"QUALITY ASSURANCE: FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE"

[Quality Assurance Processes in Egyptian Higher Education Institutions at Both Institutional and National level: Their Development and Sustainability]

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Abstract:

Internal and external measures assuring quality in Egyptian higher education institutions and the improvement in higher education as a result are discussed in this study. Effect of QA processes on internal mechanisms and the role of such QA processes in policy making at both the institutional and national levels are also investigated with reference to some case studies. Internal mechanisms are implemented through QA units in colleges/institutes, QA centers in universities, and projects for QA and qualifying for accreditation financed by the "Ministry of Higher Education". These projects are managed by a "Steering Committee for The Program of Continuous Improvement and Qualifying for Accreditation". The need for continuous improvement urged faculties to adopt certain policies to deal with points of weakness where some faculties intended to have a formal system to deal with student complaints, to handle resistance to change among faculty staff and administrative personnel, and to think of strategies for dealing with the bureaucracy. The needs of higher education systems in Egypt for external and internal QA measures are evident and therefore, several proposals for ensuring sustainability are suggested. "The National Authority for QA and Accreditation of Education" plays a pivotal role in external evaluation of QA activities in higher education institutions. Its basic principles are inspired from the good systems and practices aimed to assure quality of education. Cooperation of Egyptian higher education institutions with QA agencies are also discussed in this paper while referring to means of identification and dissemination of good practice for the purpose of continuous improvement.

For many years, different measures assuring quality of higher education, governed mainly by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), were applied in Egyptian universities based on higher education act number 49 in year 1972. In year 2000, the higher education (HE) national conference resulted in strategic reform plan for HE with 25 distinct reform projects (Abdellah and Taher, 2007). The first phase of the implementation plan took place between years 2002 and 2007 and included 12 reform projects under six major fields one of which was the 'Quality Assurance and Accreditation Project' (QAAP) financed by the "World Bank" . During this phase of HE enhancement internal system for QA was established on the institutional level in 157 institutions during the three cycles of QAAP. On the university level, 16 projects for establishment of quality assurance centers and 17 other projects for development of university strategic plan for quality assurance were also completed (QAAP progress report, 2008). On the sectors' level, 10 projects were devoted to formulate National Academic Reference Standards (HEEP impact assessment study, 2008).

A second phase of HE enhancement (2007-2012) succeeded in establishing internal QA system in 124 institutions during the two additional cycles of QAAP2 (http://www.qaap.edu.eg/sc/qaap2_pro.html). During this phase of HE enhancement there were many achievements related to QA and qualifying for accreditation of HE institutions through a number of projects funded by the Egyptian government. Since 2002, the HE system witnessed a drastic change in the QA processes where clear, specific, measurable and documented QA practices and procedures were applied with continuous feedback on their impact on improvement plans. The review elements of QA processes allowed the internal QA mechanisms to be accurately documented, systematic, comprehensive & detailed. Such processes also helped in producing outcomes which can be reviewed/audited against clearly defined aims, allowed for flexibility in handling emerging needs, and resulted in clear action plans with clearly defined actions, responsibilities and timescales. In Egyptian HE system, the following QA systems are adopted:

1- Internal QA system:

1-a: An internal QA system is the responsibility of and is run by HE institutions resulting in establishing an annual self study assessing all quality components applied to academic

programs as well as the institution itself such as academic standards, learning resources, governance and administration, research, community service, and quality management. During the first and second phases of HE enhancement QA units were established in 297 institutions out of a total 319 HE institutions in Egypt.

QA units inside faculties are thriving to create the appropriate environment for improving students' education (The Quality Assurance and Accreditation Handbook for Higher Education in Egypt, 2007).The QA unit of each HE institution is responsible for completing the self-assessment of the institution, implementing internal and external QA measures, ensuring the completion of course and program specifications and reports by academic departments. QA units play an important role in disseminating the quality culture among faculty staff and employees. Throughout the unit activities, course/instructor evaluation system is implemented. Faculty members respond to the feedback obtained from students after the QA unit communicates in writing with relevant Department Heads to raise students' comments on courses for discussion in department councils. Good practices are used to develop other courses in the academic program while improper practices are tackled with appropriate solutions. QA unit activities also encouraged faculty members to take the feedback obtained from the student evaluations into consideration for the purpose of improving their teaching performance, developing the course materials, or developing the curriculum as reflected in course reports. QA units also helps to effectively implement the policy and procedures for the constitution of examiners' boards in oral, written and practical examinations to be approved by departments and faculty councils. External evaluators are engaged in the educational process in some HE institutions to mainly comment on the appropriateness of assessment methods used with reference to course and program indented learning outcomes (ILO's). They also comment on the fairness and efficiency of the assessment method and procedures among other aspects of the educational process. Feedback of external evaluators is to be documented in each course report and be taken care off in the action plan for the coming year. Stakeholders of HE institutions include students, graduates, employers of graduates, suppliers, academic and non-academic staff, non-governmental organizations, sponsors, community groups, and government at large. An internal system of quality assurance in any HE institution cannot be sustained without a policy and consistent procedures to regularly engage stakeholders in the educational, research and community service

activities. External views and comments of stakeholders can be captured through surveys, forums, focus group meetings. Higher Education Enhancement Project Fund (HEEPF) strengthened the cooperation and integration between industry and HE institutions. Effective QA units engage stakeholders in the quality enhancement process through membership of faculty councils, membership of committees for curricular development, or generally engaging them in different phases of the internal review process conducted by quality assurance units in each faculty. A system to monitor student employments also started to take effect through an alumni office within the QA unit organizational structure in many HE institutions. This office aims to follow up and support student employment through continuous interaction with relevant employers. An impact assessment study depicted significant change in some of the activities performed in self assessment studies as example of QA practices performed during HE reform projects compared to the time before projects (HEEP impact assessment study, 2008).

1-b: QA centers exist in universities to promote and support QA activities, help QA units to qualify their institutions for accreditation, spread the quality culture, and offer training programs for developing capabilities of human resources. QA centers in Egyptian universities cooperate with each other at the national level to share experiences and best practices and promote system level QA monitoring and evaluation. The QA centers in each university also organize external evaluation visits to the faculties where external reviewers assess the achievement of the faculties toward meeting accreditation standards. Reports of such visits are shared with the university management together with the internal reviewing annual report for the purpose of continuous improvement. During the first phase of development (2002-2007) QA centers were established in public universities with a clear organizational structure and job description. Some of these centers were added to universities' finance and administration organization structure and its director is invited to attend the university council meetings to present and discuss QA related issues (HEEP progress report, February, 2008).

The QA center of Ain Shams University provides a case study that could exemplify internal QA system that helps in implementation of important QA practices in the educational process by faculties throughout the academic year by setting a specific month for each practice and monitoring the performance of QA units. Such practices

include appointing coordinator for each course, setting office hours through a student advisory system, making program/course specification available to students, ensuring the completion of a course file, implementing the system of student evaluation of courses/instructors, performing self-study, dealing with student complaints, announcing the grades of periodic exams to students, academic supporting of students at risk of failure, conducting external evaluation of programs/courses, ensuring the performance appraisal of administrative departments, implementing the concept of examination committee, encouraging the documentation of curriculum development committee reports, stressing the importance of periodic meetings of the committee for monitoring the implementation of improvement plans, and ensuring the consideration of stakeholders views & feedback.

1-c: Quality assurance and accreditation projects managed by a "Steering Committee for the Program of Continuous Improvement and Qualifying for Accreditation"; a new entity established by The MOHE in February 2008, is involved in assuring quality and helping faculties/institutes in public universities to be ready for accreditation. This committee provides means of competitive funding for projects targeting faculties' sustainable development and accreditation. MOHE allocated a budget of one billion EGP for the projects of "Program of Continuous Improvement and Qualifying for Accreditation" (PCIQA) over years 2007-2012. The total number of approved PCIQA projects till the end of year 2010 reached 282 in 242 institutions out of a total 319 HE institutions in Egypt.

The strategic objective of PCIQA is to reach the inherent institutional capacity for continuous improvement and achievement of academic and institutional quality that assures competiveness and qualifies for accreditation. The main objectives of the program are as follows:

1- Attaining effectiveness and sustainability of QAAPs which started at the first phase of development.

2- Establishment and implementation of internal QA system in each and every public HE college/institute in Egypt.

3- Adopting the academic standards of educational programs in colleges/sectors and supporting their application.

4- Qualifying public HE institutions for accreditation with the concept of continuous improvement in mind.

5- Improving the effectiveness and international accreditation of a number of laboratories and scientific and research centers in public universities.

6- Developing the institutional capacity in some sectors of high priority like colleges of nursing, science, and arts.

7- Comprehensive development of academic programs in field of high priority and qualifying them for accreditation.

8- Advancement of student assessment methods and improving the educational effectiveness in some HE institutions.

The projects offered through PCIQA and managed by its steering committee include the following:

1- Quality Assurance and Accreditation Project–second phase (QAAP2).
2- Continuous Improvement and Qualification for Accreditation Project (CIQAP).
3- Development of Academic Programs Project (DAPAP).
4- Higher Education Institutions' Laboratories Accreditation Project (HLAP).
5- Development of Student Assessment Systems Project (DSASP).
6- Infrastructural Quality Related Projects (IQRP).
7- Monitoring and Evaluation of New Programs Project (MENPP).
8- Quality Assurance Students' Projects (QASP).

It is to be mentioned that MENPP monitors and evaluates the performance of public HE institutions offering new programs that enable graduates to practice an additional new aspect of the profession in labor market. In such new programs, relatively small number of students is enrolled with tuition fees reflecting a positive impact on the quality of education in institutions offering such programs. New programs offered in year 2007/2008 reached 48 in 14 public universities under nine sectors serving a total number of students of 4622 (Monitoring and Assessment of New Programs Report 2007/2008). In year 2009/2010 the number of new programs reached 63 in 15 public universities under ten sectors serving a total number of students of 10825 (Monitoring and Assessment of New Programs Report 2009/2010). Table 1 demonstrates that the number of new programs in the engineering sector constitute the largest percent of new programs (46 %) out of the total number of new programs offered followed by the pharmacy then the medical sector.

Consequently, 45% of the total number of students enrolled in new programs was of the engineering sector.

The QASP mentioned above aims at developing a positive interactive relationship between the undergraduate & graduate student community and the HE institution during the years of study and after graduation. This is achieved through increasing student participation in activities related to enhancing the quality of education while continuously improving their HE institution, engaging them in the decision making process, and fostering the spirit of belonging to their institutions. In October 2010, 162 projects were submitted from 19 different public universities and they are being currently screened through peer evaluation process for approval by the steering committee of PCIQA.

Table 2 demonstrates key performance indicators for the main objectives of PCIQA. The academic standards referred to in table 2 were the outcome of both QAAP2 and CIQAP. In QAAP2, academic standards were adopted for 611 undergraduate and 2340 graduate programs while in CIQAP academic standards were adopted for 885 undergraduate and 4222 graduate programs till the end of year 2010. Since the time PCIQA is effective and till the end of year 2010, the number of submitted projects' proposals is 851 out of which 282 projects were finally approved by its steering committee for financing (Table 3). The funding allocated by MOHE is 48,152,238 EGP for the three competitive projects (DAPAP, HLAP and DSASP) and 600,946,106 EGP for the CIQAP. During the second phase of development, the number of approved CIQAP projects reached 103 while competitive projects reached 55 (Tables 4 and 5). It is to be mentioned that PCIQA projects' availability differs by the educational sector. The humanities sector has the highest percentage of DAPAP and QAAP2, the medical sector has the highest percentage of CIQAP, while the agricultural and veterinary sector has the highest percentage of HLAP.

Table 1: Number of new programs in public universities and number of students served in academic years 2007/2008 and 2009/2010 (Source: Monitoring and Assessment of New Programs Reports for academic years 2007/2008 and 2009/2010).

Year	Sector	Engineering	Pharmacy	Medicine	Basic Sci.	Agriculture	Computers & Information	Mass communication	Commerce	Arts	Veterinary Medicine
2007/ 2008	No. of programs	23	6	7	3	4	3	-	2	1	1
	No. of students	2161	676	694	410	81	135	-	346	16	49
2009/ 2010	No. of programs	29	9	8	3	5	3	1	2	2	1
	No. of students	4504	1858	2341	786	144	237	16	692	59	73

Table 2: Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for PCIQA (Source: Interim report of five-year strategic plan (2007-2012), PCIQA, PMU, MOHE, First Part: General Framework of the program, June 2010).

Main Objectives of PCIQA	Intended KPIs
- Attaining effectiveness and sustainability of QAAPs which started at the first phase of development.	- QA units and QA centers in universities achieving their mission.
- Establishment and implementation of internal QA system in each and every public HE college/institute in Egypt.	- Monitoring the performance of 173 HE institutions having an internal QA system established during the first phase of development. - Establishment of internal QA system in 131 HE institutions.
- Adopting the academic standards of educational programs in colleges/sectors and supporting their application.	- Technical support for completion and implementation of the academic standards of both undergraduate and graduate programs.
- Qualifying public HE institutions for accreditation with the concept of continuous improvement in mind.	- Qualifying 60-80 colleges for accreditation by NAQAAE.
- Improving the effectiveness and international accreditation of a number of laboratories and scientific and research centers in public universities.	- Qualifying 20-25 labs for international accreditation.
- Developing the institutional capacity in some sectors of high priority like colleges of nursing, science, and arts.	- Qualifying 10-12 colleges of Sciences for accreditation by NAQAAE. - Developing some colleges of nursing.
- Comprehensive development of academic programs in field of high priority and qualifying them for accreditation.	- Developing 15-20 academic programs and qualifying them for accreditation by NAQAAE.
- Advancement of student assessment methods and improving the educational effectiveness in some HE institutions.	- Advancement of student assessment systems in 40 -60 HE institutions.

Table 3: The number of submitted PCIQA projects and the finally approved by its steering committee (Source: Interim report of five-year strategic plan (2007-2012), PCIQA, PMU, MOHE, First Part: General Framework of the program, June 2010).

Project Name	QAAP2	CIQAP	DAPAP	HLAP	DSASP	QASP	Total
No. of submitted projects	163	272	87	112	55	162	851
No. of approved projects	124	103	13	22	20	-	282

Table 4: Summary of the numbers of CIQAP projects during the second phase of development (Source: Interim report of five-year strategic plan (2007-2012), PCIQA, PMU, MOHE, Second Part: Continuous Improvement and Qualifying for Accreditation Project (CIQAP), June 2010 and the documents of the meeting of the steering committee of PCIQA in January 2011).

Cycle	First	Second	Third	Fourth	All Cycles
Date of proposal submission	December, 2007	June 2008,	August, 2009	December, 2009	_
Number of projects submitted	37	46	42	80	272
Date of contract	March-April, 2008	April -May, 2009	October, 2009	March, 2010	_
Number of projects finally approved	22	25	23	33	103

Table 5: Summary of the numbers of competitive projects during the second phase of development (Source: Interim report of five-year strategic plan (2007-2012), PCIQA, PMU, MOHE, Third Part: Competitive Projects, June 2010 and the documents of the meeting of the steering committee of PCIQA in January 2011).

Cycle	Item	DAPAP	HLAP	DSASP	All Projects
First	Number of projects submitted	42	34	28	104
	Number of projects finally approved	4	8	12	24
Second	Number of projects submitted	14	14	12	40
	Number of projects finally approved	4	2	1	7
Third	Number of projects submitted	32	35	17	84
	Number of projects finally approved	5	12	7	24
All Cycles	Number of projects submitted	88	83	57	228
	Number of projects finally approved	13	22	20	55

Identification and dissemination of good practices by PCIQA is performed through the technical support visits and periodic reports of the program to different HE institutions. Through such periodic monitoring, support, and evaluation visits, PCIQA facilitates external evaluation of HE institutions which is crucial while implementing their improvement plans. During the second phase of HE enhancement, PCIQA signed a number of two protocols for cooperation with HE institutions to provide them with technical support to sustain internal QA system and to attain national accreditation. PCIQA also completed a number of three forums for intellectual exchange and sharing experiences among projects at the institutional/national level. A number of 159 DE visits, 941 technical support, monitoring and evaluation visits have been also completed. During academic years 2007/2008, 2008/2009, 2009/2010, and 2010/2011 there were 48, 48, 51, and 23 visits respectively for technical support, monitoring and evaluation of new programs with a total number of 170 visits. The good practice of PCIQA is also evident in

the regular meetings of program management with the monitoring and evaluation committees and with the procurement and finance personnel. The total number of meetings reached 430 meeting till the end of year 2010. PCIQA is also keen to conduct meetings with NAQAAE management and with the universities' leadership for coordination and sharing experiences among projects. The decisions related to the program activities are also taken through democracy by the steering committee of PCIQA. For ensuring best practice, the program management is establishing and updating the electronic systems of the administration, spreading the information related to program activities through a periodic magazine, handbooks and Arabic and English website, monitoring the performance of QA centers, training peer reviewers, training trainers, performing impact assessment studies, documenting work progress reports, and developing the capabilities of human resources in the fields related to QA and accreditations. The PCIQA, through the "National Center for Faculty and Leadership Development" (NCFLD), has completed a number of 20 TOT training programs for preparing 182 as certified trainers in the field of QA and accreditation. The programs included 55 workshops mainly for peer reviewing, project management, and strategic planning.

2- **External QA and Accreditation System:**

An independent National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE) was established according to law No. 82 for year 2006. In year 2007, the Presidential decree number (25) was issued to declare NAQAAE's executive bylaws. NAQAAE is independent being under the Prime Minister's governance and has the right to establish branches in different governorates. According to Article (14) of the law of establishment, NAQAAE is to have a board that consists of fifteen members among whom, a president and three vice-presidents are appointed; one for HE affairs, another for pre-university affairs, and the third for Al-Azhar education affairs (www.naqaae.org).

NAQAAE documented its basic principles for the process of QA and accreditation of education which were inspired from the good systems and practices aimed to assure quality of education. Such principles must be taken into consideration during application, whether from the side of NAQAAE or the educational institutions. They are as follows:

- Interest in the main beneficiaries/stakeholders, and making sure to achieve high levels of their satisfaction by meeting their needs and expectations.

- Leadership and governance directed by strategic thinking and planning, objectivity, transparency and justice.

- Democratic administration style that relies on active participation of all interested parties, delegation, empowerment in decision-making process, and at the mean time accepting criticism.

- Innovation and creativity aiming to purposeful change and continuous improvement and development.

- Independence in a way that assures respect for the educational institution and its responsibility in managing its academic and administrative operations and activities.

- Commitment to responsibilities and duties specified by institutions or individuals' roles.

- Continuous learning that depends on making use of the accumulated experience, accepting new ideas, and being global.

- Mutual benefits among all parties relating to the educational institution including students, teaching staff and their assistants, employees, and community parties.

- Interest in operational and technical processes in the institution, producing educational, research, and community services.

- Interest in feedback, as well as collection and documentation of information to understand and make use of experiences to improve and develop the institutional system outputs.

The external quality assessment and accreditation process run by NAQAAE is mandatory for each HE institution (faculty, higher institute, technical college…) and has to be applied every five years after the first accreditation is granted. NAQAAE is also the authority responsible for spreading the culture of quality in educational institutions and society, developing the national standards coping with the international standards for restructuring of institutions, and improving the quality of their processes and outputs in a way that leads to winning society's trust, improving their competitive capability locally

and internationally, and serving the goals of sustainable development in Egypt. For that purpose, the Authority seeks to achieve sustainable development of education and to assure its quality according to a set of principles and values highlighting transparency, objectivity, justice and keenness to assist educational institutions in settling their goals and enhancing their overall performance to be qualified for accreditation.

NAQAAE aims at QA of HE and its continuous improvement through:

- Raising awareness of quality culture.

- Coordinating with HE institutions to assure access to an integrated system of standards and mechanisms of performance measurement, guided by international standards and in a way that does not contradict the nation's identity.

- Supporting HE institutions to carry out self-evaluation.

- Ensuring trust at the local, regional and international levels regarding the outputs of the educational process.

- Carrying out overall evaluation of HE institutions and their programs in accordance with the standards adopted.

Identification and dissemination of good practice by NAQAAE is performed through training programs to develop human resources and through communication with HE institutions to ask for reporting any good practices and having a policy of announcing them on NAQAAE's website. The rules of good professional practices of NAQAAE itself are represented in its commitment to assure fairness and transparency for the purpose of achieving its mission and goals in line with good practice abided by similar bodies at the international level. The good practices of NAQAAE include four areas as follows:

(1) Management and Independence: NAQAAE is an independent governmental entity not affiliated to any ministry, which assures impartiality of its decisions. The policies are documented and publicized for transparency and accountability. A department of development and follow-up exists for the management of internal quality, evaluation of the effectiveness of performance, and planning for continuous development according to the results of performance evaluation and the local and global changes as well as feedback from all interested parties (e.g., educational institutions, students, society members,

relevant ministries, political leadership, etc.). NAQAAE makes the best use of local and international experts specialized in all types of education, and in the systems of quality and development to achieve its objectives efficiently and effectively. It has a training department enabling it to achieve quality performance of its members and of the certified reviewers.

(2) Authority's Relationship with Educational Institutions: NAQAAE stimulates educational institutions towards continuous improvement and provides advisory expertise through a department separate from the management of evaluation and accreditation. It issues a series of guidebooks and manuals to help educational institutions carry out self-evaluation in order to enhance their performance and to prepare them for accreditation. NAQAAE encourages innovation and creativity in the performance of educational institutions. It organizes site visits for evaluation through coordinating with the institutions under evaluation and consults the institution in forming the team of certified reviewers to assure that there is no conflict of interest. NAQAAE informs the institutions being evaluated about the initial report of certified reviewers giving them the opportunity to comment on it and to provide any evidence or additional documents. The reply of the institution is taken into consideration as to the final decision. It also requests feedback reports from institutions about both the evaluation process and the performance of certified reviewers in the visit. Such reports are used as the main source of information in the process of self-evaluation of NAQAAE. It is committed to maintain the confidentiality of documents and information relating to the institution under evaluation except for what should be announced according to regulations and laws.

(3) Evaluation and Decision-Making Process: NAQAAE acknowledges the right of the institution to be evaluated in the light of its declared mission and objectives as long as they are appropriate to the educational level of the institution. The evaluation criteria cover the various areas of the activities of educational institutions, including teaching and learning, community service, research, etc., according to the type of the institution. The evaluation process depends on documents and evidence. Surveys conducted to know the opinions of students, teaching staff, employees, and community parties are a fundamental part of the evaluation process. NAQAAE shows interest in the sustainability of evaluation process during the accreditation validity period through the annual reports of institutions and monitoring visits to assure the sustainability of the institutions' right to gain the society's

trust. NAQAAE acknowledges the right of educational institutions to appeal against its decisions in accordance with its stated policy. It is committed to announce its decisions regarding the accreditation of educational institutions to the interested parties as well as to the public.

 (4) External Activities and Cooperation with Other Institutions: NAQAAE coordinates the cooperation with the concerned ministries regarding the issues of common concern. It is keen to establish mutual relationships with the agencies and organizations in the fields of quality assurance of education and accreditation at the regional and international levels with the aim of mutual acknowledgement of the accreditation certificates. It cooperates with relevant international bodies to exchange experiences and good practices and for enhancing its capacity.

QA processes had a role in policy making at both institutional and national level:

1- At the institutional level most faculties have a well organized organizational structure. Faculties with QA and accreditation projects revised and updated their organizational structure by adding a QA unit, a curriculum development committee, a student complaints' committee, and/or a steering committee to supervise the completion of the faculty annual report with final action plan for improvement. As requirements for completion of such annual report, faculties are urged to evaluate the performance of faculty management, faculty members, and administrative departments. For continuous improvement, faculties are required to adopt certain policies to have a formal system to deal with student complaints, to handle resistance to change among faculty staff and administrative personnel, to think of strategies for dealing with the bureaucracy, and to realize the importance of suggesting new leadership recruitment policy that permits selection/promotion according to achievements rather than seniority.

2- At the national level, it is obvious that HE current policy frameworks are undergoing reforms and quality is an important consideration in these reforms. The main key terms of the higher education policies in these reforms is capacity building, relevance, sustainability, and human resource development. In general, QA processes pointed out to the importance of measuring their effect on learning outcomes for different educational

programs. An orientation is evident toward the participation in the AHELO program supported by OECD to assess graduates for their achievement of learning outcomes in the fields of economics, engineering and the mastering of generic skills. They also pointed to the importance of accountability, training of potential calibers, and finding alternative means for financing HE. A number of other policies were implemented as a result of QA processes such as reducing the number of academic programs in faculties of Agriculture, increasing the number of enrolled graduate students in faculties of Education and having new programs in HE for Malaysian students in faculties of Medicine. In general, the way in which policies can be translated into action necessitates articulation of QA issues explicitly in such policies.

Requirements for a sustainable QA system may include:

1- Adequate capacity development that is focused on developing a well trained manpower base which will take forward the move to assure quality in HE.

2- Decentralizing existing QA mechanisms and moving towards a stakeholder-based QA culture.

3- Involving students in QA process.

4- Continuous internal evaluation of the robustness of QA systems.

5- Innovative approaches and formal system to handle bureaucracy & resistance to change.

6- Sustainability of a performance appraisal system of the faculty staff and personnel.

7- Strong awareness of quality culture.

8- Making the system of external evaluation more effective.

9- Sharing experiences & intellectual exchange.

10- Focusing on feedback systems and their role in improvement.

11- Stressing the importance of improvement in graduate learning outcomes reflected by some indicators such as average number of years till graduation, success rate, labor market satisfaction, alumni office statistics).

12- Sustainability of the external evaluation provided by QA agencies independent of the provider of the educational service; MOHE.

Throughout QA and Accreditation Projects there was cooperation between MOHE and The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), UK. Some faculties used the academic standards set by QAA as a benchmark for improving their academic programs. Consultants from QAA helped in transferring their expertise to other reviewers during the developmental engagement phase early onto the QAAP. The cooperation between NAQAAE and universities for assuring quality can be manifested through the development of National Academic Reference Standards (NARS), academic standards for the graduate programs, the norms planning for infrastructure and human resources, self-study standards, the national standards for academic practice of faculty members and providing professors to act as experts for NAQAAE.

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