobility – inspite of some change in recent years (due more to rankings than QA).
QA in LAC – standard setting

Main focus on accreditation:
- of institutions or programmes
- of minimal standards (few exceptions)
- at all levels or more focused
- mostly voluntary, trend towards compulsory schemes
- state or private (HEIs) agencies, split accreditation schemes
- attention to compliance (rather than improvement)
- weak internal QA systems
- difficulties with: Learning Outcome-based approach, student involvement in QA, Recognition of Prior Learning, Internationalization – although things are changing.
QA in LAC – cross-border QA

- RIACES strongest QA network in LAC; + Spain, Portugal
- Impact of INQAAHE; membership, issues with imported HE
- Impact of ENQA, European Standards and Guidelines, evaluation of QA agencies, internationalisation, joint degrees
- Search for foreign seals of quality (ABET, EQUIS, IEP of EUA)
- Unique experiments with joint accreditation in sub-regions: Mercosur (ARCU-SUR), Central America (CSUCA)
- Little experience of LAC QA agencies in other LAC countries
- Growing attention paid to international visibility / credibility