



Developmental Areas for APQN

Prof. Antony Stella
Commissioner
Commission for Academic Accreditation – UAE

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APQN

- Simple beginning as an interest group in 2001
- Project based but no money
- Successful development with external funding
- Notable achievements in capacity development in QA
- Pro-active network - Positive external evaluation
- Benefit of learning from others, especially INQAAHE



APQN...(contd)

- Diverse membership
- Collegiality amidst differences
- Lack of political will
- As a network, APQN has significant experience and pooled knowledge



Over the past fifteen years: Some positive developments in QA

1. Common understanding of Quality and Quality Assurance
 - Quoting what authors wrote 20 years ago on ambiguities in defining Quality has reduced.
 - Acknowledgement of its multidimensionality and diversity in approaches – Fitness for purpose
 - QA professionals speak a similar language
 - QA is a profession by itself



Over the past fifteen years...

2. Expanding scope

- Distance education, online courses and e-learning
- Life Long Learning, Recognition of Prior Learning
- Transnational Education
- Non-national, private and for-profit higher education
- Community Engagement



Over the past fifteen years...

3. More sophistication in data based evaluation
 - Benchmarks
 - Indicators
 - Standards



Over the past fifteen years...

4. Learning from each other and working together
 - QA networks and sub networks
 - Special interest groups
 - Joint projects



Criticisms and Challenges

1. QA Overload?

- Evaluation bureaucracy
- Compliance culture
- Diminishing returns
- Reduction in cost effectiveness
- Impact of EQA
- Upholding relevance



Criticisms and Challenges

2. Too many players: Multiple and overlapping entities
3. Lack of Contextualization in some emerging economies - Tension between 'international approach' and 'local interests'
4. Accreditation Mills
5. Unhealthy Influence of Rankings



Areas that need attention

1. Efficient use of essential data
2. Responding to stakeholder expectations
3. Politics of QA
4. NQF and NIC
5. QA of QA
6. International dimensions of QA
7. Carrying forward the APQN projects



1. Data

Fifty years ago...

criticism that people were making decisions on “admission policy, size of universities, staff-student ratios, content of courses and similar issues based on dubious assumptions, scrappy data and mere hunch”

Today, the wheel has turned.

- Proliferation of data collection
- From data free to data overload

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QA agencies constantly ask for 'evidence'
Unintentional compliance culture?

QA agencies should insist that institutions collect only essential data and use them efficiently
Promote healthy debates on new developments
– eg Indicators and Learning Outcomes

Indicators should facilitate questioning and reflection
Goodhart's law: "when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure"

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Related to this is the 'mis-use' of data: Eg Ranking

QA agencies have given spurious validity to rankings by taking the stand that 'rankings are here to stay'

Undo the damage of rankings

- More information in the public domain
- Comparable data (eg CHEDS in UAE)
- Promoting 'quality literacy'
- Careful use of terminology

APQN project on QA Information Portal?



2. Meeting stakeholder expectations

To what extent? Who are the various stakeholders?

Without compromising the primary objective
eg. Different types of reports from a single process

New models of learning (eg OER and MOOC) need
new ways of QA

QA principles are the same – is not valid here!



3. Politics of QA

- In Asia Pacific, governments are the major funding sources for HE and QA
- Will 'Government at arm's length' work here?
- Balancing "Independence" and "impact"
- Autonomy vs collaboration
- Europe is a positive model
- Lack of political will for a regional approach in QA in Asia Pacific
- Other examples: ASEAN...



4. Slow developments in the region

Robust national data collection system

National Qualifications Framework

- Increasing role for QA agencies in shaping the Regional Convention since 2000
- Signatories to the Regional Convention made a commitment to three areas – national data centre, NQF, and QA.
- QF - APQN has been organizing workshops around NQF but the impact is not yet visible



5. Demonstrating quality of quality assurance

- INQAAHE GGP
- APQN Membership Criteria
- Chiba Principles
- Only a few APQN members have taken that path
- Informal methods that are not robust prevail

Will an Asia Pacific Quality Register
make a difference?



6. International dimensions of quality assurance

- HE sector is increasingly internationalised but not EQA
- Eg Mutual Recognition of QA decisions, Joint QA activities, Benchmarking initiatives,are sporadic.
- Again Europe has some good examples (eg ECA)
- APQN's database of reviewers – how much of that has been used?



7. Taking forward the APQN projects



Thank you!

Antony.stella@mohesr.gov.ae

<http://www.caa.ae>