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Strengthening World Bank Support for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education in East Asia and the Pacific

by

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> **…developing countries are turning to regionalism as a tool for development.**
> *Shiff and Winters, 2003*

Regional Integration and Development, a recent co-publication by the World Bank and Oxford University Press introduces the realization long suspected that *regionalism* is playing a major role in countries adopting: a more outward-looking stance, a greater liberalization of national policy and a sense of being a more equal partner with other countries. (Shiff and Winters, 2003) In the East Asia and the Pacific region, activities related to global, regional and bilateral trade agreements; regional and international associations; and inter-governmental organizations are contributing to an increasing sense of connection and, through these closer relationships, a new form of "peer pressure" to enhance domestic policy and practice.

National higher education systems are not immune to the dynamics of regionalism. To the contrary, higher education by its basic nature of inquiry, has traditionally sought to respond to changing circumstances nationally and has looked beyond the limits of national borders to seek new truths and ways in which the educational enterprise can continuously improve itself. With the rise of regionalism and an increased sense of their status in the global marketplace, countries are recognizing the critical role played by higher education in economic development. Indeed, the 1998-99 *World Development Study* claimed that "Knowledge has become the most important factor in economic development." The Bank concurs:

> *The last decade of the 20th century saw significant changes in the global environment that, in one way or another, bear heavily on the role, functions, shape and the mode of operation of tertiary education systems all over the world, including those in developing countries…Among the most influential changes are the increasing importance of knowledge as a driver of growth in the context of the global economy, the information and communication revolution, the emergence of a worldwide labor market, and global sociopolitical transformations.* (World Bank *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education, 2002)*

The *quality* of the higher education sector, and how that quality is defined, evaluated and monitored is therefore key not only to the social and economic well-being of a nation-state, but is a determining factor related to the status of that higher education system within a region, and the overall quality of a region's higher education sector in a global context:

> *As knowledge becomes more important, so does higher education…The quality of knowledge generated within higher education institutions, and its availability to the wider economy, is becoming increasingly critical to national competitiveness.*
>
> *(Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise, 2000)*

I. *Quality Assurance in Higher Education*

Quality assurance may relate to a program, an institution or a whole higher education system. In each case, quality assurance is all those attitudes, objects, actions and procedures which, through their existence and use, and together with the quality control activities, ensure that appropriate academic standards are being maintained and enhanced in and by each program. Quality assurance extends to making the process and standards known to the educational community and the public at large.

International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

Countries with visions of economic growth are learning that a prerequisite of that growth is more of their population educated at higher levels. This translates into larger percentages of public funds designated for higher education and/or encouraging foreign education providers to enter the country and confer academic degrees. With increased funding and a growing number of degree granting entities come an increased concern by governments to be reassured on at least three counts:

(1) Are the institutions of higher education planning to produce the graduates required by society (i.e., are their *objectives appropriate*?);

(2) Is the money invested being spent well and are the institutions running efficiently (i.e., are they being *managed well*?)

(3) Are the institutions producing the desired graduates (i.e., are they *operating effectively)?*

These concerns have led to an evolving concept of *quality*. Traditionally, the word quality was associated with excellence or outstanding performance. The United States, for example, began using quality assurance in the form of accreditation in the latter nineteenth century when it was difficult to distinguish where secondary education ended and tertiary education began. Yale and Harvard Universities were designated as the singular model of excellence by a newly organized New England Association of Schools and Colleges, and all institutions that chose to be recognized as tertiary had to fit the single model. By the advent of *mass education* beginning in North America in the late 1960's and in full swing in Europe by the beginning of the 1990's, the notion of quality had evolved into "fitness for purpose", allowing the institution to demonstrate the achievement of objectives according to the purpose of its mission. This definition allowed greater diversity in the types of institutions necessary for educating a broader segment of society, as opposed to cloning them to a singular model.

Prior to the mass education movement in Europe in the 1990's, external quality review existed essentially in the United States (for all institutions of postsecondary and higher education) and in the United Kingdom (for the polytechnic but not the university sector). In the last dozen years, the number of countries which have embraced quality assurance as a mode of evaluating the quality of its higher education sector has increased to approximately 60 in every region of the world, making it an important and widely used tool for evaluating and improving the quality of higher education and for providing the government, educational establishment, students and employers with critical information about the quality of education offered at a particular institution and comparative information about the quality of a higher education system as a whole.

A. Purposes of Quality Assurance

In its multiple roles, quality assurance serves both the country and higher education community. Quality assurance:

- *Defines higher education*
  The foundation of quality assurance consists of standards or criteria for quality that are agreed upon by the communities of interest (e.g., government, higher education institutions, the professions, employers).

- *Assists in reform efforts*
  The standards for quality can help define expectations for higher education institutions and their programs – i.e, what they are expected to become.

- *Provides a basis for future planning*
  With the standards as anchors for definition, the institution is clearer about its present in order to plan better for its future.

- *Provides a structure for educational improvement*
  The purposes of quality assurance are not only for purposes of assessing, but are also for purposes of enhancing the level of educational quality.

- *Maximizes communication across education*
  A national set of standards and a process for applying them enhances a country's ability to establish comparative data across its system of higher education, and a student's ability to move from secondary to tertiary and within tertiary education.

- *Assists users to make better decisions*

B. Who are the users and uses of quality assurance?

The primary users of quality assurance include government, students, employers and funding organizations, each of which use the process and outcomes for their own purposes:

Users	Uses
GOVERNMENT	To define higher education country-wide
	To assure quality higher education for the citizenry
	To assure a quality labor force
	To determine which institutions and programs receive public funding
	To accept into civil service only those graduated from accredited institutions
	To determine which institutions receive research funding
	To generally use quality assurance as a means of consumer protection
STUDENTS	To assist in selecting an institution for study
	To ensure transfer between accredited institutions
	To ensure admission at the graduate level in a different institution from undergraduate degree
	To assist in employment, particularly in civil service and in the professions
EMPOYERS	To assure qualified employees
FUNDING ORGANIZATIONS	To determine eligible institutions
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION	To improve institutional information and data
	To enhance institutional planning
	To determine membership in certain organizations
	To facilitate transfer schemes
	To assure a qualified student body

C. Modes of Quality Assurance

There are three primary modes of quality assurance globally: assessment, audit and accreditation. Their definitions are not sharp and when used concurrently, their functions sometimes overlap within a national system. Further, within these modes, additional quality assurance activities are practiced such as ranking, the use of performance indicators and testing/examinations. Among some private institutions throughout Asia, it is a marketing trend to undergo an ISO 9000 quality review which, because it was designed for application in industry, assists in measuring the educational "inputs" and "process" of an institution. However, there is no known quality assurance system in Asia which incorporates ISO 9000 in its own national process.

Assessment, audit and accreditation are each operative to some extent in the region of East Asia and the Pacific:

Mode 1: Assessment

Assessment is an evaluation which results in a grade, whether numeric (e.g., a percentage or a shorter scale of, for example, 1 through 4); literal (e.g., A to F) or descriptive (excellent, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory). Assessment asks "how good are your outputs?" Assessment in and of itself typically does not include the dual purpose of quality improvement, which is necessary in a developing context. Further, assessment has a tendency to be more dependent on quantitative rather than qualitative measurement (e.g., it may ask how many books are in the library rather than finding out whether these books are: current, relevant to the curriculum and are read by the students and teaching staff). In the region, India and China use assessment (in the form of grading Indian institutions or Chinese teachers) in combination with the process of accreditation.

Mode 2: Audit

An audit is a check on what an institution explicitly or implicitly claims about itself. The institution claims what it will do and a quality audit checks the extent to which the institution is achieving its own objectives. Audit asks, "how well are you doing what you say you are doing?" Governments are more likely to prefer accreditation over audit, so that the auditing process is now found most typically in well-established higher education systems with strong traditions of self-evaluation internal to the institutions. In the region, Australia and New Zealand use the process of audit.

Mode 3: Accreditation

Accreditation is an evaluation of whether an institution qualifies for a certain status and is the primary choice of governments for national systems of quality assurance. This status may have implications for the institution itself (e.g., permission to operate or eligibility for external funding) and/or its students (e.g., eligibility for grants or a professional degree). Accreditation asks "are you good enough to be approved (to confer degrees)?" Accreditation has a dual purpose:

(1) quality assessment as well as (2) quality improvement and should take into consideration inputs (e.g., how many volumes are in the library) but not without outcomes (e.g., how many titles are in the library; are they current, relevant and used).

Generally speaking, an institution of higher education or its programs which is accredited is found to:

1. Have educationally appropriate objectives as defined over time by the higher education community;
2. Have the financial, human and physical resources needed to achieve these objectives;
3. Have demonstrated that it is achieving these objectives now; and
4. Have provided sufficient evidence to support the belief and it will continue to achieve its objectives for some reasonable time into the future.

Of the three modes, the most widely used regionally and globally and the most beneficial for purposes of development and capacity building is <u>Mode 3: Accreditation</u>. Accreditation in East Asia and the Pacific region takes place in: Cambodia*, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines and Vietnam**, and is the aspiration of Thailand. In an article comparing the three primary modes, Woodhouse uses a "five-point checking sequence" for comparison purposes:

1. Are the higher education institution's objectives appropriate?
2. Are its plans suitable for these objectives?
3. Do its actions conform to its plans?
4. Are its actions effective in achieving its objectives?
5. What is the measure of the objectives?

Woodhouse attests that when usually applied, assessment addresses #5; audit addresses #'s 2 and 3 but accreditation addresses #'s 1 through 4. (Woodhouse, 1999) Audit is used most typically in mature systems of higher education and assessment is typically used in tandem with accreditation and audit. Accreditation, on the other hand, is a process which can be used in both developing and mature systems of higher education and has been the process of choice among World Bank higher education projects throughout the last decade (e.g., Romania, Hungary, China, Argentina, Chile, Vietnam, Cambodia and others).

*By Royal Kret April 2003 [not included in this study]
** Pending final regulations

[***<u>Note:</u>*** The three primary modes of assessment, audit and accreditation apply to the *quality assurance* of institutions of higher education and their programs. They should not be confused with licensure and certification which attest to the *competency assurance* of the individual graduate/professional. The number of graduates who achieve licensure

(typically a governmental recognition of an individual to practice a certain profession) or certification (typically a non-governmental recognition of an individual to continue to practice a certain profession) can be used as outcome indicators of quality of an institution or program but are not free-standing modes of quality assurance. (Lenn, 1987)]

D. Types of Accreditation: Institutional and Programmatic

Institutional accreditation focuses on the institution as a whole, giving attention not only to the overall educational program but to such areas as:

- Mission
- Governance
- Effective management
- Academic Program
- Teaching Staff
- Learning Resources (library, laboratories and educational technology)
- Students
- Student Services
- Physical Facilities
- Financial Resources

The standards relate to the achievement of the institutional mission and objectives. The criteria are broad, as is demanded by the focus on the whole institution and by the potential presence of institutions of widely different purposes and scopes (e.g., universities, colleges, polytechnics, community colleges). The criteria also provide encouragement to institutions to try innovative curricula and procedures and adopt them when proven successful.

Programmatic accreditation focuses on a degree granting program within an institution of higher education which typically prepares professionals or special occupations. Each program has its own distinctive definitions of eligibility, criteria or standards for accreditation. These are most effective when they are developed through the cooperation of both educators and current practitioners as well as other interested parties such as employers and public agencies. Sought are reasonable conditions for achieving the objectives of satisfactory quality. The crucial dimension of quality in program accreditation is the adequacy of the educational program as it related to professional expectations and requirements for entry and practice in a field (e.g., medical education leading to becoming a physician). During the external review process, the reviewers may review the relationship of the program to the institution for purposes of program maintenance and development.

Vital to both institutional and programmatic accreditation is the institution of higher education being able to ascertain where it is in order that it can move to where it needs to go. Quality standards and criteria can take many forms, but they generally follow a generic set of questions that can be posed for this purpose:

■What are the institution's/program's purposes and goals?
■Are they known to the members of the academic community?
■What do you know about changes in the environment which could affect the goals?
■Is it possible to improve the links between stakeholder needs and the goals?
■Do the purposes and goals provide an adequate framework for institutional/ programmatic evaluation?
■Where do you want to go?
■What is necessary to get there?
■What are the possible alternatives for action?
■What is needed to implement the various alternatives for action?
■Is the institution able to cover those costs?

[**_Note:_** An additional way in which standards can be developed for programs is through a national (and typically governmental) _qualifications framework._ The two national systems in Asia that employ qualifications frameworks for higher education are New Zealand and Australia. In both of these cases, the quality assurance mode is _audit._ Hong Kong is currently in the process of establishing a qualifications framework for postsecondary (occupational/vocational) education. As an example, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority describes itself as having a national qualifications framework designed to provide:

- _nationally recognised, consistent standards and qualifications; and_
- _recognition and credit for all learning of knowledge and skills._

Framework qualifications are quality assured and nationally recognised. Administered by the Qualifications Authority, the Framework is a way of structuring national qualifications in a three-pronged quality system: (1) national standards are registered; (2) the standards are used by accrediting organizations; and (3) a moderation system ensures national consistency.

E. Four Steps of Accreditation

Global practice in accreditation typically follows four steps:

1. **Development of Standards**
   Fundamental to the process of accreditation is agreement on a set of standards sponsored by a national accrediting body, which are applied evenly to all institutions of higher education or their programs in the country. These standards, whether institutional or programmatic accreditation, generally follow the component list for institutional accreditation as above. Again, the standards for programmatic accreditation are more discreet given their specialization.

2. **Self-Evaluation**

    The institution or program undergoing the process is asked to respond to the standards in a written report. It is typical that several months are allowed for this process to assure that the self-evaluation includes as much of the community as possible (e.g., administrative and teaching staff, students, employers, etc.).

3. **External Review**

    A team of experts, representative of the national higher education community (and professional community in the case of programmatic accreditation) review the self-evaluation report prepared by the institution as compared to the standards for accreditation and visit the institution/program for purposes of evaluating the extent to which the institution/program is doing what it says it is doing.

4. **Accreditation Decision**

    Based on the self-evaluation and the feedback of the external reviewers, a decision is reached by the national accreditation body as to whether the institution or program is: accredited, not accredited, or is on probation for a certain period of time during which improvements have to be made. An institution or program which is denied accreditation can experience: the cessation of public or private funding; its graduates being unqualified to enter the profession; a loss of status in the national higher education community.

F. National Accreditation Bodies

Organization and Funding. National accreditation bodies come in four major modes of organization and funding. Regardless of mode, ***it is optimal if not essential that accrediting bodies have <u>independence</u> in decision-making*** in order to be credible, trustworthy and respected. For example, the national accreditation body can be "centralized governmental" (such as Australia which has as its members the education ministries of the states/territories) and still have independence in decision-making as long as those in government who use the outcome of the decision/accreditation for such matters as: authorizing operation or funding are *not* a part of the decision-making process leading to accreditation. *An overt conflict of interest at any level of accreditation, but particularly at the national level, neutralizes independence and its overall effectiveness.*

The two predominant modes of organization for accreditation worldwide include Centralized Governmental and Quasi-Governmental. In both, funding is derived from government. But of these two, the one which is *most* likely to remain independent in its decision-making in any political setting is the quasi-governmental mode, although the Australians would argue that their governmental process is a worthy model for their needs. Of most national systems established through participation in a World Bank higher education project, the predominant mode has been quasi-governmental (e.g., Romania, Hungary, Malaysia, Indonesia, Argentina, Chile). *However,* in systems which

are generally centrist in nature; do not (yet) have a large private sector and there is little distinction between government and higher education, a governmental process of quality assurance (even without independence of decision-making) is better than no process at all (e.g., China, Vietnam and Mongolia).

1. **Centralized Governmental**
   The national accrediting body is typically housed in or under the Ministry of Education and is clearly a governmental function. In the case of Australia, the national accrediting body is composed of Territory/State ministers of education. Other models include Germany, Russia and China, the latter evolving toward Provincial and Municipal (e.g., Beijing and Shanghai) accrediting agencies. Not all governmental models can claim independent decision making in the process of accreditation.

2. **Quasi-Governmental**
   The national accrediting body is paid for by government but is "owned" (administered) by the institutions of higher education. This is the predominant model of accreditation in Eastern/Central Europe (Romania, Hungary, Estonia) which, when accreditation began in the region in the early 1990's, ensured the independence of the process from a legacy of centrist decision-making.

The two lesser used modes of organization for accreditation include Non-Governmental and Parallel Governmental and Non-Governmental, each of which have evolved in national contexts which have not been replicated worldwide:

3. **Non-Governmental**
   Although professional accreditation typically is independent and non-governmental, there are few truly independent and non-governmental models of institutional accreditation. One of these is the accrediting system in the United States, which accredits 6,000 institutions of postsecondary and higher education and tens of thousands of programs all through non-governmental bodies which are a combination of national and regional. Another is the auditing process administered by the New Zealand Vice Chancellor's Association. In these cases the funding for the accrediting body and process is derived from the institutions themselves. Americans with an historical disdain for government would tend to argue that the only independence is complete independence from government, including funding. However, for most national settings, the funding of the institutions themselves is derived from the government and makes alternative means of financial independence improbable.

4. **Parallel Governmental and Non-Governmental**
   In some countries, a combination of governmental and non-governmental accreditation exists. For example, three parallel forms have existed simultaneously in the Netherlands: (1) central governmental institutional accreditation; (2) non-governmental professional accreditation administered by a single body sponsored by the professions themselves, and (3) non-governmental

accreditation administered by the association of vice chancellors/rectors and funded by the institutions (which are, in turn, funded by government). In Canada, institutional accreditation is carried out by provincial governments, while professional accreditation is administered on a nation-wide basis by non-governmental professional associations.

Another model of governmental and non-governmental activity is found in countries which have elected to nationally "recognize" accrediting bodies which, in turn, carry out the accrediting functions. In the United States where all accreditation is non-governmental, this central recognition function is carried out not only by the federal government but also by a national non-governmental recognizing body. In Chile, the governmental program accreditation body has developed a national recognition system for professional organizations which will carry out accreditation of professional education.

G. Responsibilities of National Accrediting Bodies

The following constitutes responsibilities typical of national accrediting bodies. The national body, composed of any combination of representatives of government, institutions of higher education and the public, is served by a central secretariat whose business is to provide staff support for these various functions. In a rough chronological order from time of founding, typical responsibilities include:

- Developing standards of quality in consultation with institutions and major users

- Developing and updating policy manuals of accreditation for national body and institutional use

- Developing a registry of external reviewers

- Scheduling external review of institutions/programs

- Maintaining records of accreditation activity

- Maintaining a national database of comparative institutional data

- Conducting training programs for:

  - National accrediting body members
  - Institutions in the process of self-evaluation
  - External reviewers in the process of site visit

- Coordinating special committees for professional education (engineering, medicine, law, business, etc.)

- Cooperating with regional and international quality assurance bodies and organizations

- Cooperating with national educational and professional agencies and organizations

- Making public (publicizing) quality assurance decisions

- Evaluating and renewing the accrediting process

Two of the largest responsibilities of a national accrediting body are to: (1) select and (2) train *external evaluators*, the primary *ambassadors* of the accrediting process. It is the external evaluators who: review the institution/program's self evaluation; conduct a site visit and provide a report (and in some cases a recommendation for accreditation) to the national accrediting body. It is therefore critical that the national body select for these positions a relatively large corps of persons from the higher education and professional community who are:

- Credible in their fields
- Without conflicts of interest
- Flexible and empathetic to diverse educational missions
- Fair and objective
- Advisory
- Trusted

Depending on the size of the higher education system, the selection and the maintenance of the external reviewer list can be a major task, but the training of these people who are at the core of the accrediting process can be an expensive and time-consuming challenge to the secretariat/national accrediting body. The training, however, is necessary to:

- Socialize the external reviewers to the process;
- Provide a broader forum for the continuing interpretation of the standards in the academic community; and
- Provide continuity in the interpretation and application of the standards for quality.

H. Politics of Quality Assurance

There are some typical politics related to quality assurance which appear to be common to countries worldwide. Among them are:

1. **A Bias Against Private Higher Education**

Until the advent of mass education, the public sector has, with few exceptions (e.g., the United States and countries in South America) had a monopoly on national higher education systems. Only those institutions of higher education funded by the State are considered of quality because it is assumed that the State is providing its citizenry the best higher education possible. Although this mythology is eroding as the result of nations being unable to keep up with rising demand thus necessitating the influx of private providers (which are by most current accounts degree granting components of other nations' public institutions), there is a tendency for governments to want to apply a national quality assurance system solely on private institutions. This is a major mistake. A nation's institutions of higher education should be viewed as a system in which *all institutions* should be subject to the same standards of quality. It is common knowledge that not all public institutions are good and not all private institutions are bad. It is a country's primary responsibility to assure that a quality higher education is provided, regardless of the public or private status of the provider.

2. **A Tendency Toward Quantitative Measurement**
Generally speaking, immature quality assurance processes have a tendency to be quantitative in evaluation whereas mature systems tend toward qualitative evaluation. It is easier to count things and assume that the outcome has something to do with quality when it may have no bearing at all. The number of teaching staff, for example, does not tell whether each is qualified in his/her field; is active in a professional development program provided by the institution; is employed at other higher education institutions in the country; is a good teacher or produces graduates who are readily employed and valued in the workplace. The square meters of a classroom does not tell if learning is taking place; Care needs to be taken in new systems to assure a healthy balance of quantitative and qualitative measurement.

3. **A Fuzzy Definition of Conflict of Interest**
It is imperative for accreditation to be without conflict of interest in order that its outcomes are trusted and respected by its large number of users. In countries with developing legal systems or a legacy of centrist ideology, care needs to be taken to assure that the process is as objective and fair as possible. There are multiple ways in which this trust can be violated: through the appointment of an "old guard" which is not representative of modern higher education on the national commission; through the use of external reviewers who are known to be biased against certain types of institutions; or by having the decision making process leading to the status of accreditation led by those who are not independent (such as the governmental funding body making accreditation decisions upon which funding is determined).

4. **Ranking Institutions**
Although there are countries which claim that they can publicly rank institutions (either by number or grade) without consequence, it is generally believed that

avoiding ranking is the less divisive course in the long term development of a system of higher education. Asian countries in particular have a propensity for ranking institutions both inside and outside of their national systems. In some Asian countries, for example, it is strongly believed (likely based on their own national tendency toward ranking) that there exist not 3,000 but perhaps a dozen quality degree granting institutions of higher education in the United States. There further is a tendency in some countries for institutions to achieve top rankings based on historical precedence and remain at that rank regardless of current objective quality reviews.

To avoid ranking is not to say that there should not be *gradations or levels* of accreditation. Several systems employ at least a three status system: "accredited" (typically for a specified period of time no less than three and no more than seven to ten years; five being a reasonable time period for most systems); "probation" (for a reasonable time period less than accreditation during which certain weaknesses are to be addressed) and "not accredited" (which usually means that the institution or program needs to apply again after a certain period of time; or the status leads to a conclusion of educational activity).

5. Professional Accreditation
Some industrialized countries have a bias against what they consider the self-serving nature of the professions (the "guilds") while developing countries have a tendency to ignore quality issues in the professions altogether. While the academic disciplines have retained the interest of new accrediting systems, there is a tendency to postpone the need to pay attention to professional education. Often, there is not a strong professional body advocating a certain level of practice in the country. When this is the case, it should be the responsibility of the national accrediting body to form a specialized committee for that profession (best composed of practitioners and academics) and nurture the development of professional standards and/or develop a national qualifications framework (as discussed earlier). Where strong professional bodies exist, they should be co-opted by the national accrediting body to help it review professional education programs. In more mature stages, the national accrediting body can "recognize" the "professional accreditors" which will, in turn, carry out their specialized processes on relevant programs.

6.Setting the Standards Too High or Too Low
Accreditation provides a cut-off point or threshold that can be as high or as low as desired. Accreditation is a gatekeeper role, and it is no criticism of an accreditor to observe that it has little to say to an institution that is very far above the quality threshold. A cut-off point that is too low leads to a situation of *caveat emptor* (buyer beware) while a cut-off that is too high is safer for users but can deter innovation and new institutions. (Woodhouse, 1999)

II. The Status of Quality Assurance in East Asia and the Pacific Region

As a gauge for the growth of quality assurance in higher education globally, the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education was founded in 1991 with 20 member countries. In 2003, the number of member countries that can claim a national quality assurance system is 60. This growth is mirrored in East Asia and the Pacific region. Of the 15 *major national* quality assurance bodies currently operating in 13 countries in the region, 12 were founded since 1991 and 11 of those since 1994. The 13 countries and their major national quality assurance bodies include:

- **Australia**: Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA)

- **Hong Kong**: Hong Kong Council on Academic Accreditation (HKCAA)

- **India**: National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)
  [*Note:* India is not among the countries of the World Bank's East Asia and the Pacific region. However, it is included in this study because it is a member of the "Asia-Pacific" regional network of accreditors, a sub-network of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education. India's accreditable universe is larger than any other in the region.]

- **Indonesia**: The National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN)

- **Japan:**
  - National Institution for Academic Degrees (Governmental) NIAD
  - Japan University Accreditation Association (Non-governmental) JUAA

- **Korea:** The Korean Council for University Education

- **Malaysia:** National Accreditation Board (LAN)

- **Mongolia:** National Council on Higher Education Accreditation

- **New Zealand:** Academic Audit Unit (AAU)

- **People's Republic of China:** a combination of centralized and decentralized quality assurance bodies

- **Philippines:** [primary bodies only]
  - Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (Governmental) AACCUP
  - Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (Non-governmental) PAASCU

- **Thailand:** Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment, Ministry of University Affairs (ONESQA)

- **Vietnam:** Quality Assurance Unit (QA Unit)

In addition to these, there is outstanding legislation in **Cambodia** with the potential for establishing a national accrediting council for public and private higher education. A World Bank credit is possible upon appropriate passage of this act.

[*:* In earlier Bank publications, quality assurance systems were claimed in Australia and Singapore. Although Australian universities have historically been authorized by a State or Territory to confer degrees and call themselves universities, the universities have traditionally claimed themselves to be "self-accrediting". Only in 2001 did the Australian government establish a central quality assurance body of Australian higher education (the Australian Universities Quality Agency). Similarly, Singapore is listed as having a quality assurance body. It is probable that some form of quality control activity takes place out of Singapore's Ministry of Education, and there are Offices of Quality Assurance internal to such institutions as the National University of Singapore. But an "independent" or "semi-autonomous" body that has developed higher education standards and monitors the quality of Singapore's public institutions and programs of higher education is not known to exist. Singapore higher education is known to use foreign quality assurance bodies in a number of its professional schools such as medicine or management. At the time of this report's publication, Singapore is planning on establishing an accreditation process for *private* higher education. The Singapore Accreditation Council is to be administered out of the Ministry of Economy and not out of the Ministry of Education.]

A. General Characteristics of the Region's Quality Assurance Bodies

Attached to this report is a substantial *Appendix* which describes in some detail the quality assurance body(ies) of 13 countries in East Asia and the Pacific region. For each body, the following information is provided:

- Contact Information
- Legal Establishment of Body
- Relationship to Stakeholders
- Information about the Body Itself
- Quality Assurance Activity

Key characteristics of the region's quality assurance bodies found in the Appendix is presented in comparative form below in ***Figure 1: National Quality Assurance Bodies in East Asia and the Pacific: General Characteristics***. For this purpose, China is counted as a single quality assurance system and only major national bodies are listed for countries where multiple bodies exist (e.g., Japan and Philippines). Figure 1 indicates that of the 15 major national quality assurance bodies in the 13 countries of the region:

- **Founding:**
  Twelve were founded by government, and three by universities (the latter being **Japan'**s JUAA, **New Zealand's** QAA and the **Philippines'** PAASCU).

- **Independence:**
  All but **China**, **Mongolia** and **Vietnam** (models of "Centralized Government" bodies described earlier) claim some level of independence/autonomy from government; however, it is difficult to ascertain just what "independent" means in some national contexts. Examples include: **Japan's** NIAD, **Korea's** KCUE, **Philippine's** AACCUP, and **Thailand's** ONESQA. All of these are governmental bodies but their independence from government decision-making in higher education would need closer scrutiny than this study to determine the level of autonomy. Therefore, the category, "Quasi-Governmental" has been avoided in Figure 1. As described earlier in this section, the non-governmental bodies (the 3 founded by the universities listed above) can claim the greatest independence in decision-making.

- **Government Represented on National Body:**
  Governmental officials, such as from the Ministry of Education either sit on or chair the national bodies in **Australia, China, Korea, Mongolia**, the AACCUP in the **Philippines**, **Thailand** and, although pending policy development, most probably in **Vietnam.** As stated earlier, the level of independence maintained by the national body depends on *who* from government sits on the national body. As examples, the Minister of Education and/or those in charge of funding institutions usually do not sit on national accrediting bodies so that an apparent conflict of interest is avoided.

- **Funding:**
  - The 3 founded by universities are funded by the universities
  - 6 are funded by <u>both</u> government (for the organization) and the institutions of higher education (for the external review processes)
  - In addition to receiving funding from government and institutions, Hong Kong receives additional fees from consulting and other services.

- **International Participation on Body or in Process:**
  Of the 15, **Hong Kong** (one quarter of the Council members), NIAD of **Japan (**one member: head of the bilateral Fulbright organization) and **New Zealand's** Academic Audit Unit have international members serving on the national body. **Australia** and **Hong Kong** use international external reviewers in their processes. (Among the recommendations of this study is provision for a regional pool of external reviewers for the dual purposes of capacity building and building closer regional ties.)

Figure 1
National Quality Assurance Bodies in East Asia and the Pacific: General Characteristics

	Founding and Governance					QA Type			Funded by			International Participation	
	Year Founded	Founded by Government	Non-Governmental Origin	Independent body	Government represented on body	Accreditation	Audit	Assessment	Government	Institutions	Other	On decision making body	Among External Reviewers
Australia	2001	X		X	X		X		X	X			X
China PRC													
Provincial	2000	X			X	X		X	X	X			
Hong Kong PRC	1990	X		X		X			X	X	X	X	X
India	1994	X		X		X		X	X	X			
Indonesia	1994	X		X		X			X	X			
Japan													
JUAA	1947		X	X		X				X			
NIAD	2000	X		U		X			X			X	
Korea	1982	X		U	X	X			X				
Malaysia	1996	X		X		X				X			
Mongolia	2000	X			X	X				X			
New Zealand	1994		X	X			X			X		X	
Philippines													
AACCUP	1987	X		U	X	X			X				
PAASCU	1957		X	X		X				X			
Thailand	1999	X		U	X		X		X	X			
Vietnam	2002	X		*	*	X			X				

U - Undetermined Independent Status
* - Pending Policy Development

B. Current Status of Quality Assurance Networking in the Region

Although national quality assurance bodies in the region have visited each other's countries and met on occasion at international gatherings over the years, the majority of regional networking in quality assurance has taken place **since 2000**. In the last three years, UNESCO has sponsored two regional programs; the ASEAN University Network (AUN) has initiated a quality assurance activity; SEAMEO may entertain a regional policy in quality assurance and INQAAHE has formed an Asia Pacific Sub-Network. Each of these gatherings has contributed to:

- Developing a sense of higher education quality community in the region
- Assisting smaller and developing countries
- Providing forums for discussing issues common to higher education in all countries
- Identifying expertise in the region
- Providing opportunity for cross-fertilization through staff exchange or short-term professional visits

Discussed in the final section, it is notable that the World Bank has not played any direct role in any of these initiatives although it would have the most to offer for long-term development.

<u>**UNESCO.**</u> The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization with its regional offices in Bangkok has sponsored two regional conferences on quality assurance. The first was hosted by the Ministry of University Affairs of Thailand on 8-10 November 2000 and centered on the theme, "Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Standards, Mechanisms and Mutual Recognition". It was agreed that quality assurance is clearly a major issue for higher education across the region and it was predicted that "it seems certain to continue to be of key issues concern for the next decade and beyond." (Harman, 2000) A major publication of conference proceedings emanated from that conference. A second, smaller conference was convened by India's National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in August, 2002 with sponsorship by UNESCO.

Of concern at both of these conferences and to UNESCO throughout the globe is the issue of *recognition of academic degrees among countries*, particularly as greater mobility characterizes the global marketplace, including both persons and higher education itself crossing borders in virtual or physical ways. In 2001, Paris headquarters instituted a new Section in the Division of Higher Education on Access, Mobility and Quality Assurance. Among this Section's responsibilities are the regional Conventions on the Recognition of Degrees, including UNESCO's Asia Pacific Region. In UNESCO's European Convention (which includes traditional Europe, Turkey, Israel, the United States, Canada and Australia as an observer), a system of European National Information Centers (ENICS) was instituted several years ago, typically housed in the foreign education credential

evaluating divisions of Ministries of Education. It is the responsibility of these National Information Centers to provide basic public information on the authorized/accredited status of institutions of higher education in their country for purposes of transparency and be a service to students, teaching staff and others in need of checking the status of an academic qualification or the legitimacy of an institution. However, national quality assurance bodies have evolved and matured over the years with direct access and responsibility for such national higher education information. Within this context, UNESCO has indicated that they would like to explore a possible collaboration with any regional quality assurance initiatives the World Bank may initiate for purposes of exploring the feasibility of national quality assurance bodies becoming the National Information Centers in the Asia Pacific region.

ASEAN. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) includes the ten countries of: **Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Cambodia.** (ASEAN countries with national quality assurance bodies are underlined.) The basis of a trade bloc (the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement), the organization sponsors a variety of activities for its member countries, including the ASEAN University Network (AUN), developed in 1995:

> The general objectives of the AUN is to strengthen the existing network of cooperation among universities in ASEAN by promoting collaborative studies and research programs on the priority areas identified by ASEAN. The specific objectives are to promote cooperation and solidarity among scientists and scholars in the ASEAN Member Countries; to develop academic and professional human resources in the region; and to produce and transmit scientific and scholarly knowledge and information to achieve ASEAN goals.

A new initiative of the AUN, begun in 2000, centers on *quality assurance:*

> This new AUN initiative is currently on top of the Network's priority list with the aims to promote the development of a quality assurance system as an instrument for maintaining, improving and enhancing teaching, research and overall institutional academic standards of higher education of AUN member universities while recognising and respecting the differences among member universities in their institutions and environment.

In the three workshops held since its founding, the AUN quality assurance initiative claims to have developed common quality assurance policies and criteria; discussed benchmarking procedures and best practices in teaching and learning. There are strengths and weaknesses in this network:

- A strength is that each country's strongest universities are represented on the AUN;
- A weakness is that a total of 17 universities are involved in the process with no prospect for expansion and those not included complain that information is not getting to them. If it is true that each country can send 2 universities, the total only reaches 20 participating at any one time;
- A strength is that common policies and criteria for quality assurance are being discussed; however, it is
- A weakness is that there is scant evidence that these discussions have any bearing on the respective national system quality assurance processes, although some of these universities are involved directly in those national bodies;
- A key strength is that 17 universities in the region are being well served by this capacity building activity.

In brief, although the AUN is an important activity among member countries, it is not broad-based enough to have impact on neighboring universities and there is little evidence that there is any influence on national quality assurance systems, nor national quality assurance systems on the AUN.

SEAMEO. The Southeast Asian Minister of Education Organization (SEAMEO) based in Bangkok has included quality assurance as a topic in its various meetings over time. It is mentioned because of a draft proposal it received at the end of 2002 on the development of a regional quality assurance framework from 12 participants in a multiple month quality assurance training program sponsored by the Dutch government and held in the Netherlands. The 12 represent three countries: Vietnam (2); Thailand (7) and Indonesia (3). The proposal calls on the development of a single responsible body to strengthen and maintain the quality assurance culture in the region through regional workshops, training courses and the use of electronic information systems with the potential over time to develop a regional accreditation system using common standards. There is no evidence to date that this proposal has been or will be considered by the intergovernmental body.

INQAAHE. The International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education was founded in 1991 in Hong Kong by representatives of several national quality assurance systems from throughout the globe. Whereas in 1991, the number of country members was 20, in 2003, the number has swelled to 60. The Network's offices move every few years but are expected to become more permanent in 2003. The primary purposes of the Network are to:

- Promote good practices in the maintenance and improvement of quality in higher education;

- Facilitate research into the practice of quality management in higher education and its effectiveness;
- Provide advice and expertise to assist in the development of new quality assurance agencies;
- Facilitate links between accrediting bodies;
- Assist members to determine the standards of institutions operating both within their borders and operating transnationally;
- Permit better informed international recognition of qualifications;
- Assist in the development and use of credit transfer schemes to enhance the mobility of students between institutions (within and across national borders); and
- Enable members to be alert to dubious accrediting practices and organizations.

Since 1991, several Sub-Networks of INQAAHE have been formed representing geographical regions. On 18 January 2003, the Asia Pacific Quality Network was formed by vote of the members meeting at a regional conference in Hong Kong. Six areas of priority were identified and project committees assigned:

1. Compilation of Quality Indicators
2. Information Gathering and Dissemination on QA Agencies in the Region
3. Compilation of Information on National Qualifications Frameworks
4. Facilitation of Regional Training and Development Workshops
5. Quality Assurance of Distance Education
6. Staff Exchange and Secondment Among QA Agencies

It was at this historical regional meeting that this Study gathered information from the 13 countries of the region with national quality assurance systems both about their national systems (Appendix) as well as what activities or services they would identify as having the most importance to strengthening and maintaining quality assurance in the region (to be discussed later). Clearly, INQAAHE and its Asia Pacific Sub-Network is the premiere organization in the region whose members deal on a full-time basis with quality assurance in higher education.

III. The Trade Agreements and Increasing Regional Mobility: Implications for Higher Education

Countries sometimes form trade blocs for non-economic reasons, such as national security, peace and assistance in developing political and social institutions.
Shiff and Winters, 2003

A quickly emerging dynamic which is impossible to ignore relative to quality assurance in the region of East Asia and the Pacific is the role of the trade agreements and how these will have impact on higher education in the areas of:

- National higher education policy liberalization;
- Common standards for professional education (leading to greater professional mobility);
- Cross-border provision of higher education by private providers; and
- Mutual recognition of academic credentials.

 In each of these matters, the national accrediting body plays a vital role.

Most global regions are deeply involved in and heavily influenced by global, regional and bilateral trade agreements. While an agreement such as the European Union is for the purpose of economic union thereby effecting judicial, legislative and executive policy, the agreements in East Asia and the Pacific region are more typical of trade agreements: for the removal of tariffs on goods and for the liberalization of investment and policies, including those related to education services. The largest regional trade bloc is the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperative (APEC), which is scheduled to become a free trade agreement (FTA) in 2020.

But the region is not waiting until 2020 for the evolution to begin. *Just as the European Union has made it imperative for member countries to have national quality assurance systems for higher education for purposes of mutual recognition and to participate in discussions related to common standards for professional education and practice, so will other trade regions, including the Asia-Pacific region, need to follow suit or be left behind.* Attention is already being paid to regional or global standards in the professions. China has adopted the U.S. accrediting standards for architecture; Japan the global standards for engineering (through the Washington Accord); there is already an APEC engineer and architect; Hong Kong and New Zealand incorporate international evaluators into their local processes; and Singapore welcomes foreign accreditors into its higher education system. Accrediting bodies in the region are or will become a critical part of the economic viability of their respective nations and the region. Will a country be less competitive without a national accrediting system? Absolutely. The Australians found that it was necessary to their credibility as a major cross-border supplier of higher education that they not just claim that they had high quality higher education institutions but that they could through the establishment of a national third party system of quality

assurance could prove such a claim. As noted in the last section, the Australian Universities Quality Agency was founded in 2001. *Any country without a national accrediting function will not be taken seriously in the global marketplace.*

Asia boasts almost half the world's population and has comparatively low higher education enrollments nationally. As regional governments put a high premium on becoming *knowledge societies*, the need to expand the tertiary sector with private sector providers has made the region the largest higher education marketplace in the world. In a study of the global demand for transnational education, the Australian International Development Program (IDP) estimated that by the year 2020, there will be 157 million traditionally aged learners in the world, 87 million of which will be in Asia. This means a major growth in tertiary enrollment. In Thailand, for example, and assuming goals are maintained, the enrollment capacity will need to increase at an annual rate of 3% between now and 2025. In order to accomplish this goal, 20,000 students need to be added each year. (Blight and West, 2000) Are these students to be spread out across an already burgeoning system or is it necessary for the government to invite the private sector, including foreign investment, to assist by opening new programs and institutions of higher education as quickly as they can? Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore represent at least three jurisdictions in the region which have systematically welcomed private and foreign investment in higher education in order to increase access. This results in quality assurance agencies facing the new challenge of assuring the quality of foreign provided higher education. When those providers are online (providing higher education degrees by electronic means), this challenge becomes even greater.

A. The GATS
The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) calls on member countries to liberalize not only in the trade of goods (the GATT), but in the (larger) area of *services*. The demand for transnational education has made education one of the top globally traded services. The OECD reports that within the OECD membership in 1999, education services accounted for over US30 billion, representing roughly 3% of total trade in services in OECD countries. However, they further report that this figure is grossly low in that it reflects only students studying abroad in OECD countries and does not take into account the burgeoning number of degree programs currently being offered to students where they live. (Larsen, Martin and Morris, 2002) Moving education, not students, is a trend which is proving to have staying power.

In response to the GATS and other trade agreements, countries are seeking to liberalize policy. A clear example of this is the *Law on Promoting Private Education in the People's Republic of China,* passed by the 31st plenary session of the NPC standing committee held on 28 December 2002. With the pretense of "revitalizing China through science and education", the law enables private education at all levels to operate in China. A small number of institutions of higher education have been given permission to officially collaborate with foreign institutions in offering a degree, and approximately three dozen have been given permission to initiate electronic learning (including

partnerships with foreign providers). Although the number of foreign private institutions approved to give their own degree (rather than through a Chinese university) is still very small, the new Law and policy shifts are nevertheless evidence of liberalization taking place in Chinese higher education. It is the accrediting function of a country which is responsible for assuring that quality is maintained or enhanced with each policy change.

As of April, 2003, the GATS negotiation process, initiated with the Uruguay Round in 1995, has progressed through the three main stages of negotiation: proposals, requests and offers. The round is expected to conclude in 2005 unless extended. In the region, Japan, New Zealand and Australia have submitted negotiating proposals in education services to the WTO; Korea announced its intention to do so in April, 2003; and most other countries have made public actual or planned policy liberalization in anticipation of participation in the global trade agreement. The accrediting bodies are inextricably tied to these changes.

B. APEC
One third of world trade takes place within free trade agreements, two thirds if the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is included. (Shiff and Winters, 2003) The 23 member countries of APEC include: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, United States, China, Hong Kong (China), Taiwan (China), Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Chile, Peru, Russian Federation, and Vietnam.

As stated earlier, APEC is not scheduled to become a free trade agreement until 2020. In the interim, however, there are a number of activities taking place in its name among member countries for purposes of regional harmony, including those related to higher education. APEC Education Centers have been established in designated universities in member countries. An APEC Education Foundation was established some years ago through the efforts of the Republic of Korea and the United States. Mobility schemes, such as APEC Engineer and APEC Architect will be discussed below. Until it becomes a free trade agreement, APEC activity remains unbinding. Its strength lies in the opportunity for formal deliberation on issues of common concern and in its collaborative activity.

C. ASEAN
The activities of the trade bloc ASEAN, its members, and the ASEAN University Network are discussed in the earlier section.

D. Regional Mobility Schemes
A number of mobility schemes have emerged in recent years in the Asia Pacific region, some related to students and their study abroad; others related to professional mobility. Some of these schemes are directly related to processes of quality assurance; others are

indirectly related. Interestingly, although the primary purpose of these schemes are for purposes of liberalizing policy related to professional mobility, as countries adopt and implement regional/global standards for professions in particular or higher education in general, both emigration and immigration should actually be reduced, assuming the local economy keeps pace with the upgrade in educational standards.

- **APEC Professions**
  Australia has promoted the development of professional mobility frameworks within APEC based on the premise that it is crucial for Australian graduates to have their qualifications recognized internationally, beginning with engineering and architecture. The *APEC Engineer* lists "suitably qualified and experienced engineers who have been assessed according to agreed criteria, thus providing individuals with improved access to independent practice in all participating APEC economies. The *APEC Architect* project, which is now under way, aims to establish similar mobility arrangements for experienced architects in participating APEC economies." (Henry, 2003)

- **JABEE**
  Through an increased awareness of international benchmarking and assurances that local qualifications are globally mobile, Japan has recently created its first professional accreditation body for engineering, JABEE. As with engineering program accreditors globally, JABEE's goal is to be recognized as a member of the *Washington Accord,* a multi-lateral agreement begun in 1989 among professional engineering degree programs. The Accord recognizes the substantial equivalence of programs accredited by member bodies and recommends that graduates of these programs be recognized internationally as having met the academic requirements for entry into the profession.

- **UMAP and UCTS**
  Founded in 1993, UMAP is the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific, a voluntary association of governmental and non-governmental representatives in the region with the purpose of achieving enhanced international understanding through increased mobility of university students and staff. UMAP members and their universities are working toward standard arrangements for the recognition of study undertaken by UMAP students and have agreed to pilot a UMAP Credit Transfer Scheme (UCTS) in which university participation is voluntary. The objective of the UCTS is to increase student mobility by ensuring that credit is received by students for study undertaken when on exchange with other universities. The UMAP International Secretariat is in Japan.

E. Bilaterals

Even with the promises of regional and global trade agreements, bilateral agreements have become popular in recent months. The United States and Singapore are concluding negotiations; there are ongoing bilateral discussions between the U.S. and Japan; the U.S.- Australia FTA has begun and other U.S. bilaterals are being planned with countries in the Asia–Pacific. Central to these free trade agreements are issues of investment and mobility, including the qualifications of professionals and the assurance of quality of general academic degrees.

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The trade agreements are both driving and responding to the global marketplace, the rise of regionalism and the determination of countries to assure that they are not left behind. A decade ago, few in higher education in the most dynamic region of the world would have mentioned any trade agreement – global, regional or bilateral – as having any impact on higher education, including its quality and the mobility of its graduates. In the 21st century, countries that ignore internalizing these powerful external dynamics do so at their own risk. National accrediting bodies are no longer limited to knowledge of their own system. Regionalism as a powerful means to globalization is a current reality, which will only grow in strength. It is foreseeable that quality assurance will become regionalized. Were this author to guess the progression of regionalization in quality assurance, it will begin with bilateral mutual recognition agreements for academic credentials, followed by regional accrediting functions for those professions with the most mobility (e.g., engineering), evolving over time into a region-wide process for assuring quality in higher education regardless of physical location. The basis for this has already begun as several Southeast Asian countries are already discussing the feasibility of a sub-regional system of standards development for higher education through SEAMEO.

IV. Toward Strengthening World Bank Support for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in East Asia and the Pacific

A. The World Bank and Quality Assurance

Past. The importance of quality assurance in higher education was first formally acknowledged by the World Bank in its 1994 *Lessons of Experience*, in which "introducing policies explicitly designed to give priority to quality and equity objectives" became one of the four key directions recommended by the report for reform. This was followed by an abbreviated report in 1998: *Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Recent Progress; Challenges Ahead.* In the intervening years, the Bank led several successful projects resulting in national quality assurance systems: Romania, Chile, Argentina and Indonesia. (It should be noted for perhaps a separate study how these and more recent Bank sponsored projects in quality assurance have been influential in promoting quality assurance in additional countries in the Central/Eastern European and South American regions.)

Quality assurance is a key project component or quality is a matter of future concern in Bank project reports on countries in East Asia and the Pacific region: China and Indonesia in 1996 and Thailand and Vietnam in 1998. Of these, China and Indonesia employed centralized quality assurance processes at the time of these reports. Thailand was to initiate a national process in 1999 and Vietnam in 2002 (with final regulations still pending in 2003). Additional countries in which the Bank supports efforts through loans, credits or grants and where quality assurance systems have emerged include: Malaysia (1996) and Mongolia (2000). In Cambodia, legislation is pending to develop a national system of quality assurance.

It deserves mention that in the East Asia and the Pacific region, there also have been a number of Bank projects which call for direct intervention for *"quality improvement"* in higher education although it is unclear whether any direct connection was made during the projects between the "quality improvement" needed and the existing national formal mechanism for assuring quality. With the exception of Thailand, each of the following countries had a national quality assurance system in place at the time of each of these Bank projects:

> *Malaysia Education Sector Support* (1999) [science, mathematics and information technology]
>
> *Indonesia Quality of Undergraduate Education* (1997)
>
> *Thailand University Science and Engineering Education* (1997)
>
> *China Higher Education Reform* (1999) [basic science and engineering]
>
> *Indonesia: University Research for Graduate Education* (1994)

Korea: Science and Technical Education (1994)

China Effective Teaching Services (1993)

Korea: Environmental Research and Education (1993) [agriculture & veterinary]

It is recommended that in future projects when the quality of a course, program, sector or institution is of interest, that an appropriate role for the national quality assurance body in assuring that quality be seriously considered.

Future. The first signs of direct World Bank involvement in the creation and/or enhancement of national accrediting bodies since Eastern/Central Europe (Romania and Hungary) and South America (Chile and Argentina) in the early to mid-1990's were in Cambodia and Vietnam in 2002. Romania and Hungary are now viable candidates for the European Union in part because of higher education systems under formal accreditation control (a prerequisite for EU membership) and Chile and Argentina are leaders in the MERCUSOR negotiations for common standards for professional education in agriculture, medicine and engineering. To what extent are their Asian counterparts ready for these inevitable regional challenges? To what extent is the World Bank insisting that accreditation in higher education is a necessary component for economic viability? Whether caused by a prolonged Bank focus on basic education, the lack of local governmental priority, or some additional cause(s), this is an attention gap too long but not too late. Although other intergovernmental and international organizations have recognized the need for strong national accrediting bodies and strong activity at a regional level in East Asia and the Pacific, these organizations as described earlier have many priorities of which higher education quality is but one. The focused attention of the World Bank on national and regional quality assurance in the coming years will serve to develop higher education systems more quickly and effectively than any other single intervention because*:*

- Accreditation is a proven means to improving higher education nationally as well as regionally;
- Quality higher education and viable economies are interdependent;
- Informed quality assurance bodies can upgrade professional education and therefore professional practice both nationally and regionally;
- Student and scholarly mobility can be enhanced through focused attention on improving quality;
- The potential of mutual recognition of degrees in the region is already palpable; and
- Some countries are already talking about having a single region-wide process of accreditation for higher education in the short-term (otherwise presumed to be a long-term outcome of regionalism).

There are three categories of needs in quality assurance in East Asia and the Pacific region to which the World Bank can be responsive: (1) those specific to individual countries of interest to the Bank; (2) those common to these and additional countries at a

sub-regional level; and (3) those which are common across the region. ***National, sub-regional and regional assistance on the part of the Bank can serve to substantially strengthen the capacity to assure quality higher education throughout the region.***

B. National Capacity Building

[***Note:*** The ***Appendix*** is a compilation of country descriptions for all countries in the region with quality assurance bodies for higher education for staff information. For the 8 countries listed below in which the Bank has sponsored activity, a section on "Needs" was added which delineates areas in which external assistance from the Bank and other sources would serve to strengthen national capacity. The information in the Appendix was derived through a variety of sources: interviewing the senior staff at the regional meeting of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education in January, 2003; reviewing materials on each accreditation body; and, in 5 cases, from direct experience during in-country technical assistance activities in Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Vietnam and Cambodia.]

Given the critical functions of accrediting bodies to national educational and economic conditions, the World Bank is encouraged to generally support national capacity building in accreditation by:

1. **Refocusing on the quality assurance activity of higher education activities in the 1990's (including loans, credits and grants)**, **including China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines**.

   Of these countries, **China** is a special and complex case, summarized in the Appendix. In the area of quality assurance, and given the dynamic nature of reform in the country since the Bank's 1996 study (including a 2002 Law on Promoting Private Education), a national study on the status of quality assurance in higher education at the State and Provincial/Municipal levels in China could be helpful both for international understanding and national review of practice for purposes of enhancement. Again, see the Appendix for a list of practical needs in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

2. **Emphasizing the importance of a strong national infrastructure for quality for newer Bank higher education efforts in Cambodia, Mongolia, Thailand and Vietnam.**

   It is these countries which require the Bank's priority attention in the short-term because they are the newest in building national accrediting infrastructures and are therefore in need of a more concentrated national capacity building activity in the coming months and years. To these four, it is recommended that **China** be added to ensure that China's quality assurance infrastructure keeps pace with new dynamics in the country's higher education system, including but not limited to the provision for private higher education; the globalization of the

professions; and the decentralization of a traditionally centrist system of quality assurance.

Capacity building activity at the national level can include programming for <u>larger</u> <u>numbers</u> without the additional cost of travel. The volume involved in training *institutions of higher education* in the process of self-evaluation and *external reviewers* in the process of third party evaluation is most practically done at the national level.

The range of programs and services at a national level should include:

- National policy development
- Infrastructure development of national quality assurance agency
- Training programs:
  - National agency staff in all areas related to quality assurance
  - National accrediting body appointees in the process of standards development, oversight of the process and quality assurance decision-making
  - Institutions in the process of self-evaluation
  - The selection and training of external reviewers
  - Professional bodies in the process of professional accreditation
- Quality enhancement of quality assurance
- Dealing with relevant issues: online learning, transnational education, private higher education, etc.

3. Identifying new countries in the region which need attention.

It is recommended that the Bank identify other countries in the region which do not have a quality assurance infrastructure (such as Brunei Darussalam, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and, in a different category, Singapore) to participate at a sub-regional capacity building level as described in Section D below.

[***Note:*** Figure 2 at the end of this section provides a summary chart of National, Sub-Regional and Regional Capacity Building: Target Groups, Participating Countries and Program/Service Areas.]

C. East Asia and the Pacific Quality Assurance Region

> *"Ways of overcoming isolation include organizing conferences, providing travel grants…computer-mediated communication…international volunteer corps…research centers…"*
> *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise*

East Asia and the Pacific region is composed of countries with differential experience and capacity in quality assurance. However, there is unanimity among these quality

assurance agencies that there is interdependence and a definite need for regional cooperation for all the dynamics discussed in previous sections. As stated before, the heads of the 13 country national quality assurance bodies gathered in January, 2003 in Hong Kong for the purpose of establishing an Asia-Pacific Quality Network, a sub-network of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education. For this Study, the heads and senior staff of these agencies (plus other relevant governmental representatives present) were interviewed by country to determine national capacity building needs and also convened in a group to discuss at length sub-regional and regional needs. (See the Appendix for country descriptions of national quality assurance systems.)

D. Sub-Regional Capacity Building

In order to build capacity in East Asia and the Pacific region, it is recommended that the region be divided into more manageable sizes but with strategic purpose. There are many ways in which a region as large as Asia can be divided. For the expressed purposes of strengthening quality assurance in the region, **ASEAN trade bloc member countries** could represent the core target group for a logical sub-regional listing plus the 5 systems requiring the most attention at a national level. This includes about half of the countries in the region with national quality assurance systems. Consideration should also be paid to including, when appropriate, countries without a quality assurance infrastructure which are ASEAN members.

 The Sub-Regional Country List recommended therefore includes the 12 countries:

- Brunei Darussalam
- Cambodia
- Indonesia
- Lao People's Democratic Republic
- Malaysia
- Mongolia
- Myanmar
- People's Republic of China*
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Vietnam

[*_**Note:**_ Some consideration should be given to dealing with China as a sub-regional phenomenon in and of itself.]

A carefully coordinated sub-regional and national capacity building program for these countries (or any further sub-grouping of these countries) can serve for a more efficient use of resources. In this sub-regional network are countries with considerable quality assurance experience that can both help advise neighboring countries in the process as well as benefit from participation in capacity building opportunities themselves. At the

sub-regional level, the scope of delivery is smaller than at the national level, but the target groups can center clearly on the cross-fertilization of those in <u>national leadership positions</u>, including:

- Quality assurance staff,
- Ministries of Education (i.e., "users of quality assurance"), and
- Appointed members of the national quality assurance body.

At this sub-regional level, a capacity building program concentrating on the following areas of national leadership would be most beneficial:

- Training in:
  - Responsibilities of national quality assurance staff in oversight and daily operations
  - National accrediting body appointees in the process of standards development, oversight of the process and quality assurance decision-making

- Quality enhancement of national quality assurance systems (practicing what they preach)

- Regional quality assurance issues from a sub-regional perspective: online learning, transnational education, private higher education, professional standards, etc.

[***Note:*** Figure 2 at the end of this section provides a summary chart of National, Sub-Regional and Regional Capacity Building: Target Groups, Participating Countries and Program/Service Areas.]

E. Regional Capacity Building

There are a number of initiatives that, if implemented, will serve to strengthen capacity in the world's most populated and economically dynamic region in *major* ways. For the short-term, these will support the development of the national systems in that they will provide experienced and well-trained personnel to carry out the sovereign accrediting functions. However, no national system can afford to not look beyond its borders for very long. Therefore, for the short to medium-term, regionalized activities and services will become the core of a region-wide quality assurance forum for the discussion of common issues, ranging from professional standards to regional standards for institutions of higher education. For the longer-term, these activities and services will form the foundation for a regionalized quality assurance system - perhaps with both centralized (region-wide) and decentralized (national) functions in keeping with the trends found in other regions of the world with strong interests in trade and economic growth.

This emphasis on the regional capacity building is contrary to how most funding organizations work. Intergovernmental bodies like the World Bank operate on a country-

by-country system, and private foundations have the tendency to do the same. Credits, loans and grants are typically made to governments and governments are until lately national in nature. However, the European Union and South America's MERCOSUR do not fit this mold nor do ASEAN, SEAMEO and other regional governmental bodies, each with the potential to influence quality development in large and powerful regions. Years ago, UNESCO instituted the NGO (non-governmental organization) status because the private sector was a source of major technical or philosophical assistance in development. Funding institutions limited by rules made for a different world will serve to slow an inevitable process.

From the interviews and group meeting held in Hong Kong, a *master list of program and service needs* evolved which, if implemented, could benefit capacity building in all participating countries in the region. A summarized list includes the provision for a:

- ***Regional Pool of External Reviewers***

- ***Regional Quality Assurance Service***

- ***Regional Information Clearinghouse***

- ***Regional Staff Exchanges***

- ***Collaborative Training and Development Programs***

- ***Liaison Functions with Regional Organizations***

1. *Regional Pool of External Reviewers*

External reviewers are vital to the quality assurance process in that they are the "ambassadors" of the national system and it is they who are responsible for the self-evaluation review and on-site evaluation of the institution/program's compliance with national standards of quality. However, most national quality assurance systems in the region will identify external reviewers as the *weakest link* in their processes. Reasons given for this typically include inadequate selection processes; training programs; or honoraria/per diem.

Recommended is the establishment of a regional pool of experienced external reviewers who can, at the request of national quality assurance bodies, augment on-site reviews. The two primary purposes of such a service would be to: (1) add experience to teams of inexperienced external reviewers; and (2) provide an international perspective of quality. At the outset, this pool of reviewers should have expertise in *institutional quality assurance.* As this service matures or on an as-needed basis, the pool can evolve to include *specialized and professional quality assurance* experts (i.e., for disciplines and professional education programs). Necessary to such a service would be: agreements with user countries as to what percentage of travel and honoraria they would cover and/or a centralized fund which

enables a certain number of such regional external reviewers to be used by designated countries on an annual basis.

In this pool should be representatives of every participating country in the region. Countries with mature accrediting systems would be encouraged to include on their teams a less experienced regional representative. All countries which can pay for this service should.

2. Regional Quality Assurance Service

As regional identity becomes stronger and as international standards of quality become increasingly important to system of higher education, quality assurance systems do not have to remain only national in nature. There are a number of circumstances currently in which a regional quality assurance service, composed of experts derived from the region and globally, can provide a critical service:

a. To countries *without a national quality assurance process*, either for the whole of higher education or for one of its sectors (like private institutions);
b. To countries with a need to do "sectoral quality reviews". For example, Estonia uses international teams from throughout the world to evaluate at once all programs provided by universities in the country in such fields as medicine, law, business, etc.;
c. To countries which would prefer an international review of foreign institutions which have entered their country;
d. To institutions who wish to undergo an international process of quality review, whether or not there is a national process in place; and
e. To countries who desire international consultation on the process of quality assurance.

Indonesia as an example already envisions an evolution away from national quality assurance toward regional accreditation, beginning with the development of common standards for higher education and mutual recognition agreements.

Such a regional service can be coordinated centrally and care should be taken to work cooperatively with national quality assurance bodies. Base funding would be beneficial so that services are not restricted to only those capable of paying, such as private institutions of higher education or perhaps central Ministries.

3. Regional Information Clearinghouse:

Not enough is known to the region (and thus to the global quality assurance community) about national quality assurance systems in the region. Contributing to better information in this regard would be:

- Translation services to translate national quality assurance policy into English for region-wide use.
- A regional study (beginning with this one) on the nature and context of quality assurance in the region.
- A regional clearinghouse of information on:
  - Accredited institutions and programs of higher education for regional mobility purposes;
  - Transnational higher education: its origins, accredited status and patterns in the region;
  - Sources of research on quality assurance; and
  - Credit transfer schemes (probably coordinated with emerging APEC program on same).

4. Regional Staff Exchanges:

Experience in another national setting can benefit both the inexperienced or experienced quality assurance professional. A coordinated function regionally can encourage both short-term staff exchanges and longer-term staff secondments. Countries that can afford to pay for visiting colleagues should and some central funds should be available to countries which cannot but would benefit greatly by the presence of an experienced colleague.

5. Collaborative Training and Development Programs:

In coordination with the national and sub-regional training programs mentioned earlier are region-wide training and development programs on issues of common concern. Some of the current issues identified include:

- Quality assurance of distance education (online learning)
- Quality assurance of transnational education
- Implications of the trade agreements on quality assurance
- Regional mobility and credit transfer schemes
- The role of quality assurance in mutual (academic) recognition
- Institutional management as a chronic quality problem
- Quality assurance for research

Resources would determine how often regional gatherings could take place. When face to face gatherings are economically difficult, the use of World Bank teleconferencing facilities in the region could facilitate gathering. Consideration will need to be given to interpreting services although English appears to be a first or second language for most all senior quality assurance staff in the region at present.

6. Liaison Functions with Regional Organizations:

A coordinating function for regional quality assurance programs and issues can serve as liaison and technical adviser to such regional organizations and SEAMEO, AUN

and UNESCO in the specific area of quality assurance. That each of these organizations is dealing with issues related to quality assurance in higher education but none can afford to make this critical topic their only priority makes a coordinated function all the more important.

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[*Note:* Figure 2 provides a summary chart of National, Sub-Regional and Regional Capacity Building: Target Groups, Participating Countries and Program/Service Areas.]

Figure 2
National, Sub-Regional and Regional Capacity Building:
Target Group(s), Participating Countries and Program/Service Areas

Program Level	Coordinator	Country Priority Lists	Target Groups for Training & Development	Program, Content & Service Areas
National:	World Bank	Recent QA Bodies: - Cambodia* - Mongolia - China (decentralization) - Thailand - Vietnam	- QA Body Staff - QA Body Appointees (Accreditation Council) - Institutions - External Reviewers - Professional Bodies - Ministries - Other National Stakeholders	- National Policy Development - Infrastructure Development - In-depth Training Programs for each Target Group

Sub-Regional:	World Bank
	
	ASEAN
	
	INQAAHE
	Regional
	Network
		ASEAN members plus above:
		- Brunei Darussalam
		- Cambodia*
		- Indonesia
		- Lao People's Democratic Republic
		- Malaysia
		- Mongolia
		- Myanmar
		- China**
		- Philippines
		- Singapore
		- Thailand
		- Vietnam
			National Leadership:
			  - QA Body Staff
			  - QA Body Appointees
			  - Ministry Staff
				- Training for each Target Group
				- Forum for Discussion of Common Issues:
				   Exs: mutual recognition
				           professional standards
				           distance education
				           transnational education
				           private higher education

Regional:	INQAAHE
	Regional
	Network
	
	and
	
	World Bank
		Established QA bodies:
		- Australia
		- Hong Kong
		- India
		- Indonesia
		- Japan
		- Korea
		- Malaysia
		- Mongolia
		- New Zealand
		- China
		- Philippines
		- Thailand
		- Vietnam
			National Leadership:
			  - QA Body Staff
			  - QA Body Appointees
			  - Ministry Staff
				INQAAHE Regional Forum:
				- Regional Pool of External Reviewers
				- Regional Quality Assurance Service
				- Regional Information Clearinghouse
				- Regional Staff Exchanges
				- Collaborative Training & Development
				   Programs
				- Liaison Functions with Regional
				   Organizations

QA - Quality Assurance

ASEAN - Association of Southeast Asian Nations   * Pending legislation approval

INQAAHE - International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education   ** Advised that China could be considered a sub-region in and of itself

F. Focal Points for Coordination

It is a priority of the World Bank to strengthen quality assurance in East Asia and the Pacific and the time is right for a major initiative in the region's higher education sector. The region's stakeholders, including universities, students, employers and governments have declared quality higher education as a top priority for mobility and economic development. Intergovernmental organizations and international associations related to education have quality assurance among their highest priorities; and national quality assurance professionals have declared what is necessary to strengthen their capacity toward the overall improvement of higher education in the region.

Strengthening the capacity for *national* quality assurance in-country will continue to involve the Bank and various other lenders working in coordination with national Ministries. But at a *sub-regional and regional level*, the capacity building activities require coordination with the national initiatives to be efficient and effective. Where should such a focal point for coordination be located?

- In a single country?
- In multiple countries in and out of the region by type of activity?
- In The World Bank?
- In a regional body such as ASEAN, SEAMEO or APEC?
- In the regional office of an intergovernmental body such as UNESCO?
- In the regional office of an international association such as INQAAHE?
- Some combination of the above?

Given potentially varying circumstances at the time of funding and implementation, (including the level of funding for which activities) the focal point or points for coordination should have the following characteristics:

- An in-depth understanding of the East Asia and the Pacific region
- An in-depth understanding of and practical experience in quality assurance
- An in-depth understanding of the needs of developing countries
- Familiarity with relevant regional organizations and associations
- Credibility among the region's quality assurance bodies
- Ability to coordinate activities among multiple and complex organizations
- Extensive international experience in quality assurance

As it appears in Figure 2, it is recommended that the new Asia-Pacific Quality Network, a sub-network of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) be a focal point for sub-regional and regional programming. The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) has volunteered its services to act as a regional Secretariat for the Sub-network. Assuming reasonable *continuity* of secretariat services and with the coordinating and training capability of such organizations as the Center for Quality Assurance in International Education (CQAIE – National Center for Higher Education in Washington, D.C.) which authored this study, the Centre for Higher

Education Policy Studies (CHEPS – University of Twente, Netherlands), the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (CHERI - formerly the Quality Support Centre – The Open University, London] in combination with experienced quality assurance personnel within the region, the ingredients are available for a major and influential regional initiative which strengthens capacity in quality assurance.

Expectations are high among quality assurance bodies in the region of East Asia and the Pacific that there will be a quality assurance initiative in the near future which will serve to strengthen capacity.

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<u>*Note:*</u>
Other Geographical Regions: As mentioned early in this Study, World Bank projects leading to national quality assurance infrastructures have taken place in other regions of the world, and most notably Eastern/Central Europe and Latin America. The growth of quality assurance in both of these regions parallels that in East Asia and the Pacific and the dynamics of regionalism, including trade blocs and increased mobility issues, have become a daily staple in higher education activity. Particularly in Latin America, including both Central and South America, quality assurance has grown substantially in the last decade, launched with World Bank involvement. A mapping of the region's quality bodies and identification of its major issues and capacity building needs could serve both the Bank and this region as is its promise to East Asia and the Pacific.

Relevant Websites:

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperative
www.apecsec.org.sg/hrd/index.html
www.apec.org
www.apecef.org
www.apec.edu.tw/what.html

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
www.aseansec.org

ASEAN University Network
www.aun.chula.ac.th

Australian Universities Quality Agency
www.auqa.edu.au

Badan Akreditasi Nasional Perguruan Tinggi *(Indonesia)*
www.ban-pt.net

Guangdong Center of Evaluation and Development Research for Education *(People's Republic of China)*
www.gdhed.edu.cn

Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation *(People's Republic of China)*
www.hkcaa.edu.hk

International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)
www.inqaahe.nl

Japan University Accreditation Association
www.juaa.or.jp/english/

Jiangsu Agency for Educational Evaluation *(People's Republic of China)*
www.ec.js.edu.cn

Korean Council for University Education
www.kcue.or.kr/english/

Lembaga Akreditasi Negara *(Malaysia)*
Lan.gov.my

Ministry of University Affairs *(Thailand)*
www.inter.mua.go.th

Mongolia National Council for Higher Education Accreditation
www.accmon.mn/english.html

National Assessment and Accreditation Council *(India)*
www.naac-india.com

National Institution for Academic Degrees (Daigaku-Hyoka Gakui-Juyo Kiko) *(Japan)*
www.niad.ac.jp/english/index.htm

New Zealand Qualifications Authority
www.nzqa.govt.nz/framework/about.html

New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit
www.aau.ac.nz

Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities
paascu.sphosting.com

University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific
www.umap.org

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