Internal quality assurance

Maria Jose Lemaitre
Executive Director, CINDA
Immediate Past President INQAAHE

AKU Provost’s Speaker Series
Aga Khan University
Nairobi, May 9, 2014
Social changes
New scenario for HE
(diversification, increased access, internationalization)

Questions about the validity of higher education
Need for public assurance of quality
Demand for national and (increasingly) international transparency

Need to generate trust
→ Useful, relevant, definition of quality
→ Development of quality assurance mechanisms
Quality assurance mechanisms can

• Set minimum standards (quality threshold)
• Make explicit the social expectations about HEI and their programs
• Give public assurance of quality
• Promote improvement

By so doing, they can

→ Contribute to better management of the higher education system
→ Help make decisions on the allocation of resources
→ Contribute to better institutional management
→ Help HEI design and implement their development plans
→ Protect users

→ Generate trust
Two perspectives for QA

Looking backwards:
How far have we come?
Are we meeting our own and external quality standards?

Looking forwards:
How far we must go?
What is needed to achieve the expected goals?
External quality assurance

• It is a means, not an end in itself
• It must be aligned with national policies and priorities
• Procedures must be aligned with purpose
• It must be flexible, understand and recognize diversity and its implications, without losing rigorousness
• It must focus on substantive issues, and not limit itself to formal aspects
• It must promote self regulatory capacities, not a culture of compliance
• It must be able to learn (and to un-learn)
EQA: One name, different purposes

Quality control: Makes sure HE provision meets threshold standards

Accountability: Provides valid and reliable information about the degree in which stated purposes and quality criteria are met

Improvement: Assures that HEI have in place reliable self regulatory policies and mechanisms

Licensing

Accreditation

Quality audit
## Underlying rationale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Quality control (licensing)</th>
<th>Accountability (accreditation)</th>
<th>Improvement (quality audit)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mode</strong></td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
<td>Can be voluntary or compulsory</td>
<td>Can be voluntary or compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Framework for evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Externally defined criteria or standards</td>
<td>External criteria, internal consistency</td>
<td>Institutional purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expected outcome</strong></td>
<td>The weakest HEI meets threshold standards</td>
<td>Degrees are recognized and validated, nationally and eventually, internationally</td>
<td>HEI can identify strengths and weaknesses, and plan accordingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Procedure</strong></td>
<td>External review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Self assessment
Basic principles for QA

QA as defined by the main networks emphasize the role of IQA:

- providers of higher education have the primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance;
- there need to be efficient and effective organisational structures within which those academic programmes can be provided and supported;
- there should be encouragement of a culture of quality within higher education institutions;
- institutions should be able to demonstrate their quality at home and internationally

(ESG, ENQA)
Basic principles for QA

The external QA agency recognises:

- that institutional and programmatic quality and quality assurance are primarily the responsibility of the higher education institutions themselves;
- respects the academic autonomy, identity and integrity of the institutions or programs;
- applies standards or criteria that have been subject to reasonable consultation with stakeholders; and
- aims to contribute to both quality improvement and accountability of the institution.

(GGP, INQAAHE)
What does IQA require:

- Clear purposes and goals
- Assessment of inputs, processes, outcomes, as well as the relevant context
- Identification of quality factors
- Identification of restrictions, both internal and external
- Design and implementation of a development plan
- Design of short and mid term improvement plans
- Monitoring and follow up
Assessment

• Dynamic, continuous, systematic process
• Based on the collection, processing and analysis of significant information
• In order to verify whether pre-determined objectives are being achieved
• Leading to actions which mean to change behaviour, make changes, adjust inputs or processes with stated purposes in mind
Formalization of the decisions and actions that lead the organization towards expected results:

- Mission
- Vision
- Values and culture
- Internal and external analysis (SWOT)
- Objectives and strategic actions
- Implementation
- Assessment
Assessment and planning

• Planning looks to achieve the best performance of actors and resources of an institution, in order to achieve goals that are consistent with stated institutional purposes

• Assessment establishes a monitoring system to deal with the effectiveness of institutional actions from the point of view of the achievement of institutional purposes
• Collection, processing and analysis of relevant information
• Assessment of inputs, processes, outcomes, against internal and external criteria, norms and requirements
• External assessment and validation of the results of self assessment processes
• Recommendations

Planning
• Immediate changes
• Planning and organization of change
• Follow up

IQA

EQA

Accreditation
Components of internal quality assurance

Conventional procedures:

- **Mission statement:**
  - It is a conceptual statement about the institution’s vocation.

- **Definition of the institutional vision:**
  - It describes a possible future institutional reality.
  - The mission is unique, and should be permanent
  - The vision can change, in order to adapt to local and global conditions

- **SWOT Analysis (Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)**
Mission

It is a conceptual statement about the institution’s vocation. It is usually stated in generic or abstract terms, but it must clearly define the boundaries that identify legitimate options. Based on the institution’s principles and priorities, it makes sense about the long term purposes of the institution.

Every concept used in the mission statement must have a concrete meaning in the institution. What do the following concepts mean in my institution?:

- Academic excellence
- Relevance to the needs of the local/national/regional environment
- Quality
- Interdisciplinary approach
- Internationalization
- Social responsibility
**Vision:**

*It is the description of a future reality that is both desirable and feasible*

*The mission is unique and have a sense of permanence*

*The vision changes to adapt to local or global conditions*

**Mission**

Possible future situation 1
Possible future situation 2 (selected)
Possible future situation 3

**Local and global environment**

The vision is a deliberate option about how the mission will be fulfilled
The water is freezing.
Pass the word

Enthusiastic leader
Frustrated leader
IQA: a shared language

Mission

Goals

Final situation

Final situation

Final situation

Vision

Outcomes SWOT analysis

Diagnosis (baseline)

Actions

Strategies
Additional components

- **Operational definition of quality**
- **Development of conceptual models for the operation of a HEI, which make it possible to view the interactions and restrictions that affect institutional development**

HEIs usually coincide in WHAT they want in the coming future (missions of different universities differ very little), still the restrictions and difficulties which limit achieving (apparently) similar goals require a very precise analysis fitted for each institution, within each particular context.

- **Good understanding of the interaction between economic and academic variables, which determine institutional development**

HEIs tend to evidence a strong gap between what is academically desirable and what is economically feasible. This tension considerably complicates decision making processes.
We need to understand quality

Quality = fitness for purpose
Purpose = Combination of two dimensions: internal and external consistency

**Internal consistency:** Institutional capacity to make decisions on the basis of the principles and priorities that emerge from its mission

**External consistency:** Institutional capacity to identify relevant demands and to organize its inputs, processes and resources to respond to the requirements and expectations of their reference group
Institutional mission and vision

Internal consistency

Institutional management and decision making processes

Students ➔ Academic processes ➔ Resources ➔ Academic staff ➔ Academic products ➔ External consistency

Academic community (disciplinary, professional)

Social and economic environment

Labor market (local and global)

(Adapted from J.R.Toro)
Management and decision making processes

Main actors: Academic staff

Main actors: students

Academic processes: teaching and learning

Academic products

Resources: Teaching and learning, facilities, financial resources, etc.

External environment: Laws, norms, regulations, socio-economic factors
Quality factors (QF)

*Quality factors* are special attributes in which *system components* can be unfolded. By acting on quality factors, system components are transformed in a direction which affects the overall quality of the institution.

They are aspects on which action is possible. Attributes that cannot be modified are considered restrictions.
Examples of quality factors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic staff:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary and teaching qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor conditions: Salaries, teaching loads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources and environment for academic production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules (selection, promotion, evaluation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entry qualifications of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study habits, ability for autonomous study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic processes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consistency of curricula with market demands and main stream of disciplines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of teaching learning process (e.g. active learning processes, student engagement with learning process)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General education requirements and adequate balance between breadth and depth of education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of physical resources in supporting academic processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of teaching resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of restrictions:

### Academic staff:
- Cost of the teaching staff / difficulties for its renewal
- Tension between teaching and research
- Critical mass that makes it possible to have an academic environment
- Academic labor market
- National education policies

### Students:
- Quality of secondary education
- Family socio economic conditions / cultural background

### Academic processes:
- National regulations / NQF
- QA standards

### Resources:
- Access to electricity
- Access to internet
The rationale behind quality management

Baseline: system components and current status of associated QF

Diagnostic evaluation
Explanatory Evaluation
Identification of relevant QF
Model of interactions

Strategies and actions designed after an analysis of QF and their interactions

Planning Implementation
Monitoring and evaluation

Expected situation of system components and associated quality factors
Quality factors and strategies

Quality factors associated to resources, such as number of academic staff, supporting IT equipment and services

Strategies centered on resources
High investment and operational costs

Quality factors associated to processes, such as teaching and learning process, decision making, curricular reform

Strategies centered in processes
Lower operational costs (high cultural / implementation difficulty)

Strategic plans cannot be limited to obtaining required resources. **How** things are done (assuming a reasonable availability of resources) can be an extremely useful and sometimes the **only** valid strategy to achieve quality.
Quality cycle based on people and resources

More teachers, better qualified in their respective disciplines

Academic staff

Less students per teacher, better prepared

Students

More and better resources

Physical and information resources

Academic products
Quality factors closer to processes

- In-classroom and external activities
- Student engagement
- Consistency of learning assessment practices

Students

- Development and use of educational materials to support autonomous learning

Academic staff

- Pedagogic training
- Incentives for good teaching

Academic programs

- Consistency between learning objectives and study plans

Physical and information resources

- Consistency between study plans and learning resources

Academic outcomes

Entry requirements
Threshold and saturation of quality factors / the law of diminishing returns in education

Below a certain threshold for the quality factors, it is impossible to achieve satisfactory quality levels.

Above a saturation level, there are no significant increases of quality.

**Investment in education below the threshold is ineffective in the short term.**

**Investment above the saturation point is inefficient.**
Quality management cycle

- Institutional purposes and objectives
- Main actors
- Processes
- Resources
- Needed changes
- Adjustment to the plans
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Main actors

- Needed changes
- Resources
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Institutional purposes and objectives

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Main actors

Resources

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Quality factors associated to resources and processes

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Processes

- Needed changes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Results

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Monitoring and evaluation

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Main actors

- Needed changes
- Resources
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Resources

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Quality factors associated to resources and processes

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Processes

- Needed changes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Results

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Monitoring and evaluation

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Main actors

- Needed changes
- Resources
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Resources

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Quality factors associated to resources and processes

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Processes

- Needed changes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Results

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Monitoring and evaluation

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Main actors

- Needed changes
- Resources
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Resources

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Quality factors associated to resources and processes

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Processes

- Needed changes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Results

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Monitoring and evaluation

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Institutional purposes and objectives

- Needed changes
- Resources
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Resources

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Quality factors associated to resources and processes

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Processes

- Needed changes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Results

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Monitoring and evaluation

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Main actors

- Needed changes
- Resources
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Resources

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Quality factors associated to resources and processes

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Processes

- Needed changes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Results

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Monitoring and evaluation

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Institutional purposes and objectives

- Needed changes
- Resources
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Resources

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Quality factors associated to resources and processes

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Processes

- Needed changes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Results

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Monitoring and evaluation

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Main actors

- Needed changes
- Resources
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Resources

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Quality factors associated to resources and processes

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Processes

- Needed changes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Results

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Monitoring and evaluation

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Institutional purposes and objectives

- Needed changes
- Resources
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Resources

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Quality factors associated to resources and processes

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Processes

- Needed changes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation

Results

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans

Monitoring and evaluation

- Needed changes
- Processes
- Results
- Quality factors associated to resources and processes
- Improvement plans
Thank you

mariajoselemaitre@gmail.com
mjlemaitre@cinda.cl