

Quality Matters

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A Quarterly Newsletter of the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA)

St. Mary's University College

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Quote of this issue

"Quality is everyone's responsibility."

W. Edwards Deming

This newsletter is published every three months by the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA) of St Mary's University College (SMUC). The Objective of the newsletter is to inform the SMUC community as well as interested public, private, non-governmental stakeholders about the activities and endeavors of the institution in fostering quality education and research in the Ethiopian Higher Education setting.

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Quality Assurance Network Workshop Conducted

The Association of African Universities (AAU) organized and conducted a three-day workshop on the "African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN)" from 25th to 27th of November, 2009, Accra, Ghana. The workshop was forum of dialogue for participants on issues of Higher Education Quality Assurance and regulatory mechanisms of the African Quality Assurance Network.

The workshop, thus, created awareness on the challenges of higher education development, identified strategies to address them, lifted knowledge on higher education quality assurance mechanisms and practices in the African context to a new height. It also identified linkages between internal and external quality assurance practices. More importantly, it established regional agreements on mutual recognition of study programmes and qualifications of graduates. African external quality assurance agencies, representatives of higher education institutions, development partners from the continent attended the three-day workshop. ■

From the Editorial Desk

The major source of economic growth has changed over time. While growth largely depends on land in agricultural societies, physical capital in industrial economy, it depends on human capital for knowledge economies. Today, more than any other times, knowledge has become a key to development and lack of it is a major constraint to economic and social progress. The growth potential of knowledge economy depends largely on its capacity to produce and absorb knowledge. In many countries, knowledge based sectors have become engines of growth and development. While economic sectors produce knowledge-based goods, the higher education sector plays an important role in facilitating the production and distribution of knowledge. It is, indeed, always a key to development, and is never more so than in Africa today, where countries stay thousands of light years back from the advanced world.

Knowledge is universal and institutions producing knowledge have universal appeal. That is why universities remain international entities even when nationalism is on the rise. Today, knowledge has become an international good to be traded and transcends national boundaries faster than capital and people. It gives knowledge-based economies a global orientation, scope and operation making them catalytic agents in the process of globalization. With globalization, the production of knowledge itself has become a

process dependent on market forces. This has implication for the institutions involved in the production of knowledge. Universities are increasingly responding to market demands and they too have become global in operation. Globalization of higher education has become a market-oriented activity attracting foreign capital and inviting competition.

Open and Distance Education (ODE) has now become an important mode of globalized higher education as it involves providers, programmes, course materials, teachers or students moving beyond space and time. It is, in fact, an impressive development that brings with it serious quality challenges especially for the third world countries. Yet, governments have the responsibility to protect their fellow citizens not only from inferior and dangerous goods, so too do citizens have the right to be protected from poor quality education and worthless qualifications. And this is a role for both the government and non governmental actors including the public at large. ■

Forthcoming Event

International Conference in University Learning and Teaching

June 29-30, 2010

University of Hertfordshire
England

For more information visit:

<http://www.herts.ac.uk/course/schools-of-study/education/incult-conference/home.cfm>

News

National Survey and Directory compilation of Knowledge and Idea centers in Ethiopia

The Center for Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Outreach Services of St. Mary's University College finalized a consultative survey on knowledge and idea centers- national libraries and archives, museums, and public libraries, in Ethiopia from August 2009 to December 2009. The study generated information that can be used for design and implementation of intervention programs for the realization of information/knowledge society in Ethiopia, and enhance access to information.

Methodologically, this cross-sectional study is carried out by using mixed approach to research. Also, the study used organization based survey design with three stage cluster sampling stratified by regions, zones and districts (woredas). The study was conducted in three research modes: descriptive research, formative evaluation, and explanatory research.■

CEIRQA restructured

St. Mary's University College is in the process of restructuring its Center for Educational Improvement, Research and Quality Assurance (CEIRQA) into the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA). The newly-developed structure has put the research component under an autonomous office of Graduate Studies, Research

and Outreach services. This is done with the intention of making the center focused in its endeavors of quality enhancement in the education and training of the University College.

The new structure's Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEQA) has three units: Academic Development and Resource Unit (ADRU), Quality Assurance Unit and Data Processing Unit. It, thus, can be said that CEQA is a quality management center entrusted to co-ordinate and oversee implementation of university-wide Quality Enhancement (QE) programmes and activities based on university level policies.■

Bulletin of Student Statistics (BOSS 2009) to be Published

The Data Processing Unit of the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA) is to publish the 4th round of annual book of student statistics. Bulletin of Student Statistics (BOSS) is an annual publication on SMUC's Conventional and Distance education data including Indra Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) students. The publication contains statistics of admission, attrition, readmission, and graduation of current students and university scholarships. BOSS aims to provide reliable and up-to-date statistics on students in the University College. The data is indeed indispensable for University management, researchers and policy makers of the higher education sector.■

Research Corner

Research Title: Cross-Border Provision of Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities for Private Higher Education Institutions in Ethiopia.

Researcher: Bob Campbell (Dr.) Higher Education Quality and Relevance Agency, Ethiopia and Department of Educational Studies, University of York, UK

A research paper published in the Fifth Proceeding of the National Research Conference on Private Higher Education in Ethiopia, August 25, 2007. St. Mary's University College

The need for expansion of Higher Education in Ethiopia has been recognized with increased allocations of students to the Public Universities, the foundation of New Public Universities and establishment of Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs). Demand for Higher Education is predicted to continue to grow. Demand that cannot be met by national providers may be catered for by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) based in other countries. This Cross-Border provision in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the qualification awarding institution is based offers additional study opportunities for students. However, Cross-Border Higher Education also carries risks for students unless the relevance and quality of the provision can be assured and the qualifications awarded are recognized nationally and internationally for employment and advancement. While Cross-Border provision may offer new opportunities

and some possible risks to students, it poses a potential threat to local PHEIs. This is acute if students see the quality and relevance of the programs offered by Cross-Border providers as better than that of local PHEIs and the currency of the qualifications gained as having greater value in the national and international employment market. With strong competition from Cross-Border providers some PHEIs may seem less attractive to students.

On the more positive side, while Ethiopian PHEIs have established themselves primarily to provide Higher Education to Ethiopians in Ethiopia, there is no reason why they too cannot be involved in Cross-Border education. Cross-Border provision thus offers new opportunities for PHEIs in Ethiopia to engage directly with learners in other countries and/or join with HEIs outside the country in partnership or franchise arrangements to offer Cross-Border programs in Ethiopia and/or elsewhere.

This paper expands on the topic of Cross-Border Higher Education with respect to Ethiopia and elaborates on the challenges and opportunities for the Private Higher education Institutions in the country. ■

Interview

This column features interviews of people including government officials, policy makers, educators, researchers, and presidents of universities or colleges as well as students on issues of importance in the higher education sector. This edition presents interview with W/O Yeromnesh Ayele from Education and Training Quality Assurance Agency (ETQAA) on issues of Quality Assurance and Accreditation practices in Distance Higher Education in Ethiopia.



Background

W/o Yeromnesh Ayele is an accreditation sub-process owner in the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA)- now Education and Training Quality Assurance Agency (ETQAA). She has served as an expert and head of Department, Higher Education Human Resources Development in the Ministry of Education and senior expert in the Higher Education Strategy Center for the last fifteen years. She has a masters degree in Agriculture from the University of Leipzig, Germany . In her professional involvement in the education sector, She has attended various international workshops and trainings. Tigist from CEIQA talked to her on issues of Accreditation and quality Assurance practices in distance higher Education in Ethiopia.

Quality Matters: *What are your thoughts on Quality Assurance and Accreditation practices in distance higher learning context in Ethiopia?*

W/o Yeromnesh: *As it is well known, the process of accreditation of higher education institutions in Ethiopia is a recent phenomenon, due to the recent introduction of private operators in the higher education sector. Distance education at diploma level started ten years back largely by non government and private providers like Alpha, St. Mary's, and Admas university Colleges. From this point of view, the issue of accreditation and preparation of guidelines and standards has become a priority to the government in order to answer concerns related to relevance of programs and quality of the education.*

It is, in fact, obvious that distance education is one major means of improving access and equity to the public, especially for those who are less likely to have formal schooling. However, institutions offering distance education are trying to expand their coverage in different regions of the country with minimum capacity and efforts. On the other hand, the Agency has limited capacity to assess the facilities that are put in place and the overall teaching and learning process, and thus to assure the quality of the education provided

in distance mode in the country.

The role of professional associations to contribute towards quality enhancement is not yet to its optimum expectation. Even though the direction is changing to output based assessment, the current practice of accreditation is largely based on input (infrastructure, facilities, staff. etc.). Competent graduates joining the world of work are central to the development of the nation and will have an immense contribution to poverty reduction strategy of the country. Through institutional quality audits the quality and relevance of programs and of the teaching and learning environment, and the appropriateness and effectiveness of institutions' approach to quality care, its systems of accountability and its internal review mechanisms will be analyzed and assessed.

Quality Matters: *What are your views of the standards, guidelines and policies used to determine quality of distance learning here in this country?*

W/ro Yeromnesh: Besides expansion, the focus of the third Education Sector Development Program (ESDP III) is quality of education, supported by the legal framework (higher education proclamation). Standards and guidelines developed so far to determine the quality of distance education are not to be considered to be at the level of experienced countries of the world. But efforts are made to update those standards, guidelines and checklists, develop new ones using other countries with well established accreditation systems and practices as benchmarks.

The quality audit system in both public and private HEIs, focuses on the evaluation of the quality of the HEI as a whole, assessing what sorts of mechanisms for quality assurance are in place, and whether the achievement levels of graduates match the degree concerned, following submission of self evaluation documents to the Agency. It provides a two-way communication and extends an integrated involvement towards enhancing quality of the higher education in the country.

Quality Matters: *What needs to be done to enhance quality in distance higher education in this country?*

W/ro Yeromnesh: It is believed that quality assurance is primarily the task of HEIs, not just the responsibility of the regulatory body. Also, the public at large and stakeholders in particular should work hard to promote quality education in this country. Higher learning institutions offering distance and regular education need to build their capacity to establish sound quality assurance systems to take responsibility for quality assurance on their own. Each HEI offering distance education needs to pay special attention to support students, make their teaching methods interactive, teaching methods and able to use information communication technology as means of facilitation. It should be noted that accountability, honesty and social responsibility is highly required from private education provider's.

As practiced in other countries of the world, the role of professional associations should be maximized in association with the regulatory body in developing

(Cont'd to P. 9)

Perspective

Quality Assurance and Accreditation Practices in Open and Distance Higher Learning

By: Markos Mezmur (CEIQA)

Concern about higher education quality in Africa is on the rise. This is justified by the need to reawaken the sleeping giant- higher education institutions of the continent, in the face of increasingly growing state recognition of the potentially powerful role of tertiary education for sustainable development. The argument is further warranted by the ever increasing competition in the higher education market as globalisation of higher education including the proliferation of cross-border provision and increased electronic delivery of higher education became a reality. Furthermore, the growing demand for educated human power in the third world means governments have to resort to innovative options, such as lifelong learning and distance education. This, in fact, poses even bigger daunting challenges of maintaining quality as universities in the continent seem to stretch beyond capacity and the continent still staggers with backward educational technology (Materu, 2007).

Recognizing the need for Quality Assurance in Ethiopian Higher Education System, the FDRE government established the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Assurance Agency (HERQA)- now 'Education and Training Quality Assurance Agency' (ETQAA) in 2003. The Agency conducts assessments to respond to applications for licenses, pre-accreditation and

accreditation of academic programmes and higher education institutions. Among others, it conducts external quality audits, ensures relevance of higher education to national policies, sets national benchmarks and standards for educational quality. Though young and not well resourced, the agency has, in fact, managed to develop systems and procedures for quality assurance and control, including licensing and accreditation of private HEIs and carried out external quality audits though mostly on inputs. However, it has not yet established benchmarks and systems for effectively evaluating quality of the teaching- learning processes and outcomes. Furthermore, its assessments for accreditation are limited to private HEIs (FSS, 2009).

As far as educational Quality Assurance- which refers to a systematic institutional review used to determine whether acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are maintained, is concerned, there is this view of Quality Assurance practices in conventional and distance mode of educational delivery; one has to consider specificities of distance education linked to changes in the learning/teaching dynamics due to the 'distance' factor. However, it is understood that Quality Assurance practices in distance higher education is integrally linked to quality assurance of conventional education in general. (McIntosh, 2005).

Though distance Higher Education in Ethiopia is a recent phenomena dating back only a single decade, in the post industrial society the operation of correspondence schools dates back to the previous century. Today, distance education has increasingly expanded and refers to any educational or instructional activity in which students are separated from faculty and other students. This may include, in addition to correspondence instruction, synchronous or asynchronous learning environments with a variety of instructional modes paper-based or computer-based; e.g., audio or computer conferencing, computer-mediated instruction, internet-based instruction, videocassettes or disks, or television as well as printed materials (Ibid).

In recent years, accreditation as a response to societal health and safety concerns as well as serving for the good of the public has resuscitated as a consequence of the globalization of higher education. It actually refers to a process of external peer review on quality of higher education institutions and programs of higher learning. In distance education mode, accreditation examines and makes judgment about how the fundamental features of institutional operation that are deemed important to quality of the education are affected by the peculiar distance learning challenges. These features are institutional mission, organization, institutional resources, curriculum and instruction, faculty support, student support, and student learning outcomes. In some cases, this is based on new standards and processes that have been developed specifically to assure quality of the distance learning. In other

cases, accreditors modify existing standards or processes to achieve the desired goal. Through these changes, accreditors assure the quality of alternative designs of instruction, alternative providers, and expanded focus on training which are core areas of focus in the course of institutional self-evaluation and external quality audit (CHEA, 2002).

Overall, despite the preeminence given to higher education quality, little is known on what African universities are doing to enhance Distance higher education quality, what it takes to implement quality assurance initiatives, what has been the impact, and priority needs for capacity building in this regard. Therefore, there is a need for better understanding on how Open and Distance Learning (ODL) functions in light of the existing Africa's socio-demographic and economic contexts, and redress concerns regarding quality of the education provided through Open and Distance Learning. There is also a need to put in place a robust national quality assurance policy for appropriate and efficient planning as well as management of the education provided through Open and Distance Learning. ■

References

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- McIntosh, C (ed.) (2005). Quality Assurance Survey of Mega Universities. Common wealth of Learning / UNESCO Publishing.
- Materu, P (2007), Higher Education Quality Assurance in Sub-Saharan Africa: Status, Challenges, Opportunities and Promising Practices. Working Paper No. 124 World Bank, Washington, D.C.
- FSS, (2009), Quality of Higher Education in Ethiopian Public Institutions, Addis Ababa.

standards, assessing, giving professional advice and realizing a well established quality assurance system.

Strengthening the capacity of the Agency in terms of human, financial and material resources is an inevitable issue. It is already on progress to widen the Agency's scope through experiences gained from engagement with countries whose agencies have accumulated significant expertise in the area. Updating of standards and guidelines and being part of the dynamic and fast changing global situation is truly needed.

Tracer study of graduates educated through distance mode of higher education will give an insight to evaluate the delivery approach, assessment and accreditation system as a whole.

Apart from the conventional mode of education, there is currently an emerging trend and interest from higher education institutions around the world to involve in higher education in this country in the form of cross-border education at post graduate level. This requires timely response, strong but flexible accreditation and/or recognition system without compromising on quality and the national human resource development demand in terms of quantity and professional mix. ■

Virtual Links

Ministry of Education

Web site: [http:// www.moe.gov.et](http://www.moe.gov.et)

Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (Ethiopia)

Website: www.higher.edu.et

PROPHE- Programme for Research on Private Higher Education

Website: www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe/

International Network for Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education (INQAAHE)

Website: [http:// www.inqaah.org](http://www.inqaah.org)

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (UK)

Website: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>

Center for International Research on Higher Education

Website: http://bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe

Quality and Standards Authority of Ethiopia

Website: <http://www.qsae.org/>

International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa

Website: <http://www.eric.ed.gov>

International Network for Higher Education in Africa (NHEA)

Website: <http://www.bc.edu>

International Network for quality assurance Agencies in higher Education

Website: <http://www.inqaah.nl>

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Website: <http://www.enqa.eu>

Asian Pacific Quality Network

Website: <http://www.apqn.org>

Ethiopian Knowledge and Technology Transfer Society (EKTTS)

Website: <http://www.ektts.org>

Association of African Universities (AAU)

Website: <http://www.aau.org>

Macmillan books

Website: <http://www.palgrave.com>

Fun Corner

Several scientists were all posed the following question: "What is $2 * 2$?"

The engineer whips out his slide rule (so it's old) and shuffles it back and forth, and finally announces "3.99".

The physicist consults his technical references, sets up the problem on his computer, and announces "it lies between 3.98 and 4.02".

The mathematician cogitates for a while, then announces: "I don't know what the answer is, but I can tell you, an answer exists!".

Philosopher smiles: "But what do you mean by $2 * 2$?"

Logician replies: "Please define $2 * 2$ more precisely."

The sociologist: "I don't know, but is nice talking about it".

Behavioral Ecologist: "A polygamous mating system".

Medical Student: "4"

All others looking astonished: "How did you know???"

Medical Student: "I memorized it."

Forthcoming Event

European Distance and E-Learning Network (EDEN) 2010 Annual Conference on Distance and e-learning

Media Inspirations for Learning

What makes the impact?

9-12 June 2010

Valencia, Spain

For more information, Please visit <http://www.eden-online.org/eden.php>

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If you have comments on this issue of the newsletter or would like to contribute to future issues please contact our office on 011 553 8001 Ext 145 Or email: ceirqa@smuc.edu.et

Photo Gallery



2010 Jessup Ethiopian National Rounds, Faculty of Law,
St. Mary's university College



Call for Papers

St. Mary's University College will held its 8th national annual research conference on private higher education institutions in Ethiopia in August 2010. The organizing committee invites all interested to submit abstracts for the conference to be held under the motto of

“INVIGORATING THE WORK ON ACCESS, EQUITY AND QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA”

Papers for presentation can focus on the following specific thematic areas

- *Quality culture in Ethiopian Higher education institutions;*
- *The link between higher education and national development policies;*
- *Addressing the issue of mature students in Ethiopian HEIs;*
- *University governance and management;*
- *Closing the gender gap in academics;*
- *Linkages between higher education and the labour market;*
- *Accreditation and Quality Assurance systems;*
- *Globalization of Higher Education;*
- *Financing Private Higher Education in Ethiopia;*
- *Cross-cutting themes such as HIV/AIDS and environmental justice.*

Deadline for submission of abstracts: May 30, 2010

Deadline for submission of full papers: June 2010

Abstracts should be submitted to:

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Honorarium will be paid for papers selected for presentation and papers would be considered for publication.