QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION:

DEVELOPING AND MANAGING QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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PREFACE

This volume had its beginnings in an invitational paper prepared and presented at the First Biennial Conference and General Conference of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education held in Montreal in May 1993. Preparing the paper gave me an opportunity to become more fully aware of recent trends in quality assurance in the Asia and Pacific region and to appreciate more fully the important developments under way. The Montreal conference also gave me the opportunity to meet with various senior government officials and academics from many of the countries in the region. Since then, a number of these colleagues have helped by providing me with additional information.

Many other people helped in the preparation and production of this volume. In particular, I would like to thank colleagues from various countries of the Asia and Pacific region who provided me with information and comment: colleagues in other parts of the world who have contributed to the current quality debate and whose ideas have influenced my thinking and colleagues at the Unesco Principal Regional Office in Bangkok who encouraged me with this monograph and made publication possible. I also wish to thank Elizabeth Hylton-Cummins for her help with formatting.

In reporting on new initiatives with respect to quality assurance both in the Asia and Pacific region and elsewhere, I have used the most up to date information available to me. In some cases, unfortunately, I may have been unaware of very recent developments which are not yet widely reported.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<td>AAU</td>
<td>Academic Audit Unit</td>
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<td>AVCC</td>
<td>Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee</td>
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<td>DGHE</td>
<td>Director General of Higher Education</td>
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<td>CNAA</td>
<td>Council for National Academic Awards</td>
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<td>CNE</td>
<td>Comite National devaluation</td>
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<td>HMI</td>
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<td>MOE</td>
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<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

This book provides an introduction to key ideas about developing and managing quality assurance in higher education systems and institutions. It also provides a blueprint for action designed specifically to assist higher education systems and institutions in the Asia and Pacific region. In essence, quality assurance refers to systematic management procedures and processes adopted to ensure achievement of a given quality, or continued improvement in quality, and so to enable key stakeholders to have confidence about the management of quality control, and about the standards of outputs achieved.

Quality and quality assurance clearly have become key issues for higher education in the 1990s, both in the Asia and Pacific region and more generally. (Kens 1988 and 1992; Kens and van Vught 1988; and Craft 1992 and 1994). They may even prove to be the key issues for higher education internationally for this decade. Wherever you go today, managers of higher education systems and institutions are concerned about quality and how to put in place appropriate quality assurance mechanisms. Governments are concerned about the huge costs of providing credible academic and professional awards, while rapid increases in enrollments and often falling support per student unit raise doubts about whether quality is being maintained. Quality issues dominate the higher education debate in many countries, as ministers, bureaucrats, employers and business interests become increasingly concerned about the outputs of higher education institutions and the suitability of graduates to meet the needs of employers. Many people question whether their societies are getting real value for their massive investment in higher education and urge the adoption by governments of mechanisms to achieve more control over the work that higher education institutions do. Quality and accountability thus have become key elements in the efforts of many countries to become and remain internationally competitive in a world where interdependence in trade is rapidly growing. Apart from this, there is more emphasis on quality associated with increased mobility of professional and skilled labour and the greater needs for recognition of qualifications obtained by workers from institutions in different countries. As Craft (1994, p viii) points out:

‘globalisation’ and international migration mean that academic and professional qualifications need to be ‘portable’ across national borders, and so both institutions and nation states are keen to learn
more about each other’s procedures for assuring the quality of tertiary education provision.

The main issues in the quality debate about higher education in many countries are the maintenance and improvement of levels of teaching, learning, research and scholarship; improvements in the quality and adaptability of graduates; how to define and measure quality; management approaches likely to improve outcomes from universities and colleges; the use of benchmarking and performance indicators; and how to convince stakeholders that institutions and systems are doing a competent job in ensuring quality outputs. In addressing many of these issues, this monograph has been written primarily to assist senior officials in Ministries of Education, Ministries of Higher Education and University Affairs, and University Grants Commissions; Vice-Chancellors, Rectors, Residents, Principals and other members of senior management groups in universities and other kinds of higher education institutions; and academic and teaching staff interested in achieving increased quality outputs in student learning and in the professional competence of graduates. In addition, it is hoped that the publication will be of interest to those scholars and researchers who specialise in the management of higher education systems and institutions.

In summary, the volume provides definitions of quality, quality assurance and other key concepts; explains why there is increased concern about quality in higher education throughout the countries of the region; outlines the main quality issues under discussion and summarises the traditional approaches in the region to quality control and quality assurance; documents new directions with respect to quality assurance and quality improvement in selected countries of the region; explains the new international quality assurance agenda and some of the key mechanisms that have been adopted in various countries; and sets out recommended strategies. The main emphasis is on higher education system-level issues, approaches and mechanisms, although reference is also made to various developments and approaches at institutional level. The monograph attempts to cover the whole of post-secondary education but, because in many cases information on non-university sectors is limited, the main focus is on universities.

Quality and Higher Education

In one sense, the quality debate in higher education is not new, although in the past universities and government agencies used different terms such as academic standards, standards of degrees and diplomas, student assessment, and accountability (Harman 1994). In the past too, the main issues in this quality debate were largely about maintaining academic standards according to some national or international norm, the maintenance and improvement of levels of teaching and learning, and how to provide sufficient financial and other resources to achieve quality higher education. Many of these issues are still important
today, but the new quality debate is largely about the achievement of quality outcomes; the establishment of appropriate internal management processes to monitor achievement, and to ensure high achievements and ongoing improvements in quality; and how to convince or assure major stakeholders that institutions and systems are doing a competent job in ensuring quality outputs. One of the big differences between the old quality debate and the new quality debate is that, while the old was concerned greatly about inputs and national and international academic standards, the new is much more concerned about management processes, assessment of outputs, and how well outputs meet employer and other needs.

Various studies and papers produced over the past seven or eight years have documented key aspects of the quality debate in OECD countries, and in major geographic regions such as Western Europe and North America (e.g., Ball 1985; National Center for Postsecondary Governance and Finance 1989; Sizer 1990; Frazer 1991; Neave 1991; van Vught 1991; Williams 1991; Anwyl 1992; Craft 1992; Lindsay 1992; van Vught and Westerheijden 1992; Lindsay 1994; and Craft 1994). But quality is also a major issue in the higher education systems of Asia and the Pacific, although within the region there are very considerable variations about how quality issues are perceived and in the priorities that different governments and higher education systems are giving to tackling quality problems.

Asia and the Pacific is a vast region, containing almost two thirds of the world's population and the world's two largest nations in terms of population size - China and India. Geographically, the region extends from the Indian subcontinent in the west (and sometimes further to include some countries of the middle east), to Korea and Japan in the north, almost to Hawaii in the east, and south to include Australia and New Zealand. The sheer size of the region and its diversity in terms of languages, cultures, political systems and economic development makes generalisations difficult. In addition, there is very little detailed scholarly literature in English on many of the higher education systems of the region. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, a broad overview of quality issues, traditional methods of quality control, and new directions in quality assurance is attempted here.

The recent international literature on quality and quality assurance in higher education reveals considerable difficulties and ambiguities in the definition of a number of key terms. This is not surprising as quality deals with a number of complex notions. For example, in the literature only in the widest sense is there broad agreement about what quality is, and how to define a number of key concepts used in the current debate about quality. Within many universities too, there are often quite surprising variations in views about the essential characteristics of quality, about what characteristics of institutional work are regarded as being of the greatest value and why, and what constitutes academic
Quality Assurance for Higher Education

performance at the highest level and how such performance can be recognised. There also is sometimes a measure of disagreement within many higher education institutions about what constitutes good teaching, and about which graduates have the most valued characteristics. Apart from this confusion and lack of agreement, scholars interested in researching quality issues differ significantly in their views about key terms. Many see quality as a relative concept, meaningful only from the perspective of particular judges at particular points of time, measured against some either explicit or implicit standard or purpose.

But despite these differences in views among both scholars and practitioners, there is an increased degree of consensus emerging about key terms. For this publication I draw on this growing consensus and set out a number of working definitions to be used in the book.

The Concept of Quality

In the recent extensive scholarly literature about quality, there has been considerable debate and discussion about what is quality, and about how quality can be recognised and assessed. As already mentioned, this is not surprising, since discussions of quality deal with complex phenomena, and for many years both researchers and administrators have been wrestling with difficult questions about such matters as measuring academic performance of students, comparing academic standards over time and between different institutions, and devising means to ensure that teaching in academic departments or institutions is of consistently high quality.

These difficulties have implications for policy and practice since there are major problems in putting in place effective quality assurance mechanisms without some general agreement of what quality is, and how it can be recognised and assessed. By quality in the context of higher education, I mean a judgement about the goodness or level of achievement of specified activities and/or outputs. It is a value judgement about the degree to which activities or outputs have desirable characteristics according to some norm or against specified criteria. Sometimes judgments are made in relation to some specific purpose or objective, such as producing a graduate competent to work in a particular profession. Thus, a recent Australian government report on quality in higher education followed the definition of the British scholar, Christopher Ball (1985), about quality being, in essence, ‘fitness for purpose.’ According to this definition, a course of study in a higher education institution is of satisfactory quality when it conforms to the particular standards or levels of achievement for the purpose it was designed.

Of course, within this basic definition of quality, there can be many different perspectives and, in fact, such different perspectives are highly desirable
for many tasks in dealing with quality and quality assurance. The value of different perspectives can be well illustrated from the work of the American scholar, Robert Birnbaum, who in a study of American college presidents reports on three different views of quality in higher education (Birnbaum 1994). He describes these as the meritocratic, the social, and the individualistic views of quality. With the meritocratic view, Birnbaum found that college presidents assess quality in relation to conformity to some institutional or universalistic professional or scholarly norm, and so normally use the academic profession as a reference group. Those presidents who take a social view of quality base their judgments on assessment about the extent to which the institution satisfies the needs of important constituencies and audiences -what people have now come to refer to as the stakeholders - and so uses a particular community as a reference point. Presidents who take an individualistic view emphasise the contributions that the institution makes to the personal growth of students, using the individual learner as the reference point.

An Australian scholar, Alan Lindsay, has categorised key approaches differently. In a recent paper, he identifies two distinct approaches to discussions of quality in higher education. One approach, which he terms the ‘production-measurement’ view, treats quality as a synonym for performance, and so discussions of quality revolve around the definition and measurement of resources and outcomes. The other approach, which Lindsay terms the ‘stakeholder judgement’ view, is based on assessments by various key actors involved in higher education. These assessments may incorporate ‘imponderable elements of our conceptions of educational processes and outcomes, and their dependence on contested value positions’ (Lindsay 1992, pp 154-156).

Middlehurst (1992) usefully identifies four different ways that the term quality had been used in the recent higher education debate, primary in the United Kingdom. These are quality as a defining characteristic or attribute; quality as a grade of achievement; quality as a particularly high level of performance or achievement which, by virtue of general consensus and reasonable stability over time, comes to be seen as a standard against which to judge others; and quality as fitness for purpose achieved through performance that meets specifications.

Within the Asia and Pacific region, it is important to recognise that a great deal of discussion about quality in higher education relates to very basic input issues, such as inadequate resources; the expertise, training and numbers of staff; inadequately prepared students; and the competence of managers. It also deals with curriculum and pedagogical matters; low internal institutional efficiency; imbalances in graduate output and the major problem of graduate unemployment and the special problems of private institutions and how to ensure that the education offered in such institutions meets at least basic community and employer expectations, and minimum standards. These problems are all important and need to be addressed. However, they are by no means the only
quality issues of importance and, in fact, today in many countries around the world there is a great deal of interest in and concern about what we might refer to as the new quality assurance agenda.

Related Concepts

Apart from the concept of quality, a small number of other specialist terms now in common use in the higher education quality debate need definition. Of these, the most important are quality assurance, quality control, quality audit, quality assessment, quality management self study, and evaluation.

The frost of these terms, *quality assurance*, as already noted, refers to those mechanisms and processes used to lead to the maintenance and improvement of quality outcomes and so to enable key stakeholders to have confidence about the quality control procedures in place and the standards achieved in terms of outputs. It also has come to mean a guarantee or certification that particular standards are being met. Thus quality assurance is largely about convincing people essentially outside the university that the university takes its quality control seriously, and that the quality of teaching and the quality of graduates leaves no room for concern. It is also about generating and making public the evidence that enables stakeholders to make such judgments. It is important to note the reference to stakeholders. In the recent quality literature, this term is used deliberately, since it is thought to be much broader than terms like clients, customers or participants. Stakeholders can be defined as all those who have a legitimate interest in what universities do and in the quality of their outputs; they include students and graduates, but they also include employers, parents, various professions and professional bodies, and government.

Sometimes the term quality assurance is confused with processes related to achieving quality outputs, and the essential characteristics of quality. For example, Frazer sees quality as having four inter-related components:

(a) everyone in the enterprise has a responsibility for maintaining the quality of the product or service...;

(b) everyone in the enterprise has a responsibility for enhancing the quality of the product or service;

(c) everyone in the enterprise understands, uses and feels ownership of the systems which are place for maintaining and enhancing quality; and

(d) management... regularly checks the validity and viability of the systems of checking quality (Frazer 1991 pp 3-4).
However, it is possibly preferable to think of these as desirable features of any quality assurance and improvement system, rather than as part of a definition of what quality assurance is.

Quality control refers to the processes or mechanisms within an institution or system used to ensure compliance with quality standards or achieve improvements in performance. It is about evaluating and guaranteeing standards. The term appears to have been adapted from industry where quality inspectors or quality controllers, somewhat independent of the main workforce, monitor the production process and particularly the quality of outputs. Experience in industry has shown that it is not sufficient to have an efficient quality monitoring group, but rather the workforce as a whole needs to be convinced of the importance of quality in order to achieve the highest levels of production performance. In higher education, quality control can focus on inputs, outputs, the mechanisms used to monitor quality, or some combination of these three.

Quality audit refers to the processes of external scrutiny used to provide guarantees about the quality control mechanisms in place. Quality audit is based on a large element of peer review and on the notion of developing a detailed report which becomes available to the institution to assist in improving procedures and achieving enhanced outputs. The concept was developed and popularised following the establishment of an Academic Audit Unit in 1990 by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals in the United Kingdom to review the processes employed by universities to monitor and ensure maintenance and improvement of quality (Frazer 1991).

Quality assessment has come to mean a review or systematic examination, usually conducted externally, to determine whether quality activities comply with planned arrangements and whether the ‘product’ (the educational process) is implemented effectively and is suitable for achieving the stated objectives. However, there are some differences of opinion in the literature as to whether the focus is, or should be, on the mechanisms to achieve quality, or the educational process and outcomes, or all of these.

Quality management has come to refer to the management of quality control and quality improvement and to that aspect of the overall management function that determines and implements the quality policy [intentions and directions] of the organisations (van Vught and Westerheijden 1992). It is about the design and maintenance of quality assurance mechanisms.

The term self study has come from the work of American accreditation agencies and refers to the internal preparation of a detailed evaluation document, concerning the goals, mission, strategies and activities of an institution or academic unit or programme, usually to be presented for review by an outside review panel who will visit the institution and provide a written report. Many
Quality Assurance for Higher Education

quality assurance approaches put a major emphasis on a self study or self evaluation.

Evaluation is a term frequently used in the recent literature on quality in higher education. It refers to systematic analysis and judgments about the worth or effectiveness of a programme, activity, mechanism or process. Any in-depth evaluation should consider not only the results achieved, whether in relation to intended goals (outputs) or the more complex effects (outcomes or impacts), but also the preconditions and the resources available to the units being evaluated, and the processes going on in the units.

Quality Assurance and Total Quality Management

While Total Quality Management (TQM) has had a major influence on thinking about quality management and quality outcomes in industry, its influence to date in higher education has been more limited. In cases where TQM has been applied within higher education institutions, its application has been more common and generally more successful when related to administrative processes and service activities, rather than to academic functions. Still, there are examples of higher education institutions, especially in the United States, who have made strenuous efforts to apply TQM principles to both academic and administrative areas have reported successful results (Seymour 1992; Chaffee and Sherr 1992; and Sheer and Teeter 1991).

TQM had its origins in statistical quality control techniques developed in the United States in the 1920s by statistician W A Shewhart at Bell Telephone Laboratories. Shewhart examined variability in industrial production and concluded that quality control could be built into the production process by the introduction of sampling and statistical techniques. This idea was a departure from the traditional method where quality inspection occurred at the end of the assembly process. Shewhart’s method was successfully applied to the production of telephone equipment and by the 1940s the notion of statistical quality control had evolved into a management technique. From this developed what we know today as TQM.

Three people have been credited with playing particularly influential roles in the development of TQM. They were Joseph Juran, Philip Crosby and Edward Deming. Juran, a colleague of Shewhart, wrote The Quality-Control Handbook (1951) which examined product design and marketing as well as the manufacturing process. Crosby, who was a senior executive of IT&T, moved TQM further ahead with his book, Quality is Free (1979), in which he asserted that quality is a function of expectations and that most errors are the result of lack of attention. Deming began his career in the US Department of Agriculture in the 1920s. As an early advocate of Shewhart’s work, in the 1940s he improved US
Introduction

Census Bureau methods and in the 1950s worked as a consultant with Japanese manufacturing firms, advocating a system approach to problem solving and quality control. Industrial quality, he maintained, could be achieved through goal setting, consumer research and attention to organisational details. With the success of Japanese industry, by the 1980s Deming’s ideas on TQM were receiving wide attention in the United States. By then, he was advocating (eg Deming 1986) a more comprehensive philosophy of management, based around the ideas of meeting or exceeding customer needs, a process of continually improving management processes and the quality of outcomes, the importance of investing in quality, and the notion of quality as a responsibility of everyone in the organisation. These ideas were enthusiastically taken up by industry in the US and internationally, and more recently have been adapted to meet the needs of service and non-profit organisations, including universities and colleges.

Most attempts at adapting TQM ideas to higher education stress the need for a strong service orientation to ‘customers’ (including students, parents, alumni, employers, and professions), the discovery of customer needs and the redefining of services to meet these needs, strong and effective leadership, more precise definition of mission and goals, more effective planning and linking of planning and budgeting, and a strong emphasis on continuous improvement. However, it is clear that the attempts to interpret and apply TQM principles to higher education systems vary greatly in their central emphasis and in many cases it is difficult to distinguish the application of TQM from the application of many of the ideas associated with the new quality assurance agenda. On the other hand, many scholars consider the success in the translation of TQM principles to higher education have been limited. According to one recent review article,

The great difficulty lies in making the translation. The nagging fact persists that TQM’s greatest higher education victories have occurred in auxiliary areas. While bookstores and dining halls dedicated to ever-improving service are beneficial to the institution and society, TQM must become part of the entire culture to be effective. Unless it can penetrate into the very core of academic culture, TQM’s achievements will be minor, ultimately relegated to the status of a fad. Improving the maintenance of residence halls is one issue; the real tension begins when proposals are made to introduce TQM in the process of teaching and governing departments (Sloan 1994 p 458).

This monograph is deliberately about quality assurance rather than TQM, although many of the ideas set out here are closely allied with various attempts to apply TQM concepts to higher education. For example, both the new quality assurance agenda and TQM stress the desirability of attention to clients or stakeholders, the values of participative management, the use of management processes and data collection methods suitable to the goals and characteristics of
Quality Assurance for Higher Education

the institution, and the use of evaluation involving both peer review and the use of quantitative indicators. Further, both emphasise the importance of continuous improvement as a major objective. What is different, however, in this work compared to the literature on TQM and higher education is that the starting point here is the traditional and new approaches to achieving quality assurance in higher education, rather than applying TQM ideas originally developed for industry to higher education. Further, the emphasis here is on both higher education system and institutional approaches to quality, in contrast to the TQM emphasis on institutional management.
PART I

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXTS
Chapter 2

HIGHER EDUCATION IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

With its rapidly growing population and, in many cases, dramatic economic and social changes, the Asia and Pacific region provides major challenges for higher education providers. Some three billion people live in the region, with many of them being located in rural areas. While the region includes some of the world’s fastest growing and dynamic economies, it also includes some of the poorest nations. To understand the current quality debate in the region and recent developments with respect to quality assurance, it is necessary to appreciate some of the key characteristics of the region’s higher education systems and institutions.

Diversity and Variety

A number of particular aspects of the Asia and Pacific higher education scene need to be noted with respect to the focus of this book. First, the higher education systems of the region present a portrait of great diversity and variety. They have been built on different cultural and ideological traditions and have looked to a variety of European countries and the United States for their basic institutional models. But in each case, the models borrowed from overseas have been adapted to meet local needs and traditions. The systems vary considerably in size - from the relatively small systems of Pacific island states and Papua New Guinea to the very large systems of India and Japan. These systems also vary greatly according to the stage of development achieved for example, a number of developing and newly industrialised countries enrol less than one per cent of the age cohort of 17 to 24 year olds; at the other end of the continuum, countries like Thailand have a relatively high participation rate, with well over 20 per cent of the relevant cohort enrolled in higher education. The OECD countries of Japan and Australia both have an even higher participation rate. There are differences too in structure, and sharply different roles for private and public sectors of higher education, and different expectations about the responsibilities of government in providing financial support and in directly controlling universities and colleges. In the Philippines and Korea, for example, 80 per cent or more of total student enrollments are in private sector institutions, whereas elsewhere the public sector
Quality Assurance for Higher Education

has a virtual monopoly in the field of higher education. There is also diversity and variety in terms of resource levels, relations between higher education and the labour market, approaches to system-level planning and resource allocation, and experimentation and reform. Systems like those of Japan and Australia are well resourced compared to those of Bangladesh, Nepal and some small island nations of the Pacific. In a number of cases in recent years higher education and secondary education have expanded at a much faster rate than education at the primary school level. This in turn has led to rising unemployment among the educated. Many countries of the region are experimenting with major open universities somewhat along the UK Open University model, whereas in other countries different approaches to distance education have been adopted. Some higher education systems like those of Australia and New Zealand are under-going major reconstruction and re-organisation, while in others broad policies and overall institutional arrangements have been relatively stable for quite a long period.

Growth and Funding Pressures

Over recent years higher education in the region has expanded rapidly and the pressures of growth continue. This constitutes a problem of very significant proportions and higher education systems and institutions have been under considerable strain to respond. Table 2:1 shows rates of growth from 1975 to 1992. In Australia and New Zealand, the rate has been modest compared with that in developing countries such as China, the Republic of Korea and Thailand. Australia’s three to five per cent growth rate per annum since the early 1980s contrasts with the Republic of Korea where total enrollments in higher education increased from 279,000 in 1977 to 1,364,000 in 1987, with an annual growth rate in some years of almost 40 per cent. A high rate of growth places very heavy demands on facilities, staffing and finance. In addition, fluctuations in the growth rate from year to year, and significant changes in demand by fields of study, place increased strain on institutions.

Recent increases in student numbers in almost every major national system of higher education have not been matched by an equivalent increase in public funding for tertiary education. Developing countries in particular face major dilemmas over the inability of public resources to match expansion demands. A number have invested considerable resources in higher education over the past three decades, often with support from such agencies as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). But the majority of higher education institutions are confronted today with the difficult situation of uncontrolled, or largely uncontrolled, growth of enrollments and expenditures.
## Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific

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<td>Vietnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>46</td>
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Source: Unesco Statistical Yearbook, Paris, various editions
Quality Assurance for Higher Education

against a background of diminishing financial resources. In many countries, declining funding levels have resulted in increased staff-student ratios and staff workloads, and deterioration of working conditions, student services and institutional fabric. Two common mechanisms for coping with increased demand in a climate of financial stringency have been the creation of open universities which may have relatively lenient entry requirements and which provide education at a distance through utilising modern communication technology, such as radio and television, to supplement written materials and classroom instruction and shifting some of the higher education burden to the private sector through either the creation of private higher education institutions or asking individuals to contribute directly to the cost of their education, or both. While the open university model has become a popular experiment for increasing access to higher education, this model varies considerably from country to country, as do other arrangements for external studies (distance education) and part-time study.

But despite the dominant pattern of diversity, there are many common themes and common problems across the higher education systems of the region. These include problems in coping with expansion and the inability of governments to adequately fund expansion, serious mismatches between the output of graduates and the needs of the labour market, very serious graduate unemployment, and the difficulty of maintaining and improving quality while at the same time broadening access. In many cases, the price of rapid development in higher education has been high, and will remain so. A well-placed Asian observer has commented as follows:

One serious complaint is that the unplanned and haphazard growth of enrolment and the mushrooming of new institutions in many developing countries have alarmingly eroded the quality of the outputs. This relates to both standards and relevance. Unemployment and underemployment of university graduates is widespread. Reports of administrative inefficiency and large-scale waste of resources are not uncommon. Traditional courses of study are still very heavily relied on in many general universities and colleges. Most of them are in the periphery of the international knowledge system and look towards the west for guidance and political change. Their role of teaching, research and public service is indispensable for national development (Selim, undated).
Quality and Diversification

With the demand for quantitative expansion arises the ever-present question concerning the quality of graduates produced. Concerning the competency of graduates, there is a dilemma between the immediate market demand for manpower and the potential for future development. Professional skills for ready use in the workplace as well as specialisation for the achievement of specific goals are required by many newly established industries, businesses, and services. Flexibility, broad vision, and innovative abilities are preferred by more established and advanced enterprises. Moral, ethical, and personal qualities as educated persons are also sought. These divergent requirements represent pressure for changes and for the improved efficiency of higher education institutions in order that they may become more closely linked with a nation’s economic, social and cultural development. In a number of cases expansion in higher education systems has been accompanied by significant diversification of programmes and institutions. Reference already has been made to the establishment of open universities and the increased use of distance education teaching methods. Some of the new open universities cater for very large groups of students, many of whom would probably be denied access to other higher education institutions. For example, Thailand’s two open universities cater for an enrolment of almost three quarters of a million students, while China’s Radio and Television University System is the largest distance teaching institution in the world. Between 1979 and 1989, it enrolled 1.61 million students in degree programmes, of whom 1.04 million have graduated, and since 1986, well over three million people have completed its non-degree programmes. Other examples of diversification include the rapid growth of private institutions in Indonesia, the establishment of branches of overseas universities and colleges in Malaysia, the establishment and development of regional institutions in Thailand, and the development of polytechnics and training institutes (often in joint schemes with foreign governments or industry) in Singapore.

Supply of Student Places

In most Asian countries demand for student places far exceeds supply. Of course, this is not surprising because of the private benefits higher education is seen to bring and because higher education is heavily subsidised. Table 22 provides some illustrative data for the Asian region. Excess demand varies by field; usually medicine and engineering are the most oversubscribed faculties or schools.
### Table 2.2: INDICATORS OF EXCESS DEMAND FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN SELECTED ASIAN COUNTRIES, MID-1980s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Last graduation in secondary schools</th>
<th>Number taking entry examination</th>
<th>Local public</th>
<th>Local private</th>
<th>Distance education</th>
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<td>Bangladesh</td>
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<td>194764</td>
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<td>..</td>
<td>15194</td>
<td>11425</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: ****** This indicates that student enrolment in local public higher education institutions refers to the new entrants in both public and private local higher education institutions.*

Chapter 3
QUALITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE REGION

This chapter aims to sketch out the specialised context with respect to the recent debates about quality and the new quality assurance initiatives in the Asia and Pacific Region. It tries to explain why there has been growing concern about quality in higher education, it sets out the main issues that have been discussed in the recent quality debate, it provides information on the traditional methods of quality assurance in the region, and points to some of the limitations of these traditional methods.

Increasing Concern About Quality

Van Vught and Westerheijden (1992) have drawn attention to four factors to explain the increased attention given recently to quality issues in higher education in Western Europe:

- general societal concern about the increase of public expenditure in general;
- expansion of higher education systems;
- increased openness in many sectors of present day societies; and
- growing international mobility of students, teachers and researchers, and increasing internationalisation of the labour market.

Clearly these factors also appear to operate in the Asian and Pacific region, but the actual form they take differs somewhat to the Western European experience.

In the first place, in many countries of the region there is general concern about the scale of public expenditure and questions are being raised about the priority to be given to higher education. In countries like Australia and New Zealand, electors have shown a distinct reluctance to increase levels of taxation and a strong desire to reduce taxes and cut public sector budgets, and to do so at a time when public sector health costs and social security payments have risen rapidly. In contrast, in many developing countries, particular pressure arises because education is competing for very limited funds with the need for increased expenditure on essential development infrastructure, especially transportation, roads, electricity and irrigation projects. In addition, in many developing
Quality Assurance for Higher Education

countries there is strong pressure to reduce the proportion of funds going to higher education out of the total education budget because of the need to expand primary education and to give a much higher priority to adult literacy programmes. Studies conducted by international agencies have suggested that in developing countries the rate of return for investment in primary education may be considerably higher than for investment in higher education, and findings from such studies have influenced the policies of aid agencies and sometimes governments. A particular problem for some of the small island nations of the Pacific since the early 1980s has been major fluctuations in export commodity prices, resulting in fixed or shrinking public sector budgets (Meek 1992; Gannicott and Throsby 1990).

Second, certainly rapid expansion in student numbers and in the size and diversity of higher education systems has prompted concern about quality. In countries such as Korea and various small South Pacific nations, it is widely believed that rapid expansion over the past two decades has been achieved only at the expense of lowered educational standards. Various World Bank papers and reports have drawn attention to this problem internationally, noting that

. . . the quality of teaching and research has declined as a result of overcrowding, inadequate staffing, deteriorating physical facilities, poor library resources and insufficient scientific equipment. Internal efficiency is often very low and there is a rising problem of mismatch and graduate unemployment. Numerous institutions of higher education in developing countries now operate at the periphery of the international scientific community, unable to engage in the generation and application of the advanced knowledge necessary to address social and economic developed problems (Salmi 1991, p 4).

Linke has drawn attention to the important linkages between growth in student enrollments, economic constraints and new accountability pressures:

Increasing demand for services leads to pressures for wide community access and greater curriculum diversity. Economic constraints lead to broadly based pressures for improved efficiency in organisation structure and management (often leading to institutional amalgamations or closure), in curriculum design and teaching practice (through improved credit transfer arrangements, reduced overlap in curriculum content and an increase in average class sizes), in research productivity (through strategic
Quality and Qualify Assurance in the Region

application of government funds and performance based selection within institutions), and in the pattern of staff employment (with increased emphasis on contract appointments and individual performance appraisal) (Linke 1993).

Third, increased openness in many sectors of society has been an important factor in bringing quality issues on to the public political agenda in countries such as Australia and New Zealand. There is a new trend in public accountability demanding that government agencies and publicly funded institutions explain to society at large what they are doing and how well they are doing it.

Fourth, within the region increasing international mobility of students and the growing internationalisation of the labour market has prompted a new emphasis on academic standards and the standing of degrees. However, influence has operated somewhat differently in the Asia and Pacific region compared to Europe. For example, countries like Australia, New Zealand and Japan which are involved in ‘exporting education’ on a major scale are conscious of the need to maintain and enhance quality in their higher education institutions in order to attract large numbers of fee-paying students. Similarly governments in countries such as Malaysia, where large numbers of students go abroad to study and where twinning arrangements have been developed with institutions in the US, UK and Australia, are becoming increasingly experienced in making judgments about the quality and relevance of academic programmes in overseas institutions.

In addition, within this region other important influences can be identified. Of these, perhaps the most important has been an increased degree of international economic competitiveness among the countries of the region. In many countries, including Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand, there is a strong belief in government and industry that higher education can play a major role in economic growth and in capitalizing on new economic opportunities, especially in manufacturing and services. The key attributes for higher education are thus seen to be quality, relevance and flexibility. The stress on quality in higher education as an important strategy to help Australia compete internationally, for example, comes out in many of the public speeches given by politicians and industrialists. In a major speech in 1992, for instance, a senior Australian politician said:

Education has to be about excellence . . . If it is not about quality, then all our effort, all our expenditure will have been for nothing because we will not only have blighted the lives of our students, but damaged our ability to compete and survive in a world which does not owe us a living (Kemp 1992).
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The Chief Executive of Australia’s largest company in a speech given about the same time was even more explicit:

*We cannot have a world class economy and a world class living standard without a world class workforce.
And we cannot have a world class workforce, without world class education.*

(Quoted in Kemp 1992).

Another important factor in the region bringing concern about quality to the forefront has been the considerable growth in the private sector of higher education. In some countries, many private institutions offer high quality education and their activities are closely monitored by governments. But in others, such as Indonesia, rapid growth has generated concern that academic standards and teaching are of lower quality than in public sector institutions.

Finally, as far as developing countries are concerned, some of the new interest in quality stems from major changes in policy and emphasis within international agencies such as the World Bank and UNDP. In the 1960s and 1970s, the main emphasis of the major international and regional aid agencies was on expansion and growth, with researchers being preoccupied with exploring such matters as the ramifications of correlations between earnings and years of schooling. Data to study quality issues were lacking, and influential studies (e.g. Coleman 1966; Jencks 1972) from the United States seemed to suggest that variations in schooling did not matter much anyway. However, over the past decade, this attitude has been replaced by active very keen interest in quality issues. Agencies such as the World Bank now explicitly incorporate quality in their appraisal of education projects, while leading researchers have found ways to overcome some of the data problems which confronted early attempts to study quality (Gannicott and Throsby 1990).

Quality Issues and Quality Debates

In the recent scholarly and research literature related to higher education in the Asia and Pacific region, discussion of quality has essentially focused on seven main issues: inadequate resources; staff numbers and quality; inadequate prepared students; curriculum and pedagogical matters; low internal efficiency, imbalances in graduate output and graduate unemployment; the special problems of private institution and accountability and quality assurance.

Inadequacy of resource provision is the single quality issue that is identified most frequently in the literature for both developed and developing countries. In most cases, the experience of the past decade has been that resourcing per student unit has not kept pace with expansion in enrollments. For
some of the less wealthy countries, the level of resourcing for higher education is a major problem of great seriousness. In Nepal, for example, it is predicted that over the next three years total resident enrollments will double but public resources available to higher education in real terms are likely to be reduced by 20 per cent. Even in the developed countries, there is considerable public debate about resource levels. In Australia, while total public resources allocated to higher education increased by over one third in real terms between 1983 and 1992, dollars allocated per equivalent full time student declined by 11.2 per cent measured against planned load, and by 16.3 per cent measured against actual load (Higher Education Council 1992b, p 53). But what effects this has had on teaching quality is a matter of dispute.

Academic staff issues are identified as a major problem in many developing countries. This includes an overall shortage of well-qualified staff, staff without appropriate post-graduate qualifications, serious staff shortages in regional institutions, and unfavorable staff-student ratios. Many systems experience a ‘brain drain’ from universities to the private sector, where salaries are higher and promotions are on merit, and to overseas appointments.

Inadequately prepared students is a serious problem in a number of countries. Secondary education is often weak, especially in terms of preparation in mathematics and science, and higher education institutions find that many students do not have appropriate academic backgrounds to cope with more demanding courses. In many countries in the region, universities have little influence on the selection, intake, and distribution of students between different courses, which is the responsibility of the government.

Scholars in a number of countries complain of out-of-date curricula and teaching methods, with courses not being relevant to development needs. Often there are serious shortages in textbooks and learning materials. In countries which have changed from instruction in English to instruction in local languages, there are often major problems in the prevision of relevant, up-to-date textbooks.

Often there is low internal efficiency, students proceed slowly through the university system, thus producing low progression and graduation rates. There are imbalances in graduate output, contributing to graduate unemployment. Systems have often expanded enrollments unnecessarily in the humanities and social sciences at the expense of the sciences and technology. Graduate unemployment remains a major problem, especially on the Indian sub-continent.

Because of the rapid increase in the number of private higher education institutions and in their enrollments, there has been growing concern about the quality of education offered in non-government institutions. In many cases the supervision of private institutions is minimal and ineffective, and so there are now suggestions being made of introducing accreditation systems or setting new
Quality Assurance for Higher Education

registration requirements. In January 1988, the Indonesian Director-General of Higher Education announced a moratorium on the registration of additional private universities, intended to provide breathing space for efforts to improve the quality of those institutions already in existence (Snodgrass 1991, p 485).

Another way to view quality issues is to consider the particular matters currently under discussion in one particular country. For this we will consider Indonesia, which has a highly centralised major system of public higher education under the control of the Directorate-General of Higher Education (DGHE) and enrolling about 500,000 students. There is also a private sector enrolling over 750,000 students. Private institutions have more autonomy than public institutions but they do come under the control of a Directorate of Private Higher Education in the DGHE. Five particular quality problems are identified in the literature. First, there is a serious shortage of qualified academic staff. In some of the newer universities, and especially those located off Java, failure to attract qualified staff has led to arrangements whereby staff from Jakarta fly in weekly or monthly to take intensive classes. Comparatively few staff even in state universities have higher degrees (Snodgrass, 1991, p 485-6). Second, there is concern about the standards of teaching. Watson comments that several factors contribute to this situation:

... university administration is inefficient and the standard of record-keeping low; there are no proper procedures for monitoring course content and teaching; library facilities are inadequate knowledge of English, the language in which most of the text books are still to be found, is abysmal; the nature of classroom instruction is authoritarian and discourages independent thought. All these factors persist through inertia within the system, largely perpetrated by the staff being appointed from among the graduates of the same institution. Such junior staff tend to follow the practice of mentors and have no other models to adopt. Thus classroom teaching consists almost entirely of a lecturer reading out notes which are duplicated for sale to students. Exams, often multiple choice to avoid the burden of marking, are based simply on these duplicated notes. Not only are students not encouraged to read independently, lecturers themselves rarely read more than a minimum of two or three texts to prepare their courses (Watson 1992, p 325).

Third, low internal efficiency is characteristic of many universities. Frequently students take seven, eight or more years to complete a course designed to take no
more than four to five years. In 1985 the average age of S-1 graduates was 27 years for KIP (education) graduates and 29 for graduates of other courses. Only 10 to 15 per cent of students were found to complete their courses on time even at leading state universities (Snodgrass, 1991, p 486). Fourth, to some extent the quality problems spring from generally low quality of primary and secondary education, which means that university students are insufficiently prepared for their higher level studies. Fifth, there is particular concern about quality in private institutions, even though they come under government supervision and their graduates have to pass state final examinations to obtain official recognition of their degrees.

Traditional Methods of Quality Assurance

Van Vught and Weterheijden (1992) have identified two main traditions in quality assurance in higher education systems in Western Europe - the Continental tradition and the British tradition. The Continental tradition was essentially a tight state control model, mainly controlling inputs rather than outputs. This included line item budgets, academic staff having civil servant-status, government control over senior academic appointments and staff remuneration, control over student intakes through entrance examinations, and control of the approval of new study programmes and sometimes detailed prescription of curriculum and examinations. In some cases a government inspectorate helped monitor quality, while a number of countries had additional examinations for students to qualify for nationally recognised degrees. By contrast, the British tradition involved much less state control over the universities, with individual institutions having considerable autonomy through their charters and being left largely to develop their own forms of quality control. The universities traditionally were free to select their own staff, according to their own criteria and on their own conditions (including salary levels), to select their own students, to choose their own curriculum, and to award their own degrees. Two key mechanisms that operated for collective upkeep of academic standards of output were a system of external examiners (experienced academics with a high reputation who reported on student work and examination performance, judging whether it was of comparable quality according to standards applied in other universities), and a system of external accreditation and professional licensing in various professional fields such as engineering and accounting.

A third tradition is also identified in the literature (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate 1991; van Vught 1991), that of the American model. This model for the public sector is based on a reasonably tight budget control and some government supervision for private institutions, but considerable institutional autonomy for institutions in both sectors with respect to curricula, examinations, student admissions and staff appointments. External quality control is exercised mainly through accreditation of institutions and programmes carried out by
Quality Assurance for Higher Education

regional accreditation agencies, specialist accreditation bodies for particular professions, licensing boards which give licences to practice in such areas as accounting and nursing, and state government agencies. The main accreditation agencies are non-government bodies, but operate with a measure of government support. In addition, quality control over admissions is assisted by the operation of various national testing organisations. The accreditation system plays an important role in quality control and quality improvement. According to a report of the (British) Her Majesty’s Inspectorate, the American accreditation system provides a cost effective assurance that American institutions and programmes meet minimum standards. It also contributes to the improvement of quality in institutions by imposing conditions for accreditation and reaccreditation and through the requirement for self study which it imposes on institutions. In these ways, accreditation provides an important encouragement to the development of effective quality control by institutions (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate 1991, p 19).

In broad terms, these three different approaches have constituted the main traditional approaches to quality assurance in higher education in Asia and the Pacific since the Second World War. However, the models as implemented differ in a number of respects from Western European and American practice. Before examining these three approaches, two preliminary points need to be made. The first is that in many respects over the past three decades there has been a marked convergence in Asia and the Pacific between the Continental bureaucratic model and the British model, with many systems based originally on the British style relatively autonomous universities coming under much tighter state control. The second point is that in most countries arrangements differ significantly between the sub-sectors of the public post-secondary education sector (i.e. universities, polytechnics, teachers colleges, technical and vocational institutions), with generally universities having much more control over their own affairs than non-university institutions, and also with significant differences between the public and the private sectors.

The Continental or Bureaucratic Model

This model is found in a large number of developing and also newly industrialised nations of the region. Higher education is tightly under government control, with regulations covering the establishment of new institutions, both public and private, and often academic departments; senior staff appointments and sometimes all appointments; staff salaries; student admissions; tuition fees; student places available in various fields of study; and at least broad aspects of the curriculum. In many instances, academic staff in universities are
Quality and Quality Assurance in the Region

civil servants. Thailand, China, Indonesia and Vietnam, and also to some extent in Korea and Taiwan, exhibit these characteristics.

In Thailand, for example, the quality of higher education has traditionally been supervised by central government agencies, especially the Ministry of University Affairs (MUA) which is responsible for broad policies relating to higher education, university regulations, setting curriculum standards, overseeing university personnel and administration, for approving accreditation and curriculum development, and for acting as a link between universities and government (Watson 1991, p 573).

Through the Joint Higher Education Entrance Examination which it administers the Ministry exercises tight control over student selection and admissions, except for the two open universities. For non-university institutions, even tighter control is exercised by other government departments, and especially the Ministry of Education (MOE).

Curricula and standards in both Thai universities and non-university institutions comes under strict government control. University curricula and programmes are designed and devised by individual departments, but must be approved by various university committees and boards and then by the MUA. College curricula are developed by ad hoc committees consisting of representatives from the relevant colleges, and approved by the MOE. According to one Thai scholar, when universities and colleges develop a new study programme, they require the approval of the curriculum, then apply for permission to operate the programme from the MUA and the MOE. Finally they submit the programme to the Civil Service Commission to get a salary scale for the graduates of the programme (Wiratchai 1992, p 725).

The British Model

Since many of the higher education systems of the region were established when their nations were British colonies, it is not surprising that the British model of quality control in broad terms was followed for a long period. Universities generally were given considerable autonomy, and were allowed to set their own standards, recruit their own staff and students, decide on curricula and examinations, and award their own degrees. Commonly systems of external

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examiners were developed, and professional bodies established systems of accreditation and licensing to practice. Non-government institutions were under the strict control of government agencies, which frequently set the curricula, recruited the staff and controlled student selection and admission. In many cases, legislation required that the academic standards of degrees in universities should be identical to those in British universities.

This system with local variations was followed by a large number of Asia and Pacific countries, including much of the Indian sub-continent, Malaysia, Brunei, Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and a number of small Pacific nations. Local variations are important to note. For example, external examiners are found in a number of university systems established in the 19th century, and also those of Malaysia and Brunei established after the second world war, but not in Australia, except for the external examination of higher degree research theses.

Despite the emphasis in many countries following the British tradition, university autonomy generally has been reduced substantially over recent years. In some cases this has followed from universities’ dependence on government funds, but elsewhere government control has been deliberately increased to achieve particular national objectives - for example, affirmative action to achieve ethnic balance objectives in the case of Malaysia (Singh 1991), and economic competitiveness in the case of Singapore (Selvaratnam 1992). Many of the systems following a British model have given considerable responsibility y to buffer-type coordinating agencies, along the lines of the former University Grants Committee (UGC). But there has been a clear trend away from such bodies and now in a number of systems including Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore central ministries of education deal directly with universities and have considerable powers in determining policies. In others, and particularly on the Indian sub-continent, the UGC model is still strong, although such bodies tend to be more like government regulatory agencies than committees of academics advising government essentially on allocations of funds among institutions. Nevertheless, in India and Pakistan (Shuka 1991, p 472-3; Saqeb 1992), the UGCs have taken positive measures to try to improve quality, such as by establishing centres or departments of excellence and trying to increase salary levels to enable institutions to recruit better qualified staff.

The American Accreditation Model

Higher education in the Philippines, Korea and Taiwan exhibit features of the American accreditation model. However, the Philippines has followed American type arrangements for its extensive private sector for a much longer period than in Korea and Taiwan.

The Philippines has a large higher education system in which some 80 per cent of students are enrolled in private institutions. While all educational
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Institutions come under the supervision of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, both public and private higher education institutions enjoy a large measure of academic autonomy. Private institutions are supervised and subject to the regulation of the Bureau of Higher Education which formulates minimum standards for the operation of private institutions and the maintenance of quality education.

Two separate external quality control mechanisms operate. The first is a system of voluntary accreditation introduced by the private higher education sector with the aim to improve quality of educational programmes. Introduced first in Catholic sectarian institutions some thirty years ago, the system has now gained wide acceptance among other groups of private institutions. Accreditation is carried out by separate agencies related to particular private higher education associations, such as the Catholic Education Association of the Philippines, the Association of Christian Schools and Colleges, and the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities; these various accrediting associations have now joined together to form the Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (Cooney and Paqueo-Arrezo, 1993). Of the various accrediting agencies, the most advanced is the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities, which was established in 1957. By 1987 this agency accredited 185 programmes in 66 different institutions. The government counterpart association, the Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges, considered voluntary accreditation for some years before introducing it in the late 1980s (Gonzales 1991, p 545), and only then did it establish and incorporate a separate accreditation agency.

The various accreditation processes in the Philippines are based on the common American model of institutional self examination followed by the visit of an accreditation team of peers from other colleges and universities. The visiting committee validates the institution’s self examination and then makes its own recommendations. The process involves pre-accreditation, accreditation for three years, and then accreditation for longer periods up to seven years. The Department of Education, Culture and Sports recognises the work of the accreditation associations. Institutions that have achieved high ratings may be exempted from further government reinspection and re-evaluation for official recognition, while institutions may lose recognition if accredited status is not renewed or withdrawn (Arcelo 1992).

A parallel form of accreditation is operated in the Philippines by professional examination boards in a number of areas such as medicine, engineering, nursing, law and accounting. Also the Department of Education, Culture and Sports maintains technical panels in seven major disciplinary areas. These have the power to recommend opening or phasing out curricula offered in non-government institutions.
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A second external mechanism consists of various testing bodies, which examine students wishing to enter higher education. A National College Entrance Examination is operated by the National Education Testing and Research Centre. Other national examinations for university entry to particular university professional schools are conducted by the Centre for Education Measurement, a private testing agency ‘whose mission is to enhance excellence in education through test and measurement’ (Arcelo 1992, p 12) and other bodies.

Limitations of Traditional Approaches

The limitations of these three traditional methods of quality control in higher education in the region need to be stressed. In many higher education systems, the emphasis has been mainly on control of inputs, with comparatively little attention being given at system level to assessment of educational processes and outputs. Moreover, at institutional level, there has been little capacity to monitor educational performance in any systematic manner. In many developing and newly industrialised countries, there is a lack of a strong tradition of evaluation in higher education, even though the needs for improvement and better use of resources are pressing. Teichler and Winkler (1991, pp 45-50) advocate improvement of evaluation in developing countries based on the following Principles:

- evaluation should take account of the diversity of preconditions;
- special attention should be paid to issues of ‘evaluation culture’;
- evaluation methods based on reading of documents and on-site visits by external experts will most likely remain a key approach;
- a balance has to be achieved between reasonable costs and a broad scope;
- evaluation should be embedded in a code of ethics in order to increase the level of mutual trust and confidence in the evaluation process;
- a balance should be sought between direct evaluation and use of data collected for other purposes; and
- efforts should be made to train evaluators in developing countries and develop appropriate instruments of evaluation.

Further, as already noted, the existing methods of quality control in many countries of the region are based on highly regulated state control and intervention. A number of scholars have speculated that this tight government control may be one reason why many of these systems are so sluggish in their response to calls for change and innovation. A leading Indian economist, Patel, is even more critical. In an address to a 1991 World Bank seminar in Kuala Lumpur, he said:
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... it has to be admitted that despite much governmental interference in everything, including appointments and promotions - and perhaps because of it - the system of efficiency and performance audit in higher education leaves much to be desired in most developing countries. This is undoubtedly one of the main causes of high costs and poor quality . . .

Restoring a semblance of management and managerial autonomy by rolling back government intervention and political patronage and making students and teachers responsive to purely educational criteria are perhaps the greatest challenges in higher education in many developing societies (Patel 1991, p 12).
Chapter 4

INTERNATIONAL TRENDS AND KEY MECHANISMS

As already noted, over the past decade, important developments have taken place in a number of countries with respect to new directions and approaches in quality assurance. This chapter aims to briefly review these international trends in a number of countries outside the Asia and Pacific region.

New approaches to quality assurance have emerged in a surprising number of different countries in Western Europe over the past decade. In most cases, the initiative has come from governments and government agencies, but in other cases, such as in Britain, Sweden, and the Netherlands the higher education institutions themselves have played important roles in initiating new approaches.

Some Examples

The following case-studies indicate something of the variety of approaches and the mechanisms which have been adopted. Each case-study is brief and attempts only to provide a summary sketch, concentrating particularly on providing an overview of new mechanisms and new approaches.

Denmark

Traditionally, quality assurance in the higher education system of Denmark depended mainly on the system of external examiners who sat on and graded individual examination papers. In 1992, the Government strengthened this system by requiring external examiners to make an annual general report to the Ministry of Education on quality in various study programmes.

Following attempts in the late 1980s to provide more student choice and more competition in the higher education system, increased concern grew about academic standards and in 1991 the Danish Parliament set up an Evaluation Centre as a government agency, with the mandate to initiate evaluation processes, develop appropriate methods for assessing programmes, inspire and guide institutions in the matter of evaluations and quality, and compile information on national and international experiences (Thune 1994, p 68). Three important principles were agreed on about the work of the Centre - it would concentrate on
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teaching and not cover research, evaluations would be on a voluntary basis, and the Centre would not offer any financial incentives to institutions for their participation in the evaluation programme.

In its work, the Centre decided to concentrate on the evaluation of programmes of study rather than the evaluation of whole institutions. It now undertakes large scale evaluations of established study programmes every five years and small scale evaluations of trial programmes and programmes which are experiencing acute problems. Its mandate is not only quality, but also quality assurance and development. Evaluations can be requested by the Education Councils, the Ministry of Education or the higher education institutions themselves, but to date all evaluations have been requested by the Education Councils, individual institutions and the Conference of Rectors.

The methodology for these evaluations follows clearly spelt out specifications (Caspersen 1993). A Steering Committee, which includes prominent employers of graduates of the particular study programme, is responsible for the professional oversight of each evaluation. A self study is conducted by staff in each institution concerned with the study programme. A visiting team of experts visits each institution to review the self-study and have discussions with staff and students. The team also analyses documentation on surveys of students, recent graduates and employers. A major emphasis is placed on these user surveys which account for about one third of the costs of each evaluation. Prior to the final report being submitted to the relevant Education Council, a draft report is prepared and discussed at a one day conference, when representatives of institutions and study programmes have an opportunity to provide comment.

Finland

The approach to evaluation and quality assurance in Finland is based on the Government’s 1986 statement of the principles of higher education policy and on the new law on the development of higher education which became effective at the beginning of 1987. In the principles of new directions set out in these documents, evaluation procedures are seen as one instrument for increasing self-regulation of higher education institutions.

Evaluation is made up of three components: reviews of individual disciplines, strengthening the role of the central buffer agency in evaluation, and reviews of individual universities (Sallinen, Konttinen and Panhelainen 1993). Disciplinary reviews were commenced by the Ministry of Education with two experimental evaluation projects in 1991-92, one covering the faculties of science and mathematics, and the other covering the humanities. These were organised by two national working groups.
For the reviews of universities, the Ministry launched an important experiment in 1991. Two universities volunteered to be reviewed as pilot projects. Under these reviews, a major emphasis was on self-assessment, but at the same time another purpose of these reviews was to create a national quality assurance system. The two reviews were coordinated by a national steering group consisting of representatives of the two universities, officials of the Ministry of Education, and members of some other universities. The organisation of each review was left to the university concerned, but it was required to choose an external review group that would mainly consist of foreign experts in research, teaching and university management. Both universities were given great freedom in the approaches and methodology they used. The University of Jyväskylä chose an institutional research approach, where it organised a series of studies, compiled a report, and discussed these widely in the University. Under this scheme, a major emphasis was on a bottom-up approach where the process started with studies and reports written by each department. The University itself has described the approach as ‘an interactive self-developing model of the university’s quality assurance’ (Sallinen, Konttinen and Panhelainen 1993). The external visiting group consisted of one foreign and four Finnish experts. In the case of the University of Oulu, special emphasis was placed on the efficiency of institutional infrastructure in the service of teaching and research, institutional organisation and performance, internationalisation, and the adoption of new management and budgeting procedures (Linna 1993).

Following the completion of the experimental programmes, in June 1993 the Finnish Government adopted a Plan for the Development of Education and University Research up to 1996. An important element was a commitment to continue both the disciplinary and institutional evaluations.

Separate disciplinary evaluations of research activities are carried out by the Academy of Finland using panels of foreign research experts. This system was established in 1983 and, between 1983 and 1993, 13 nationwide evaluations were completed (Linna 1993).

France

The main vehicle of quality assurance nationally in the higher education system in France is the Comité National devalorisation (CNE) which was setup in 1985 to address concern about problems with the traditional centralised system of quality control. Significantly, it is a government agency but, since it reports to the President, it is independent of the Prime Minister, Minister of Education and other executive agencies.

The CNE quality assessment procedures consists of both institution-wide evaluations and horizontal disciplinary reviews. The evaluations do not assess individual staff members or specific courses within individual institutions,
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although where necessary the CNE makes use of existing evaluations and control reports of other agencies. Institutional evaluations cover teaching and learning, research, and management. They are undertaken by invitation and the CNE policy is to ‘tour’ all institutions every eight years. Each visit results in a report on the institution, with recommendations being made to the persons responsible for institutional management. The reports are public reports and, as well as going to the institution, they go to Ministers responsible for the institution being visited. Results are not used directly in making reallocations of funds although, through the contract negotiations and the annual budget negotiations, a firm link with budgetary decisions is established (van Vught 1994, p 7).

The CNE disciplinary reviews consist first, of self-evaluation reports produced by the institution being reviewed and statistical reports produced by the CNE, government offices and the institution, and second, of institutional visits and writing of a report which is made public by an external peer committee. The committees works ‘horizontally’ in the sense that they review all courses across the country in particular disciplinary areas.

Every year the CNE presents a summary report to the President, giving an overview of its institutional-wide evaluations. However, no explicit rankings are made of those institutions audited in the past year (van Vught 1994, p 8).

At first, the CNE concentrated mainly on institution evaluations but now is looking to put more emphasis on programme and departmental evaluations (Woodhouse 199%).

Sweden

Since the late 1970s, the Swedish higher education system has had a distinctively different approach to evaluation and quality assurance to that in use in most nearby Scandinavian and European countries. From the 1950s until 1977, the dominant evaluation approach in Swedish higher education was ‘product oriented evaluation’, carried out to provide answers to questions about efficiency and productivity. Evaluations were initiated by decision makers in central agencies and a major emphasis was on measurement of student ‘throughput’ and assessment of the specific knowledge and abilities of students.

With the reforms of 1977 aimed towards building an integrated higher education system, the new emphasis adopted was on monitoring to ensure that all institutions maintain comparable, high quality. However, the 1980s brought declining confidence in the value of higher education and the judgment soon developed that this approach to evaluation was too restricted, and so there was a move to process-oriented evacuation.

The early 1990s produced a further change in policy direction, with greater use of market forces in the higher education system and a substantial decentralisation of power to institutions. The Government and the Parliament
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deliberately decided to move from management by directives to management by
goals and results, giving institutions much more discretion over their study
programmes, student recruitment and the employment of staff. This new system
brought with it a new direction for quality assurance, where responsibility was
explicitly distributed over all levels from University departments and faculties to
institutional and national levels. However, the primary responsibility is with the
institutions themselves, whose managements have the task of establishing an
effective quality assurance system that fits the type and size of the institution.

This new direction for higher education has produced a quality assurance
system that was different in many respects to those of most European
counterparts. Compared to the systems of France and the Netherlands, it was
built bottom-up, with responsibility being shared by all levels, stimulating a
horizontal approach to evaluation and a division of work, but at the same time
putting in place demands for co-operation between the levels. It is also a multi-
modal approach using a variety of mechanisms and perspectives to evaluation.
Apart from using annual collections of statistics, institutions are required to
report to the Government every three years in connection with their three-year
appropriation and the results achieved. These reports must include detailed reports
on the local quality assurance mechanisms used and the results obtained. Two
Swedish scholars report as follows:

Behind this QA model with the characteristics of institutional
ownership and heterogeneity and flexibility of methods lies a strong
consciousness of the risk that evaluation procedures easily turn into
a useless burden of administrative routine instead of being an
instrument for quality development. The reason we think it is
worth the extra effort to try solving these problems is our
conviction that such a QA system in the longer run will become
more deeply rooted in the higher education activities and therefore
have a stronger impact on the development of teaching and learning.
The QA system is intended to become a qualify-driving instrument,
not an administrative obligation (Bauer and Franke-Wikberg 1993).

The Netherlands

The current system of quality assurance in the Netherlands for both the
University and the non-University sectors sprang from a restructuring in the mid-
1980s of the relationship between the Ministry of Education and Science and
higher education institutions. An understanding was developed that, in exchange
for a greater degree of financial and managerial autonomy, the institutions would
demonstrate that they were offering quality education. Originally it was planned
that this assessment of quality would be a responsibility of the Inspectorate for
Higher Education but, in the end, after negotiations, the two voluntary bodies
representing higher education institutions in both university and non-university
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sectors respectively agreed to take on this responsibility (van Vught 1994, pp 9-10).

For the university sector (ie the VSNU system), the approach employed is evaluation of particular disciplinary fields, rather than institutional evaluations. For each discipline, a visiting committee reviews all study programmes in that discipline in all institutions, and produces a detailed report. All major disciplines are covered in a six-year cycle. In preparation for the visiting committee, each participating study programme is required to complete a self-evaluation according to a specified format which includes a check-list of items that must be covered. All self-studies are available to the committee before it commences its programmes of visits.

Each visiting committee consists of about seven members and includes at least one foreign expert in the field. Members are nominated by the collective deans in the participating faculties. Each study programme is visited for two or three days and during each visit the committee meets with representatives of all interest groups in the faculty including the students. Final reports contain a general discussion of the study area and its problems, outlooks and expectations and chapters about each individual study programme. By 1993, seventeen review committees had published reports on 53 disciplines (Lentz 1993).

At first, the Ministry of Education and Science did not take any action on the basis of the reports of the visiting committees. It was argued by the universities that direct links with funding would have adverse affects on institutions. However, more recently the Ministry in conjunction with the Inspectorate of Higher Education has carried out metea-evaluations which involve formulating an opinion about the quality of each report, verifying whether all aspects were treated satisfactorily and ensuring that the composition of the visiting teams were satisfactory and the procedures were followed. The Ministry produces an overview report, giving for each field of study its opinion on the quality of the reports and the extent to which it believes that the reports will lead to improvement and accountability in the field.

Another recent innovation is that the Ministry is conducting systematic interviews in institutions about every three years after the discipline reviews. It reports for each field on the nature and extent of change recommended. It is rumoured that the Government may introduce an institutional audit process to complement the discipline reviews (Woodhouse 1996).

The United States

In the United States where there has been a large element of coordination through market mechanisms usually associated with a high degree of institutional autonomy, quality assurance in higher education has traditionally involved self
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evaluation, review by peers usually in the form of visits by team of assessors, and a system of accreditation.

In the late 19th century, growing diversity in institutional forms and lack of centrally defined standards led to a degree of chaos. In the end, institutions took the initiative and developed two main processes of quality assurance. The first of these was accreditation of institutions and of academic programmes. Accreditation usually involves a process of self review by the organisation or unit seeking accreditation, resulting in the development of extensive documentation providing detail on goals, resources, facilities and internal evaluation mechanisms, as well as an assessment of achievements in relation to specific goals. Production of the self study is usually followed by a visit of a team of external assessors, and a final decision by a peer board, using pre-defined standards, on whether or not the institution or the programme meets the specified criteria and will be given accreditation. Institutional accreditation is usually conducted by regional bodies that are controlled by the higher education institutions themselves, while programme accreditation is usually conducted by state-based or national profession-controlled bodies.

The second approach adopted was the intra-institutional process of systematic review of study programmes or disciplines. This is generally undertaken by universities to assess programme quality, to enhance institutional decision-making, and in some cases to provide a basis for marginal redistribution of resources within the institution.

New developments are currently at work to modify this traditional approach, in response to substantial public criticisms of quality and the traditional accreditation approach. This has led many of the regional accreditation associations to revise key elements of their approach, resulting in more emphasis on assessment of quality management mechanisms within institutions, reconsidering the practice of making reports available only to the institution concerned, and making the results of accreditation processes more generally available to the public (Crow 1994, pp 122-123).

Some years ago another quality assurance mechanism to develop was national assessment and ranking of disciplines and professional schools, usually based on surveys of academics and/or professionals. The results of these assessments and rankings attract a great deal of interest in the mass media, and are taken very seriously by leading institutions. However, this system of ranking has few of the negative effects of the ranking systems that have emerged in Britain and Australia, since generally the agencies concerned publish the results for only the ten or so leading departments or professional schools in each field.

Two other new directions should be mentioned. The first relates to the use of assessment of student outcomes. Throughout the 1980s, there was increased
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concern about the undergraduate curriculum, particularly related to the personal, intellectual and social development of students. This in turn led to calls, such as by the National Education Goals Panel, to increase substantially the proportion of college graduates who demonstrate an advanced ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and solve problems (quoted in Ratcliff 1993). In turn, this has led to attempts to develop tests to assess these changes. The second development is the use of performance funding by state-level funding agencies and within institutions. Considerable interest has been shown in a number of developments, such as that in the state of Tennessee where a small proportion of institutional budgets is distributed on the basis of performance.

United Kingdom

Until the early 1990s, when the binary system in British higher education was abolished, quality assurance was handled very differently in the universities compared to the system which operated for the polytechnics and colleges. In the polytechnics and colleges, quality was supervised by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) and by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI). The CNAA was an independent government body with the authority to review courses of study and to award degrees. It validated proposed courses within institutions and then reviewed them every five years. Institutions were visited by specialist panels of peers who based their recommendations on detailed information with regard to structure and content of the course, methods of teaching and assessment, and available resources. The review of courses was complemented by institutional reviews every five years.

Traditionally, the universities handled quality assurance themselves, and relied largely on the use of a system of external examiners both for undergraduate programmes and for research higher degrees which also was adopted by polytechnics and colleges. At the undergraduate level, external examiners were appointed for each degree programme and their task was to approve the examination papers (particularly judging whether the questions were at the appropriate academic standard, ensuring that wording was unambiguous, and the questions fall within the curriculum), sampling the marking of scripts, attending the meeting of the examining board, and participating in any oral examinations. In essence, the purpose of the system was to ensure fair and equitable treatment of students, and to ensure the maintenance of standards. In many respects this system has worked very well over the years, but in recent years a number of concerns have been expressed about the extent to which the external examiner should provide advice, whether the examiner should have a veto power, and the effects of the appointment being often in the hands of heads of departments. Also with major growth in enrollments the system became increasingly costly and difficulty was experienced in finding suitable examiners, while internally the increased use of continuous assessment and the use of modular programmes meant

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that many traditional aspects of the role of examiners had to be changed (Lewis 1993).

Because of increasing concern about the system of external examiners and fear of some government intervention, in 1990-91 the University sector supplemented the system of external examiners by the establishment of an Academic Audit Unit (AAU) by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, the umbrella organisation of the universities. University leaders particularly feared that an audit process would be established by the HMI. The AAU activities took the form of meta-evaluation. Instead of evaluating the quality of higher education, the Unit assessed the quality of an institution’s evaluation methods. Institutions were visited by small teams of academics, following a ‘negotiated invitation’, and these teams made an on site audit using a check-list of good practice. A general report was prepared for the university as a whole, while confidential reports on sensitive issues were produced for the Vice-Chancellor. Initially, these reports were not made available by the AAU to persons or institutions outside the institution that had been visited, but they are now public documents.

Since 1991, major changes have been made in quality assurance processes for the higher education system. Following the disappearance of the binary divide, the AAU was absorbed into the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) which also took over some of the functions of the CNAA. The HEQC is a company limited by guarantee and funded by subscriptions from individual universities and colleges of higher education. It has separate administrative units concerned with quality assurance including audit, and with quality enhancement. In addition, the HEQC deals with applications from institutions for degree awarding powers and university title.

The former funding councils for both university and non-university sectors were replaced by three new funding councils (one for England, one for Wales, and one for Scotland) and each of these have setup new quality assurance mechanisms. For the evaluation of teaching, the three funding councils have set up mechanisms whereby department/facuities provide information on themselves and their programmes, including information on specified performance indicators, and include a claim to be regarded as ‘excellent’ or ‘satisfactory’. Small disciplinary panels of senior academic staff visit all universities claiming excellence and a selection of other departments. Results for all universities are publicly announced. The most recent assessments carried out by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, for example, were for the fields of social policy and administration, environmental studies, geography, English, anthropology, geology, and music (Times Higher Education Supplement 3 November 1995). Departments were ranked ‘excellent’, ‘satisfactory’, or ‘unsatisfactory and awaiting a revisit’. Only a fifth of the excellent grades went to former polytechnics and colleges of higher education and only five departments across the system in these disciplines were considered to be unsatisfactory. The
unsatisfactory departments will be revisited within a year by Funding Council assessors. If there are not improvements by then, the institutions could face funding cuts. None of the unsatisfactory departments were in old universities, except for the postgraduate programme in English at the University of Exeter. Under a revised scheme, departments will be ranked in future on a scale of 1 to 4.

A 1994 evaluation of the assessment by a University of London research team of the quality of teaching carried out by the funding councils of England and Wales recommended a number of variations in methodology, including extension of visits to cover all departments and programmes, more time to be spent in dialogue with groups of teaching staff, more emphasis on quality improvement, and better training of assessors. It concluded that it ‘found much evidence of the general principle of quality assessment being accepted across institutions and a recognition that quality assessment, particularly through the preparation of the self-assessment, was already having beneficial effects in institutions’ (Barnett 1994, p 44).

In addition, the funding councils assess the quality of research on a departmental basis. The Funding Council of England does this every four years and participating departments are awarded a grade of 1 to 5, with 5 being given to top departments. A minor element of recurrent funding is adjusted according to grades received in this assessment. A high correlation has been noted between excellent departments in research and excellent departments in teaching. In the assessment of teaching completed in May 1995, there were 30 cases of departments gaining the top grade for both teaching and research out of a system with over 100 institutions. On the latest round reported in November 1995, 32 departments had the top grade for both (Times Higher Education Supplement 3 November 1995).

The Scottish Higher Education Funding Council has adopted a similar approach to the assessment of disciplinary areas (Donaldson 1994, pp 102-111). Assessments are carried out in major disciplinary areas by senior academic staff, drawn from higher education institutions throughout the UK, and by assessors drawn from industry, with support provided by the Council’s Quality Assessment Directorate. For each disciplinary assessment, self-studies are prepared by each department and a sample of institutions are visited as well as those departments claiming to be excellent. Draft reports are submitted to institutions before finalisation. In 1993-94, assessments were made against a four-point scale of excellent, highly satisfactory, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory.

In 1995, the Higher Education Funding Councils and the higher education sector set up a joint working party to create a new quality agency, to draw together assessment and audit in a single system. The proposal for a joint agency has the support of the Secretary for State for Education and Employment and the
Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (Times Higher Education Supplement 5 January 1996).

**Common Characteristics of New Quality Initiatives**

The new systems of quality assurance that have emerged internationally have a number of common elements or common features, as van Vught (1994) has observed. The frost is that most systems include both intrinsic and extrinsic elements providing elements of self-study or self-evaluation, review by peers and accountability to external constituencies. Self study has the advantage of being cost effective, providing a high sense of ownership by the institution or unit being reviewed, and increasing the likelihood of improvements to follow from evaluation. Van Vught comment:

> It is often argued in the literature on higher education that, in order for academics to accept and implement changes, they must trust and ‘own’ the process in which the problems are defined and the solutions are designed. This is certainly also the case in quality assessment. Only if the academics accept quality assessment as their own activity, will the system be successful; thus self-evaluation is a crucial element (van Vught 1994, p 13).

Peer review is a well established process in higher education, and gives any evaluation process a degree of legitimacy. Also peer judgments are essential to evaluate worth in relation to well-established academic standards. Accountability to external bodies is essential in order to convince external stakeholders about the quality of programmes and that higher education institutions are acting responsibly.

Second, frequently the managing agent for external reviews processes has a high degree of independence from other government agencies and is responsible for the meta-level assessments. Many experts in the field see this as being important and warn against possible problems if the government agency responsible for funding allocations and co-ordination is also the agency which has responsibility for quality assurance. Van Vught points to the particularly important role performed by the Higher Education Quality Assurance Council in Britain (which is owned by the higher education institutions collectively) and the VSNU in the Netherlands.

Third, a common element is the emphasis given to a combination of peer review and the use of site visits. Generally the external experts are senior academics in the particular discipline, or experts from professional bodies, employers organisations or industry. While the mix varies from one country to another, generally reviews of programmes of professional preparation include both senior academics and experts from the professions and industry. Institutional
visits usually include interviews with representatives of key groups, including students as well as examination of documentary materials.

A fourth element concerns the reporting of the results of the evaluation activity and the method used. Reporting is an important element to assist in renewal and improvement, but also in external accountability. While in some cases reports go only to the institution or the unit being reviewed, an important characteristic is that usually the group being reviewed have the opportunity to comment on the draft report before it is finalised. Increasingly, there is pressure for the results of reviews to be made more widely available.

A fifth element is the link between the outcomes of the assessment and funding decisions. In Western Europe, the clear preference is to have no clear and rigid links between quality review reports and funding decisions. The key argument is that, if such a link is included, the primary purposes of reviews to lead to improvement will be distorted. On the other hand, the British higher education funding councils have made a deliberate link between research performance and research funding, while in France there is a link which is not made explicit.

Sixth, as already noted, in a number of cases higher education institutions and peak organisations of higher education institutions have played a major role in initiating new approaches and even in taking responsibility for the operation of quality assurance. Generally this has worked very well, leading to a high degree of institutional acceptance and to methodologies which fit well with the values and operational norms of higher education.
PART II

NEW INITIATIVES IN QUALITY

ASSURANCE IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
Chapter 5

NEW INITIATIVES IN SELECTED ASIAN AND PACIFIC COUNTRIES

New Directions in Asia and the Pacific

A surprising number of countries of the Asian and Pacific region are currently experimenting with new forms of quality control and quality assurance in higher education, or are considering doing so. In most cases, the initiative has come from governments and government agencies, but in other cases, such as in Korea, New Zealand, Taiwan and the Philippines, the higher education institutions themselves have played an important role in moves to establish new quality assurance mechanisms. Important examples of innovations include the following:

(a) introduction of national evaluation mechanisms for academic disciplines and for higher degrees in China;

(b) establishment of a Council for Academic Accreditation in Hong Kong for the accreditation of degree courses in non-university institutions;

(c) various initiatives for quality improvement taken in India by the University Grants Commission, and establishment of government sponsored accreditation bodies for a limited number of important profession

(d) increased institutional autonomy for universities in Korea and introduction of a system of university accreditation;

(e) planning in Papua New Guinea for a national system of programme accreditation and institutional accreditation;

(f) introduction of a new system of internal validation of polytechnic courses in Singapore

(g) a trial programme undertaken in Taiwan with responsibility for academic accreditation of institutions and programmes being delegated from the Ministry of Education to individual academic associations;
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(h) extension of the well developed system of accreditation for private institutions to state universities and colleges in the Philippines, and establishment of a Commission on Higher Education;

(i) establishment of a Qualifications Authority in New Zealand, with responsibility to set up a qualifications framework, accredit courses and institutions, and undertake quality audits; and establishment of an academic audit system for universities;

(j) establishment in Australia at the national level for universities of discipline reviews, academic standards panels, and a new quality audit mechanism, and for Technical and Further Education (TAFE) of an accreditation system and a competency-based approach to vocational training.

These innovations demonstrate not only that important recent initiatives have been taken in a number of countries in the region, and in many cases very recently, but they also suggest that a range of different quality control and quality assurance mechanisms are likely to emerge. At the same time, most of the new directions or innovations have common elements; they are concerned with educational processes and outcomes, as well as inputs; they aim to produce improvements in the quality of teaching and learning; they aim to provide key client groups with much greater information about courses, teaching and performance; and generally the new mechanisms include, as important elements, self studies by institutions or departments, and preparation of detailed documentation prior to visits by panels of experts.

This chapter and the two that follow provide detailed information on the initiatives listed above, as well on related developments. This chapter provides information on selected developments in various counties of the region outside of Australia and New Zealand. It does not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of recent developments throughout the region, and undoubtedly some important developments are not reported here because of lack of information. At the same time, the various examples give a clear indication of major change, and of the variety of different approaches being adopted.

China

The most important recent initiatives in China in quality assurance have been the introduction of national evaluation mechanisms. One major effort concentrating on academic disciplines was introduced in 1985. By 1993, eight disciplines encompassing 55 degrees had been reviewed (Sensicle 1993).
Another major effort has been in review of masters and doctoral degrees. These reviews are conducted by Disciplinary Appraisal Groups with peer experts, appointed by the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council. By 1992, the quality of masters degrees in a total of 100 specialties in the humanities and social sciences, natural sciences, engineering, agriculture and medicine had been reviewed, and this covered more than 100 doctoral degrees and 1000 masters degree programmes (Wang and Li 1993).

These evaluations, conducted under the auspices of the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council, are nationwide accreditation activities. Reviews use criteria and procedures set by the Academic Degrees Committee. Degree conferring units frost carry out self evaluations, submitting reports to the office of the Academic Degrees Committee, which appoint panels of experts to review the reports, and to give scores for each evaluation for each institution. The office of the Academic Degrees committee then organises an expert group to make on-site visits to some selected institutions. This group produces a final report which is submitted to the Academic Degrees Committee and is published.

Because of shortages of funds and differences between institutions, it has become increasingly difficult to continue these nation-wide reviews. To overcome these problems, the Academic Degrees Committee has decided to gradually authorise relevant ministries and provinces to conduct their own evaluations for masters degrees. This has been adopted in Shanghia, Jiangsu, Sichuang, Hubei, and Shaanxi as a trial. In addition, some ministries have already taken responsibility y for evaluation in their respective subordinate universities and research institutes.

Hong Kong

In Hong Kong the Government and tertiary institutions take very seriously the need to ensure that degree programmes are of a high standard and are comparable with standards in leading overseas institutions.

One important recent initiative was the establishment in 1990 of the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation. Modelled on the British Council for National Academic Awards, this independent statutory body is entrusted with the tasks of advising on academic standards and validating degree courses offered by the two polytechnics, Lingnan College, the Academy for Performing Arts and the Open Learning Institute, (which offers university-type courses by distance learning and open access) (Rim 1992). The Council is required to monitor standards and work to improve quality, and has powers to accredit both courses and institutions.

The Council itself has 22 members, appointed by the Governor, and a secretariat of professional and administrative staff which in 1993 numbered 21
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(Sensicle 1993, p 6). In addition, it uses external specialists from Hong Kong and overseas for its accreditation activities.

The course accreditation process commences with a detailed proposal submitted by an institution. A validation panel of four to five experts is appointed, visits the institution and then reports to the Council. A notable feature is that each panel includes one or two experts from outside Hong Kong (usually from the UK, the US and/or Australia).

The Hong Kong universities lobbied hard to ensure that they were not subject to validation and review by the Council. They argued that their own internal procedures are rigorous, and are supplemented by professional body accreditation and at the Hong Kong University and the Chinese University by the external examiner system.

India

In India a number of important recent initiatives have been taken to improve the quality of higher education and to regulate academic standards. Particularly important are the initiatives taken by the national government through the University Grants Commission, by specialist agencies concerned with particular areas of professional training, and by professional bodies.

The University Grants Commission has statutory responsibilities for the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in universities, flowing from responsibilities set out in the constitution for the central government to be responsible for the maintenance of academic standards in higher education throughout India (Khanna and Sharma 1993). Over the years since its establishment in 1956, much of the efforts of the Commission have been directed to the maintenance and improvement of academic standards and to the improvement of quality. Recent initiatives taken by the Commission include establishment of academic staff colleges to provide in-service and refresher courses for university teachers; a scheme of restructuring undergraduate programmes to achieve increased flexibility and greater social relevance; establishment of inter-university research facility centres to provide access to facilities of international standards (eg the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics at Poona University establishment of audio visual me-arch and educational media research centres; and establishment of the National Educational Testing Programme. Under the National Educational Testing Programme, the Commission conducts tests twice a year for Junior Research Fellowships and for eligibility to teach in universities. The tests in science fields are conducted jointly with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. Successful candidates for Junior Research Fellowships are awarded positions with stipends to carry out research, while universities and colleges are required in making academic appointments to
consider only those candidates who have satisfied requirements to teach in higher education (Khanna and Sharma 1993).

Another important initiative taken by the University Grants Commission has been to explore the possibility of development of a system of accreditation for higher education institutions. A committee appointed by the Commission has investigated this possibility and has suggested that an accreditation system should focus on various aspects of institutions, including institutional mission and objectives, planning and evaluation, organisation and governance, teaching programmes, student services, library resources, finance and ethical practices (Khanna and Sharma 1993).

The work of specialist agencies has been particularly important in the case of medicine and technical education. In medicine, the key agency is the Medical Council of India, established by an act of the Indian Parliament. Its governing body consists of medical educators, practicing experts, and appointees from ministries of health at state and national levels. The Council prescribes minimum standards for medical courses and for necessary facilities. It carries out inspections as part of an accreditation process, and it has the power to withdraw accreditation from higher education institutions, whereupon medical graduates from those institutions may not be registered as practitioners (Shuka 1991).

Similar professional supervision of engineering and technical education is provided by the All India Council of Technical Education, set up under the authority of the Ministry of Education. The Council functions through specialist Boards of Studies for particular disciplines. All courses in technical education require approval from the appropriate Board of Study. Proposals for new study programmes are sent to the relevant professional body, whereupon experts evaluate it and also examine the adequacy of infrastructure and facilities. On the recommendation of expert panels, the Council may grant or withhold approval (Behar 1992).

New initiatives also are being taken by professional associations such as the Bar Council of India, the Indian Council of Medical Research, the Institute of Chartered Accountants and the Institution of Engineers. Most of these maintain close links with parallel bodies in the UK and other counties.

**Korea**

Leaders of higher education institutions in Korea are very concerned about quality issues, and generally believe that over the past two decades or so the government allowed far too rapid expansion in student enrollments at the expense of quality. At a recent World Bank Senior Policy Seminar in Singapore, the President of the University of Ulsan said that
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... the rapid expansion of, and equalization in, higher education, has posed a quality problem. The quantitative expansion naturally resulted in recruiting mediocre high school graduates in universities...

The abrupt increase in student population has given rise to services deficiencies in facilities and professors... the Korean university is deeply entangled with the conflicting dilemma of quantity versus quality (Lee 1992, p 3).

At the same Seminar, the President of Pohang Institute of Science and Technology said that through quantitative expansion ‘quality had inevitably suffered’ and that university education in science and engineering which had begun without any research projects still has no research activities in many colleges and universities today. With an exception of two or three universities, the masters and doctoral degrees conferred in science and engineering at Korean Universities are questionable in their academic standard. (Kim, 1992 p 14).

Two important recent developments have sprung from this concern about quality. First, tight Ministry of Education control over higher education has been somewhat relaxed and the government has introduced policy measures to encourage institutional initiatives for autonomous academic planning and development in combination with increased financial support. Thus government policy has changed from ‘control without sufficient support’ to ‘more support without strong control’ (Lee, 1993, p 1). These changes, which have been welcomed by the universities, have resulted in control of senior appointments, Curriculum planning and development, and student discipline being turned over largely to institutions themselves, while government financial support is being provided for the promotion of academic research and for overseas study grants for academic staff.

Second, a comprehensive system of university accreditation was introduced in 1991. This system followed an earlier system of accreditation set up in 1984 by the Korean Council for University Education Act which empowered the Council to evaluate its own institutions. Such evaluations consisted of institutional evaluations carried out in five year cycles, and various programme evaluations which were on an annual basis (Korean Council for Education 1993, p 17). The new system of accreditation sprang from recommendations of the Presidential Commission for Education Reform in 1988, which saw an accreditation system as being necessary to ensure democracy and the full
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autonomy of higher education institutions (Kim 1991, p 509). The government accepted these recommendations and then debate followed as to the form that such accreditation should take. The Government favoured introducing both programme and institutional accreditation simultaneously, but the Korean Council for University Education argued that it was too soon to introduce a total system of university accreditation. In the end a compromise was reached with programme accreditation being introduced in 1991 and institutional accreditation being postponed until 1996.

Under the new system of programme evaluation, departments in two selected fields of study are assessed each year. In October 1991, the first programme accreditation for departments of physics and electronic engineering commenced. This consisted of self evaluations carried out by each department, followed by on-site visits by visiting panels. The results were analysed by the Korean Council for University Education by the end of 1992, and in March 1993 a list of universities with ‘sound’ departments was published. The second programme accreditation focused on departments of chemistry and mechanical engineering (Lee 1993).

One significant feature of the new system of accreditation is that control lies jointly with the Ministry of Education and the Korean Council for University Education. In 1992, the Ministry and the Council agreed to establish an independent accreditation body within the Council, called the Council of University Accreditation. The latter body is composed of 16 representatives from universities, industry and government. For assessments of departments, evaluators concentrate on six major areas: objectives, curriculum, students, faculty, facilities, and management. At present the Ministry of Education and the Korean Council for University Education decide annually which departments will be evaluated. The Council consults with relevant professional associations and organises an accreditation committee made up of university faculty to develop the criteria. After the self-study, each department is visited by an on-site team of three university faculty members which writes an evaluation report and awards numerical ratings for each item evaluated. Reports are sent to departments visited, while staff at the Korean Council for University Education review reports and produce total scores for each department. On the basis of total scores, departments are classified into three groups; good, moderate, poor. The list of good departments is announced and reports and documentation are considered by the Ministry of Education’s Advisory Council for Higher Education (Lee 1993).

How this new system will develop over time is uncertain. On some basic issues there is sharp disagreement between the Ministry of Education and the Korean Council for University Education. The Council wants accreditation to be used to ensure a minimum quality of higher education, while the Ministry proposes to use accreditation as a means to select particular departments and universities for increased financial support and a greater measure of autonomy.
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The Ministry believes this will prove to be a useful means to pressure poorer universities and departments to lift their performance. On the other hand, the Council argues that the approach favoured by the Ministry would lead to a vicious circle where universities that are evaluated as poor would never receive sufficient funding or self determination in order to improve their performance. There is also some difference of opinion on the standards and the criteria, and on the extent to which evaluations actually consider inputs, processes and outputs.

Papua New Guinea

In Papua New Guinea, the Commission for Higher Education is working to prepare a national accreditation policy for higher education, and a statement of policy and guidelines for administering such as accreditation policy.

For some years various efforts have been made to strengthen and extend the limited form of accreditation in operation. In 1979, the Commission for Higher Education’s forerunner, the Office of Higher Education, circulated a draft policy on the establishment of an Accreditation sub-committee. This paper pointed out that the then system of professional accreditation only met professional association requirements and that, in giving institutions the power to grant awards, the Government had not thereby certified that programmes offered met official requirements. It argued that piecemeal accreditation had resulted in a number of problems, but particularly that students find it difficult to upgrade their qualifications, employers have difficulty in identifying the knowledge and skills associated with particular awards, and each accrediting body carried a heavy workload.

A Committee of Enquiry into Educational Standards two years later found that a major problem in higher education was ‘little compatibility between programmes, little agreement on certificate and diploma requirements, and no accreditation or cross-accreditation between institutions (Commission for Higher Education 1993, pp 2–11). In 1983, the Commission for Higher Education was established by the Higher Education Act 1983 which required the Commission to recommend to the Minister a national structure of academic awards for programmes of higher education. For various reasons the Commission moved cautiously on accreditation.

Recently, however, the Commission appointed a Working Party of six persons to develop a policy for a national accreditation system, and by early 1993 this Working Party had produced a detailed working paper. This paper proposes a system of accreditation which will be complementary to that operated by professional associations and higher education institutions, and particularly the two universities. Academic awards will use standardised nomenclature and for the purpose of the registration of awards there will be five categories or levels: associate diploma, diploma, bachelors degree, masters degree, and doctorate. The
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programme of accreditation envisaged will concentrate on both accreditation of awards and institutional accreditation. The proposed accreditation system will be operated by a national Accreditation Committee appointed by the Commission for Higher Education (Commission for Higher Education 1993).

Singapore

Higher education institutions in Singapore are deeply conscious of the importance of quality in the context of the nation’s efforts to maintain and enhance economic competitiveness. One good example of recent initiatives is the introduction of a quality assurance system at Singapore Polytechnic (Cheong 1993).

This new system had it beginnings in the mid-1980s when the Board of Studies at the Polytechnic decided to establish a system of internal validation for new courses. Senior staff visited institutions in the UK, Australia and Canada to study various models of quality assurance and accreditation and to identify a model that would best suit the needs of the institution. In the end in 1989, working closely with consultants from Nottingham Polytechnic in the UK, the institution set up the quality assurance processes of an academic audit. Since then these processes have undergone fine tuning and evolved to their current form.

The main functions of the quality assurance system are validation, monitoring and course review. Validation is the process whereby each new or extensively revised course is scrutinised to assess its suitability for inclusion in the institution’s academic programme. Monitoring is the continuous process of reviewing courses in operation by the collection of data relevant to course design, management and operation. Course review is a process by which the progress of a course is critically appraised and evaluated at periodic intervals to confirm that the course remains academically valid. Data are gathered from employers, graduates and students.

Introduction of the new system involved major efforts in staff development, and in the systemisation and documentation of the evaluation process. By mid-1993, 47 courses had been validated and 22 courses had been reviewed. A distinctive feature is the extensive involvement of persons from industry and business in the validation and course review processes.

Taiwan

Since 1991 efforts have been under way to improve the system of specialised accreditation of programmes and institutions operated for some years by the Ministry of Education (Su 1993). Opinions about the accreditation system were collected from educators and institutional administrators through an extensive program me of seminars and out of this process came the suggestion
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that specialised accreditation should be carried out by academic associations, rather than the Ministry. On the basis of this suggestion, the Ministry funded a feasibility study carried out by the National Hsinchu Teachers College and then a plan for a trial for accreditation to be conducted by academic associations.

Under the trial, which continued until March 1994, three associations had responsibility to formulate implementation plans, hold seminars for evaluators, conduct self studies and on-site evaluations, and publish evaluation reports. The Ministry provided funds for technical assistance and to assess the effectiveness of the trial. Technical assistance was provided by the National Hsinchu Teachers College.

At the time this report was prepared information was not available on the final evaluation of the trial. However, it is widely expected that responsibility for all specialised accreditation would be handed over to academic associations. One possibility is that the Ministry would play a somewhat similar role to the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation in the United States, and would accredit the academic associations that would in turn carry out the specialised accreditation (Su 1993). This would be a major task, as there are over 300 academic associations which could potentially become involved in specialised accreditation.

The Philippines

As already noted, an American style system of voluntary accreditation was developed more than three decades ago in the Philippines and became widespread among private institutions. More recently this system of accreditation was extended to state universities and colleges.

One senior administrator reports that since 1985,

the voluntary accreditation system has made some healthy inroads to enhancing academic autonomy with the issuance of levels of accreditation status defining the privileges of an accredited institution. Accreditation status is categorised into four levels:

Level I — Institutions that are undertaking the accreditation process.

Level II — Duly accredited institutions.

Level III — Institutions that have gone through accreditation status and have achieved significant academic research and extension services that may qualify one for further support.
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**Level IV** — Institutions that are considered as the national centers of excellence.

The privilege at Level I is in the form of financial support for undertaking accreditation efforts. On the other hand, Level II institutions are entitled to financial deregulation and academic autonomy. Level III institutions get greater recognition with greater financial support as they move towards being considered national centers of excellence. Level IV is at the apex and no institution has yet been categorized as such (Arcelo 1992, pp 13-14).

Recent efforts have attempted to strengthen the accreditation agencies and their procedures. The Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines has developed common accrediting standards, and in 1991 the Congressional Commission on Education recommended that the policies and practices of the accrediting agencies be reviewed periodically to ensure that they embody high standards (Cooney and Paqueo-Arrezo 1993).

In 1994, a Commission on Higher Education was created by the Higher Education Act which was signed into law by His Excellency President Fidel V Ramos on 18 May 1994. As an integral part of this new initiative, new goals were set for the higher education system, including a specific goal related to quality and excellence. Programmes to achieve quality and excellence will include rationalisation of public and private higher education institutions, strengthening human resource capabilities, development of centres of excellence in key priority areas, and the development of a Higher Education Information System and establishment of a Communications Superhighway. Within the Commission on Higher Education, an Office of programmes and Standards will include units concerned with Standard Development and with Monitoring and Evaluation activities.
Chapter 6

NEW INITIATIVES IN AUSTRALIA

In recent years the Australian higher education system has undergone major reform and redirection. It also has experimented with new and improved mechanisms for quality assurance, and for quality management and quality improvement.

Significantly, to a large extent, the main source of initiative and reform with regard to quality assurance has been the Commonwealth or Federal Government, rather than state governments or non-government bodies, or higher education institutions themselves. This may appear somewhat curious as in Australia most universities are owned and operated by state governments, and universities pride themselves on the degree of autonomy they enjoy and how responsibly they act. However, apart from the need for a national approach to quality issues, it is important to note that the Commonwealth Government essentially funds all universities in terms of basic operating grants. It sees quality in higher and post school education as being of vital importance in ensuring that institutions meet labour market requirements and the needs of restructuring the economy to achieve increased international competitiveness.

Universities and Traditional Quality Control

Until recently Australian universities largely used a traditional British style approach to quality control and quality assurance. At institutional level, the main mechanisms were strict control over student admissions; internal course approval checks at department, faculty and academic board levels; periodic reviews of courses and departments; and efforts to improve the quality of teaching through the work of special teaching and learning centres. Comparatively few institutions used a British style system of external examiners at undergraduate levels, although all universities employ external examiners for the assessment of higher degree research theses. At system level, the main mechanisms of quality control were periodic reviews by major Commonwealth and state government committees of enquiry, and accreditation systems operated by professional associations and, in a limited number of cases, by state registration boards for particular professions.

By the mid 1980s it was becoming increasingly clear that this approach was unsatisfactory. In a major study of quality measures for universities, Bourke concluded that
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..with the exception of certain areas, Australian universities have yet to perfect in their own walls that culture of evaluation and self-assessment, especially at the department level, which is an integral part of any professional activity (Bourke 1986, p 20).

About the same time, the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission concluded that higher education institutions needed to develop procedures for systematic evaluation ‘which will enable them to demonstrate that they are seeking at all times to preserve and enhance the quality of their activities’ (Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission 1986, p 262). In 1988 and again in 1991, official statements made by Commonwealth Ministers responsible for higher education emphasised the need for a more serious approach to evaluation. In the 1991 statement, Minister Peter Baldwin said that there was concern that in the recent rapid expansion ‘quality had been sacrificed to numbers’ and the Government considered it necessary to ‘implement measures specifically designed to provide a degree of quality assurance at both institutional level and for the higher education system as a whole’ (Higher Education: Quality and Diversity 1991, p 3).

New Directions for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Measures instituted by the Commonwealth Government since the mid-1980s to strengthen quality assurance in higher education include the following

- a system of discipline reviews carried out by panels of experts which report to the Minister;
- a project to develop and test performance indicators which might be useful in the evaluation of university activities;
- allocation of funds from the National Priority (Reserve) Fund to support special initiatives, such as curriculum development or projects to improve quality;
- establishment of a fund to provide allocations for institutional projects to improve teaching, administered by the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching; and
- establishment of a national academic audit mechanism to review the procedures used by universities for monitoring and improving the quality of outcomes.

In addition, in 1987 the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee (the peak organisation of universities, consisting of university executive heads) established a system of academic standards panels.
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Of these various initiatives, the discipline reviews, the academic standards panels and the new audit mechanism deserve special comment. The discipline reviews, which were established by the then Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission in 1985, have focused on major disciplines and fields of professional education (law, engineering, teacher education in mathematics and science, accounting, agriculture, and information science). Their terms of reference have required expert panels not only to consider qualitative aspects of teaching and learning, but to investigate supply and demand for graduates, questions of duplication and rationalisation of offerings, and resource utilisation. According to Chubb, their original aim was to determine whether the teaching and research activities of higher education institutions in particular fields of study were carried out at a suitable level, whether there were any areas where resources were wasted or where there was duplication and whether there were ways in which quality and efficiency might be improved (Chubb 1991).

Panel members have been drawn from senior academics, the professions and major employers of graduates. While the various reviews completed have been competent pieces of policy research, a distinguished education researcher claims that the first four reviews failed in the requirement to assess teaching and learning (Connell 1992, pp 40-41). Further, there is debate about the extent to which the reviews have operated as a stimulus for change and self appraisal, while it is generally agreed that the process has proved slow-moving and costly. The current Commonwealth Government plan is to continue the reviews, ‘but on a less costly and probably more frequent basis’ (Higher Education Council 1992b, p 76).

The academic standards panels were established in 1987 by the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee rather than the Government. These panels, made up of five to seven experts drawn from Australian universities, have been concerned mainly with consistency of grading in fourth year honours courses in a number of basic disciplines (Lee Dow 1992). The Vice-Chancellors’ Committee considered adoption of a British-style system of external examiners, but instead chose academic standards panels because of the lesser costs involved and the possibility of producing greater interaction between senior personnel from different universities in particular disciplines.

The national academic audit mechanism which was established recently was an attempt to supplement previously established mechanisms with a holistic approach to quality improvement at the institutional level and including a broad range of institutional functions including teaching, research, and professional service to the wider community. Compared to similar institutional evaluation
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approaches in other countries, it has some novel features and its adoption understandably stimulated a great deal of public debate.

Unlike the schemes of academic audit established in the UK and New Zealand, the Australian scheme combines academic audit with performance funding and a ranking of institutions. The final model chosen resulted from extensive consultation conducted over a period of about eighteen months with the universities and relevant interest groups by the Higher Education Council, the Commonwealth Government’s main advisory body for higher education policy. The decision to establish an audit mechanism of quality assurance was announced by Peter Baldwin, then the Minister for Higher Education and Employment Services, in his policy statement of October 1991. The Minister explained:

The Government’s principal initiative in relation to quality is its decision to provide additional funds of $70 million, the equivalent of 2 per cent of operating grants, annually from 1994 for a quality assurance and enhancement programme. These funds, which are additional to the operating grants provided for 1994, are intended to act as a catalyst for institutions to allocate their total resources in ways which will maximize the quality of provision. The funds will be allocated in recognition of good performance in the use of all available resources to attain the best quality, including the achievement of equity objectives, taking into account such factors as quality management practices, the composition of the student population and the extent of progress in implementing articulation and credit transfer arrangements (Higher Education: Quality and Diversity 1991 pp 33-34).

As a result of the consultations it undertook, the Higher Education Council in the end was able to recommend a mechanism which appeared to have a much wider degree of University support that many people thought possible. In its formal final advice to the Minister published in the detailed report, Achieving Quality, the Higher Education Council argued that while such mechanisms as discipline reviews and academic standards panels are useful, ‘they are not sufficiently systematic, comprehensive in their coverage, not representative enough of all stakeholders to provide quality assurance for the system as whole’. (Higher Education Council 1992a p 76).
Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

After considering a range of different possible structures for a quality assurance agency from an inspectorate through to a two level agency with separate audit and quality improvement functions, the Higher Education Council recommended establishment of a separate government committee, responsible to the Minister through the Higher Education Council and consisting of persons with appropriate expertise drawn from both higher education and the wider community. It recommended that the committee should

(a) invite universities to participate in regular review and audit of their mechanisms for monitoring and improving quality of their outcomes;

(b) examine portfolios submitted by universities showing the quality assurance and quality improvement mechanisms in place;

(c) conduct interviews and visits and evaluate how institutions have assessed the effects of their policies and processes; and

(d) recommend to the Minister on the allocation of specially designated funds to universities to recognise achievements demonstrated by the effectiveness of policies and procedures through an evaluation of their assessment of the quality of their outcomes.

The essential idea of the Higher Education Council then was to have a quality assurance mechanism somewhat wider in its scope than that of the UK academic audit unit, but at the same time being sensitive to university claims about the importance of institutional autonomy and Australian’s dislike of elite-type ranking systems. It would involve a limited measure of performance funding, but the funds to be allocated would be additional funds and there was no intention to use recommendations of the new committee to allocate general operating grants to institutions. The element of performance funding was meant as an incentive to secure participation by universities in the scheme, and to recognise and reward institutions which have in place mechanisms designed to assure and improve quality and which are demonstratably effective. The main emphasis would not be to monitor performance, but to evaluate what universities actually do and achieve in quality control; in other words, the emphasis, according to the Higher Education Council, would be assessment of quality management and quality achievement, and ranking would be on this basis and ‘not because of what universities are or do, or because of how old (or young) they are’.
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Each year, according to the Higher Education Council’s plan, the committee would select a particular area or areas of the university’s work to be audited, and would invite universities to submit a portfolio of documentation, setting out both policies and processes in place, and their own assessment of outcomes in relation to institutional missions and objectives. Key aspects of university activities would be covered over a period of three to five years.

The recommendations of the Higher Education Council were essentially accepted in full by the Government, although some modifications were made in implementation, reflecting in part the personal views of Kim Beazley, the Minister for Employment, Education and Training who took responsibility for the higher education sector following the March 1993 general election, and his successor in this position, Simon Crean. A Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education was appointed with a senior Vice-Chancellor (Professor Brian Wilson of the University of Queensland) as Chair and the former Chair of the Higher Education Council (Professor Ian Chubb) as Deputy Chair. Of its other seven members, four are senior staff members of universities, two were from industry, and one was a senior official of the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training.

According to its terms of reference for its initial round of assessment, the Committee was asked to provide public advice to the Minister on the allocation of specially designated funds to universities to recognise achievement demonstrated by the effectiveness of policies and procedures, and through evaluation of their assessment of the quality of outcomes. In recommending regular review of the mechanisms for monitoring and improving the quality on these allocations, the Committee was asked to invite universities to participate in the programme. The terms of reference stated that the Committee will:

(a) examine portfolios volunteered by universities showing what they have put in place to assure and improve quality;

(b) evaluate how they have assessed the effects of their policies and processes including summaries of their own assessments of performance;

(c) conduct interviews and visits as appropriate; and

(d) use existing, nationally-based, data (Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 1993, attachment B).

In July 1993, the Committee published the Minister’s guidelines and its own detailed procedures and invited universities to participate in the 1993 review. Universities agreeing to participate were required to submit portfolios setting out their policies and achievements. Those universities participating in the process...
New Initiatives in Australia

and being able to demonstrate effective quality assurance policies and practices were told that they would share in a sum of A$84 million. While the guidelines followed the key recommendations of the Higher Education Council, they departed from the original plan by stating that the reviews would focus on quality outcomes as well as on quality assurance processes. This reflected a change of ministerial responsibility from Peter Baldwin to Kim Beazley. Information distributed to universities said that guiding principles for 1993 placed significant responsibility of universities:

1. They may choose whether or not to participate;
2. The procedure is reliant on self-evaluation;
3. The institutions are expected to determine for themselves what evidence to present to demonstrate the effectiveness of their relevant policies and practices and the quality of their outcomes - there are to be no prescriptive guidelines on the content of portfolios;
4. The context for the review will relate to the institutional mission and objectives set by the institutions themselves within the context of the statement of purpose and objectives for the national system as a whole;
5. There is a focus on outcomes as well as processes (Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education 1993, preamble).

For 1993, the Committee stated that it would undertake an overview study of institutional quality assurance policies and practices, while for 1994 the emphasis would be on teaching and learning and for 1995 most likely on the management and integration of research and community service activities.

The Committee and the Government have essentially followed the plan for a three year programme of evaluation. In each year, universities have been invited to participate and have prepared portfolios according to specifications set by the Committee. This was followed by a one day visit by a review team, led by a member of the Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Draft reports were provided to each institution for comment, prior to the Committee’s advice to the Minister being finalised.

For the 1993 round, criteria set in the Minister’s guidelines stated that

- about half of the eligible institutions may gain a share of the funds;
- the maximum grant the Committee can recommend is equivalent to five per cent of an institution’s operating grant;
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- institutions which receive these additional funds will be those which are able to demonstrate effective quality assurance policies and practices, and excellent outcomes and
- institutions will be expected to expend the funds in a way which addresses the maintenance and enhancement of quality, particularly in the institution’s areas of strengths (Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education 1993, p 7).

However, there was a change of Ministers before the 1993 round was completed and, in the end, all institutions which participated received some funding from the sum of A$76.8 million made available. But what proved controversial and damaging to many institutions was that institutions were placed in six different bands or groups of institutions depending on the judgments of the Committee, with the top group receiving the most funding. The results were widely reported in the national press, and also in the media in various countries of the region. Universities which were placed in the top bands found that this increased their community prestige, whereas institutions in the lowest bands considered this had a very damaging effect on their reputation and standing with both employers and prospective students. Significantly, all six institutions placed in the top group were well established major universities located in a state capital city or in the national capital, Canberra, while all institutions in the bottom category were relatively small, new universities.

In the second round which focused on teaching and learning, the Committee paid particular attention to the following:

- overall planning and management of the undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and learning programme;
- curriculum design;
- delivery and assessment;
- evaluation, monitoring and review;
- learning outcomes;
- use of effective innovative teaching and learning methods;
- student support services and other teaching support services such as library and computer services;
- staff recruitment, promotion and development;

In its guidelines the Committee indicated that it would give equal weight in its assessments to the educational processes and learning outcomes. The Committee sought answers to the following basic questions through each institution’s portfolio

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- What quality assurance policies and practices does the institution have in place or is developing for assuring the quality of its teaching and learning performance?
- How effective and how fully deployed are these?
- What processes does the institution have to evaluate and monitor the quality of its outcomes?
- What quality related indicators does the institution use and why?
- What are the institution’s priorities for improvement?
- What quality initiatives has the institution undertaken since the 1993 review and what evidence of improved performance is there? (Report on 1994 Quality Review 1994, pp 2-3).

For the 1994 review, a sum of A$71.3 million was distributed, with all institutions which participated receiving some funding. However, institutions were placed in three bands according to performance, with the sixteen institutions in the top band sharing A$45 million in relation to their total student enrollments. Twelve institutions were placed in the second group and eight institutions in the bottom group. Again the same pattern could be observed. The institutions in the top group were mainly large, well established universities, while those in the bottom group were mainly small and new, and mainly located away from the major cities.

An important innovation for the 1994 round was that the Committee published in a separate volume (Report on 1994 Quality Reviews 1994, Vol 2) each of the individual institutional reports. These reports provide detailed information on the implicit values of the Committee. Perhaps the most notable characteristic of the reports is the major emphasis given to the development of planning and management at institutional level, especially the introduction of a systematic and integrated approach to strategic planning with a strong emphasis on goal setting, and specification of strategies and the establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including the use of performance indicators and benchmarking. Consider the following comments in different institutional reports from the 1994 quality round (Report on 1994 Quality Reviews, 1995, Volume 2):

**Institution A**
The review team found that corporate planning is well-established and that the strategic planning process is participative. A strategic plan for the period 1995-2005 is being prepared, involving wide input from across the institution. Faculties are also developing strategic plans which are being related by an integrative process to the corporate plan . . . .

**Institution B**
The University’s quality management processes are presented as a learning organisation model based on a culture of continuous improvement in
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which staff have responsibility for quality . . . . In addition to the University Teaching and Learning Plan, each Faculty has such a plan. The University has recently appointed Deputy Deans (Teaching and Learning) to provide faculty leadership in teaching and learning and to enable a process of quality networking to become established across the University . . . . The Teaching and Learning Plan identifies strategies intended to address areas needing improvement as well as to enhance areas of strength . . . . The Quality Management Plan adopted in 1993 provides a strategic framework for quality processes throughout the University . . . . Since 1993, the University has moved to quantify targets for improvements in the quality of student learning experiences and outcomes as well as for CAUT and University teaching and development grants.

Institution C
The University has an obvious and strong planning culture. The mission is well communicated throughout all levels of the institution. Its senior management are clearly committed to strategic planning, while schools, faculties and divisions are oriented toward operational planning . . . . Planning is based on a quinquennial cycle incorporating an annual monitoring, review and operational cycle. Overarching ‘flagships plans’ such as the teaching and learning plan are taken into account in the development of faculty, school and division plans. The research and community service plans are further examples of flagship plans . . . . The University views the management of teaching as an integral part of the strategic planning process.

Institution D
The team found evidence this year of on-going improvements to the planning process and a clear identification with the planning process throughout the organisation. The University’s mission, goals and strategies are set out in Planning for the Next Century Parts I-IV. Part V Implementing Agreed Strategies identifies a series of operational goals to inform and guide more detailed strategies at the various levels of academic departments, schools, faculties, Academic Senate, Budget and Planning Committee and administrative divisions . . . . Faculty Strategic plans that the review team saw appeared to be well aligned with the University’s plan and had clearly defined targets, timelines and accountabilities. There was a strong transparent link between the planning and budgetary processes. The Budget and Planning Committee reviews school strategic plans and considers school operational plans at an annual budget and planning meeting.

Significantly, the above comments refer to institutions all placed in the top group of institutions in the 1994 quality round.
Many of the institutions placed in Group Three in the 1994 round were specifically encouraged to develop a well integrated approach to planning. In one case, for example, the review team commented:

The prospects for the University’s planning processes at the time of the visit by the review team are difficult to assess as there was still much to be done in setting priorities and targets. The team encourages the University to move rapidly to an integrated process which sets clear targets and incorporates systematic processes to monitor achievements.

In another case, the review team said:

Faculty plans provided to the review team included goals, objectives and targets in a number of areas with less emphasis on quantitative targets and timelines. In future development of overall planning processes, the team encourages the University to place more emphasis on quantitative targets and timelines to monitor performance.

In another case the review team considered that ‘academic planning and resource allocation could be more clearly aligned and in another said that with regard to planning there was not ‘a systematic approach involving data collection, monitoring and review for continuous improvement’. Two final examples are instructive in that they spell out in greater detail the particular detailed approach to planning which seems to be favoured by the Committee and its review teams. In the first case, the review team commented that although good progress had been made, the final plan was not available during the visit and that the review team suggested that the following should be taken into account in the planning process:

- the need to ensure the development of a fully integrated Plan across the University;
- the desirability for close alignment of the planning and budgetary processes, particularly within faculties;
- as suggested by the review team in 1993, the development of a management information system to support a range of indicators which would assist the planning process and allow the University to monitor its performance;
- the desirability of enmeshing the concept of continuous improvement in the planning process through the provision of training for all staff and students involved in planning, and the establishment of mechanisms to enable the sharing of information...
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In the second case, the report stated:

While the portfolio describes the process by which the University’s mission statement and strategic framework is linked with school action plans and targets, the team suggests that it would be further improved by:

- ensuring quantitative targets linked to the performance measures established in the strategic plan are included in action plans;
- framing the strategic plan in such a way as to provide guidance for the priorities of school action plans;
- clarifying the process for aligning the strategic plan and school’s plans; and
- having in place a mechanism to produce or update the next strategic plan.

As expected, the 1995 review focused on research and community service. The guidelines asked institutions to give particular attention to research management, research outcomes, research improvement, and community service. The particular questions that the Committee addressed were almost identical to those used in 1994. The results of the round were announced in early December 1995. The Committee commented on the significant changes that had taken place since 1993 related to research and community service:

All universities have research management plans and/or strategies to guide their activities with clear objectives and targets for research development. Many have moved to provide incentives to departments or schools by incorporating research performance factors, as well as student numbers, in their basic operating funding formulas. Most institutions have targeted increased numbers of research postgraduate students in their profiles providing pressure for revision of policies and greater codification of supervisory practices. Finally, many institutions are benchmarking their research and postgraduate practices with those of comparator institutions in Australia and overseas seeking ‘good practice’ (Report of 1995 Quality Reviews 1995, p 25).

A sum of $50 million was allocated to reward institutions, with all institutions winning a share. Unlike the two earlier rounds, institutions were not given an overall ranking, but rather were placed in bands relating to the four key areas reviewed - research management process, research outcomes, research improvement, and community service - management, process and outcomes. As in previous rounds the seven or eight old established universities did best. On this occasion, however, the differential in funding allocated to institutions was
considerable y less, with the largest allocation being $3,273,000 and the smallest $489,000.

**Assessment of the Three Annual Quality Reviews for Higher Education**

The initial three year programme of quality reviews is now complete and the Commonwealth Government is evaluating the programme and considering whether the programme should be continued and if so in what form. The programme has been a bold but controversial experiment, which has combined the elements of quality audits of institutions with formal reports to the individual institutions concerned, institutional rankings with published results, and performance funding (again with the results announced publicly). The formal view of the Committee is that the programme has been highly beneficial. In its 1994 report, the Committee gave its own overall judgement as follows:

The response of the system to the review process has been overwhelmingly positive, with significant improvements noted across the sector. The achievements in the second round reviews represent improvement against the evidence collected in 1993 on quality in the sector. In particular, there has been a marked improvement in quality assurance policies and practices in teaching and learning. Results from round two indicate that the level of development in the system across teaching and learning exceeds development in the first round of reviews.

The Committee and its review teams were impressed by the magnitude and extent of the attitudinal and procedural changes evident in 1994 across the higher education system. There is a widespread perception that the quality assurance programme has been valuable in focussing university attention on the importance of the continuous improvement and in gaining support for quality assurance measures at all levels. An enhanced service orientation is apparent in universities’ approaches to their students, employers, industry and broader community (Report of the 1994 Reviews 1994, p 1).

The Chair of the Committee, Professor Brian Wilson, who gave up the position of chair at the end of 1995, provided a vigorous defence of the programme in his recent Sir Robert Menzies Oration. He compared the disciplinary assessment approach common in a number of European countries with the ‘more holistic’ Australian approach evaluating academic themes across the whole university’. In comparing the British and Australian approaches, he commented:
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There are, of course, both similarities and differences between the British experience and our own. Both systems have been through major changes with the disappearance of the binary system and the concurrent loss of accrediting authorities for part of the unified system creating concern about standards and leading to specific governmental attention - interventionist in the UK and more benign in Australia. Greater emphasis is placed on quality assurance processes in the Australian audit review than in the UK. However, the introduction of assessment activities has developed the same 'game' mentality, with universities seeking to maximise their return in a zero-sum financial situation, while also recognizing that the reputational value of a positive evaluation may have more long term significance than the financial returns.

The provision of significant financial rewards has undoubtedly influenced the pace of change in Australian universities. Peter Williams, who heads the audit group within the UK's Higher Education Quality Council and who was the Committee's initial training facilitator, believes the process has introduced a greater cultural change in Australian universities than in England or elsewhere. This may be, in part, because the whole university has been affected in each round rather than just a specific group every few years. (Wilson 1995).

Wilson quite rightly commented that while the achievements have been considerable the workload on institutions and on the Committee and review panels was considerable. He ended his lecture with the judgment:

The current programme has liberated the reformers in our universities from the natural conservatism and inertia characteristic of universities here and elsewhere, now and in the past. I would be surprised if they can be recaptured. I hope not.

Within institutions, there is considerable support for the programme, with many senior administrators and academic staff agreeing that the programme has encouraged major changes in management practices and a much greater client focus. Institutions consider that the additional funding to enhance quality has had a particularly beneficial effect. Some institutional leaders have been very supportive. One Vice-Chancellor said when the second round results were announced that he supported the quality process which had 'cranked up the higher education system in Australia'.

On the other hand, there have been considerable criticisms. These have focused particularly on the adverse effects on lower ranked institutions of the ranking system, funding based on ranking and publication of the full reports on
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each institution. There also has been criticism of the methodology underpinning
the reviews and the work load placed on institutions. Lower ranked institutions
have complained strongly of the adverse effect of the rankings of public
perception and especially in the recruitment of Australian and overseas students.
Chapter 7

NEW INITIATIVES IN NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand provides a very interesting case-study internationally of major and dramatic changes in higher education and post-school education systems which have flowed from major changes in deregulation of the economy and in public sector management. In turn, substantial innovations in quality assurance have been part of a much more comprehensive package of reforms.

Background

As part of major recent reforms to its education system, the New Zealand government established new mechanisms of quality control, quality assurance and quality improvement for post-school education. These mechanisms are operated by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), the New Zealand Vice-Chancellor’s Committee (NZVCC), the Education Review Office, and the Ministry of Education, and apply to both universities and non-university institutions. The changes were preceded by extensive community consultations and intensive investigations into the tertiary education and training system, summarised in three major reports commissioned by the government (Probine-Farghar, Picot and Hawke) and the publication of two policy documents entitled ‘Learning for Life’. A number of the key changes were given a legislative base in the Education Amendment Act passed by the Parliament in July 1990. The Act listed as one of its major aims the intention to give tertiary institutions ‘as much independence and freedom to make academic, operational and management decisions as is consistent with the nature of the services they provide, the efficient use of national resources, the national interest and the demands of accountability’ (Langer 1991, p 2390).

An important feature to note is that New Zealand has approached quality assurance in higher education within the context of quality assurance in post-school education more generally, and within a philosophy that learning is a life-long process. All types of learning are seen as being important, and higher education is viewed as not being the territorial preserve of the universities or the academic disciplines.

The overall approach has been to define a framework of awards at eight levels. Levels 1 to 4 cover National Certificates, National Diplomas span levels 5 to 7, initial degrees are placed at Level 8, while other degrees, higher certificates and diplomas are placed also at Level 8. The quality systems which are being developed apply equally across all eight levels of the framework from senior secondary school level through to post-doctoral level (Barker 1993, pp 1-3),
National qualifications consist of packages of course units normally determined by professional associations and industry groups, or by single enterprises. Units are based on specified learning outcomes and assessment criteria, and each has a credit rating to enable credit transfer of units for different qualifications. Most national qualifications will use either achievement-based or competency-based assessment, with considerable emphasis being placed on competency-based assessment for vocational subjects (Čauchi 1993, pp 1-2).

**The NZQA**

The NZQA is a government agency which was established in 1990 with the aim of coordinating an accessible and flexible qualification system to meet New Zealand's needs and internationally recognised standards (O'Connor, 1993). Its main functions are to:

- coordinate all qualifications in post-compulsory education and training (from upper secondary to degree level) so they have a purpose and relationship to one another that the public and students can understand;
- set and regularly review standards as they relate to the qualifications;
- ensure New Zealand qualifications are recognised overseas and overseas qualifications are recognised in New Zealand; and
- administer national examinations, both secondary and tertiary.

Previously the New Zealand qualifications system had been confusing and complex. Few qualifications linked with each other, and in some learning areas there were no nationally recognised qualifications at all (Barker 1993, p 1).

The NZQA was established as a ‘crown agency’, and so enjoys a considerable degree of administrative independence. Its governing council is made up of Ministerial appointees and includes leading businessmen, industrialists and representatives from schools and tertiary education. The NZQA is required to raise a substantial proportion of its own revenue and it is intended that it will become fully self-funding.

To date a major task for the NZQA has been to establish a qualifications framework, and a data base of all registered units and courses, and of all registered tertiary education providers. The intention is that theoretically any registered provider could teach any registered course. The essential thrust for establishment of the NZQA came from concerns about vocational education, and the desire to develop a competency-based approach to training and facilitate credit transfer. By mid 1993, 400 course units had been registered and by the end of 1993 it was expected that this number would have increased to 6000 units. The qualifications system developed by the NZQA was derived, to some extent, from the work of
the Scottish Vocational Council, and the National Council for Vocational Qualifications in the United Kingdom.

A second major task for the NZQA has been in the area of approval and accreditation of courses of study leading to various awards including degrees. By legislation it has responsibility for approval and accreditation of all nationally recognised tertiary awards, except those in universities for which responsibility by legislation has been delegated to the NZVCC. The delegation of approval and accreditation powers to the NZVCC recognises the long standing position in New Zealand of the university system to approve and accredit degrees. The NZVCC has been more formally established and it has inherited a number of key functions performed in the past by the former University Grants Committee, a buffer body between universities and the Ministry which previously recommended on government financial allocations to universities, approved new academic developments and programmes, and provided advice to the Minister. The NZVCC now approves all new degree courses, moderates standards, and administers scholarships for the universities. For other tertiary institutions, the NZQA accredits courses, accredits public and private institutions to teach nationally recognised courses including degrees, and monitors educational standards. In addition, in order to carry out its coordinating functions, the NZQA has a monitoring role for the NZVCC in the application of criteria for use in the approval and accreditation of degrees.

With respect to the approval and accreditation of degrees, both the NZQA and the NZVCC use the same criteria. They are as follows:

1. The acceptability of the proposed course to the relevant academic, industrial, professional and other communities in terms of its stated objectives, nomenclature, content and structure.
2. The adequacy and appropriateness of the regulations that specify requirements for administration, credit for previous study, recognition of prior learning, course structure, assessment procedures and the normal progressions.
3. The availability of appropriate academic staffing, teaching and research facilities, and support services.
4. The adequacy of the means of ensuring that assessment and appeals procedures are appropriate, given the stated objectives, and fair.
5. The adequacy of the Provision for monitoring course standards and quality, for reviewing course regulations and content, and for determining whether the course shall continue to be offered (O'Connor 1993, p 4).

For the approval of degrees, one section of the relevant regulation provides that the NZQA:
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. . .shall not consent to the granting of an award that is described as a degree unless it is satisfied that the award recognises completion of a course of advanced learning that

(a) Is taught mainly by people engaged in research; and

(b) Emphasises general principles and basic knowledge as the basis for self-directed work and learning (Section 254 (3), Education Amendment Act 1990- quoted by O'Connor 1993, p 4).

The NZQA has established a five stage process for achieving quality in degrees consisting of (i) registration of private training establishments; (ii) course approval; (iii) course accreditation; (iv) monitoring; and (v) audit. The course approval procedure is based on peer appraisal, depending on document analysis followed by the visit of a peer panel. The peer panel comprises two nominees of the NZVCC from the relevant discipline, a senior academic from the applying institution from a different discipline, a college of education senior academic if the applicant is a polytechnic or vice versa, two representatives from the relevant professional body or equivalent, an independent chairman, and an officer from the NZQA. The evaluation visit is held over two days, and the panel must recommend whether or not the course should be approved. Before leaving the institution, the panel must discuss their findings with the Chief Executive and course team. The essence of the audit is to ensure that the audit organisation is conforming to what it has agreed to do (O’Connor 1993, pp 3-10).

NZQA and the Quality Audit

One of the specific responsibilities of the NZQA is to assess the quality of tertiary education and to assure itself that quality control and quality assurance systems are in place in institutions. In the long term, the main function of the Authority will be quality audit. In a major discussion document issued in 1992, quality is not specifically defined but elements mentioned are conforming to specifications, fitness for purpose, and responsiveness. The document states:

There are many definitions of quality but there is general agreement that quality is present when specified requirements are met . . . If quality is the meeting of requirements, then quality can only be measured if these requirements are known and defined. By defining requirements, the standards to be achieved are set (New Zealand Qualifications Authority 1992, p 7).
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On this basis, the NZQA has concentrated on developing indicator measures of quality and assisting polytechnics to develop their own quality measures. Its twin thrusts are validation and moderation, acting as an external auditing agent. To date validation and moderation procedures are still in a process of development. Validation criteria include such check-list items as the following:

- the course is described in terms of learning objectives;
- the course provides a sound and balanced learning progression;
- assessment procedures are well-documented, educationally sound, relate to the course objectives, and are understood by the learner;
- prerequisites and admission requirements are appropriate and fair;
- the administrative, financial and professional provision available to support the course;
- accommodation and learning facilities are relevant, current, adequate and accessible; and
- student facilities and support services meet acceptable standards and cultural and equity requirements (Cliff 1992).

Although documentation details how validation will be conducted, it does not specify the basis for evaluation, and this has provided some problems for visiting validation teams. To date there has been little input from students in these procedures, except for a brief meeting between the validation team and selected students. In terms of moderation, the NZQA stresses the need for self evaluation in conjunction with peer evaluation.

Success of the NZQA

While the NZQA is still a relatively new organisation, it already has had a significant impact on education and training. According to one observer in a senior polytechnic,

The concept of flexible, portable and internationally recognised qualifications has generally met with considerable support. Industry, professional bodies and user groups have welcomed their increased input into curriculum development and monitoring of educational provision. As the integrated qualifications system allows providers to offer programmes at a variety of levels, some high schools are taking the opportunity to offer tertiary qualifications, while the larger polytechnics have become degree granting institutions. Universities, however, did not welcome the proposal that their qualifications should be included in the national framework (Cauchi 1993, p 5).
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A number of issues continue to stimulate lively debate. These include whether the centralised and standardised national approval and accreditation procedures may reduce flexibility and accessibility in tertiary education, whether the course unit approach will lead to lack of integration, the costs of approval and the accreditation processes, and the problems of developing appropriate quality assurance processes for open learning and non-traditional modes of teaching.

The NZVCC

Except for delegated powers to the NZVCC, universities have not been directly affected to date by the work of the NZQA. However, some observers believe that in time at least some of the universities may wish to be recognised as national providers and to have courses and units recognised nationally. Apart from this, the work of the Authority has prompted the universities to look more closely at their internal academic accreditation processes and to agree to establish an academic audit unit for the university system.

The NZVCC established a specialised Committee on Academic programmes to undertake the responsibilities given to it by the Education Amendment Act of 1990 to approve university awards and to accredit university institutions to offer programmes leading to the approved qualifications. This Committee is chaired by a Vice-Chancellor, with membership comprising one academic from each university, and two persons representing the polytechnic and college of education sectors respectively. So far the Committee has been concerned with the approval for new awards, but it is now beginning to consider extending its activities to the revalidation of existing qualifications and issues related to the accreditation of institutions (Malcom 1993, pp 1-4).

Notwithstanding the existing quality assurance mechanisms in universities, the NZVCC and its Committee on Academic programmes decided to establish an Academic Audit Unit (AAU). The terms of reference for the Unit are as follows:

(i) to consider and review the Universities’ mechanisms for monitoring and promoting the academic standards which are necessary for achieving their stated aims and objectives;

(ii) to comment on the extent to which providers in place in individual universities reflect best practice in maintaining quality and the extent to which they are carried out in practice;

(iii) to identify and commend to universities good practice in regard to the maintenance of academic standards at national level; and
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(iv) to consider and review the ways in which universities take account of the principles of the Treaty if Waitangi in so far as they relate to academic matters identified in (i), (ii) and (iii) above (Malcom 1993, pp 34).

The Unit has operational independence of the universities and the NZVCC. It has a full-time director and an advisory board, and it functions chiefly by means of audit visits to universities.

Malcom (1993 pp 4-5) has identified two major factors which led to the establishment of the AAU. First, there was recognition by the universities that Government concern as articulated by the Minister for Education ‘that the academic performance of the universities is not sufficiently transparent to constituencies outside the universities themselves, especially to business and employer constituencies and Government itself. The universities were aware that the Minister has commented favorably on developments in the United Kingdom with respect to academic quality assurance. Second, the universities were concerned about their own performance in an increasingly competitive environment, and at the same time wish to protect academic autonomy in their operations. According to Malcom,

By taking the initiative it is hoped to provide a coordinated response to the variety of audit assurance demands being laid on the universities by various external agencies and constituencies and to do so in a way that receives the full cooperation of academic staff and leads to improved performance, as well as to more transparent processes for assessing the quality of performance (Malcom 1993, p 4)

According to Woodhouse (1996), the system for universities is based on the UK’s academic audit concept to address the institutional-level review requirement. However, the New Zealand AAU emphasises the need for universities to have their own systematic processes in place for external review of departments and investigate the effectiveness of these in the audit process.

Education Review Office and Ministry of Education

Both the NZQA and the Education Review Office were intended to have rights of entry to institutions, but this provision was removed from the original bill following strong national and international opposition to what was perceived to be a serious threat to academic freedom. The Education Review Office’s functions are now limited to a three yearly review of the extent to which higher education institutions are eliminating barriers to disadvantaged groups and actively promoting equity. Through these two agencies, the government has considerable power to determine directions for higher education and monitor performance. The
powers are somewhat less easily exercised for universities, but are strong in relation to polytechnics and colleges of education (Peddie 1992, p.507).

As the major provider of funding to post secondary education institutions, the Ministry of Education is concerned primarily with resource allocation and utilisation, but it does have a substantial interest in educational quality. The Minister has an overriding right to direct the Council of an institution not to provide a course of study (but not an individual section of a course) where resources could be used inefficiently. In relation to polytechnics, the Ministry requires institutions to report on performance and employs various performance indicators including costs per EFTS, tutorial staff/student ratio, EFTS growth per cent, changes in financial value, operating surplus or deficit, and changes in cash balance. It also requires each polytechnic to report on its achievements in relation to goals and objectives as stated in its business plan. Although some goals relate to quality, the measures used tend to be descriptive rather than quantitative. According to a senior member of Manawatu Polytechnic, the indicators used provide the Ministry with only a restricted set of quality measures. He claims that polytechnics:

... do not have a formal means of establishing whether their individual performance met, exceeded or fell short of the Ministry’s expectations. It appears the polytechnics will have to rely on their own comparison methods and other informal ways to determine the Ministry’s level of satisfaction with their performance (Cliff 1994, p 50).
PART III

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
Chapter 8

MANAGING QUALITY ASSURANCE:
CONCLUSIONS AND MODELS

Conclusions

This monograph has attempted to provide an introduction to the recent international debate and new directions in thinking and practice about quality assurance in higher education systems and institutions. It has pointed to the new environmental factors at work putting new pressures of accountability on both systems and institutions. It has outlined the tremendous variety in experimentation that has taken place in recent years, providing a rich source of models of evaluation and review, and reporting on the results of such efforts. Many of these different approaches and models have been spelt out in some detail, partly to help make the point about variety and diversity, but mainly to provide system-level and institutional managers in the region with detailed information on alternatives and comments on their strengths and weaknesses.

The various chapters have demonstrated that quality and quality assurance are major issues in higher education systems and institutions in Asia and the Pacific, although within the region there are very considerable variations about how quality issues are perceived and in the priorities that governments and higher education institutions are giving to tackling quality problems. Concern about quality of educational programmes is clearly increasing, reflecting the influence of a number of factors, but particularly the rapid rate of recent expansion in student enrollments, the growth of the private sector, new demands for public accountability, and various increasing pressures arising from international economic competition and mobility of professional and highly skilled labour.

In the region, discussion of quality issues focuses not only on quality assurance, but on more basic concerns such as inadequacies with respect to resources, staff, facilities and curricula, and on problems such as imbalances in graduate output and graduate unemployment. In some cases, senior officials and institutional managers take the view that it is almost impossible to focus on quality assurance issues unless at least a minimum in basic resources has been provided. On the other hand, it is unfortunate - perhaps even shortsighted - for any higher education system or institution to avoid facing up to the challenges of quality assurance on the grounds that resources are inadequate. Further, even with limited resources, it is not difficult to design quality assurance mechanisms to help improve the quality of teaching and learning and the quality of graduates.
Quality Assurance for Higher Education

Currently a number of countries in the region are experimenting with new forms of quality assurance, particularly academic accreditation, academic audits and institutional evaluations, performance funding, reviews of disciplines and professional areas, and new qualifications frameworks and competency-based approaches to vocational education and training. Many of these experiments seem likely to continue and expand in scope, especially if they are able to produce positive benefits such as improvements in academic programmes, closer links with employers and professions, and increased portability of professional qualifications. Further, a number of other countries in the region already are showing interest in undertaking similar initiatives, particularly in the area of academic accreditation. On the other hand, questions will be asked, and already are being raised, about the financial and administrative costs of quality assurance mechanisms in relation to the benefits derived, while in the poorest countries in the region inadequacy of resources to provide adequate basic higher education programmes seems likely to continue well into the future as the single most pressing quality problem.

Reference has been made already to the quite amazing variety of different approaches that have been used in different countries. The result is that there is a growing body of experience about how well each of these different approaches are working in particular settings. In choosing from the available menu of successful approaches, it seems highly desirable that countries and institutions should select approaches likely to suit their particular needs. Further, as already mentioned, care should be taken about resource implications, the possibility of additional administrative burdens, and likely adverse effects on particular types of quality assurance mechanisms. A number of the methodologies in frequent use can prove expensive to implement in terms of personnel and financial resources, although with any methodology there are usually ways that administrative costs can be kept to a minimum. Ideally, the methodology selected by any higher education system or institution should be one that promises maximum benefits in terms of the resources spent.

In choosing among possible methodologies and strategies, it is important to stress that the possible adverse effects as well as advantages should be considered. For example, experience both in the UK and Australia demonstrate many of the unfortunate effects of performance funding and ranking, especially if all institutions and/or departments involved in the evaluation process are ranked. In the United States, as already noted, with a long established system of ranking departments and professional schools, the adverse effects of such system are limited since the usual practice is to publish only the results for the top tenor so departments or schools. Other possible adverse effects are that particular kinds of quality assurance approaches can limit creativity and distort institutional priorities in an attempt to meet requirements imposed by a government agency or some outside review team.
Managing Quality Assurance: Conclusions and Models

The general international experience with new approaches to quality assurance points to the importance of placing a major emphasis on quality improvement. While most quality assurance programmes quite understandably have accountability as a major driving idea and requirement, it is important that programmes be designed to achieve improvement (hopefully continuous improvement), particularly in teaching, research, and institutional planning and management. Any programme of quality assurance is limited indeed if its main emphasis is simply on identifying and reporting on weaknesses, or satisfying formal accountability requirements. Much more satisfactory and worthwhile is a quality assurance programme which sets out to ensure that problems identified are properly addressed and corrected, with the end result that the weak institutions or units get stronger, and the strong get even stronger.

A related point is that in order to succeed and produce major benefits at either institutional or system level a quality assurance programme must have the support of the academic community. The benefits will be disappointingly limited unless academic staff can be persuaded to participate and support any new quality assurance or quality audit process. Gaining this support may not be easy, since in a number of the recently introduced programmes academics see the new initiative as constituting a serious threat to them, their professional independence and their work. But if quality assurance is to be accepted and work well in any higher education system or institution, it obviously needs the strong support and endorsement of academic staff. This then means that a major factor in new choice of any new programme or mechanism should be how it will be regarded by academics.

While the borrowing of ideas from other higher education systems and institutions is to be commended, it is important that the procedures and approaches adopted fit well within the particular society and culture. As Craft (1994 p ix) has warned, ‘procedure need to be adopted and adapted with care and sensitivity if the quality assurance/accreditation movement is not to be a new form of cultural imperialism’. There are also dangers too in adding new regulations and rules that may, unintentionally lead to creativity being constrained.

Main Approaches and Mechanisms

The main approaches and mechanisms of quality assurance and quality management in higher education now used across major industrialised countries both in the Asia and Pacific region and beyond are set out in Table 8:1.
Quality Assurance for Higher Education

Table 8:1

Quality Assurance Approaches

A. Methodologies

- Self study or self evaluation
- Peer review, usually including the use of at least some external visitors
- Analysis of statistical information and/or use of performance indicators
- Surveys of students, graduates, employers, professional bodies
- Testing of students' knowledge, skills and competencies

B. Focus

**The National or Regional Higher Education System Level**

- National reviews of disciplines: - reviews of research only
  - reviews of teaching only
  - reviews of both research and teaching
- Institutional evaluations: - reviews of teaching only
  - reviews of research only
  - Reviews of quality assurance processes
  - Comprehensive reviews usually including teaching, research, management, and quality assurance processes

**Institutional Level**

- Reviews of departments, faculties and schools
- Reviews of courses and programmes
- Reviews of administrative and service units

C. Reporting and Follow-up activities

- Report provided solely to the institution or unit concerned
- Report provided to the institution but also published or made more widely available
- Formal reports provided to the Minister, Ministry, higher education funding or coordinating agency, or at institutional level to Vice-Chancellor/Rector
Managing Quality Assurance: Conclusions and Models

- public reporting
- use of ranking and publishing results of such ranking
- performance funding
- accreditation or validation

The main evaluation and data collection and assessment methodologies used are the self study or self evaluation; the peer review panel with the peers either being senior academics, experts by industry or the professions or some mixture; and performance indicators or the collection and/or analysis of relevant statistical information, particularly related to performance. Over time, as already noted, self studies or self evaluations have proved very effective and also cost efficient. If institutions or units within institutions can be persuaded to evaluate their own performance, it is more likely that renewal and improvement will result. Also the process of evaluation is made less threatening when a key emphasis is placed on self-evaluation. Frequently some element of peer review is often associated with self evaluation to provide external accountability and to ensure that the self study is taken seriously. Most evaluations include the use of statistical information and performance indicators, and frequently the results of surveys of students, graduates and employers.

In the United States, various initiatives have been made to develop tests to assess students knowledge, skills and competencies. The main efforts have been made at institutional level, although there are examples of state-wide efforts.

With regard to the focus of evaluation and quality assurance efforts, at the national level the most common mechanisms are 'horizontal reviews' of disciplines and institutional evaluations. The reviews of disciplines are usually carried out by panels of experts using peer review and concentrating on teaching only, on research only, or on both teaching and research. Generally these reviews result in published reports, with often detailed comment being made on the work within each department or faculty evaluated. Institutional reviews include academic audits of quality assurance processes and outcomes and more extensive reviews such as those conducted in Finland. Other mechanisms used are accreditation and validation of courses and institutions large scale testing of student achievement; ranking of departments and institutions; and some measure of incentive or performance funding. Generally evaluation is the responsibility of government agencies as voluntary peak bodies representing universities or University Vice-Chancellors or Rectors.

At institutional level, the main evaluation efforts are regular reviews of departments and faculties; reviews of courses and programmes; and reviews of administrative and service units. Generally such reviews are broad-based in terms of focus, looking not only at teaching but also research, community service and management. In most cases, a major emphasis is given to a self study or self
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evaluation, associated with peer review by a visiting panel which includes at least some senior academics and/or experts from the relevant profession and from industry.

A variety of approaches are used with regard to reporting and follow-up activities. In some cases, the reports on the assessment are provided solely to the institution or the unit concerned, but increasingly the practice is to make the results more widely available and for reports to be formally provided to Ministers/Ministries and funding and coordinating agencies. Reporting is an important element in achieving renewal and improvement, and is vital for external accountability. A common practice is to provide the institution or unit being assessed with an opportunity to comment on the draft report.

In some cases a system of ranking based on performance in relation to established criteria are used. In the UK, for example, participating university departments are ranked on both performance in teaching and research and the results of these rankings are publicly announced.

In a minority of cases, some element of performance funding is used. In the UK again, performance in research is used as the basis of allocating some research funding. The argument for such an arrangement is this funding provides a strong incentive towards excellence and sends out very clear messages to institutions and academic staff. On the other hand, those who do not support this system argue mainly that performance funding distorts the purposes of evaluation, damages the links of evaluation to renewal and improvement, and by denying funding to lesser performing departments, damage their reputations, their ability to recruit good staff and students, and their ability to improve.

In a limited number of cases, the final result is accreditation of the programme or the institution, or validation of the programme as practiced by the CNAA in the UK until recently. The use of accreditation mechanisms is being extended in a number of Asia and Pacific countries, whereas in the United States, where accreditation mechanisms have been used for many years, there is increased concern about the strength and impact of many traditional approaches.
Chapter 9

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

This section puts forward recommended strategies for consideration by Ministers and senior officials with regard to quality assurance in higher education systems, and by Vice-Chancellors, Presidents, Rectors and other senior University administrators with regard to individual universities and colleges. The aim is to set out in a relatively simple form strategies based on the analysis and discussion earlier in the book. However, the reader is urged to refer to the detailed discussion and not to depend alone on the brief listing which follows.

1. **Accept that new initiatives and approaches may be necessary**

   The general experience of all the countries discussed in this book is that traditional approaches to quality assurance have proved inadequate in operating in the new international environment for higher education which stresses increased competition in trade and production, and increased mobility of skilled and professional labour. In British universities, for example, the traditional approach based largely on the use of external examiners has come to be regarded as inadequate. Similarly in the United States, it is generally agreed that the well-established approach to institutional and programme accreditation needs to be both strengthened and supplemented with other approaches.

2. **Choose from the wide variety of approaches and methodologies that are available and that have been widely tested in a number of countries and institutions**

   Higher education systems and institutions wishing to take new initiatives today are in a particularly advantageous position in that there is now an extensive body of experience and documentation about the value of a variety of different approaches. Clearly some approaches and methodologies work better than others, and details on this should be analysed before any decision is made.

3. **Look for an approach and methodology that not only suits the institution or system, but is cost effective and likely to gain the support of academic staff**

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Ideally, any new initiative with quality assurance should fit well with the culture and operational norms of the system or institution. If a good fit is not achieved, it is highly likely that there will be a strong measure of resistance, especially from academic staff. Cost effectiveness is particularly important at a time when universally there is increasing pressures on institutional budgets, and often decreasing funding per student unit.

4. **Try to include an approach which incorporates elements of self study, peer review, and external reporting**

International experience demonstrates clearly the value of self studies, peer review and external reporting of the results of the review process. The idea of self studies came originally from the accreditation process in the United States, but its value has been demonstrated in many other approaches to quality assurance. Self-studies are cost effective, since the main work is done internally, often with little additional resources being necessary. Self-studies usually achieve a high degree of ownership since the main work is done by the staff involved. Self-studies increase the chances of substantial improvement being achieved, since the judgments are made by the people in charge of the activity who have a direct interest in the future of the activity. Self-studies are based on the idea of each operating unit being required to take stock of itself. It is highly desirable that every effort be made to achieve improvement through consultative and interactive means, rather than through purgative and punitive methods.

To be effective, self-studies are best combined with elements of external peer review and external reporting. This combination results in internal staff taking the process more seriously. As noted by many scholars, one the strongest pressures on any group of academics is the prospect of being judged by senior peers in the discipline. Further, as Kogan (1993) has noted, the process will be more rigorous if the whole institution acquires political and evaluative capacities with which to apply critique to the unit’s evaluations.

Self-studies combined with peer review by outside experts, which is a well-established academic process, particularly in the research area, generally works well as long as the external panel members respect the fact that self evaluation implies respect for the values of those being evaluated and recognise that their contribution is toward a self learning process. At the same time, it must be recognised that peer review can introduce values and constructs from outside for the system, University or the department to take aboard.

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Peer review is common whether the evaluation is of programme/discipline or institution. In its traditional format it generally involved a visit by a group of well-regarded academics in the particular field, but recent practice, especially for reviews of programmes or disciplines, has been to add other experts to panels, such as persons from industry or business, practising professionals, or elected public officials.

External reporting is necessary to ensure accountability requirements, but it also operates as an additional inducement for staff to take self-studies seriously. But one of the crucial questions for decision is to whom should the external reports go, and how widely and publicly should reports be distributed.

5. Place a major emphasis on clear guidelines, on openness, on review of documentation and on the analysis of evidence

With any quality assurance mechanism it is of crucial importance that there be clear, written guidelines and that all processes should be as open as possible in order to develop confidence of all those involved. All participants should be encouraged to develop and demand high quality documentation, and conclusions should be based on evidence available to all the parties involved in the process.

In a number of countries, great efforts are being made to ensure that guidelines are appropriately detailed, that documentation is of a high quality, and that judgments are based on evidence. For example, in the United States accreditation agencies are making more extensive use of guidelines and clearly specified evaluative criteria (El-Khawas 1993). While there is considerable variation between accrediting agencies, detailed written guidelines generally specify focus on four areas:

- organisational and administrative matters;
- resources currently available to the unit (including financial resources; personnel; space and equipment);
- the curriculum; and
- statistics showing the performance or other outcomes for the programmers graduates (El-Khawas 1993, p 41).

More recently in the United States there has been a strong move to establish competency-based criteria and for external reviews to visit to make judgments on whether these standards are being met. So the role of reviewers with this approach is to affirm whether or not the programme meets the specific criteria or not.
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6. Develop mechanisms to ensure fairness in the processes employed

With any quality assurance mechanism, there is always the possibility that review and assessment procedures will be used by some participants to achieve personal goals, and so will operate in a way that is not strictly fair. Also fairness in procedures is essential to generate and maintain wide support for the process. Many procedures can be introduced such as:

- Allow challenges to the names of the proposed reviewers - a programme unit to be reviewed should have the opportunity to learn the names of the proposed reviewers, and if an appropriate reason is given, can have a name removed and another person chosen.
- Develop checklists for use by reviewers - in some cases such guidelines are simply a guide to reviewers for the site visit, but in other cases they go further and require reviewers to include comments on each element in their final report. The general premise is that checklists help reviewers focus on areas that the accrediting agency thinks important and helps ensure consistency among reviewers.
- Establish oversight committees that review the reports of review panels to ensure that correct procedures were followed.
- Develop two-tiered reviews with a second committee or panel which must confirm the recommendations of the visiting panel.
- Allow postponements because of special events.
- Allow minority reports. Sometimes it takes great effort to get consensus, and this is important on the critical question of whether or not a programme should be judged as satisfactory and accredited. But experience in a number of places suggests that the process is not adversely affected by minority vote or report.

7. At system level, consider the desirability of incorporating elements of both disciplinary reviews and institutional assessments

In a number of countries the new quality assurance mechanisms include both horizontal reviews of disciplines or departments and reviews of institutions. Examples are Britain and France. With institutional assessments, in many cases it has been found to be more satisfactory to concentrate on elements of quality management rather than quality outcomes. Often this is called an academic audit. Warren Piper comments that fundamentally an audit relates back to two questions:

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Recommended Strategies

- What is the university trying to do?
- How does it know how well it is doing it?

The task of the audit team is to establish how well the university has identified and communicated what it is trying to do, and how successfully it has evaluated its own progress and acted upon that evaluation. Alternatively, the audit team sometimes concentrates on trying to gauge the capacity of the institution to identify and communicate appropriate goals and its capacity to monitor and react to its progress (Warren Piper 1993 Vol 1 p 31).

8. Put a Major Emphasis on Improvement in Quality at Institutional Level

It is highly desirable that a major emphasis in any quality assurance programme should be on achieving continuous improvement and a strong customer/stakeholder focus. Ideally, this should be achieved in the context of a strong emphasis on quality management at institutional level which involves:

- setting goals and strategies to achieve these goals;
- evaluating performance in terms of the set goals and the specified strategies and
- using the results of evaluation to improve practice and performance.

There are various procedures commonly used for encouraging high quality and good practice. They include:

- rules and regulations;
- codes of practice and descriptions of best practice;
- training and communication of information on best practice;
- assessment of client/customer needs and assessment of the extent to which needs are being met;
- communication of information to relevant stakeholders on the results of assessment and evaluation.
- incentives and rewards; and
- assessment of performance.

9. Take care to work out and specify clear external reporting arrangements prior to the commencement of the first review

One of the most contentious issues relates to what happens to the report on an evaluation. While often the participants in the institution
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would wish to limit circulation of a report, the demands of accountability usually demand that the report circulate widely and that copies should go to central funding agencies and Ministries. There also are difficulties for those writing reports on evaluations which seek to meet the needs of two or more parties eg institution and Ministry. What is essential is that these issues should be openly discussed in the development phase of any new quality assurance mechanism, and that there be clear specification of external reporting requirements.
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