

TRANSNATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE: IN PURSUIT OF GLOBAL COOPERATION

- By
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Introduction

The international context has with no doubt acted as a political window through which change...in quality assurance... has been introduced

Introduction (Cont'd.) ((C

- The internationalization and globalization of Higher Education, the transparency of standards in graduate education and the influence these are having in Canada and on the Ontario public universities in terms of greater collaboration and cooperation are the focus of this paper.
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I. Introduction (Cont'd.)

- Assurance of quality and standards has become more than a domestic concern to individual nations.
 - National and regional policy agendas for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HE) are increasingly being determined by supra-national trends and decisions.
 - One of the more positive outcomes of global pressure and internationalization in Higher Education has been greater collaboration and cooperation across borders and between national and regional associations in efforts to achieve comparable standards.
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. Introduction (Cont'd.)

- Another facet of global pressure and internationalization, of course, is increased competition.
 - In competing in this kind of environment, accreditation, public information and accountability are extremely important
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The Role of Standards in Movements Toward Transparency

One of the more challenging dimensions of the efforts at collaboration/cooperation is the search for “comparable standards”.

The Role of Standards in Movements Toward Transparency (Cont'd)

- While many more countries and institutions now seem to accept that there is a growing need for a reference framework for evaluation and accreditation, and while both criteria and standards are used for this purpose, both terms continue to be used and defined in many and confusing ways
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The Role of Standards in Movements Toward Transparency (Cont'd.)

- Regardless of the variability, one of the main goals in establishing standards remains “mutual recognition”
 - Standards are commonly accepted to mean the level of requirements and conditions that must be met by institutions or programs to be evaluated by a QA agency
 - These conditions involve expectations with regard to quality, and describe the expected outcomes of a program
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Concerns About Developing Common Standards

- that common standards kill creativity and exceptional solutions
 - too conservative
 - in new programs it is difficult to evaluate learning results as opposed to input variables
 - the principles of independence of a quality assurance body
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Concerns (Cont'd.)

- In spite of these concerns, standard setting and accreditation are two critical aspects of facilitating the movement of persons across both regional and international borders through cross border recognition of qualifications and the transfer of academic credits.
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Examples of International Progress

■ Europe

- the Bologna Declaration
 - Masstricht Treaty, and the Sorbonne Joint Declaration (1998)
 - The Prague and Berlin Communiqués
 - The Graz Declaration
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International Progress (Cont'd.)

- At the last meeting held in Berlin in September 2003, the Ministers of Education advocated the need to encourage cooperation with other parts of the world
- Evidence of cooperation and collaboration at more than one level can be seen in the movements that are taking place in some of the following countries as well.

International Progress (Cont'd).

- The Netherlands
 - Switzerland
 - Ireland
 - Japan
 - Australia
 - The United States
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• Canada

A study of the Canadian context requires a model that functions at three levels:

- 1) The Institutional
- 2) The Provincial and
- 3) The National

and ultimately leading to cooperation at the fourth level:

- 4) The International

Ontario – The Provincial or Regional Level

- The Postsecondary Education Choice and Excellence Act
 - The Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board
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Public Universities in Ontario – The Institutional Level

- Undergraduate programs at Ontario's public universities are assessed, on a voluntary periodic basis, by the Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee (UPRAC)
 - Graduate programs offered by or proposed by public universities are assessed on a voluntary basis by the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (OCGS)
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The Institutional Level

(Cont'd.)

- In the more recent past, the amount of interaction between levels has taken on a slightly new shift in similar ways to that described in other countries
 - like other regions, some concerns have been expressed about the long-range impact or value of setting common standards
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The National Level

- There is no national body or agency for accreditation in Canada, and in some cases no provincial body.
 - The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC)
 - is working toward a clear articulation and profiling of Canadian higher education QA policies
 - approved the “Principles of Institutional Quality Assurance in Canadian Higher Education”
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The National Level (Cont'd.)

- Deputy Ministers of Higher Education - pan-Canadian approach to quality assurance for degree programs.
 - (a) a degree qualifications framework,
 - (b) standards for accreditation/quality assurance reviews, and
 - (c) a pan-Canadian approach to the external validation of the quality of programs based on (a) and (b).
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CONCLUSIONS

Central to the success of a qualifications network is the matter of "trust", which is closely attached to credibility and acceptance, and is an essential attribute of successful qualifications