National Quality Assurance Framework: Establishment and Operationalisation

Prof Kevin Kinser, Pennsylvania State University, USA
and
Prof Deepthi Bandara, University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka

INQAAHE 15th Biennial Conference 2019
25 March 2019
Organization of Workshop

- Introductions (5 minutes)
- Overview of topic (20 minutes)
- US Case: Current context and reform (20 minutes)
- Comparative analysis of Sri Lanka case (10 minutes)
- Break (10 Minutes)
- Small group task and reporting (45 Minutes)
- Summary and suggestions for future QA development (15 minutes)
National Quality Framework

“an NQF is an instrument used to classify qualifications in a hierarchy of levels, each level defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes at that level. A qualification system is all the arrangements – schools, institutions, stakeholders, laws, quality assurance measures and the framework of qualifications – which ultimately deliver better qualifications for employability and lifelong learning.”

-Global Inventory of Regional and National Qualifications Frameworks, 2017
National Quality Framework

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Purpose

- Economic impact (neoliberal) to human development (Economic-social equity-Sustainability)
- Catalyst for lifelong learning
- Learning outcomes as common language
- International communication and cooperation
Features

- Country specific but with common features
  - Legal and regulatory framework
    - Functions, Criteria, Tasks
  - Stakeholder involvement and dialogue
    - Specific roles and vested interest
    - With or without “agency”
  - Institutional arrangements
    - Coordinating institution; skills/sector councils; assessment and QA bodies
  - Quality assurance systems
    - Identify standards, assessments; provide certification
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POWER</th>
<th>KEEP SATISFIED</th>
<th>KEY PLAYERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>Cabinet of Ministers, Ministry of Economy, Parliament, Donors</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Employers confederation, Trades unions, Chambers of industry and commerce, Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>MINIMAL EFFORT</td>
<td>KEEP INFORMED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual learners, Individual employers, Employment services, Media channels</td>
<td>International organisations, Public TVET providers, Methodological centres, Consultants/experts, Professional associations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LEVEL OF INTEREST**

*Source: adapted from Johnson and Scholes (1999), Exploring Corporate Strategy.*
Addressing “Wicked” Problems

What are you working on?

Trying to fix the problems I created when I tried to fix the problems I created when I tried to fix the problems I created when...
KEEP CALM AND TRUST QUALITY ASSURANCE
Quality Assurance: Background

• Long history of informal quality assurance
  • Patronage: Church and Crown
  • Sponsorship: industry, apprentices
  • Markets: Agora or Acropolis
  • Reputation: Longevity and legitimacy
  • Nationalism: Language and culture
  • Prestige: Rankings and research
  • Pride: Self-interest and integrity
Quality Assurance: Background

• US/UK goes back 100+ years
• 1990s: Current global trend begins
  • Diversification of higher education
  • Student demand
  • Private sector
  • Internationalization
• Now necessary for a modern educational system
Quality Assurance: Background

- Tension in implementation
- Reflecting the “Public Good”
- Focus is national system
- Government controlled or endorsed

Trust vs. Accountability
Knights and Knaves in Public Service

Knights nobly fulfill the public mission

Knaves act for self-interest

LeGrand, 2003
Knights and Knaves in Public Service

LeGrand, 2003

- Internal QA
  - Knights, trust and voice
  - Intrinsic motivation, noble pursuit of truth
- External QA
  - Knaves, Mistrust and choice
  - Quality validated by outside stakeholders
What is Quality?

• Fitness of purpose
  • Is education relevant to societal needs?
  • Quality for the public good
    • For the benefit of society as a whole
    • Greater than the benefit to any single individual
  • Purpose is externally imposed
What is Quality?

• Fitness for purpose
  • How well does education fulfill its objectives?
  • Quality determined by mission
    • World-class is equal to vocational
    • Not measured by hierarchy, rankings, prestige
  • Purpose internally determined
What is Quality?

• Fitness to Standards
  • Does education meet performance criteria?
  • Quality is objectively measured
    • Precision within standards frame
    • Standards vary over time: debatable
  • Quality via stakeholder agreement (socially constructed)
Quality Assurance and Legitimacy

“A generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are
desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of
norms, values, beliefs, and definitions”

(Suchman, 1995)
Quality Assurance and Legitimacy

• *Pragmatic* legitimacy
  • Practical value that an organization has to a particular group of constituents

• *Cognitive* legitimacy
  • Adopting an organizational form that is widely viewed as acceptable

• *Moral* legitimacy
  • The organization is doing the right thing, fundamentally altruistic
Quality Assurance as Information Resource

• Information for decision-makers
  • Which program best meets students’ needs?
  • Supports and encourages choice, competition
    • Value for investment of time and resources
• Guide allocation of resources
  • Incentivize behavior
  • Monitor compliance
QA as a Public Good

• What purpose should QA serve?
• Who should be its constituents?
• How much power should external QA have?
• Who should determine the standards?
• What should be the balance between consistency and innovation?
QA in a Competitive Market

• Transnational QA
• Exporting QA
• QA and education-as-trade
• QA as consumer information
Building Organizational Capacity for Quality Assurance

- Purpose
- Governance
- Infrastructure
- Policies
- Information
- Processes
- Structure

Building Organizational Capacity

© 2005 NACUBO
Architectural Drawing

Engineering schematic
Key Questions for Assessing Capacity

• What do you know about what your institution is doing?
  • Big picture and specific details
  • Culture of evidence

• What incentives are in place?
  • Explicit and Implicit
  • Encouraging and Discouraging
  • Internal and external

• What are your relative strengths?
  • Elevator pitch targeted to each audience

• What is your current focus for improvement?
United States Case
## Carnegie Classification of Higher Education

### Basic Classification

#### Distribution of institutions by classification category and control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Institutions</th>
<th>Column Percentage Distribution</th>
<th>Row Percentage Distribution</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
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<td>Private, for profit</td>
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<td>Doctoral Universities: Very High Research Activity</td>
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<td>Doctoral Universities: High Research Activity</td>
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<td>Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges: Associate's Dominant</td>
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<td>Special Focus Two-Year: Technical Professions</td>
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<td>Special Focus Two-Year: Arts &amp; Design</td>
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<td>Special Focus Four-Year: Faith-Related Institutions</td>
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<td>Special Focus Four-Year: Medical Schools &amp; Centers</td>
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<td>Special Focus Four-Year: Other Health Professions Schools</td>
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<td>Special Focus Four-Year: Engineering Schools</td>
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<td>Special Focus Four-Year: Other Technology-Related Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Focus Four-Year: Business &amp; Management Schools</td>
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<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Focus Four-Year: Arts, Music &amp; Design Schools</td>
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<td>57</td>
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<td>Special Focus Four-Year: Law Schools</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Focus Four-Year: Other Special Focus Institutions</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tribal Colleges</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Institutions</td>
<td>1,651</td>
<td>1,742</td>
<td>929</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
United States Higher Education: Many Missions, Many Masters

- Triad: Federal, State, Accreditation
- Public, Private, For-profit
- Elite and Mass
- Autonomy and Accountability
- Teaching, Research, Service
- Innovative and Traditional
- Diversity, Choice, Selectivity
United States Quality Assurance Systems

• Voluntary, Non-governmental **Accreditation**
• Linked to eligibility for financial aid
• Over sixty agencies: Institutional and program
• Main agencies have a sub-national (regional) focus
• Confidential peer review
• Standards vary, but with reciprocity
Challenges

• Large and complex organization
• Faculty autonomy
• Discipline-based reward system
• Administrative constraints and shared governance
• Information asymmetry
• Conflicting stakeholder demands
“A Fight is Brewing in Washington over College Accreditors”  (*Washington Post*, 2015)


“Senate Investigative Panel Opens Inquiry about College Accreditors”  (*Inside Higher Ed*, 2015)

“Who Keeps Billions of Taxpayer Dollars Flowing to For-Profit Colleges? These Guys”  (*ProPublica*, 2015)


Accreditation on the Edge

“US accreditation as it exists now is the worst form of oversight in higher education, except for anything else we have come up with.”
Accreditation on the Edge

Why does the system look like this?

What could be different in a reimagined accreditation world?
Perfect Storm

- New providers
- Alternative delivery mechanisms
- Scandals and Consumer protection
- Public support
- Student debt
Accreditation on the front burner

- Is accreditation working as a reliable authority of quality?
- Can it identify bad actors and take action against them?
- Does it have too much authority, or not enough?
- How much higher ed do we want to pay for?
- Is it a good investment?
- Will graduates get good jobs?
- Will taxpayer dollars be safe?
“New Normal” for accreditation

Can accreditors do the job they have been given?  Should they even have that job?

If not them, then who?
Accreditation future in the US?

- Its time has passed
- The needs of the higher education system outstrip its ability to perform
- The interests of the many stakeholders are irreconcilable

OR...

- Tracking the transformation of higher education
- Re-envisioning its mission
- Shaping a high-quality 21st century educational system
Current debates and problematic solutions

- Challenges of a messy and complicated system
- Measuring quality in higher education
- Who controls accreditation policy?
- Information and transparency
- Addressing emerging and innovative providers
A high-quality 21st century educational system

- Is trustable and trusted
- Catches the bad actors
- Helps those who falter improve
- Makes room for new models and methods
- Makes best use of the peer- and disciplinary expert review process
- Respects the uniqueness of institutional mission and also the common mission of higher education in the US
- Encourages institutions to stay on their toes (but not necessarily dance in the same way)
- Recognizes and incorporates the increasingly global realities of higher education
- Provides information about quality that helps the public make their education decisions
- Has accountability for oversight across federal, state, and accrediting actors
- Recommits us to mission, academic freedom, and institutional autonomy--while redoubling efforts to put student learning at the center of a transparent quality assurance process.
NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK: ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATIONALISATION

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Pennsylvania State University, USA
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University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka

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Higher Education In Sri Lanka

- Past – only State Universities
- Present –
  State Universities
  Non State Higher Education Institutes - NSHEIs
  Trans National Education
Quality Assurance of Higher Education in Sri Lanka

- Initiated – around 2004
- QAAC – established around 2006
- In State Universities,
  - First cycle of QA completed – Institutional and Subject Reviews
  - 2nd cycle in progress – Institutional and Program Reviews

NSHEIs
- IRs and SRs at inception
Higher Education (Quality Assurance and Accreditation) Act No. .........2018
Establishment of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Commission for Higher Education

- Commission will be established – named the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Commission for Higher Education
- Would be referred to as Commission
- Would be the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation for Higher Education
Objects of the Commission

- To establish a System of QAA based on the principles of good governance to maintain the high standard of quality of educational Institutions
- To act as the apex body for QAA at National level
- To map the different qualifications in accordance with the Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF) to facilitate the cross mobility
Constitution of the Commission

- Commission – will have 9 members appointed by the President from a panel of 15 persons nominated by the Minister
- The President shall appoint a member as the Chairman having regard to the members experience in dealing with matters relating to QA in higher education
- At least 5/9 members would be full time
determine policies, standards and criteria and update standards, criteria and procedures as appropriate for Accreditation and QA of HEIs in accordance with the prescribed manuals, tools, devices or relevant international standards
Powers and Functions of the Commission

- **SLQF**
  formulate, implement and update SLQF

- **Cooperation with QAA bodies**
  establish and maintain liaison and cooperation with any professional or any statutory or any regulatory body or QAA bodies in HE within and outside Sri Lanka on matters relating to QAA
Quality auditors

appoint trained and experienced quality auditors to conduct institutional and program audits and external quality assurance reviews

Accreditation

grant provisional and or full accreditation to HEIs and to Programs and review such accreditation from time to time
- **Revoke Accreditation**
  revoke full or provisional accreditation granted to HEIs and Programs conducted thereof that are not keeping up with the required quality and standards determined by the Commission

- **Complaints and Action**
  inquire into complaints relating to the noncompliance with accreditation requirements by a HEI or a Program and to take appropriate action
Foreign Qualifications
evaluate foreign degrees, diplomas and other academic distinctions for the purpose of recognition or accreditation of such degrees, diplomas or academic distinctions in consultation with the relevant professional or statutory or regulatory body or foreign academic institution where necessary
Minimum admission criteria
evaluate from time to time where necessary in consultation with the relevant professional bodies or statutory bodies or regulatory bodies whether the minimum admission criteria for student enrollment into academic programs are in compliance with the SLQF
Qualification compliance with SLQF
assess whether the degrees and qualifications awarded by the HEIs are in compliance with the qualification descriptors and learning outcomes as set in the SLQF

Recommend qualification level
make recommendations on the appropriate level of qualifications according to the SLQF to be adopted for HE programs and vocational and technical training programs offered by HEIs
Mapping for cross mobility
map higher educational qualifications against vocational qualifications including SLQF and NVQF to facilitate cross mobility of students

Recommendations for engagement in HE
recommend to the HEIs to provide opportunities to persons based on their abilities, experiences and capacities including any exemptions on age limitations, enabling such persons to engage in HE
- make recommendations for quality improvements in HEIs

- Maintain a register
collect, disseminate information relating to HE and maintain and update a register of accredited HEIs and accredited programs and publish the names of such accredited HEIs and accredited programs in the print and electronic media
- **Commission staff appointments**
  appoint officers and employees to the staff of the Commission and to appoint experts and committees to the Commission

- **Fees**
  levy fees or charges for any service rendered by the Commission
- **Agreements and contracts**
  enter into such agreements, contracts as may be necessary or expedient for the performance and discharge of the duties and functions

- **Circulars**
  issue circulars from time to time to all HEIs and to their professional and academic staff as may become necessary in connection with the performance and discharge of their duties and functions
System for accreditation

design and administer a system prescribed by regulations for accreditation of HEIs providing HE, and other organizations or bodies of persons who either directly or indirectly offer or provide any service relating to or connected with providing HE
Codes of Practice and Monitoring

develop and publish codes of practice relating to the content, delivery and technical standards for HE services and monitor compliance with such codes
Recognition
recognize a professional or statutory or regulatory body local or foreign in the manner prescribed by regulations under section 52

Require Minimum Standards
require the relevant professional or statutory or regulatory body to determine minimum standards relating to the grant of accreditation of a professional program or qualification
- **Engage in Research**
  engage in research, development studies and technical cooperation projects relating to or connected with the discharge and performance of the functions and duties of the Commission

- **Gazette notifications**
  specify by notification in the Gazette the levels of accreditation or certification and inspection marks, logos approved and granted by the Commission to HEIs and its programs and control the use of such marks and logos
Property
acquire by way of purchase or otherwise, any movable or immovable property and hold, take or give on lease or hire, mortgage, pledge and sell or otherwise dispose of in accordance with the provisions of this Act, any such movable or immovable property of the Commission
- **Accounts**
  open and maintain bank accounts with any bank as determined by the Commission and authorize any person to operate such account or accounts on behalf of the Commission.

- **Member**
  become a member of an affiliate or any international body, the functions and duties of which are similar to the functions of the Commission by or under this Act.
Consultancy services provide within or outside Sri Lanka consultancy services or any technical, managerial or other services in any area whether by itself or in association with any other authority, in which the Commission possess the skill or expertise.
Grants and Services receive grants or contributions from any sources whatsoever and to raise funds by all lawful means and apply such funds in the performance and discharge of the duties and functions of the Commission.
- **Provide training**

  provide training in QA, A and SLQF whether by itself or with the cooperation of any other person as the Commission thinks fit, to the officers and employees of the Commission or any other person involved in providing HE at any HEI and to award scholarships for such training
Rules
make rules in respect of the matters for which rules are required to be made under the Act

Engage in Acts
do all such acts which are not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act as may be expedient for the accomplishment of the objects of this Commission
Thank you
Small Group Task

Considering the Sri Lanka and US cases, and the background information, please consider the current position of your country with respect to its quality assurance framework. Looking five years out, what do you expect the future to be for your framework? What do you think will need to be added, changed, or implemented?

Focus your attention on the four common features of national quality frameworks discussed in the session:

• Legal and regulatory frameworks
• Stakeholder involvement
• Institutional arrangements
• Quality assurance systems

Please report your main ideas on a single slide that will be projected so all workshop participants can consider and discuss your points.