

ENQA Workshop

Accreditation Models in Higher Education: Experiences and Perspectives

Session 2 Workshop III morning

HUNGARY

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The “Hungarian model”: institutional via program accreditation (I)

- HE Act sets up Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC)
- Act mandates accreditation of all HEIs and all their programs every 8 years
- first round (of 89 HEIs) 1995-2001
- HAC formulates premise that HEI output is diploma, and study program is what leads to diploma, therefore study program is object of accreditation



The “Hungarian model”: institutional via program accreditation (II)

- institution was seen as the environment contributing to quality of study program because
 - little experience in institutional management
 - legally declared institutional autonomy was in fact limited
 - no internal QA was in place

The “Hungarian model”: accreditation with improvement orientation

- roughly one third of programs were given “conditional” accreditation with defined conditions to be met by a set date, reviewed in a monitoring procedure
- some smaller, new colleges were also given short-term conditional accreditation and no institution was closed

The “Hungarian model”: next round

- focus more on institutional level
- internal QA now in place (annual reports to HAC)
- selection of programs will be reviewed
- a separate procedure will look at programs in selected disciplines at all HEIs in a single procedure
- greater emphasis on output rather than input and process
- reports will be published in full
- problem: very difficult to change entrenched routine

Quality assurance/accreditation in Central and Eastern Europe

- protecting stakeholders
- defining quality standards and levels
- assuring comparability of study program content and level with those in Western Europe
- some countries (not Hungary): control quality of education at proliferating private institutions (
 - declared improvement orientation
 - in most countries legislation is overly detailed and has recently been or is foreseen to be thoroughly revised



Why accreditation in Central and Eastern Europe?

- almost all CEE countries chose accreditation as their preferred form of quality assurance from the start
- now all do it
- saw more control necessary at the time of regime change
- institutional autonomy was to be balanced by external quality control
- accreditation is a top-down method most often initiated by governments
- the countries in the region have a history of greater external control and have not had a chance for the kind of democratic development experienced in Western Europe

Potential advantages of quality assurance or accreditation

- quality is defined and achieved to the degree stated
- transparency of educational process (you know what you are buying)
- comparability of evaluated units, transferability of studies, mobility of students
- cultural diversity through mobility
- public (or private) funds are accounted for

Potential pitfalls of current trends in quality assurance or accreditation

- globalization, standardization leading to loss of diversity
- loss of cultural identity, language
- dominance of one or few influential trends or organizations
- compliance to real or perceived expectations without true commitment toward improvement



CEE contribution to the QA dialog in Europe

- define educational and QA strategies in each country
- cooperate among each other to define needs and expectations for HE and QA
- make our voice heard in the international arena
- participate in European projects in proactive way
- initiate own projects
- contribute to the definition of accreditation

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Should quality assurance exist?

- it is a fact of life (a world-wide movement that cannot be stopped, for many reasons)
- its advantages may outweigh its disadvantages if
 - all players keep in mind that its purpose is to ensure the quality of education
 - it remains flexible and open to changing needs (the methods are not rigid, legislation relinquishes authority)
 - all players on all levels are involved and convinced (decisions are based on consensus and are not exertion of power)
 - governments and agencies advocate institutional initiative and public service and
 - are consistent in their decisions, which are transparent and forward-looking



Two ideas for the road

- For better or for worse, internationalization is here to stay
- It is possible to revise but difficult to fundamentally change a system once it is in place!