



Sustainable
Development
Goals

Bangkok Office
Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau
for Education



International Centre
for Higher Education Innovation
under the auspices of UNESCO
联合国教科文组织高等教育创新中心

Regional Conference on Quality Assurance of Higher Education in Asia-Pacific

June 15-16th, 2017

Shenzhen, China

Conference Report



Regional Conference on Quality Assurance of Higher Education in Asia-Pacific

Conference Report

Sponsor: International Centre for Higher Education Innovation under the auspices of
UNESCO (UNESCO-ICHEI)

Chief Editor: LI Ming

Editorial Board: HAN Wei, LU Chun

Responsible Editor: YANG Chaomei, Sherry Duan, QIAO Yuhan

Tel: 86-755-88010922

E-mail: office@ichei.org

Address: No.1088, Xueyuan Blvd., Nanshan District, Shenzhen, China.

Content

Background.....	3
Introduction.....	6

Day One..... 9

Opening Remarks.....	9
Overview of Results from the Pre-Conference Survey.....	16
Keynote Address 1: Shifting Focus from Teaching to Learning.....	18
Panel Discussion 1: Challenges and opportunities for measuring learning and outcomes of higher education in Asia-Pacific.....	18
Keynote Address 2: Education 2030 – Strengthening quality assurance of lifelong learning systems.....	24
Panel Discussion 2: Education 2030 – Aligning Institutional, National and Regional Strategies to Strengthen Quality Assurance.....	24
Special Address: Reflecting on the Development of China’s Higher Education Quality Assurance System.....	31
Thematic Session: Nurturing Caring Leaders Through Quality Higher Education.....	31

Day Two..... 35

Introduction to Day Two.....	35
Opening Address.....	35
Keynote Address 3: Quality Assurance of Diverse Modes of Learning – Towards A Learner Centered Model.....	40

Panel Discussion 3: Quality Assurance of Diverse Modes of Learning.....	40
Interactive Session.....	47
Closing Ceremony.....	52
Showcase of Good Practices in Quality Assurance in Asia-Pacific.....	53
The Wall.....	54
SHENZHEN STATEMENT	55
Highlights.....	60

Background

The year 2015 saw the adoption of the new global education agenda, officially referred to as Education 2030 or Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4). The Education 2030-SDG4 laid the foundation for the development of global education for the next 15 years with concrete targets covering Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), school education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education in a lifelong learning perspective. One of the salient facts of the SDG4 is that higher education has garnered more visibility than it did with the previous Millennium Development Goals.

The Education 2030 Framework for Action Target 4.3 clearly states that “by 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university”. In addition, Target 4.b calls for substantial expansion of the number of scholarships available to benefit developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing states and African countries. The inclusion of higher education in the Education 2030-SDG4 agenda reflects the high-level recognition of Member States worldwide on the importance of higher education in promoting and achieving the sustainable development goals. However, long-term trends and emerging concerns continue to challenge quality assurance policies and practices throughout Asia and the Pacific.

Trends and challenges

Indeed, higher education systems have undergone tremendous expansion in the past decades, leading to the so-called massification of higher education in the Asia-Pacific region. For example, building on substantial investments in higher education, China’s Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) increased by 33 percentage points between 1999 and

2014. Along with the quantitative expansion come the quality challenges that almost no country can escape.

Further, the diversification of higher education providers, especially the increasing involvement of the private sector in the provision of higher education has been another factor for the concerns about quality of higher education provision in the Asia-Pacific region. As of 2014, more than half of all tertiary level students worldwide were from Asia-Pacific, and a significant portion were from the private sector. While public institutions are still the dominating force, the increasing presence of private institutions in many countries underlines the importance of effective coordination and regulatory mechanisms, including transparency and accountability across the higher education sector.

Another related factor that has triggered quality concerns has been the use of technology in the delivery of higher education programmes through open and distance learning, blended learning and MOOCs. In a region that has heavily relied on the traditional face-to-face, classroom-based learning, on-line learning, formal and non-formal learning require due attention to quality assurance (QA) so that qualifications and outcomes documents are built on the trust and confidence from learners, employers and other key higher education stakeholders.

Towards quality higher education and lifelong learning for all

One of the important features of Education 2030-SDG4 is that, compared with inputs and processes, learning outcomes now have a more prominent role in determining the quality of educational provision. National qualifications frameworks (NQFs) have likewise emerged as an important tool to help define expected learning outcomes for different levels of post-school qualifications based on level descriptors. Although NQFs are external quality standards, the alignment of university study programmes

with the NQF requirements is actually a process of internalizing the external standards at institutional, programme and professional levels. The convergence of trends in many countries is that the boundary between internal and external quality assurance mechanisms has been blurred, as the two practices are increasingly inter-connected.

Quality assurance is the main source of mutual trust and is therefore essential to the mutual recognition of higher education qualifications among countries in the region. As UNESCO is advocating for the ratification and implementation of the 2011 Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (2011 Tokyo Convention), transparency measures such as the establishment of national information centers (NICs) and equivalency arrangements based on bilateral agreements can play important roles. QA-based recognition arrangements can ultimately help to make recognition much easier and pave the way for greater mobility of students across borders in the future. In this regard, effective quality assurance is important for building mutual trust and underpins confidence in qualifications in Asia-Pacific and worldwide.

It is against this background that UNESCO, as the only UN agency with a mandate in higher education, will organize the International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Paris, France in early 2018. To prepare, regional conferences will help take stock of innovative QA policies and practices, identify gaps and challenges, and explore common agendas for future collaboration. The Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education is one of the regional preparatory conferences and will be expected to contribute to the 2018 International Conference on Quality Assurance with rich and diverse inputs from the region. The specific objectives of the regional stocktaking effort are below.

Introduction

During June 15th-16th, 2017, Regional Conference on Quality Assurance of Higher Education in Asia-Pacific was held at Wuzhou Guest House, Shenzhen. This conference was jointly organized by the Section of Higher Education, UNESCO in Paris, UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, in collaboration with the National Commission of the People's Republic of China for UNESCO (NATCOM), and hosted by International Centre for Higher Education Innovation under the auspices of UNESCO (UNESCO-ICHEI).

Mr. KIM Gwang-Jo, director of UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Mr. DU Yue, Secretary-General of NATCOM, Ms. GUO Yurong, Chairwomen of University Council at Southern University of Science and Technology (SUSTech), Mr. LI Ming, Director of ICHEI, Ms. HAN Wei, Deputy Director of UNESCO-ICHEI and Director of Residential Colleges at SUSTech, Ms. LIU Jiachen, Deputy Secretary-General of the Shenzhen Municipal Government, along with approximately 110 government officials, research personnel, and representatives from various organizations of 43 countries in Asia-Pacific Region, attended this conference.

Overall theme: New impetus for strengthening quality assurance in higher education

Subthemes:

- ❖ New impetus for strengthening quality assurance in higher education
- ❖ External quality assurance mechanisms
- ❖ Internal quality assurance mechanisms and a culture of quality within HEIs
- ❖ Bridging the links between internal and the external quality assurance processes

- ❖ National qualifications frameworks and exploring connections with quality assurance, credential recognition, and students' mobility
- ❖ Quality assurance of private higher education institutions
- ❖ Quality assurance of qualifications obtained through non-traditional modes (e.g. MOOCs and blended learning)
- ❖ International cooperation and regional harmonization efforts in Asia-Pacific

The conference lasted two days and covered a range of formats, including keynote address, panel discussion, special address, gallery walk, thematic session, the “Wall”, interactive session and working group synthesis & discussion. The conference intended to inform and shape the 2018 International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education organized by UNESCO. In particular, it aimed to map the current status, needs, innovative practices and challenges that are related to quality assurance in higher education in the Asia-Pacific region. In doing so, the conference has achieved the following:

- ❖ Taking stock of innovative policies and practices at system, institution, subject and programme levels in Asia-Pacific, with an aim to produce a consolidated regional report on quality assurance in higher education;
- ❖ Building understanding of the links between QA, NQF, and recognition, including providing concrete support and capacity building for the ratification and implementation of the 2011 Tokyo Convention;
- ❖ Raising awareness about quality assurance of nontraditional modes of learning (e.g. MOOCs, blended learning, etc.)
- ❖ Connecting multiple quality assurance initiatives in Asia-Pacific to promote synergies and cross-fertilization.

This conference report includes a collection of 10 country case study reports on

quality in higher education from Asia-Pacific region, a regional synthesis report to be submitted to the UNESCO 2018 International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Paris, and Shenzhen Statement on Quality and Inclusive Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific.

Day One

Opening Remarks

Speaker

Mr. Kim Gwang-Jo: Director of UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education



On the morning of June 15, Mr. KIM delivered a welcoming remark at the opening ceremony of the conference. He quoted the opening chapter from The Great Learning, which reads “the way of great learning consists in manifesting one’s bright virtue, consists in loving the people, (and) consists in stopping in perfect goodness. The way of ultimate wisdom is the comprehension of absolute integrity, genial development of the common people and endless pursuit of the perfection of humanities.” Through this quote, he emphasized the importance of higher education quality assurance.

He pointed out that higher education is perceived as the top level of our educational system, and therefore carries responsibilities. On the one hand, higher education must build strong links with education of lower levels-not only does it mean embracing learner-centered pedagogy, providing leadership and curriculum content, but also cultivating relationship with all areas of education to ensure collaboration with all key stakeholders in the world of work. In this way, the quality of higher education will have tremendous impact on our education systems, including how we prepare the next generation for work and serve the society.

On the other hand, higher education is about research and community service. During the course of globalization, all societies face the challenges of economy, technology, climate and populations. To tackle, practitioners of higher education should take an active stand to respond to such challenges through cultivating innovative practices and promoting sustainable development. Therefore, quality assurance of higher education is closely linked to the individual and collective developments.

The international community launched the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015. These goals are universal because they set goals for all countries, not just developing member states. Each of the 17 goals are integrative, interconnected, and transformative. SDG4, known as Education 2030, states that it should ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Specifically, it includes higher education for the first time. Therefore, the conference should take advantage of this opportunity to collect and learn from best policies and practices of Asia-Pacific countries in quality assurance of higher education, form consensus among the region, strengthen the linkage between quality assurance and qualification framework, enhance awareness on informal learning approaches such as MOOCs, blended learning and others,

promote communications and discussion on this topic, which would ultimately result in Shenzhen Statement.

Speaker

Mr. LI Ming, Director of UNESCO – ICHEI



On behalf of UNESCO-ICHEI, Mr. LI delivered a welcoming speech at the opening ceremony. He introduced UNESCO-ICHEI as well its mid-term strategic planning to the various guests at the venue, noting that its establishment reflects the dedication of the Shenzhen Municipal Government to respond to the national “One Belt One Road” strategies and fulfill its global responsibilities.

In his speech, he focused on four main areas, which are listed as below:

- (1) UNESCO-ICHEI is dedicated to building platform for Research and Exchange to encourage innovation in international higher education. UNESCO-ICHEI has

managed to hold several international events successfully, which promptly enhanced its global reputation and impact. These various events include the “2016 International Meeting on Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education” which led to publication of Shenzhen Consensus.

- (2) ICHEI adopts program-based practice to serve the needs of target countries in the Asian and African regions. UNESCO-ICHEI actively sought to build network with higher education institutions in Asia and Africa through “Digital Education Link”, through which promoted the development of ICT application in teaching and learning, accessibility, quality assurance, management, industry-university partnership of higher education. It also promoted the realization of SDG4. In August of 2017, commissioned by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, UNESCO-ICHEI will host two seminars respectively for education officials, university leaders and technicians in Asia (Cambodia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) and Africa (Ethiopia, Egypt and Djibouti).
- (3) UNESCO-ICHEI attaches great importance to the use of ICT and digitalization to promote the capacity building of higher education innovation, through the establishment of Public-Private Partnership. UNESCO-ICHEI will take advantages of its connection with private entities to take use of their funding, talents and technology. At present, UNESCO-ICHEI has established a SUSTech-Huawei Network Academy, aiming to cultivate talents to support the sustainable development of Chinese enterprises and their localization process in the global market.
- (4) As the tenth Category 2 Centre in Education in the world, and also the first one with a mandate for higher education in China, UNESCO-ICHEI strives to enhance capacity building and set up regional networks under the mission and direction of UNESCO. Through building and fostering professional relationship with UNESCO Category 1 and Category 2 institutions, UNESCO-ICHEI ICHEI will become an influential education think tank, offering

platforms for exchange and dialogue sharing for innovation and practice of international higher education.

Speaker

Ms. LIU Jiachen, Deputy Secretary-General of the Shenzhen Municipal Government



Ms. LIU expressed her sincere welcome to the guests of the conference. She stated that higher education was the priority of education, which served as an important knot among technology, productivity and talents. Shenzhen, as the first special economic zone of China and located in a critical position of the “Canton-Hong Kong-Macau Bay Area” and “One Belt One Road” national strategies, has established a comprehensive innovative ecosystem and a developed industrial environment, making it a hub for innovative enterprises like Huawei, Tencent, and ZTE.

With the rapid development of economy and technology, the Shenzhen Municipal Government has realized the importance of higher education. Recently, Shenzhen has placed great emphasis on higher education and tried to promote through introducing various educational resources of good quality. Currently, Shenzhen has attracted more than 30 universities at home and abroad to set up offshore campuses or offer joint programs, which host more than 90,000 students. This number was expected and predicted to exceed 150,000 by 2020. In the future, Shenzhen would continue to learn from advanced educational philosophy, introduce more educational resources of good quality, and actively engage in exchange and collaboration to provide more human capital for the development of the city.

Speaker

Mr. DU Yue, Secretary-General of NATCOM

Following up Mr. KIM's opening speech, Mr. DU quoted the second chapter of *The Great Learning*, which says, "If you can make things better for one day, you should make them better every day and never stop doing this." He expressed that quality assurance was an ongoing and changing process, and with the rapid development of economy in Shenzhen, quality assurance needs to be updated along the way.

Currently, there are various providers in the higher education sector. At the same time, there are diversified modes of learning and frequent international exchanges among countries. This all points to the need of quality assurance in the higher education.

China attached great importance to quality assurance of higher education and was trying to push forward the development of world-class universities and disciplines. Aligning with the national five-year development plan, the “double first-rate” plan for higher education has been officially kicked off. In the future, China will continue to enhance its capacity of higher education, and raise the standards of universities and disciplines gradually by 2020, 2030 and then the mid-century.



At the end of his speech, Mr. DU highlighted the significance of this conference, stating that it would contribute to the development of higher education of the Asia-Pacific region. He encouraged all delegates to actively participate in the process of improving higher education through learning, exchanging and sharing their ideas and best practices.

Overview of Results from the Pre-Conference Survey

Speaker

Ms. Jihye Hwang, Programme Specialist of UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education



Ms. Hwang overviewed the results from the pre-conference survey through a session titled “How we think of Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Asia and Pacific?” In her session, she first compared the differences in teacher training for basic and higher education separately, from which she concluded that higher education faced far more challenges in training teachers as they shoulder more diverse responsibilities. Therefore, the need to develop an internal and external quality assurance framework arises.

This pre-conference survey included approximately 100 participants from more than 40 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. These participants consisted of government officials, QA practitioners, University staff, representative from international and national professional bodies, students, international organizations, NGOs, and other higher education stakeholders. The results have shown that 82% of the participants were somewhat positive about QA initiatives being a drive to improve quality of teaching and learning processes. 75% of the participants agreed strongly that the Asia-Pacific region is on track to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality tertiary education, including university by 2030. However, given the current trends, the world will not achieve equal access for all at the universal upper secondary education level by 2084.

The three most urgent issues to deal with for QA in the region are:

- a) Building a culture of quality within HEIs
- b) Bridging the links between internal and the external QA processes
- c) NQFs and exploring connections with QA, credential recognition, and students' mobility

A majority of participants of the survey indicated that they needed to learn from their neighboring countries, regions or organizations on their policy and practice of quality assurance. As a result, UNESCO would intervene in this process through providing training and capacity building to support the realization of SDG4 in its member states.

Keynote Address 1: Shifting Focus from Teaching to Learning

Speaker

Ms. Teri Balser, Professor and Dean of Learning and Teaching, Faculty of Science and Engineering at Curtin, Australia



In the first keynote address titled “from teaching to learning”, Ms. Balser shared her view that in this rapidly evolving world, complex problems require adaptive and creative solutions rather than our knowledge on one single subject or skillset. Therefore, traditional higher education is in an existential crisis, which creates a fundamental misalignment between our history and modern/post-modern needs. “The world needs catalysts, not cogs,” added by Ms. Balser. Specifically, the challenges that higher education is faced with are:

- ❖ Massified (more learners)

- ❖ Diversified (wider range of learners)
- ❖ Global/collaborative/borderless (reach everywhere)
- ❖ Personalized/individualized (self-paced learners)

To address these challenges, teaching as passive lecturing is no longer acceptable, and hence requires a paradigm shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered. Nevertheless, the traditional approaches that have been adopted such as “fixing” teachers and modifying teaching content have proven to be insufficient. The key is to encompass a system, in which teachers, learners and technology all play a part in learning happening.

To address these challenges, teaching as passive lecturing is no longer acceptable, and hence requires a paradigm shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered. Nevertheless, the traditional approaches that have been adopted such as “fixing” teachers and modifying teaching content have proven to be insufficient. The key is to encompass a system, in which teachers, learners and technology all play a part in learning happening: a) We need to redefine what it means to create learning experiences, and deliberately design learning environments for modern learners; b) Use technology in support, but do not forget the human side; c) The sign of caring can make learners more motivated.

In the end, Ms. Balser summarized that a shift to a learning-focus is more than just “fixing” the teachers. It requires that we examine the entire system and better design learning environments. We need to focus on, and measure outcomes in more domains than those covered by Bloom’s taxonomy or levels of thinking. We also need to recognize the differences among consistency, quality, and equity in higher education and design our policies accordingly. Above all, we need to remember that this is a human endeavor and find ways to account for and embrace that.

Panel Discussion 1: Challenges and opportunities for measuring learning and outcomes of higher education in Asia-Pacific

Speaker

Michaela Martin, Programme Specialist, UNESCO International Institute for Education Planning, Paris, France



Ms. Martin shared some findings from an IIEP research on internal quality assurance on evaluating learning outcomes with regard to employability. She first defined the terms “employability” as “a set of achievements – skills, skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more employable and successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and

the economy” and “is not only about ‘getting a first job’, but also about coping with future jobs throughout one’s working life” (M. Yorke, 2006 & J. Brennan, 2016).

In this IIEP research, 8 case universities from Asia, Arab Region, Africa, South America and Europe were selected as participants, through which they found the following differences:

- ❖ Universities view the link between employability and IQA differently;
- ❖ The role of IQA in enhancing the link between learning outcomes and employability;
- ❖ Existing IQA tools to enhance the link between learning outcomes and employability;
- ❖ Frequency of IQA tools to enhance the link of learning outcomes and employability: Curriculum development involving professionals (79%) , curriculum review (75%), and monitoring the quality of internships (72%) are the more popular tools.

To conclude, Ms. Martin shared employability would become more and more important in higher education and therefore it would be necessary to have some effective IQA tools to enhance employability, such as Graduate tracer studies and employer satisfaction survey.

Speaker

Eddie Chong Siong Choy, Chief Technical Officer, Finance Accreditation Agency, Malaysia



As of 2015, 140 countries have developed NQFs, with 6 regional frameworks (UNESCO, 2015). However, some countries have comprehensive frameworks – basic education, technical vocational education and training, labor based and higher education), whilst others are limited in scope and/or with diverse ownership. Specifically, Mr. analyzed the challenges and opportunities that are faced by higher education quality assurance in four perspectives:

- ❖ At the regional level - Harmonization through a common reference point (regional reference framework for Asia Pacific countries), one which celebrates diversities, market-based and innovation-enabled? Unifying

tertiary, TVET and professional programmes? Our lifetime?

- ❖ At the country level – how to assess development of sectorial- or discipline-based programme standards/learning outcomes or development of standards on recognition of prior learning and modes of delivery? ODL? MOOCs?
- ❖ At the institutional level – how to ensure internal quality assurance?
- ❖ At the discipline-specific level – how to ensure ongoing and regular assessment of programs?

Students, teaching staff and supervisors, educational institutions and programme management, employers, governments and funding agencies should form consensus to use new assurance indicators to meet the needs of relevant stakeholders. Only through trust for information and cooperation can we overcome resistance. Different countries need to develop system of quality assurance according to their own needs, such as the QS rankings and the Shanghai Jiaotong University Ranking. These are very crucial to maintain the sustainability of the education system.

Keynote Address 2: Education 2030 – Strengthening quality assurance of lifelong learning systems

Speaker

Mr. Yuto Kitamura, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Education, The University of Tokyo, Japan



In this session titled “Strengthening quality assurance of lifelong learning systems”, Mr. Kitamura mainly spoke surrounding two issues, how to combine globalization with localization, and how to maintain the balance among disciplines.

The two characteristics of globalization are aggregation and dispersion. Globalization drives the development of standardization and the development of things towards homogeneous trends; therefore, sustainable development becomes a shared goal.

SDG 4 is divided into seven specific targets, of which 4.3 states "by 2030, all persons shall receive equal, affordable, quality, technical and professional skills, including university education Higher education" and 4.4 states "by 2030, there shall be a substantial increase in the number of young people and adults with relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, to promote employment, decent work and entrepreneurship" respectively. These all mean that there is a need for a more sophisticated monitor and evaluation on the learning outcomes of higher education system.

The internationalization of higher education affects its quality and mobility. Through literature review, it is found that the existing focus is still on the mobility of students. The quality assurance is rarely mentioned. The existing quality assurance system in the Asia-Pacific region is also dominated by the West, also known as the US model, which ignored the local history and environmental background. The concept of knowledge diplomacy came into being, which is achieved through education, research, innovative applications and culture. The future trend is that developed countries and developing countries want a more equal cooperation to show the interdependence of the two states, such as the European Union to help ASEAN regional higher education, UNESCO and the World Trade Organization to help promote higher quality of education.

The future of international development cooperation is an interdisciplinary research and education which requires the participation of all stakeholders to set a series of indicators to measure the internationalization of higher education, while integrating the overall objectives into the local environment. Goals will ultimately become regional goals, given full consideration of the regional environment and biodiversity issues, to achieve the outcome of sustainable development.

Panel Discussion 2: Education 2030 – Aligning Institutional, National and Regional Strategies to Strengthen Quality Assurance

Speaker

Ms. Jianxin Zhang, President of the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN), Member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation International Quality Group (CIQG) and Advisory Council



Ms. Zhang focused on "Aligning Institutional, National and Regional Strategies to Strengthen Quality Assurance: Efforts from Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) and CHEA International Quality Group(CIQG)", including the problems that high-quality education facing, the effects that APQN had done in ensuring the quality of education and the capacity construction on strengthening quality assurance at the

institutional, national and regional levels in her session.

Different stakeholders interpret high-quality education from various prospective. For example, from the point of view of academia, high-quality education means excellence; from the point of view of students and employers, it means customer satisfaction; from the point of view of taxpayers and government, it means "make every penny count". Using the self-assessment analysis, internal and external quality assurance mechanism are all aim at ensuring the quality of education so as to enhance the development of higher education. However, education is also faced with so many problems, such as the wrong positioning of universities, low efficient administration, and academic corruption. In the past 14 years, APQN has published a number of books on quality assurance to achieve high-quality education. Individuals, institutions, countries, and regions should participate in the strengthening of capacity construction at different levels to ensure the quality of education.

Speaker

Mr. P.S.M. Gunaratne, Vice Chairman, University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka

Mr. Gunaratne shared the experience of quality assurance process in Sri Lankan university system. The Directorate of Quality Assurance and Accreditation, which is part of the University Grants Commission (UGC) plays the role of policy decisions recommendation and supervisory. When a university plans to set up a new major, the Committee of Experts and the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Accreditation will evaluate and verify the adherence of all aspects with the Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF) to ensure the learning outcomes. Then, a number of national experts will be invited to train the Directorate of Quality Assurance and

Accreditation.



The 10 Criteria for institutional review are governance and management; curriculum design and development; teaching and learning; learning resources, student support and progression; student assessment and awards; strength and quality of staff; postgraduate studies, research, innovation and commercialization; community engagement, consultancy and outreach; as well as distance education and quality assurance. External quality assurance mechanism has the mutual evaluation system and foreign experts' evaluation system.

Meanwhile, there are 8 criteria for program review which are program management; human and physical resources, program design and development; course or module design and development; teaching and learning; learning environment, student support and progression; student assessment and awards; and innovative and healthy practices.

In the end, Mr. Gunaratne summarized that the key characteristics of Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework are as follows: naming of qualification; volume of learning; qualification descriptors; level descriptors; comparable levels of SLQF and National Vocational Qualifications; Sri Lanka Qualification Progression Pathways.

Speaker

Ms. Nantana Gajasen, Executive Director, ASEAN University Network, Thailand



Ms. Nantana's speech topic is "What has AUN (ASEAN University Network)-QA (Quality Assurance) network done to uplift the quality of universities in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)". In 1995, AUN was found under the views of ASEAN leaders which aim to uplift and ensure the quality of higher education in

ASEAN, enhance the regional higher education recognition. In 1998, AUN-QA System started evaluating higher education in ASEAN region so as to promote continuous quality improvement in higher education system.

AUN-QA network had cooperated with many international institutes and organizations, including various stakeholders, for example, students, teachers, employers, support staff and academic staff etc. What's more, there are plenty of training programs to do capacity building so as to enhance the experience sharing in ASEAN region. AUN-QA network also works with ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) to formulate a series of policy to enhance the devolvement of ASEAN.

ASEAN Vision 2050 emphasizes on the inclusive, sustainable, resilient and dynamic development of ASEAN. The ASEAN Work Plan on Education, especially the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Higher Education mainly focuses on the importance of quality higher education.

Special Address: Reflecting on the Development of China's Higher Education Quality Assurance System

Speaker

Mr. Zhou Aijun, Deputy Director-General, Higher Education Evaluation Centre, Ministry of Education, P.R. China



Mr. Zhou Aijun reported China's higher education quality assurance system from several prospective.

As of the end of 2016, the general enrollment rate of China higher education had reached 42.7% and the enrolled students had nearly 36.99 million which is the largest in the world. Issued in July 2010, China had published the Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development

(2010-2020) which represented China is entering a quality-centered development stage focusing on quality assurance and improvement.

Trends and China's Solutions

China adheres to the student-centered and outcome-based education philosophy, shifting the focus from teachers to students and changing the focus from input to output. Utilize External Quality Assurance (EQA) to promote Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) that establishes a closed loop towards evaluation, feedback and improvement. Through the periodic EQA to improve the awareness of university education quality assurance which will encourage the construction of IQA then leads to a long-term QA mechanism. Fully use of "The Internet +" and big data, "National Data Platform for Quality Monitoring" was established which covers all the universities nationwide. It combined the data collected from the platform and periodic assessment of experts to monitor and evaluate the universities.

National Quality Assurance in China

To configure relevant teaching resources and improve IQA and EQA system can improve the quality of professional training. To determine the teaching objectives, ensure the learning outcomes and utilize QA mechanism can ensure the education outcomes, which can eventually lead to the success of the students.

The targets of the China Satisfaction Survey of Higher Education are students, graduates and employers. It can trace the students' learning process, learning outcomes, employment situation, salary situation and employer satisfaction from the different view of various stakeholders. The result will be used to measure the quality of China's higher education and provide valuable support for formulating education policy, designing curriculum and formulating graduates' matrix.

Thematic Session: Nurturing Caring Leaders Through Quality Higher Education

Speaker

Mr. Joshua Ka Ho Mok, Professor and Vice-President, Lam Man Tsan Chair Professor of Comparative Policy, Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR, P.R. China



Mr. Mok's topic is "Nurturing Caring Leaders through Quality Higher Education: The Role of Liberal Arts University". Higher education in Asia-Pacific region is rapidly expanding. However, how to ensure the quality has become a challenge.

The massification and privatization of higher education have become 2 main characteristics. The presidents of the universities pay more efforts on ranking worldwide and nationwide while the learning outcomes are ignored. Graduates are

facing the rise of the high-skilled but low-paid job. Therefore, how to match the needs of the labor market and society should be considered before the expansion of the universities. Does globalization result in the reduction in social mobility? Are students from poor families at disadvantage?

The major roles of University Grants Committee (UGC) include Teaching and Learning Quality Process Reviews (TLQPR), Management Reviews, Quality Assurance Council Audit (QAC Audit) and Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). IQA and EQA are both do contribution to teaching and learning.

Mr. Mok also shared that being a small-scale liberal arts college, Lingnan aspired to nurture its students to become caring leaders. Close relationship between teachers and students, fully residential campus, multi-faceted workplace experience play an important role in nurturing students to become leaders with a sense of caring from an international perspective, which contribute to the development of human well-being.

Day Two

Introduction to Day Two

Host

Mr. Libing Wang, Chief, Section for Educational Innovation and Skills Development (EISD), UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Thailand



Mr. Wang stated that quality assurance needs to be cross-examined, rather than being dominated by one entity. There's no absolute right or wrong answer to quality assurance due to the ever-changing relationship between the government and universities, which depends on the development of one country. The significance of quality assurance is self-explanatory and it involves various stakeholders in the process of building and maintaining.

Opening Address

Speaker

Mr. Wang Lisheng, Director-General, China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Center (CDGDC), P.R. China



Mr. Wang talked about building a stronger graduate education with better quality assurance system, through outlining its importance. He shared the quality assurance of higher education in the following perspectives.

China Academic Degrees & Graduate Education Development Center

China Academic Degrees & Graduate Education Development Center was founded in 2003. One of its core functions is to manage the quality assurance of the academic degrees offered and graduate education in China under the guidance of the

government. The center's work can be categorized into two types: 1) to carry out the administrative work commissioned by the government, such as the management of academic affairs and the evaluation of graduate education; 2) to conduct evaluation, assessment and accreditation according to the social and governmental needs.

The characteristics of graduate education in China

Graduate education sits on the top of national educational system in every country, and is regarded as the major platform in cultivating top talents. A good quality graduate education enables the nation to improve its economic development, establish national innovation system, and enhance the overall capacity. Below are a few characteristics of graduate education of China:

- ❖ Graduate education has expanded rapidly from less than 10,000 enrolled graduate students in 1978 to more 2,600,000 by 2016;
- ❖ A comprehensive, systematic and institutional graduate education has been established;
- ❖ The significance of graduate education has been demonstrated. Since the open-up policy in late 1970s, more than 7,420,000 graduates have matriculated from Chinese universities and played crucial roles in various industries across China.

The internal quality assurance of graduate education in China

With the rapid development of graduate education, there's a rising attention to the quality assurance of graduate education. It has been proposed that there will be a reform of quality evaluation mechanism, a stronger role played by higher education institutions in quality assurance, a better external quality supervision system, and an information platform of education quality. To do so, an all-round quality assurance involving three aspects will be built, which are evaluation by the government

(guidance), self-evaluation by the HEIs themselves (foundation), and third-party evaluation by academic institutions/industry/social organizations (important component). Only through the combination of the three parts can a quality assurance system be complete.

The external quality assurance system of graduate education in China

There are the following four aspects:

1. Evaluation of Degree Awarding Units (DAUs): there are 2,914 higher education institutions in China, of which 730 are authorized to offer degrees. In the future, the center would continue to explore better ways to vet, approve, and authorize DAUs.
 - ❖ Regular evaluation of DAUs
 - ❖ There will be regular evaluation of authorized DAUs every 6 years. During the first five years, there will be self-evaluation and in the final year, a random check will be conducted.
2. Dissertation random check
 - ❖ For the dissertation random check, peer reviews will be conducted. Every year, around 6000 PhD dissertations and 32,500 master dissertations are selected for random check.
3. Quality evaluation of jointly-run programs
 - ❖ For the quality evaluation of jointly-run programs, there are over 2,400 programs/institutions nationwide.

The national qualification recognition framework

According to the UNESCO statistics, there are over 150 countries globally which have established or been in the process of establishing national qualification recognition framework. In 2016, the national 13th Five-year-plan stated specifically that China would devise and build a national qualification recognition framework, which would

enhance the quality of Chinese higher education and promote international exchange and collaboration.

China would also like to propose a union of global higher education quality assurance. It is believed that this is not an individual country's responsibility, but of all. Quality of higher education concerns all of us, and only through realizing and working on it collectively, can we all ensure that a smoother communication on qualification recognition and exchange among countries.

Keynote Address 3: Quality Assurance of Diverse Modes of Learning – Towards A Learner Centered Model

Speaker

Mr. Mohamad Dzafir Mustafa, Director, Institutional Audit Division, Malaysia Qualifications Agency, Malaysia



Mr. Mustafa talked a paradox in higher education, one being quality assurance and the other being diverse learning modes. Quality assurance is stricter and standard, whereas the latter is a flexible and dynamic process. The key is to strike a balance between the two.

In the past nine years, Malaysia has been trying to expand its quality provisions of

the Malaysian Qualifications Framework in support of more flexible learning environment. Nevertheless, the process received quite a few criticisms which led to the realization of the need to change. It is important to realize the architecture of the 'Overarching' Framework, which has been devised to recognize various learning achievements - as a fundamental merit in opening up access and pathways - within the larger context of lifelong learning. As the Framework evolves to become more neutral to learning contexts and processes, its standards and quality assurance, which underpinned the qualification system, have progressively diversified in response to growing demands of recognizing new learning. The core of this framework is to put learners at the center, focus on what learners can learn.

The framework is expected to be a comprehensive one, which includes various learning pathways, from traditional academic focus to vocational and technical training. This will enable the individual to progress through prior learning achievement acquired from formal, non-formal and informal learning, regardless of the time and place, in the context of lifelong learning.

To respond to this need, APEL was created. It is a process that involves the identification, documentation and assessment of prior experiential learning to determine the extent to which an individual has achieved the desired learning outcomes. APEL provides an opportunity for individual with working experience but lack of formal academic qualifications to pursue their studies in HEIs.

To sum up, learning is beyond the National Qualification Framework. Yet, it offers better package of recognition of various forms of meaningful learning. We need to unlock the recognition opportunities through standard-setting, quality assurance and qualification referencing.

Panel Discussion 3: Quality Assurance of Diverse Modes of Learning

Speaker

Ms. Melesete Lino Mariner, Director of Quality Assurance, Samoa

Qualifications Authority, Samoa



Ms. Mariner opened her speech by reminding the audience that the ultimate goal of the regional conference about quality assurance is to provide quality education to the next generation. With that, she moved onto sharing the Samoa quality assurance act. It has 17 legislative functions, which can be summarized as to provide policy advice; coordinate and regulate qualifications and quality standards; promote links and learning pathways; and quality assure PSET. All four aspects complete each other and makes the act comprehensive.

The Samoan vision is to ensure that “relevant and quality assured Post School Education and Training (PSET) is inclusive and accessible for all learners in Samoa.” There are three basic principles here: 1) quality in education and training is best assured by those primarily responsible for providing the education and training 2) the effectiveness of internal quality assurance processes needs to be externally evaluated to provide assurance to students and stakeholders 3) focus on continuous improvement.

Speaker

Mr. Ojat Darajat, Focal Point on Quality for the Asian Region, International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE); Chairman of the Institute for Development of Learning Materials, Examination, and Information System, Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia



Quality assurance involves two aspects: 1) teaching and learning; 2) support services. There are also five strategic issues need to be considered here: 1) How do key people involved in the QA programs in learner support areas at the three DTUs conceive of quality? 2) What are the institutional policies that support QA in learner support areas at the universities? 3) How do the key people at these DTUs report that QA policies in learner support areas are being implemented? 4) What are the challenges that key people at the universities report they are facing in the development and implementation of QA in learner support areas? 5) How are the results of the current QA processes in learner support areas used to inform practice at the universities?

Regarding the first issue, people gave various responses, which can be summarized using this quote, “For us, [quality is] meeting the customer needs and the criteria that are set by the government.” For the second issues, diverse policies are developed to support their different academic services addressing three major instructional process: 1) Self-managed learning through self-contained learning materials, 2) F2F tutorials, and 3) online tutorials (what they call “blended-learning pedagogy”). For example, develop quality modules for each academic program; provide infrastructure and the latest teaching facilities to meet the needs of ODL system. And ensure the tutorials conducted by certified tutors / facilitators according to the schedule set through program development and management and monitoring of tutors from time to time.

Lastly about the remaining three issues, the implementation of QA in LSAs corresponds to Holmberg’s Interaction & Communication Theory. QA can be One-way traffic (self-instructional learning materials) as well as Two-way traffic for promoting student-tutor interaction. In addition, personal relationships and empathetic feelings are important.

Fourthly, the implementation of QA in learner support areas relates to the

universities' external environments, such as the following:

1. Local culture, particularly language
2. Educational technology to support academic and administrative works
3. Professional QA agencies' standards (ISO, ICDE, Malcolm Baldrige Award)
4. Government QA standards
5. Students (surveys to invite regular students' feedback)

From the data it can be seen that quality assurance can be understood from different perspectives and therefore needs to be combined with local context and involve all stakeholders. Only through this way can we set a formal and working definition of quality and quality assurance.

Speaker

Mr. Sulaiman Ahmad, Director, Quality Assurance Agency, Higher Education Commission, Government of Pakistan

In 2002, Pakistan built its own quality assurance institution the higher education institutions in Pakistan. Today, this number has grown from slightly over 50 to 183, most of which are private. The higher education sector in Pakistan has expanded quickly and shown trends in massification. The enrollment ratio of aged 19 to 23 has increased from 19% to 34%.

When talking about diversified learning modes, people might first think of online learning. For Mr. Ahmad, the first key word is low quality degree or sub-standard education. For example, people would buy degrees or universities are not proficient in using ICT in teaching.

So what did Pakistan do to tackle this issue? The government has requested institutions to adopt blended strategies to teaching. First, teachers should be equipped with the knowledge to judge what aspects of courses are best suited for the classroom and what tools should be used. Secondly, there will be professional support technicians whose knowledge needs to be updated regularly. Lastly there will be consultants who can offer consultation and advice.

There will be some key performance indicators at our quality assurance organization which will evolve accordingly to the changes. The government of Pakistan does not want to restrict innovation but rather provide a platform for them to learn, grow and perform well.



Interactive Session

Group A: Building A Culture of Quality: Internal Quality Assurance

Facilitator

Mr Robert Fearnside , Deputy Executive Director, Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ)



Quality does not simply start from evaluation and assessment outside. Instead, quality is an internal process, which requires people from the inside to believe in and protect it. Many countries have very good internal assessment process, and some countries have people who handle internal quality assurance. This action also leads

to the yearly publication of quality assurance results, which provides incentives and guidance to financial appropriation and budgets.

At the same time, there lies challenges. Internal quality assurance should be a voluntary process rather than compulsory. First, due to the differences in scale and culture, the practices of quality assurance vary from countries to countries. Second, it's unclear what the accountability system is. Lastly, there is the sustainability issue. It is crucial to validate findings with data; however, the challenges lie ahead is to collect enough data and turn it into useful information, which ultimately forms the culture of quality assurance. Quality assurance shall become the responsibility of each individual, making sure people at different levels are fully represented.

Group B: Communicating About Quality: External Quality Assurance

Facilitator

Mr. Akuila Savu, Team Leader Quality Assurance, Fiji Higher Education Commission, Fiji

External quality assurance refers to communications about quality, which focuses on the effective interaction between the key stakeholders. Through involving various stakeholders, we can form an evolving and collaborative way of communications and develop effective ways of participation. Based on this shared network, countries can learn from each other and find out what works best for them and what not.



Group C: Aligning Harmonization Efforts In Asia And The Pacific

Facilitator

Mr. Michael Horig, Head of Section, Development Cooperation: Partnership Programmes and Higher Education Management, DAAD, Germany and Expert for SHARE, a project of ASEAN and the EU

Mr. Horig shared with the audience the few interconnected factors that lead to effective collaboration among countries in his session:

1. A platform for communications;
2. Support of various levels that lays the ground for successful implementation;
3. A comprehensive framework that includes languages and other factors.

4. Capacity building as a way to enhance the capacity of executors;
5. Coordination and circulation of information.



Group D: Capacity development for quality Assurance in Asia-Pacific

Facilitator

Ms. Michaela Martin, Programme Specialist, UNESCO International Institute for Education Planning, Paris, France



It is essential to understand what quality assurance entails. Only through the right policy can we be on the same page. To start, we need to establish a system, a framework which enables us to set up standards and benchmark for quality assurance. International collaboration also plays a crucial role in building capacity, especially the role played by various educational institutions.

International organizations ought to play more roles through a global network. Only through this can countries from various regions communicate effectively and regularly. However, the challenges lie ahead are three: 1) funding; 2) sharing of information; 3) where and how to acquire credited information.

Closing Ceremony

Mr. KIM Gwang-Jo, Director of UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Thailand, and Mr. LI Ming, Director of UNESCO-ICHEI delivered remarks at the closing ceremony. They expressed their gratitude to the distinguished guests, participants and the staff who made this conference happen.

Mr. KIM stated that the efforts to promote quality assurance did not just end with the closing of the conference. There were still a few follow-ups. The first was to edit and finalize Shenzhen Statement, and he expressed his wishes for all participants to comment and contribute to the final work. The second was to ensure that the outcomes of this conference would make a contribution to the world conference to be held in Paris next year. Lastly, he encouraged countries to engage in deeper conversations and ensure the approval of Tokyo Convention.

Mr. LI also expressed a few of his wishes. The first was that he wished this conference set the ground to strengthen the collaboration among countries and institutions. The second was that countries would pay more attention to the reform in quality assurance. The last one was to highlight the rising importance of ICT in quality assurance. UNESCO-ICHEI would continue to focus on how ICT could play a crucial role in quality assurance.

Showcase of Good Practices in Quality Assurance in Asia-Pacific

Member States and participants were invited to showcase their work and models on quality assurance, including publications and briefing materials.



The Wall

Facilitator

Wesley Teter, Senior Consultant, UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Bangkok, Thailand

Conference participants and delegates may raise open issues from the day to address emerging priorities and questions.



大學之道，在明明德，在親民，在止於至善。

大学的宗旨在于弘扬光明正大的品德，在于使人弃旧图新，在于使人达到最完善的境界。

《大学》，公元前 500 年

SHENZHEN STATEMENT

Building Local and Regional Capacity for a Living Quality Culture in

Higher Education in Asia and Pacific

15-16 June 2017, Shenzhen, People's Republic of China

Ensuring access to equitable quality higher education is essential to realizing the transformative potential of the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG4 and the Education 2030 Framework for Action. However, the comparability, recognition and quality assurance of qualifications remains a key concern, particularly in Asia-Pacific where qualifications are often not outcome-driven approaches to student learning. Strengthening investments in the quality assurance of lifelong learning systems to build a culture of quality is vital to enhancing the relevance and comparability of higher education qualifications throughout the region.

Asia-Pacific is the fastest-growing region in terms of the numbers of inbound and outbound international students, which underscores the importance of facilitating

student's cross-border mobility and the need to align quality paradigms. Fair and transparent procedures and criteria for the recognition of higher education qualifications are therefore crucial for building the capacity of UNESCO Member States to facilitate mobility in Asia-Pacific and beyond.

The Regional Conference on Quality Assurance of Higher Education in Asia-Pacific, held from 15-16 June 2017 in Shenzhen, People's Republic of China, addressed these concerns as well as the quality challenges brought about by the massification of higher education throughout Asia-Pacific, the diversification of higher education providers and the increasing use of technologies in the delivery of different types of higher education programmes.

Representing multiple stakeholders in higher learning, we, the meeting participants agree upon the following:

- i. With the rapid expansion of higher education systems, quality assurance mechanisms at both internal and external levels need to move from a traditional focus on inputs to an outcomes-based approach to student learning. Where relevant, such processes should be clearly aligned with regional and national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) as the main reference tools to define learning outcomes across key domains.
- ii. Learning outcomes, as defined in NQFs, should be holistic, covering cognitive and non-cognitive domains of learning, including both transversal skills as well as professional/subject-specific knowledge, skills and competencies. At the same time, institution-wide policies should be developed to serve as an overarching framework for

academic programme development, and support internal and external quality assurance of higher education institutions.

- iii. Based on the holistic pursuit of learning outcomes, quality assurance is the source of mutual trust among countries for the recognition of higher education qualifications. It is therefore important for countries to build on existing transparency and comparability measures, including through the ratification and implementation of the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (2011 Tokyo Convention). Quality assurance-based recognition contributes significantly to facilitating student mobility, the recognition of learning across diverse delivery modes, and to the wider purpose of knowledge sharing, cultural intelligence and global citizenship.
- iv. To meet the demands of the contemporary learner, higher education institutions should increasingly seek to offer lifelong learning opportunities via new types of courses and programmes (i.e. incorporating MOOCs, blended and flexible learning approaches based on life experience and the world of work), and through cross-border movement of institutions and programmes. Such new modalities for higher education should be compatible with national qualifications frameworks, include credit arrangements, be subject to the same rigorous quality assurance and be clearly articulated in terms of learning outcomes.
- v. Given this growing diversity, institutional development based on strong and relevant internal quality assurance policies and practices is essential. Such practices can complement external quality standards and

guidelines. While external regulations and standards need to be internalized at institutional level to ensure system-wide coherence, institutions need the flexibility to adapt these to their profiles and the communities of stakeholders and learners they serve. External quality assurance agencies in turn need to recognise these efforts and differentiate their quality assurance approaches accordingly.

- vi. Building a living culture focused on quality – one that continuously improves and evolves at institutional and faculty levels – is key to the successful functioning of any quality assurance mechanism. Whenever possible, research and capacity building efforts from external and internal sources should contribute to the development of self-reflective and self-disciplined academic communities and the enhancement of professionalism.
- vii. Inclusive stakeholder ownership and engagement are crucial in identifying and continuously reviewing learning outcomes based on NQFs at the discipline and programme levels. Quality assurance specialists, students, researchers, teachers, non-academic staff, employers and industry must work together to ensure that learning programmes are coherent and that learning outcomes are constructively aligned with teaching methods and assessment systems. In this way, stakeholder engagement can promote the holistic development of lifelong learning and knowledge societies that contribute to the humanistic, socio-economic, and development aspirations of countries in Asia and the Pacific.

UNESCO, as the lead agency of the Education 2030 agenda, and its partners will support efforts in the Asia-Pacific to develop and implement regional and sub-regional capacity building efforts to build a foundation for future regional harmonization of quality assurance in higher education and lifelong learning in the region.

Highlights

Hosts and Speakers





Regional Conference on Quality Assurance of Higher Education in Asia-Pacific

June 15-16th, 2017

Shenzhen, China

