

AFRICAN QUALITY ASSURANCE NETWORK

Workshop & Annual General Meeting

Accra, Ghana

25th – 27th November 2009

Report

Report

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Association of African Universities (AAU) has been working, for some time, on the establishment of an African Network for Quality Assurance practitioners on the continent. At the Second International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa, held at the Kilimanjaro Hotel, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in September 2007, the AAU launched a network, and set up a website for the exchange of information on QA practices in Africa.

Further to this, in April 2009, at a capacity-building workshop held by the AAU for representatives of emerging and existing national Quality Assurance Agencies in Africa, in Dodowa, near Accra, Ghana, workshop participants discussed the formation of a regional Quality Assurance Network.

Participants at this meeting came up with the **Dodowa Declaration**, in which the promotion of a continent-wide network, AfriQAN (African Quality Assurance Network) was called for. Subsequently, an **Interim Committee** was formed to draft a plan of action and recommendations for post-workshop activities, as well as to plan meetings to assess the achievement of this resolution.

Following the work done by the Interim Committee, the objectives of AfriQAN were presented and discussed at a number of meetings, including the AAU 12th General Conference, held in Abuja, Nigeria from 4th to 9th May 2009. Subsequently, a workshop to review regulatory documents related to the Network and hold elections to the Board of the Network, was held in Accra, Ghana, at the AfriQAN Workshop and Annual General Meeting, from 25th to 27th November 2009. The workshop agenda is attached in **Appendix 1**.

1.2 Participants

Participants attending the workshop were from Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Senegal and Uganda. Representatives of the Association of Arab Universities (AArU) and the Latin American Quality Assurance Network, RIACES, as well as representatives from the World Bank and DAAD (the German Academic Exchange Service) were in attendance. The participants represented the following organizations:

- Quality Assurance and Regulation Tertiary Education Council, Botswana

- Université du Burundi, Burundi
- CAMES, Burkina Faso
- National Accreditation Board, Ghana
- National Council for Tertiary Education, Ghana
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport, Guinea Bissau
- Commission for Higher Education, Kenya
- Council for Higher Education, Kenya
- African Council for Distance Education, Kenya (represented by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency, National Open University of Nigeria, Nigeria)
- Crawford University, Nigeria
- Ministry of Higher Education and Research, Madagascar
- CNAQ, Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique
- National Council for Higher Education, Namibia
- National Universities Commission, Nigeria
- Quality Assurance and Research Development Agency, Nigeria
- Education and Research Programme, Economic Community of Great Lakes Countries, CEPGL, Rwanda
- Ministry of Higher Education, Senegal
- Ministry of Education, Sierra Leone
- Tanzania Commission for Universities, Tanzania
- Inter-University Council of East Africa, Uganda
- National Council for Higher Education, Uganda

Objectives

By the end of the workshop, participants were expected to:

- Be aware of challenges of higher education development in Africa and possible strategies to address them;
- Enhance their knowledge on sub-regional Quality Assurance mechanisms and practices;
- Identify linkages between internal and external quality assurance, and sub-regional and regional agreements on mutual recognition of study programs and qualifications of graduates;
- Be briefed on, and identify potential areas of support from a regional Quality Assurance Network to their institutions;
- Validate regulatory documents related to the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN);
- Elect a founding Executive Board for AfriQAN;
- Agree on a draft action plan for activities of AfriQAN, with a timeline to be validated by the AfriQAN Board.

2. Presentations

2.1 Opening

2.1.1 Quality Assurance Project Officer, Association of African Universities (AAU)

The Quality Assurance Project Officer at the Association of African Universities (AAU), Ms. Adwoa Sey, thanked participants for making time to attend the meeting and wished them a good stay.

Presenting the workshop programme, Ms. Sey explained its variety, with presentations from representatives from various sub-regional and regional organizations, interspersed with discussions and group work.

2.1.2 Secretary-General, Association of African Universities (AAU)

Prof. Goolam Mohamedbhai, Secretary-General of the AAU welcomed participants. He apologized for the absence of other AAU staff members, due to an impromptu assignment at the Secretariat.

Prof. Mohamedbhai said the AAU had been closely involved in Quality Assurance issues, and that based on the knowledge that Africa is lagging behind in the implementation of Quality Assurance mechanisms at the institutional, national and continental level, funding had been sourced from the World Bank and UNESCO to support a Quality Assurance programme, resulting in the launch of the African Quality Assurance Network, AfriQAN.

The strategy at the AAU for achieving regional quality assured higher education systems, he said, was that quality assurance should be promoted at the institutional and national levels. This would facilitate sub-regional as well as regional level activities in Quality Assurance. For him, this was where AfriQAN came in - a continental body for expertise, information and resource sharing.

On the activities of the Africa Union (AU) Commission, Prof Mohamedbhai said that Quality Assurance was high on the agenda of the Commission's Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education, and that the AAU was happy to be associated with the AU's Harmonization of Higher Education activities, and associated Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa activities.

Prof. Mohamedbhai expressed pleasure at the fact that people from different linguistic areas were able to attend the workshop, and said that the Quality Assurance language united all and afforded the opportunity to look at basic principles together.

On the April 2009 Dodowa Declaration, Prof. Mohamedbhai thanked participants for the very important work done since the Declaration was made. He was happy that in addition to discussing issues pertaining to quality, the workshop was to put in place a structure for AfriQAN, review its Constitution and elect a governance body. He expressed AAU's pleasure at having the Network hosted at the AAU and hoped that in the long term AfriQAN would be able to stand on its own.

On the leadership of the Network, Prof. Mohadmedbhai appealed to the committed and available to campaign for leadership during the upcoming elections, to make AfriQAN one of the leading Quality Assurance networks.

He wished participants fruitful discussions and an enjoyable stay.

2.1.3 Executive Secretary, National Council for Tertiary Education

Mr. Paul Effah, Executive Secretary of the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) also welcomed participants to Ghana and expressed pleasure at being part of the opening ceremony.

Speaking to the topic, Mr. Effah emphasized the centrality of Quality Assurance to Higher Education. He said the fact that Africa was experiencing higher enrolment rates in tertiary education was not in itself a bad signal, but that fact that the explosion was not matched with infrastructural growth was leading to stakeholder concern.

With regard to the ranking of universities, Mr. Effah said that issues concerning qualifications would continue to dominate discussions on higher education, and stressed the need for Africa to work toward developing a common accreditation system for ranking institutions.

He also stated even though there were regional regulatory frameworks for Quality Assurance, these could not be effective without support of national institutions, which ownership of and internalize their own systems. It would also be necessary to take advantage of best practices in place in other places, to improve their systems, since cooperation was needed for achievement. He pledged the NCTE's support for this objective of African higher education institution to become a reality.

2.1.4 President, GUNI Africa

The President of GUNI Africa and immediate past president of the National Universities Commission in Nigeria, Prof. Peter Okebukola, extended the goodwill of his institution to the workshop deliberations. He said that Quality Assurance in Higher Education was one of GUNI's priority activities. He also affirmed that Africa's development should be leveraged and this could only be achieved through ensuring quality assurance in the sector. He informed the gathering that GUNI organized conferences every other year, and that at after its upcoming 3rd Conference, a book on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa would be published as one of the meeting themes.

Prof. Okebukola expressed his pleasure at being part of the workshop and asked participants to ensure AfriQAN's sustenance by contributing to its growth.

2.2 Introductions

As part of the opening ceremony, participants introduced themselves and their organizations.

3. Working Sessions

3.1 Facilitator's Presentation

The facilitator for the workshop, Mr. Kofi Kumodzi, presented the objectives of the workshop (**Appendix 1**). Topics for discussion included:

- Exponential access demands and Massification of Higher Education
- Higher Education Financing Mechanisms in Africa

Participants were asked to identify Pertinent Issues, Challenges, Strategies and Responses of African countries.

Reports of the four Group Discussions are attached as **Appendix 2**

3.2 AAU Presentation – Presentation on QA Networks

Ms. Adwoa Sey, the Quality Assurance Project Officer at the AAU made a brief presentation on Quality Assurance networks worldwide.

Discussion on AAU Presentation

Participants commended the established networks and encouraged AfriQAN to build on the strengths of existing networks. The Interim Committee was advised to extract common elements for brainstorming on what Africa should do and advise where focus should be placed. It was however considered important to not be overawed by activities of older networks. AfriQAN was therefore urged to develop its own expertise to address Africa's peculiar problems.

As part of the discussion on challenges presented by harmonization of higher education and different systems in recognition of qualifications, the workshop was asked to consider such issues as part of AfriQAN's work. East Africa was noted to be already involved in this aspect of Quality Assurance. Other emerging and yet to be formed sub-regional networks were encouraged to learn from the East African experience.

Participants requested the AAU to act as the permanent Secretariat for AfriQAN, and the Secretary-General of AAU agreed to this. It was noted that this decision would influence the workings of the Network and should be considered in subsequent discussions.

3.3 Presentation of First Working Group Report

Four groups discussed two sub-themes: "Exponential Access Demands and Massification of Higher Education" and "Higher Education Financing Mechanisms in Africa."

The discussions were to identify pertinent issues, challenges, strategies and responses of African countries.

The groups presented reports for discussion. At the end of the presentations, it was noted that there was general convergence reports from the groups.

3.1.1 Exponential Access Demand and Massification of Higher Education

Reasons identified for massification of higher education included an increase in population growth or increases in the proportion of populations with an interest in higher education, resulting in an increased demand for access.

Governments were therefore constantly under pressure to facilitate access, resulting in the liberalization of higher education, leading to massification.

Participants agreed that massification was not altogether bad. Benefits identified included an increased human resource base. Liberalization also led to competition, in the interest of subscribers. Privatization and increased higher education provision also resulted in employment.

However, in the event that massification was not matched with adequate resources, both physical and human, quality tended to be compromised, resulting in inadequately prepared graduates.

Another downside of liberalization discussed was the upsurge of unaccredited and in some cases, fraudulent foreign providers.

These and other reasons justified the need for rigorous regulation to ensure quality in HEIs. With a regional Quality Assurance body present, a clear-cut policy for Higher Education could be defined for sub-regional and national bodies to draw from.

3.1.2 Higher Education Financing Mechanisms in Africa

Two levels of financing were identified – institutional and client. Extensive financing of higher education by government was adjudged as being not very prevalent in Africa. Where it existed, there were no clear policies on it. Low financing affected remuneration of lecturers, research support and post-graduate funding.

One suggested policy to help solve this problem of funding, was for governments to set aside a percentage of GDP for financing higher education, and to ensure its enforcement, the policy should be placed within the legal framework of the country.

Participants called for AfriQAN to discuss the role it could play in addressing the challenges identified.

Massification and funding were seen as being interrelated, and some roles identified for AfriQAN to play included promoting:

- resource-sharing;
- capacity building;
- establishment of regulatory agencies to control quality;
- e-learning;
- development of comprehensive financing strategies for higher education financing;
- installation of Quality Assurance systems in institutions;
- increased involvement of private sector participation in higher education provision and enforce right controls; and
- innovative planning

3.1.3 Presentations from Institutions

The ACDE, IUCEA, CAMES, CEPGL, and AArU representatives spoke about their organizations, highlighting what the organizations were set up for, and what was done within the organizations with regard to Quality Assurance and Networking.

There were remarks on the fact that there was no Anglophone West Africa network. Participants from this area were encouraged to learn from the existing networks and consider setting up one in this sub-region. The process of harmonizing the recognition of studies and qualifications at the regional level would be facilitated if all the sub-regions had higher education networks in place.

Concerns were raised about ensuring quality in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) provision. ACDE maintained that products of ODL were no different from those of conventional institutions, and that ODL products, far from being of inferior quality, were sometimes even better. The meeting was told that certificates issued were of the same strength, or quality, even though some institutions discriminated against ODL participants by issuing them with different certificates.

ACDE was encouraged to work hard to ensure Africa did not receive sub-standard educational provision in this regard. The recently announced AU-India initiative, in particular was mentioned as a case in point.

Participants gave it as their opinion that it was encouraging to learn from existing networks that the lack of trust between higher education institutions and accrediting agencies was gradually fading away, as higher education institutions now realized the benefits of being quality assured. To this end the importance of national regulatory agencies to the success of sub-regional and regional networks was emphasized.

With regard to information sharing and capacity building, the East Africa experience of building an inventory of peers for accreditation assignments was cited as a model to emulate.

One major challenge identified was the diversity of linguistic backgrounds in Africa, leading to a related problem of diverse educational systems. In East Africa, the case of Burundi and Rwanda drawing from the Belgian model posed some difficulties for harmonization. In West Africa, the Anglophone and Francophone divides also posed problems. This was seen as an issue AfriQAN would have to consider.

3.1.4 RIACES Presentation

Mr. Leandro Haberfeld, working with RIACES, a Latin American Quality Assurance Network, shared experiences of his organization, and its links with CONEAU.

After the presentation, participants asked questions about eligibility of members with regard to voting and financial sustainability, and standards used by members.

The success of RIACES was identified to be owed mainly to the common culture and language shared by members of the network. Mr. Habersfeld also cited the countries' collective passion for football as a possible contributing factor to their unity.

With regard to accrediting members of the network, RIACES is considering leaving that to national bodies, since accreditation by the network would produce internal tensions.

3.1.5 Presentation of Second Working Group Report

Due to time constraints, the second working session was done via the VIPP method, in which participants write answers to questions on cards. The answers were compiled by the facilitator and presented in the diagram below.

What could our region (Africa) benefit from, with respect to regulation and cooperation?

Sharing resources and enhanced mobility	Standardization of qualification framework	Sub Regional cooperation and networking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exchange of staff, ▪ Exchange of students (2) ▪ Sharing ideas/ information (5) ▪ Sharing scarce resources e.g. peer reviews (4) ▪ Exchange of Human capacity (3) ▪ Sharing experience and learning from good practices (2) ▪ Inter cultural cooperation ▪ Provision of continuous capacity building for National QA agencies ▪ Knowledge of what members think most important ▪ Greater mobility of staff, experts and students (4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Harmonization of programmes (2) ▪ Recognition of degrees of Institutions of Member region (2) ▪ Reciprocal recognition of qualifications ▪ Transfer of credits ▪ Consider harmonization of regional networks on QA ▪ Harmonized standards will be realized (3) ▪ Harmonize our activities ▪ Promoting unified protocols and codes ▪ Formulation of common quality assurance indicators e.g. as developed by ENQA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Africa to become an academic village ▪ Harness Sub regional experiences ▪ Networking the existing regional agencies ▪ By adapting and adopting what is relevant, that can promote networking ▪ Bring to the light good practices of existing QA agencies ▪ Take our matters by our own hands ▪ Address challenges cooperatively ▪ Develop and enhance research in the field of QA (2) ▪ Facilitate cooperation with other networks e.g. INQAAHE etc.

Regulation of QA principles	Credibility, marketability and competitiveness of our HE Institutions	Enrichment from our diversity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The idea that agencies must first be recognized by the respective countries ▪ Develop in every country QA systems ▪ Come up with good practices principles in HE which can be adopted by different regulatory bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve quality of education (3) ▪ Improve competitiveness of academic programmes on the global market ▪ Better marketability of education (Visibility of degrees) ▪ Widespread recognition of national and regional qualification ▪ It will be easier to attract donor's funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mutual recognition and acceptance (2) ▪ Improve each other's processes ▪ By breaking the artificial separation between us ▪ Know each other better and appreciate our differences ▪ No narrow interests! Africa is the interest! ▪ Respect all concerns from different background ▪ Increase trust in the genuineness of awards granted at African universities ▪ Synchronize all commonalities

4. Constitution

4.1 Drafting the Constitution

The AAU Quality Assurance Project Officer presented the Aims and Objectives of AfriQAN (**Appendix 3**) to guide participants in the review of the Constitution.

A draft Constitution prepared by the Interim Committee was presented to the workshop for review and adoption.

After a rigorous session of reviewing, the Workshop came up with a final version of the Constitution, attached as **Appendix 4**.

4.2 Adoptions of Resolutions

4.2.1 Resolution No. 1 - Adoption of the Constitution

Ms. Musu GORVIE of the Ministry of Education, Sierra Leone moved for the adoption of the Constitution. Dr. Rotimi OGIDAN of ACDE, Nigeria, seconded the motion. All present unanimously accepted the adoption.

4.2.2 Resolution No. 2 – Adoption of Membership Fees

Mr. Stanley Mutumba SIMATAA, of the National Council for Higher Education, Namibia moved for an adoption of Membership Fees. Prof. Hamdy Ahmad NASSAR of NAAQAAE, Egypt, seconded the motion. All unanimously accepted the adoption.

4.2.3 Resolution No 3 – Adoption of Founding Members

Prof. Faisal Abdalla ELHAG of the Association of Arab Universities moved for an adoption of the Founding Members. Mr. Richard ADJEI of the National Accreditation Board, Ghana, seconded the motion. All unanimously accepted the adoption.

4.2.4 Resolution No 4 – Adoption of Composition of the Executive Board

Dr. Felix Rex OMARA, of the Quality Assurance and Regulation Tertiary Education Council, Botswana, moved for an adoption of the Composition of the Executive Board. Mr. George EBINE, of the National Council for Higher Education, Uganda, seconded the motion. All unanimously accepted the adoption.

5. Election of Members of the Executive Board

Prof. Faisal Abdallah ELHAG and Mr. Richard ADJEI volunteered to join Mr. Ransford Bekoe, of the Association of African Universities, to supervise the Election of Members of the Executive Board.

After nominations the following were voted to serve a two-year term on the AfriQAN Executive Board:

- Prof. Mayunga H. H. NKUNYA – President
- M. Zakari LIRE – Vice President
- Mrs. Florence J. ASEMADAHUN – Treasurer
- Prof. Chiedu Felix MAFIANA – Member representing Western Africa
- Prof. Honorine NTAHOBAVUKA – Member representing Central Africa
- Prof. Gaston HAKIZA – Member representing Eastern Africa
- Prof. Dr. Hamdy Ahmad NASSAR – Member representing Northern Africa
- Dr. Felix Rex O'Mara – Member representing Southern Africa

As required by the Constitution, the Executive Board held its first meeting to co-opt the following as members of the Board:

- The AAU was identified as a strategic choice. The Secretary-General was to be requested to nominate a representative to be co-opted to the Board
- The African Union as a strategic partner. Dr. Beatrice Njenga was proposed, for the role she plays at the African Union and also because there was a perceived need for more women on the Board

- It was agreed that a third person to be co-opted should be from Libya. In the event where this was not possible, an alternative was to be sought.

6. Closing Remarks

6.1 Presentation of the AfriQAN website

Ms. Adwoa Sey presented the AfriQAN website and AfriQAN's Workplan and Budget for 2009/10, and referred participants to the proposed AfriQAN strategy, which was in participants' folders. She asked participants to forward suggestions after the workshop for additional activities in the annual workplan, as it was probable that activities in the workplan would be completed before the end of the twelve-month period. Participants made comments on the workplan and the website.

6.2 Vote of Thanks

Prof. Standa thanked the Facilitator, the AAU Quality Assurance Officer, the Secretariat and Interpreters for helping to make the meeting a success.

The President of AfriQAN urged all members to work very hard to achieve the mission and objectives of the Network. He also stressed the need to involve the African Union if the Network was to gain political presence. The need to support all emerging and existing networks and to work hard to raise funds for the Network was emphasized.

The President commended the Interim Committee members who worked extremely hard, particularly during the Dodowa, Dakar and pre- AGM meetings. He made special mention of the following:

- Ms. Adwoa Sey, AAU Quality Assurance Project Officer was commended for all the work she had done and her commitment to the formation of the network.
- Mr. Abdou Lahate Cisse was commended for his brilliant ideas and his charm, which helped move the work of the Committee forward.
- Ms. Florence ASEMADAHUN was commended for her remarkable and pertinent ideas and experience in Quality Assurance issues.
- Mr. Leandro Haberfeld of RIACES and Ms. Petra Righetti of the World Bank were thanked for their valuable contributions and for staying to the end of the meeting.
- Prof. Faisal Abdallah Elhag, though employed by the Association of Arab Universities, in Jordan, had been of great assistance in deliberations, and instrumental in discussion of many issues during the workshop.
- Ms. Heike Edelmann-Okinda of DAAD was asked to convey the appreciation of Africa to her organization for their continuous support to African Higher Education. The President hoped that DAAD would extend its support to AfriQAN.

- Mr. Kofi Kumodzi, the workshop facilitator, was commended for his work. The President expressed his pleasure at working with him and asked that he make himself available in the future when needed by AfriQAN.
- The Interpreters and Rapporteur were also thanked for their efforts.

The Meeting ended at 15:20 on 27 November 2009.

Participants' wishes to spend more time on particular topics meant that not all topics in the original programme could be presented extensively and/or discussed. This is in line with the AAU's participatory approach to learning events.