INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ASSESSING IMPACT: USING EXTERNAL REVIEWS AND EVALUATIONS IN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

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INTRODUCTION BY THE IQA STEERING GROUP

The Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Group has been very successful since its establishment in 2007. ENQA-IQA seminars have been held annually since then, gathering a total of more than 200 attendants from quality assurance agencies. Benchmarking of agency practice and how to face common challenges were among the topics discussed, provoking lively debates and further enquiry.

From this perspective, the IQA seminars have presented a longer-term unique opportunity for QA agencies to share experiences and learn from each other on shared issues about IQA. The discussions also demonstrated the agencies' interest in improving their own performance.

This report is the outcome of the seminar held in Valladolid on June 7-8, 2012 entitled "Assessing impact – Using external reviews and evaluations for internal learning". Prior to the seminar, the IQA Steering Group – Douglas Blackstock (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education – QAA), Matti Kajaste (Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council – FINHEEC), Christian Moldt (Danish Evaluation Institute – EVA), Sandra Marcos Ortega (Quality Assurance Agency for the University System in Castilla y León – ACSUCYL) and Maiki Udam (Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency – EKKA) – conducted a survey among 42 full members of ENQA in November 2011. The survey comprised three parts: the description of IQA activities at agencies, the impact of ENQA external reviews on the agencies' IQA systems, and the assessment of impact of external agencies' reviews on higher education institutions. A total of 25 agencies responded, yielding a response rate of 60 per cent.

This publication presents the results of the survey and summarises the discussions at the seminar, including some ideas and thoughts for future IQA activities.

CHAPTER 1: IMPACT OF IQA SYSTEMS ON QA AGENCIES

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Quality assurance agencies should take their own medicine and make sure they have systems in place to evaluate and improve their own procedures and processes. Therefore, in preparation for the seminar, the IQA Group decided to ask ENQA member agencies the following two questions:

- What are the main internal quality assurance (IQA) activities at your agency?
- Does your agency use any 'standard' model for IQA (e.g. ISO 9001, EFQM)?

The IQA Group believed in the importance of QA agencies providing information on their IQA models given that IQA is an essential activity as set out in the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). In addition, agencies have been developing their own practices in the light of external reviews for ENQA membership.
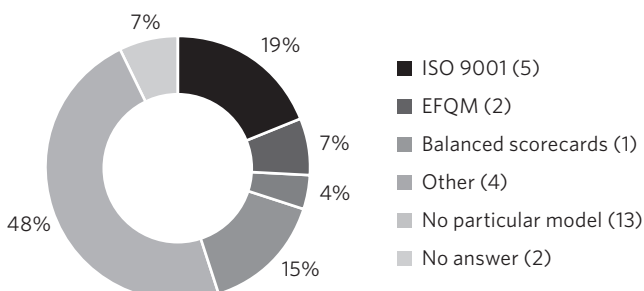
1.2 SURVEY RESULTS: IQA SYSTEMS USED BY QA AGENCIES

The survey revealed that the main IQA activities at the agencies consist of:

- Using the principles of PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act);
- Elaborating a quality manual;
- Defining quality (strategic) areas and targets for a certain period;
- Defining rules for internal procedures, e.g. correspondence, communication, meetings;
- Weekly meetings;
- Individual appraisal interviews;
- Training of staff;
- A system for collecting (and publishing) feedback (from experts, institutions, etc.);
- Regular (informal) self-evaluation, internal audit, annual development seminars;
- Annual reports to the Board/Council of the agency;
- Involvement of/meetings with stakeholders;
- Co-operation in international networks;
- Benchmarking with (international) good practices;
- Risk assessment;
- Regular external reviews.

About half of the respondents do not use any specific quality model. The most popular "standard" model is ISO 9001 (applied by five agencies), followed by EFQM (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Does your agency use any of the following models for IQA?

- 7%
- 19%
- 7%
- 4%
- 15%
- 48%

- ■ ISO 9001 (5)
- ■ EFQM (2)
- ■ Balanced scorecards (1)
- ■ Other (4)
- ■ No particular model (13)
- ■ No answer (2)

Several QA agencies mentioned EFQM as a possible future model or as a basis for the agency's own model, but also had a favourable approach towards the PDCA concept:

- "Our IQA model is inspired by EFQM but can be described as our own model";
- "Several colleagues participated in an EFQM-assessor course. There are plans to use EFQM for our IQA";
- "Our cartography has been built using the EFQM model, but overall, we are putting in place a very lean concept of IQA. Our main objective is to integrate IQA into our daily life ("management through quality") and our favourite concept is the simplest notion of all: PDCA cycle";
- "The simple PDCA loop and a Quality Handbook".

1.3 SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

After the presentation of the survey results, three QA agencies; the Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (EKKA), the Commission des Titres d'Ingénieur (CTI) and the Agence pour l'Evaluation de la Qualité de l'Enseignement Supérieur (AEQES) presented their methods and thoughts on their internal quality assurance system, which raised the following issues:

- When an agency carries out an evaluation of its procedures, the timing might influence the result i.e. depending on whether the questionnaire is sent before or after the judgment is made;
- The results also depend on whether they are sent to the management or quality staff. Therefore both groups should be included;
- The publication of results is important. These should not be hidden away in a report that only a few people read. Respondents should also be shown how their observations fit with the overall feedback across the HE sector;
- The periodic internal assessment is useful;
- One qualitative evaluation method is to nominate selected individuals from the institutions in a quality panel;
- Consistency of procedures should be a focus for IQA;
- Closing the feedback loop is necessary. The results and their consequences should be discussed and communicated internally within the agencies. Cyclical reports of evaluations should also feed into procedure development. It is thus highly recommended to involve staff in developing IQA procedures;
- Evaluating the impact of procedures should be part of instilling a quality culture and shared values in the agency;
- The way targets for internal quality assurance are set and evaluated must be carefully planned so as to ensure they do not distort behaviour. For example, if targets are set for the institution's satisfaction with the agencies' procedures, then agencies could be influenced to make positive judgements to increase satisfaction levels.

The participants further commented and concluded that:

- Consistency in site visits can be supported by good training – QAA three-day training is an example;
- Staff development and retention has an impact on quality;
- IQA can be seen by staff as bureaucratic and de-motivating, hence the importance of demonstrating the positive aspects of it;
- Learning from other agencies is encouraged.

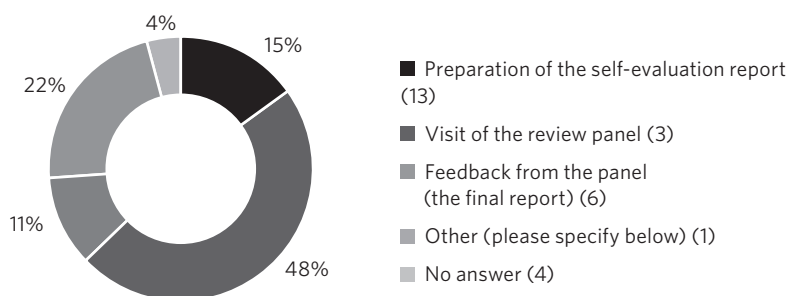# CHAPTER 2: IMPACT OF ENQA REVIEWS ON QA AGENCIES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The preparation for ENQA reviews, through the self-evaluation exercise, provides a good opportunity for QA agencies to understand how they can improve their systems, procedures and processes.

Therefore, ENQA members were asked their opinions on the usefulness and impact of external reviews.

2.2 SURVEY RESULTS: IMPACT OF ENQA REVIEWS

To the question "in which part of the evaluation process did you learn most", 48 per cent of agencies responded that the self-evaluation is the most useful aspect of the review process, followed by the feedback from the panel in their report (22%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. In which part of the evaluation process did you learn most?

- Preparation of the self-evaluation report (13)
- Visit of the review panel (3)
- Feedback from the panel (the final report) (6)
- Other (please specify below) (1)
- No answer (4)

The areas where agencies received most recommendations by external panels were related to the external quality assurance criteria and processes. There were no instances where recommendations were given on the official status of the agency and in one case an agency was given advice on its mission statement (Figure 3).

Figure 3. In which areas did you get most of the recommendations (ENQA external review)?
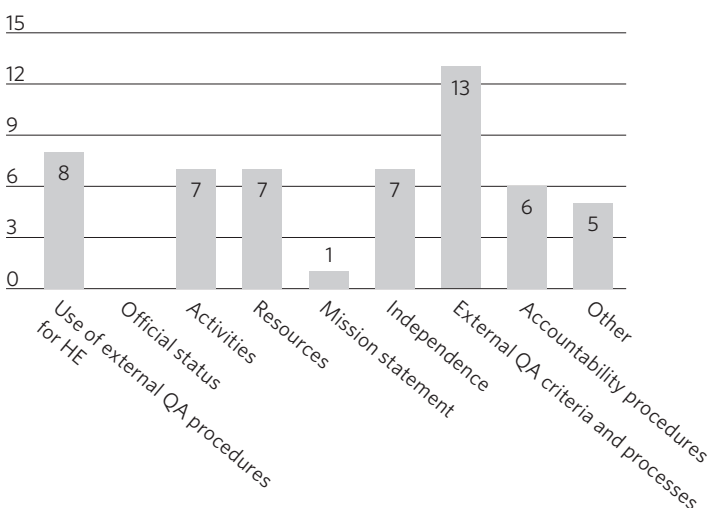
Listed below are some examples of the recommendations/improvement areas addressed to agencies:
- Formalise the IQA activities (e.g. compiling them into a manual);
- Use of clearer criteria;
- Address ESG part one in a more explicit manner in the self-evaluation;
- Implement a clear(er) policy of external QA;
- Include an appeals procedure in the evaluation method;
- A panel also commented on the accreditation system itself (e.g. possible replacement of programme accreditation by institutional accreditation).
- Reporting – more could be done to develop follow-up procedures and system-wide analysis;
- Improvements in agency processes related to decision making structures; publication of reports; and involvement of external stakeholders.

More than half of the agencies (61%) found the recommendations useful *to improve the agency's IQA system (Figure 4).*

Figure 4. The recommendations in the review report have been very useful in the improvement of my agency's IQA.
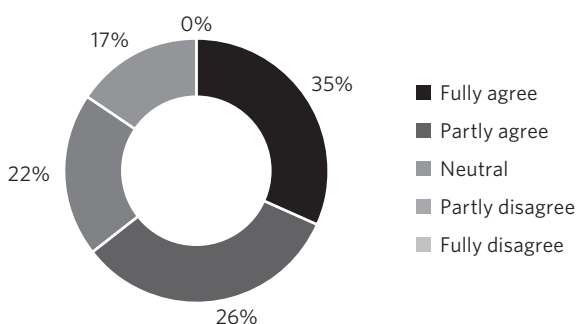
For the agencies, the positive impact of external reviews can be illustrated with the following examples:
- The recommendations gave an impetus for more commitment and have helped developing the agency's activities and internal evaluations;
- The review resulted in the development of a manual that increased the transparency of internal processes and responsibilities and led to an optimisation of these processes;
- Improvement of the strategic plan, cyclic process assessment and transparency;
- The agency should ensure clear assignment of responsibilities established in the team;
- The recommendations helped shape the future structure of the agency;
- The external view from the panel helped the agency to identify what is satisfactory and what leaves room for improvement;

The reviews' impact has however some limitations:
- The recommendations may not cover sufficiently the IQA procedures of the agency and be quite theoretical. The specific context of the agency should be taken into consideration; national legislation sometimes prevents agencies from implementing the recommendations;

- For some agencies, the preparation of the self-evaluation report proved to be more useful for learning than the recommendations of the external review report themselves;
- The issues raised in the recommendations were known beforehand – there was no new information from the review report.

2.3 SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Swiss Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (OAQ) and the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT) were invited to present their learning experience from the external review. The paper by Professor Angela Yung-Chi Hou (HEEACT) sharing experiences of the Asian Pacific region can be found in Annex I of this publication.

The following issues were raised during the plenary session:
- Both compliance and improvement benefits arise from reviews but, understandably, there is a strong emphasis on compliance;
- It is the agencies' responsibility to use their external review as a learning opportunity. Hence engaging their own staff in the process is developmental and increases learning opportunities;
- Compliance is a necessity as the outcome of the review has political consequences;
- The learning process rather comes from the preparation than from reading the panel's report;
- Implementing the action plan following the review has an impact on agencies' activities and procedures;
- Reports should be shared and discussed with all staff;
- Action plans should be owned by the Board/ Council of the agency and published;
- The self-evaluation and final review reports can be used to inform stakeholders about the agency's performance;
- Reviews help some agencies to experience a different type of evaluation culture;
- Reviews could more fully address the quality of agency products and outputs;
- Recommendations which require action beyond the control of the agency have limited use. Indeed, external circumstances (such as the legislative framework or political environment) can get in the way of implementing the recommendations;
- Recommendations should be addressed to those who have the power to make changes, ranging from governments to the agency's staff;
- Better preparation of agency reviewers is needed – this should come over time.

# CHAPTER 3: IMPACT OF AGENCIES' REVIEWS ON HEIS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the third part of the survey, the agencies were asked to describe whether and how they assess the impact of their own reviews – evaluation, accreditation, audit – on higher education institutions and/or system.

Impact assessment can be done for many reasons. For instance, agencies assess the impact of their procedures to learn more about how to improve them or to demonstrate the effect of external quality assurance to external stakeholders.

3.2 SURVEY RESULTS: IMPACT OF AGENCIES' REVIEWS

Most of the surveyed agencies (close to 60%) assess the impact of their evaluations on HEIs whereas 26 per cent do not (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Do you assess the impact of the reviews/evaluations/accreditations on the higher education institutions/system?
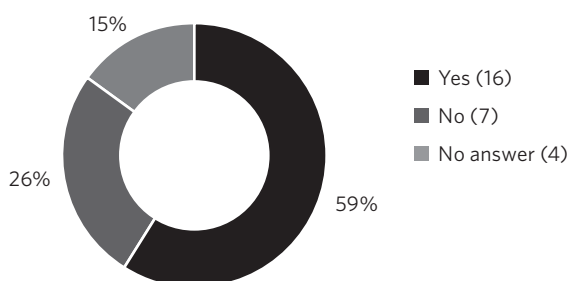
The impact assessment methods used include:

- Meetings and workshops with HEIs where they report about their developments. The outcomes of these meetings are documented and fed into the improvement of the agency's procedures. The assessment, however, is not based on empirical evidence, and will need to be done in a long term perspective;
- Surveys of the individual programmes that have undergone accreditation with the aim of improving the methods and overall satisfaction with the accreditation process. When a programme is granted conditional accreditation, the agency conducts a second visit within one or two years to evaluate the progress made and whether the revised study programme meets the standards of accreditation. In the annual user survey, universities are asked, amongst other things, to which extent external QA has had an impact on their programmes and on their internal QA system;
- System-wide analyses reports. This practice could be improved by asking HEIs more systematically what impact these reports have on their own work.

The respondent agencies who do not currently assess the impact of their reviews have proposed plans on how to do so in the future:
- Developing a research project in cooperation with external partners to analyse the impact of the national accreditation system;
- Better linking the follow-up seminars with the agency's IQA system;
- Planning/collaborating in an international/European project on the impact analysis of external quality assurance of higher education institutions. It is important for agencies to know the impact of their evaluations both internally and externally in order to assess the usefulness of their work and which necessary measures to set up.

3.3 SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), the Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance (AQ Austria), the European Students' Union (ESU), the Evaluationsagentur Baden-Württemberg (evalag) and ENQA presented different perspectives on the topic of impact.

The main points raised from the discussions were:
- Is there evidence that performance indicators are modified/adapted following external QA?
- Without a clear understanding of impact sought, simply designing measures may be the wrong place to start. There needs to be an agreed baseline for an agency, with few having longitudinal assessment of impact in place at this point;
- It is important to be aware that impact can be at different levels, e.g. system-wide and institutional level;
- One of the main challenges is to find ways to measure the impact of enhancement, as opposed to compliance;
- Agencies do not have yet instruments to measure impact. It is not current practice but some activities might help gathering useful data about impact, e.g. follow up procedures, tracking information provided on HEI websites (will it reflect change?) and reflection on the process of self-evaluation;
- Current practices also include public meetings with several institutions, where they present what they have learned and how they have changed, and research projects by PhD students on impact;
- Impact can depend on the nature and seriousness of the recommendations made by review panels. For example, a major failure on standards could be catastrophic for an institution or, an improvement made as a result of a recommendation could improve the experience for students;
- Should impact be measured against more concrete, measurable goals for agencies?
- Could the forthcoming revision of the ESG offer impetus to agencies in addressing the impact of their work?

CONCLUSIONS

FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

The last session of the seminar was devoted to sharing what participants learnt during the seminar and their aspirations and wishes for future IQA activities. All participants were invited to write down their thoughts on post-its which were collected and clustered.

The numerous suggestions for further discussions showed how the seminar facilitated debate and learning:

- How and why it is useful to measure impact of external quality assurance;
- How agencies can organise workshops and follow-up seminars after the external quality assurance process in order to disseminate learning;
- How agencies can share experiences and learn from each other e.g. by working together in pairs and comparing reviews;
- How to use consultants on external reviews in order to facilitate staff development;
- How to let external experts evaluate each other's performance;
- How to work with Ph.D. students to research the impact of external quality assurance;
- How to use students in expert panels;
- How to gather feedback from external stakeholders;
- The use of key performance indicators;
- The importance of paying attention to the quality culture.

SEMINAR OUTCOME AND REFLECTIONS

The survey indicated that all respondent agencies use an IQA system which is in most cases 'tailor-made' for a given agency and based on the Plan-Do-Check-Act approach.

The external review process is described by most agencies as a process leading to learning, development and change. The limitations for change are mainly related to the national legal system.

The majority of agencies currently assess the impact of their own evaluations/accreditations or are planning to do so in the near future within research or European cooperation projects.

Based on the feedback gathered during and after the seminar there is no doubt that the seminar was successful, benefiting from active participation in discussions.

It is worth noticing that the participants have shared experience in many different ways. The IQA seminars offer agencies the chance to go beyond the scope of the event programme and discuss topics of interest in further detail. The exchange of experience with European counterparts is the best way, for staff of agencies, to learn much about different approaches and methodologies. This is probably one important reason why the participants value the interactive IQA seminars.

ANNEX 1. QUALITY ASSURANCE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES IN ASIAN PACIFIC REGION

By Yung-Chi Hou (Angela), Vice President, Asian Pacific Quality Network (APQN). Professor, Graduate School of Educational Leadership and Development, Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan.

ABSTRACT

More than 100 countries across the globe have established education related quality assurance mechanisms of various types based on purposes and processes. For many years, American and some European nations have developed a recognition system of quality assurance (QA) agencies in order to ensure the quality of these agencies. Several international networks of quality assurance in higher education, such as INQAAHE, ENQA and APQN, have also published guidelines or principles of best practices for the self-review of QA agencies. As quality "Guardians", Asian national QA agencies are now being challenged for the quality of their own operation to meet some externally determined international standards. National QA agencies in Asia are attempting to enhance their quality capacity through several internal and external approaches. Hence, the purpose of this study is to explore internal and external quality assurance systems and procedures of QA agencies in Asia. The approaches that national QA agencies adopt to enhance their quality will first be discussed. Then, through an international survey on APQN full members, the challenges and strategies that Asian quality assurance agencies are facing and dealing with will be presented as a conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

More than 100 countries across the globe have established quality assurance (QA) mechanisms of various types based on purposes and processes, including auditing, accreditation, evaluation, ranking, benchmarking, etc. (Salmi and Saroyan 2007; APQN, 2012a). There are several reasons for this rapid growth, including the increasing number of higher education institutions, a need for funding allocation by governments, new public management concepts at rise, the increasing internationalisation of higher education, and cross-border quality assurance services (Woodhouse, 2004). As quality "Guardians" of higher education, QA agencies are required to guarantee "the credibility of the review process and to ensure the objectivity and transparency of their decisions and/or recommendations" (Martin &Stella, 2007, p. 91). In order to enhance their reputation in the academic community, QA agencies are committed to developing a clear framework for evaluation, providing a lot of training for reviewers, partnering with institutions, aiming at winning public confidence, etc. (Martin &Stella, 2007). At the same time, QA agencies are expected to undertake varying internal and external approaches to prove their own accountability as well.

American and some European nations were the first to develop a recognition system of quality assurance agencies in order to ensure the quality of these QA agencies. In 1998, the American recognition organisation, the Council for Higher Education (CHEA), announced

its standards for recognition of American accreditors (CHEA, 2010). In 2005, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) requested full members to be reviewed by the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (ENQA, 2007; ENQA, 2010). Other international networks of quality assurance in higher education, such as the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN), also published guidelines or principles of best practices for the self-review of QA agencies.

Since recently, Asian national QA agencies are being challenged about the quality of their own QA operations to meet international standards. In order to enhance their credibility and accountability, Asian QA agencies are attempting to enhance their quality capacity through joining international networks, undertaking self-review against INQAAHE and APQN principles, conducting meta-evaluations and collaborating with other foreign accreditors (Hou, 2012). Hence, the main purpose of this study is to explore internal and external quality assurance mechanisms of QA agencies in Asia through the international survey of 17 APQN full members. The challenges and strategies that Asian quality assurance agencies are facing and dealing with will be presented as a conclusion.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ASIAN QA AGENCIES

Over the past decade, most Asian countries have developed their national quality assurance systems. According to APQN, Asian governments have set up quality assurance systems for two major reasons: first, to ensure the quality of the study programmes offered by local institutions; and then, to enhance higher education institutions' competitiveness globally (APQN, 2011). Currently, half of the Asian countries have more than two local quality assurance bodies, including Japan, Hong Kong, China, Philippines, and Taiwan (APQN, 2011). Most of these QA agencies have governmental affiliations, particularly in South-East Asia. In contrast, East Asian agencies tend to be non-profit and independent bodies. The principal mandate of Asian national quality assurance agencies is to accredit local higher education institutions and programmes, no matter whether the approach is voluntary or mandatory. Most quality assurance agencies, in fact, do not have the capacity to accredit non-local programmes offered by foreign providers or cross border higher education services provided by local institutions, except Australia and Hong Kong (Hou, 2012).

Asian QA agencies are very diverse (Stella, 2010). Some agencies were just recently established in terms of implementing policies and procedures, like the National Center of Public Accreditation (NCPA) in Russia, established in 2009. Several agencies have been set up for a long time and are trying to make further improvements, such as the Japan University Accreditation Association founded in 1947. There are also a few agencies with well-established policies and procedures that can serve as a model of "best practices" for other agencies, like the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ). Agencies vary from one another also in terms of size and budget. The biggest agency is the Malaysia Qualification Agency (MQA) with 320 staff and the smallest – the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (NZAAU) – employs only one staff member. The annual budget of agencies ranges from 0.03 million USD to 33.3 million USD.

In terms of review subjects, more than 70 per cent of agencies undertake reviews at programme and institutional levels. There is only one agency (NCPA) that undertakes programme reviews. In contrast, the National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE, Japan), the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA, Thailand), the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC, India) and NZAAU mainly conduct institutional evaluations. When it comes

to the number of programmes and institutions accredited each year, most agencies make that information transparent. For example, NAAHE/BAN-PT (Indonesia) accredited a total number of 2,986 programmes and 16 institutions in 2011.

THE ROLE OF INQAAHE AND APQN IN ASSURING QUALITY OF ASIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

It is imperative to understand the effectiveness of activities conducted by the various QA agencies. Demonstrating "quality of quality assurance" has been an area of interest for all quality assurance agencies (APQN, 2010). To assist in the self-review process of national quality assurance agencies, INQAAHE and APQN have developed good principles and practices, namely the Guidelines of Good Practice in Quality Assurance (GGP) and the Chiba Principles respectively. The INQAAHE Guidelines published in 2003 and revised in 2006 are "designed to be used by all quality assurance agencies, whatever their stage of development is" (INQAAHE, 2009, p. 4). The Guidelines of Good Practice have four sections and 12 principles regarding the quality of external quality assurance, institutions and cross-border education. In the first section, it is stated that an external quality assurance agency should have "a system of continuous quality assurance of its own activities that emphasises flexibility in response to the changing nature of higher education, the effectiveness of its operations, and its contribution towards the achievement of its objectives" (INQAAHE, 2009, p.7). The document suggests that QA agencies should conduct internal self-review of their own activities as well as external reviews at regular intervals.

Established in Hong Kong in 2003, the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN), supported by the World Bank and UNESCO, aims at "helping to build alliances between agencies, and assisting countries/territories that do not have a quality assurance agency of their own" (APQN, 2012b). To enhance mutual understanding and opportunities for collaboration in higher education quality assurance agencies, the Chiba Principles were officially announced in 2008 by APQN. It is composed of three main sections – Internal Quality Assurance, Quality Assessment and Quality Assurance Agency. Section C lists the "key principles guiding the structure of quality assurance agencies and their management if they are to effectively conduct assessments for the accreditation and auditing of institutions and programmes" (APQN, 2010, p.3). After many discussions among members, APQN conducted a survey to find out the extent to which the principles were being implemented within APQN membership. The survey results showed that APQN members highly agreed on the eight principles of self-review, including fairness of judgments, clarity in objectives, adequacy of resources, clarity and transparency of policies and procedures, and other good practices such as cooperation and research in relevant areas (Stella, 2010). The report also found that English is an issue for most non-English speaking agencies, which suffered from not being able to communicate and express themselves in English well (Stella, 2010).

The guidelines of INQAAHE and APQN both addressed the importance of quality assurance of agencies. These indicators are of practical use for Asian agencies in reviewing their level of QA operations. Recently, INQAAHE and APQN both launched several projects, such as internship programmes, mutual recognition, and capacity building to ensure that the agencies have access to quality assurance resources and use them "to enhance their operations and add to their credibility and accountability" (APQN, 2011, p. 3).

RESEARCH METHOD AND SUBJECTS

An on-line survey targeting all APQN full members was conducted in 2011 in order to obtain their views on developing internal and external QA mechanisms. Based on INQAAHE and APQN principles, the questionnaires were developed into six sections, including basic

information, external review, internal review, review procedures and items, and challenges and strategies to enhance quality of QA agencies. Seventeen out of 23 members responded, nine from East Asia, and seven from Southeast Asia.

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by country and region.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by country and region

ASIA PACIFIC	COUNTRY	INSTITUTIONS	PERCENTAGE
	Russia	2	11. 76%
	Japan	2	11.76%
East Asia	China	2	11.76%
	Taiwan	2	11.76%
	Hong Kong	1	5.88%
	Subtotal	**9**	**52.94%**
	Cambodia	1	5.88%
	Malaysia	1	5.88%
	Vietnam	1	5.88%
Southeast Asia	Philippines	1	5.88%
	Indonesia	1	5.88%
	Thailand	1	5.88%
	India	1	5.88%
	Subtotal	**7**	**41.17%**
Pacific	New Zealand	1	5.88%
Total		**17**	**100.00%**

In addition, opinions of over 13 heads of Asian's QA agencies were collected through semi-structural interviews that were conducted from February to April 2012.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Internal QA of Asian QA agencies

According to the survey, 14 agencies (72.47%) already have a cyclical self-evaluation or internal QA mechanism in place, mainly every one to four years. Fifty seven per cent of agencies adopted APQN principles for internal reviews of which 43 per cent applied the INQAAHE and APQN guidelines as one of the references for self-assessment. When it comes to the approaches for internal review, the most popular methods are: "using internal reflection mechanism to take actions or react to internal and external recommendations for improvement" (79%), "collecting external feedback via interview or survey from the expert, reviewers or evaluated institutions for future development" (65%), and "collecting feedback and opinions from the staff/council/board" (65%). Only 28 per cent have developed "key performance indicators" for internal evaluation (Table 2). Moreover, other agencies developed advanced approaches to improve their accountability. For example, HKCAAVQ set up "focus group meetings with programme operators" to collect institutional feedback. NAAHE/BAN-PT (Indonesia) conducted a "customer satisfaction survey" to assess the impact of its QA procedures in higher education from a wider perspective. There is one agency that just started to launch an internal system by setting up a Self-evaluation Committee.

Table 2. Number of agencies adopting internal QA mechanism

INTERNAL QA MECHANISM	NO. OF AGENCIES	PERCENTAGE
Internal reflection	11	78.5%
Internal feedback	9	64.3%
External feedback	9	64.3%
Key Performance Indicators	4	28.6%
Other	2	14.3%

As for the transparency of internal QA mechanism, nine agencies replied that they have a published policy for the assurance of their own quality. Seven agencies produce a self-study report and eight publish their internal review reports on their website or in paper format. However, more than 11 agencies (79%) have published an annual report.

EXTERNAL QA OF ASIAN QA AGENCIES

Comparing to a high ratio of developing internal review mechanisms, only 10 agencies (59%) have an external review in place which is compulsory in seven cases. In addition, six agencies are reviewed by government authorities, and two by recognition agencies. The review cycle is primarily from five to six years. Regarding review standards, "effectiveness and efficiency" and "quality assurance criteria and processes **including review standards, on-site visit, setting up of the panel,** publication of a report, follow-up procedure, etc." are taken into account by all agencies. "Adequate and proportional resources" is the second most applied standard (9 agencies). Eight agencies were reviewed against the standards "the mission and goals of quality assurance reflect in the Agency's processes and results" and "**quality of reviewers including** their characteristics, selection and training, no conflicts of interest". "Having in place internal quality assurance procedures to inform and underpin its own development and improvement" is ranked sixth. It was also found that "independence" and "internationalisation" are not regarded as the most important for the credibility and accountability of QA agencies (Table 3).

Table 3. Number of review items selected by agencies

REVIEW ITEMS	NO. OF AGENCIES	PERCENTAGE
Effectiveness and efficiency	10	100%
Quality assurance criteria and processes	10	100%
Resources	9	90%
Mission	8	80%
Quality of reviewers	8	80%
Internal Quality Assurance improvement	7	70%
Independence	6	60%
Internationalisation	6	60%

Most Asian QA agencies agreed that the external review will contribute to enhance their credibility and accountability. Yet, the survey showed that many of them are expected to be reviewed by "external experts or scholars from other QA agencies invited by the agency itself" or "the board members from international QA network" instead of governments. Although as QA agencies, the Asian agencies are well aware of the importance of being "international" and "independent", they are not assessed against these two criteria when

undergoing a review by an international panel. Therefore, it is easy to realise that many Asian QA agencies are facing the challenges of internationalisation and independence in case they are closely affiliated with governments.

CHALLENGES FOR DEVELOPING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL QA MECHANISMS

Implementing internal and external QA of agencies is not a simple task. Asian QA agencies are still facing several challenges, including "hardly making time for IQA of their own", "difficulties in setting criteria and benchmarks for IQA and EQA", and "budget constraints". One agency responded it is easier to implement IQA while another stated that external QA is more difficult as it is more costly". Even so, several agencies still highly agree that internal and external QA are essential for a QA agency's quality. For example, it is believed that "enhancing quality of a QA agency, like NAAHE/BAN-PT, is a must, as a means of continuous quality improvement, especially because the agency is using government budget that is supposed to be managed with care, to maintain the agency's integrity and sustain the organisational growth in response to ever increasing and changing stakeholder's needs and demands". All in all, enhancing quality of QA operations becomes crucial because the agency can not only present its accountability to the public but also promote its reputation worldwide.

CONCLUSION

There is a growing awareness in Asia that QA agencies should carefully consider their quality and reliability and demonstrate them both to stakeholders and the public. Seven agencies have so far conducted both internal and external QA for several years, including MQA, HKCAAVQ, NZUAAU, HEEACT, NAAC, NAAHE/BAN-PT and NIAD-UE. Eight agencies adopted either internal QA or external QA, like NCPA, the General Department of Education Testing and Accreditation (Vietnam) and the Shanghai Education Evaluation Institute. The Accreditation Committee of Cambodia is the only agency that has not started either internal or external reviews yet, but has expressed an interest in doing so.

In order to enhance quality of QA operations, several good strategies have been widely adopted by Asian QA agencies, such as appointing excellent evaluators, developing more effective training programmes for reviewers, fostering international collaboration with other QA agencies, engaging more in research activities on higher education, and even attempting to stabilise their financial resources. In the short term, the public's demand for both internal and external cyclical reviews for ensuring accountability of QA agencies will clearly grow stronger. Therefore, Asian QA agencies are encouraged to make good use of international QA networks' guidelines or good practices in order to develop their capacity and build up trust among institutions, governments and the general public.

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ANNEX 2. PROGRAMME OF THE IQA SEMINAR

**ASSESSING IMPACT:
USING EXTERNAL REVIEWS AND EVALUATIONS FOR INTERNAL
LEARNING**

7-8 JUNE 2012

VALLADOLID, SPAIN

Hosted by the Quality Assurance Agency for the University System in Castilla y León (ACSUCYL)

VENUE
Centro Cultural San Agustin
Pso. De Filipinos, 7 (entrance Oriental museum)
47007 - Valladolid, Spain

**PROGRAMME
DAY 1: 7 JUNE 2012**
Chair: *Sandra Marcos*, ACSUCYL

09.15   Registration

10.00   Welcome speech
                 Sandra Marcos, ACSUCYL
                 Elena Tejedor Viñuela, Director of ACSUCYL
                 Fiona Crozier, QAA, Vice-president of ENQA Board

FIRST SESSION: GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF IQA
                 Chair: *Maiki Udam*, EKKA

10.15   Presentation of the survey results on "different IQA quality models"
                 Maiki Udam, EKKA

Three IQA models of different Agencies:

10.35   Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (EKKA), Estonia
                 Tia Bach, EKKA

10.50   Commission des Titres d'Ingénieur (CTI), France
                 Teresa Sanchez Chaparro, CTI

11.05   Agence pour l'Evaluation de la Qualité de l'Enseignement Supérieur
                 (AEQES), Belgium
                 Eva Jaroszewski, AEQES

11.30	*Coffee Break*
12.00	Parallel breakout sessions
13.00	Feedback in plenary from the breakout sessions
13.30	*Lunch*

SECOND SESSION: THE IMPACT OF EXTERNAL REVIEWS ON AGENCIES
Chair: *Christian Moldt*, EVA

14.30	ENQA's experience on the impact of external reviews on agencies: main findings on external reviews regarding IQA and issues arising from it. *Fiona Crozier*, QAA, Vice-president of ENQA Board
14.50	Presentation of the survey results on the "impact of external reviews" *Christian Moldt*, EVA

Using external evaluation for improving internal quality in different Agencies:

15.20	Swiss Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (OAQ), Switzerland *Berchtold Von Steiger*, OAQ
15.35	*Angela Yung Chi Hou*, Dean of the Office of Research & Development Higher Education Evaluation & Accreditation Council of Taiwan APQN Board Member Professor of Fu Jen Catholic University
16.00	Parallel breakout sessions (coffee served)
17.00	Feedback in plenary from the breakout sessions
17.30 – 17.45	Presentations of nominees for the IQA Steering Group elections
19.30	Social programme
21.00	*Dinner*

DAY 2: 8 JUNE 2012
09.00   IQA Steering Group Elections

THIRD SESSION: ASSESSING IMPACT OF EVALUATIONS FOR INTERNAL LEARNING
             Chair: *Matti Kajaste*, FINHEEC

09.15   Presentation of the survey results on "Evaluation of impact assessment"
             Matti Kajaste, FINHEEC

The experiences of three agencies assessing external impact:

09.30   Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) & Higher Education & Training
             Awards Council (HETAC), Ireland
             Karena Maguire, HETAC

09.55   Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance (AQA), Austria
             Dietlinde Kastelliz, AQA

10.10   Student view on the impact of external quality assurance
             Moritz Malkamper, European Students' Union (ESU)

10.35   *Coffee Break*

10.55   Parallel breakout sessions

11.55   Feedback in plenary from the breakout sessions-

12:25   Presentation of the IMPALA project
             Prof. Dr. Theodor Leiber, EVALAG

12.45   The Impact of QA: an introduction to the ENQA Working Groups
             Josep Grifoll, ENQA

13.00 – 13.30 End Session with feedback on the future of IQA
             Chair: *Douglas Blackstock*, QAA

THIS REPORT is based on the annual ENQA Internal Quality Assurance seminar held on 7-8 June 2012 in Valladolid, Spain, on the theme of Assessing impact: Using external reviews and evaluations for Internal Learning.