

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

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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