

Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education - Results of the QACHE project

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QA in European context, 4 November 2016, Brussels

Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education (QACHE)

- Co-Financing: Erasmus Mundus Programme of the European Union
- Oct 2013- March 2016
- Partnership: ENQA (coordinator), ANECA (Spain), GAC (Germany), HCERES (France), QAA (UK), TEQSA (Australia)
- APQN and ANQAHE
- Main aims: enhance international practice in the QA of CBHE, develop an European approach to the QA of CBHE

Cross-border higher education is:

‘education in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based’

(UNESCO/Council of Europe 2001 Code of Good Practice in the provision of transnational education)

The project focused on provision which takes place in a country other than that of the main provider of the education and which would normally lead to a degree awarded by the provider institution.

Project phases

Phase 1 – Information gathering

- Regional networks surveys (ENQA, APQN, ANQAHE)
- European providers survey (SP, DE, FR, UK)
- Country reports (SP, DE, FR, UK, AUS)

Phase 2 – Regional expert forums

- Europe (London, UK), Gulf (Manama, Bahrain), Asia (Macao, China)

Phase 3 – Main outputs

- Final report
- **Toolkit**
- Dissemination conference

What did we learn?

CBHE is a global phenomenon that can cover several aspects:

- Double/joint programmes
- Offshore campuses
- Networks
- Mergers
- Virtual education
- Many others (expansion and development)



What questions did we have?

- How is it organised?
- How systemised is it?
- How to gain information about it?
- What does it take?
- Who is responsible?
- What outcomes does it have?
- What obstacles are there?
- How to better cooperate?



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What did we learn?

Phase 1: information gathering

Regulation of and information about CBHE is patchy:

- Absence of a common approach to CBHE
- Absence of developed QA systems for CBHE
- Absence of comprehensive data about CBHE
- Lack of reciprocal understanding by sending & host countries of each other's QA frameworks

What did we learn?

Phase 1: information gathering

Strengthening inter-agency cooperation is seen as the way forward in

- the promotion of mutual understanding
- the sharing information and good practice
- the building of trust

Regional networks (ENQA, ANQAHE, APQN...) are seen as key players in facilitating information sharing and tightened cooperation

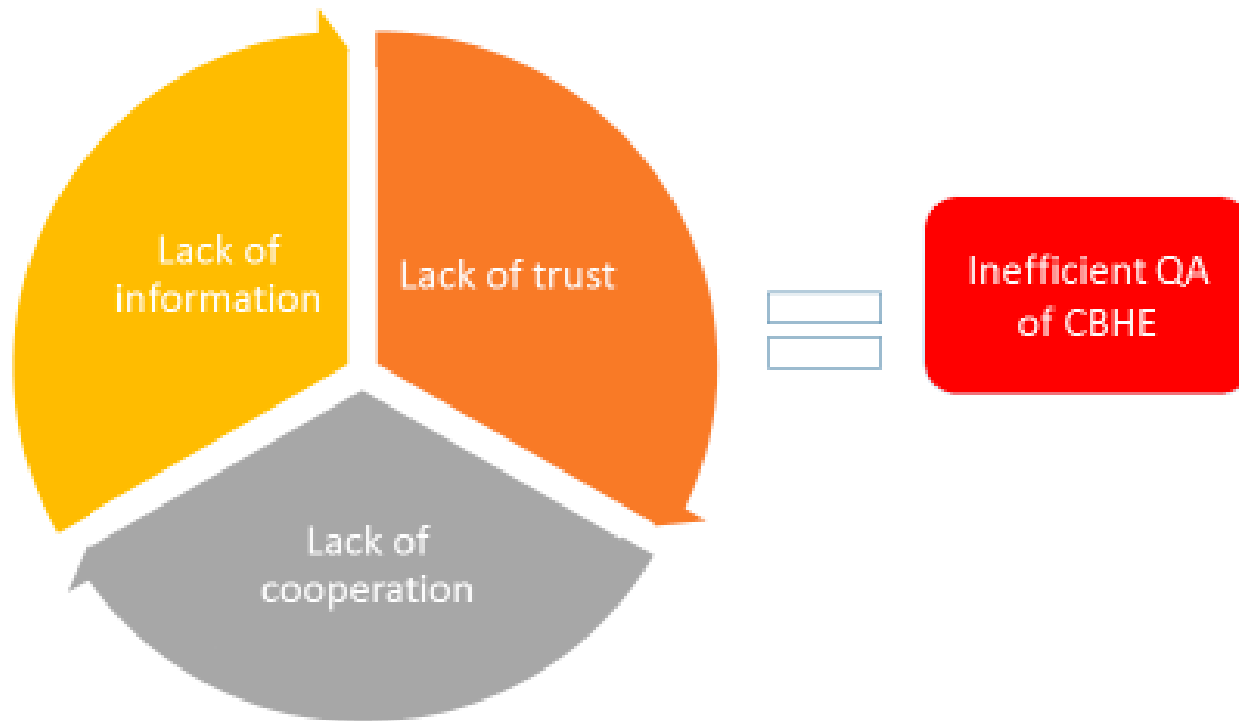
Phase 2: regional expert forums (Europe, Gulf region, Asia-Pacific)

- Interactive policy dialogue between sending and receiving countries of CBHE
 - building of trust
- Recognition issues were central in the discussions
- Provided input to the development of the policy recommendations and Toolkit, highlighting the need to
 - consolidate the existing international guidelines
 - address the ‘trust gap’ between sending and receiving countries (role of networks)
 - the provision of up-to-date and comprehensive information on CBHE

Four key findings to inform phase 3:

- The sheer diversity of approaches and regulatory frameworks for in-bound or out-bound CBHE within and across the three regions - Asia, Europe and Middle East.
- Lack of information about and knowledge of different agencies' approaches and national frameworks.
- A 'trust gap' between sending and receiving countries about the quality of CBHE, with receiving country being generally more sceptical than sending countries about the quality, and quality assurance, of incoming provision.
- Low levels of cooperation amongst quality assurance agencies in the quality assurance of CBHE.

The QACHE vicious circle



F. Trifiro, 2015

Phase 3: Final report and the Toolkit

Final report listing policy recommendations to policymakers on national and European levels

Toolkit offers practical guidance on:

- (1) *Information sharing*: how QAAs can improve the sharing of information on CBHE
- (2) *Cooperation in quality assurance*: how QAAs can enhance cooperation in its quality assurance
- (3) *Networks of agencies*: how networks of QAAs can facilitate information sharing and cooperation



The Toolkit: information (QA agencies)

In order to facilitate mutual understanding and trust, QA agencies should:

- have clear and accessible policies about their approach to CBHE
- make easily accessible a list of those institutions they have quality assured or accredited, including any eventual list of quality assured or accredited CBHE provision
- seek to establish regular channels of communication to facilitate information sharing and the strengthening of mutual understanding

The Toolkit: cooperation (QA agencies)

In order to avoid the duplication of procedures/efforts and to lessen the burden on providers, QA agencies should:

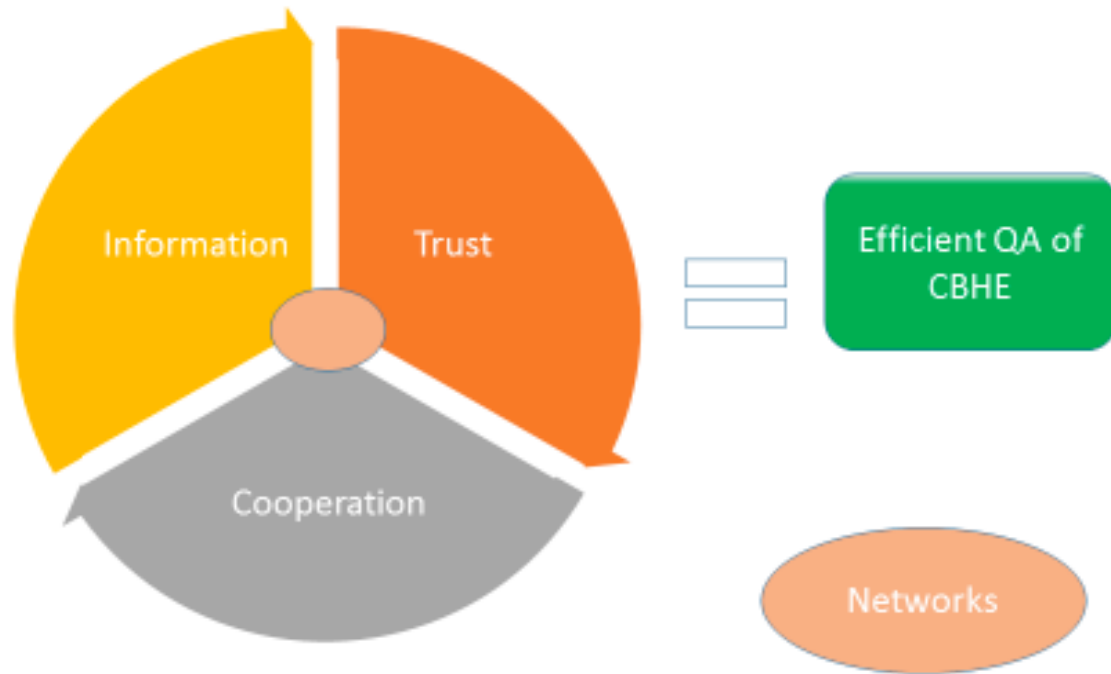
- liaise between sending and receiving countries when undertaking review of CBHE
- consider whether they would be able to make use of each others already existing information or quality assurance/accreditation decisions
- consider ways in which review activity of CBHE could be undertaken jointly

The Toolkit: cooperation (QA networks)

In order to facilitate inter-agency cooperation, networks of QA agencies should:

- consider ways in which they could serve as first point of contact for information about QA and HE systems and recognised providers in their member agencies' countries
- strengthen cooperation with other networks to promote policy dialogue, information sharing, and dissemination of good practice
- consider ways to align regional standards and guidelines to facilitate cooperation between agencies from different regions

The QACHE virtuous circle



F. Trifiro, 2015

What did we learn?

- CBHE does not only pose challenges, but it also creates great opportunities: it is widening access to higher education, addressing skills gaps and furthering global citizenship.
- It is essential to explore ways to work together to fully harness the opportunities posed by CBHE while avoiding its possible challenges and shortcomings, and in particular sub-standard education provision.
- The shared goal is to facilitate the provision of quality CBHE, avoid regulatory gaps, and unnecessary discrepancies and duplication, in the ultimate interest of higher education providers and students.

*(Trifiro, F. (2015): Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education (QACHE)
– moving towards strengthened cooperation)*





Quality Assurance of Cross-border Higher Education

<https://qache.wordpress.com/>



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