PCF8
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
27-30 November 2016

Sub-theme: Quality and Equity in Learning

Adapting Quality Assurance to Innovative Programmes

Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues, dear friends,

It's pleasure to be in Kuala Lumpur again to attend PCF8.

Our title is *Adapting Quality Assurance to Innovative Programmes* and I shall present five topics.

These are the topics:

- Adapting QA to new needs
- CHEA/CIQG Quality Platform
- Guides to Quality in Online HE
- 7 International Quality Principles
- Combating corruption in HE

First, how is quality assurance adapting to new forms of higher education as it innovates in order to reach larger numbers of learners and promote greater equity? QA evolved and developed strongly through the 1990s. By the 2000s a general model of quality assurance had emerged with the following elements:

- Regulations and guidelines produced by the QA agency
- A self-evaluation prepared by the institution
- Appointment of a peer group to review the institution or programme, starting by reviewing the self-evaluation
- Site visits by the peer group
- Publication of the report or, in some cases, only the decision.

This basic model is now spreading throughout the world and methods are converging, creating what some call "the spread of the familiar".

But as QA methods converge, the focus of QA is shifting as higher education diversifies. Not very long ago quality was judged by inputs – grades of incoming students, qualifications of teaching staff, number of books in the library and so on.

Today quality assessment focuses more on the outputs: students' learning outcomes. What have the students really learned?

Multilateral organisations are supporting this development. One example is the OECD project AHELO (Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes), which aimed to assess what

graduates **know and can do** at the global level across cultures, languages and institutions. So far AHELO has not progressed beyond a feasibility study.

There is now a similar project in the European Union.

It focuses on Measuring and Comparing Achievements of Learning Outcomes in Higher Education in Europe and has the acronym CALOHEE.

Second, private companies are creating a new sector of higher education. Its offerings are often online. We call this "post-traditional higher education" and Students' Learning Outcomes are the most solid basis for assessing the quality of these alternative providers.

In order to assist the alternative providers and the traditional institutions that might receive requests for credit recognition from their learners, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation/International Quality Group (CHEA/CIQG) developed a Quality Platform in 2013.

The Quality Platform is an outcomes-based review using standards established by the Platform, a self-review by the provider and peer (expert) review. Successful candidates are designated as "Quality Platform Providers" by CHEA/CIQG for a three-year period.

The Quality Platform is based on four simple standards:

- Learning outcomes are articulated and achieved.

- Learning outcomes meet postsecondary expectations.

- Curricula provide opportunities for successful transfer of credit.

- Transparency is maintained and comparability is established.

The self-review uses a template for providing evidence that the four standards have been met. This is the basis for an external review a site-visit by a team of experts.

If CHEA/CIQG accepts the report it then awards the Quality Platform Provider Certificate, which universities can use as an indicator of quality when considering the award of credit or recognition.

The Quality Platform was pilot-tested in 2015 with the DeTao Masters Academy in Shanghai, China, which is a private company that is not part of China's traditional higher education system. The programmes mostly use teachers from outside China (designated as "Masters" by DeTao), who have distinguished backgrounds in a wide variety of disciplines.

DeTao works in partnership with the Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts (SIVA) by providing Advanced Classes to selected groups of students. These are not full degrees but enriched majors in SIVA programmes, so the traditional QA frameworks in China do not cover them.

After the review CHEA awarded the DeTao Masters Academy a Quality Platform provider certificate at a ceremony during its Annual Conference in January 2016 (CHEA, 2016).

The CHEA/CIQG Quality Platform is now being piloted by the US Department of Education

(USDE) in a new programme, EQUIP (Educational Quality through Innovative Partnerships), designed to counterbalance what the Department called the "inflexible and unaffordable options" of traditional higher education for working adults.

Third, let me mention some helpful guides for online courses

In 2013 the company Academic Partnerships published a *Guide to Quality in Online Learning* prepared by Neil Butcher and a South African colleague (Butcher et al., 2013).

We then asked Neil Butcher to prepare a second *Guide to Quality in Post-Traditional Online Higher Education,* because 'post-traditional' approaches to higher education were continuing to multiply and included MOOCs, OER, Open Badges and Experiential Learning.

Let's take MOOCs as an example.

Thousands of MOOCs are now available so their quality assurance is topical. Developing countries, in particular, want to know which MOOCs have most value for their citizens.

How do MOOCs – and online learning generally – challenge traditional practices of quality assurance?

There is bad news and good news.

The bad news is that since most MOOCs are short and do not offer credit, most universities have only skimpy academic procedures for approving them. The good news, of course, is these 'light-touch' approval processes give institutions a chance to test innovations without having to submit them for approval to conservative governance bodies.

A recent publication by UNESCO and COL (2016), *Making Sense of MOOCs: A Guide for Policy-Makers in Developing Countries* addresses the issue of QA and MOOCs. It recommends including them in existing QA frameworks.

Some European tools such as e-Excellence, OpenupEd and MOOQ are put forward as possible models, but QA for MOOCs remains a challenge.

Fourth, CHEA now has an International Quality Group, which I helped to create..

To try and reach a common understanding of quality worldwide CHEA/CIQG has articulated seven fundamental international quality principles that underpin all forms of higher education, whatever the curricula or delivery modes.

When you read these principles you will find them simple and rather obvious, but that is the point. This is an attempt to create a global consensus on the basics.

The seven principles are:

1. Quality and higher education providers;

2. Quality and students;

3. Quality and government;

4. Quality and society;

5. Qualith and accountability;

6. Quality and the role of quality assurance and accreditation;

7. Quality and change

A series of essays on each of the principles, written by experts from around the world, explores each principle in more detail.

Finally, some remarks on corruption, to which quality assurance processes should pay greater attention. CHEA/CIQG and UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning are committed to promoting the integrity of higher education because it is the foundation for quality assurance.

The increasing frequency of press articles about corruption in higher education all over the world led CHEA/CIQG and UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning to convene an expert meeting on corruption in Washington earlier this year. Sir John and I were both closely involved.

The key finding of the meeting was that all countries and universities suffer from academic corruption. Seeing a New Zealand university offering a MOOC on Academic Integrity, illustrates this. Our group published a report that is online and we commend it to you.

It includes examples of good and bad practices and a matrix listing actions that the various higher education stakeholders can take to ensure that good practice prevails.

In essence, the key to avoiding corruption is to verify regularly that all steps in the processes of teaching, learning, assessment and certification are conducted with integrity.

This boils down to a question of institutional will at all levels.

Governments should take pride in the integrity of their systems by ensuring due process and transparency in appointments to regulatory bodies. Institutions must make ethical practices a central focus of their internal quality assurance processes.

Protection for 'whistle blowers' (the people who find and publicise corrupt practices) is particularly important and administrators must avoid the temptation to sweep rumours of bad practice under the carpet.

To conclude, have emphasised the importance of seeing that quality assurance evolves to keep pace with the expansion and diversification of higher education providers. We then explored four examples of how quality assurance is being adapted to innovations. We have both been closely involved in these four initiatives and we hope that you have found our descriptions and reflections interesting.

Thank you