



INQAAHE
II Global Trends in Tertiary
Education Quality Assurance

II Global Trends in TE Quality Assurance: Challenges & Opportunities

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Outline

- ❑ Introduction to the Global Trends
- ❑ II Global Trends: The Methodology & The Scope
- ❑ The Team Behind It
- ❑ Key Findings
- ❑ Challenges & Opportunities
- ❑ Acknowledgements



The INQAAHE Flagship Project



The Global Trends in TE Quality Assurance : emergence & evolution



INQAAHE

INQAAHE & UNESCO

UNESCO & INQAAHE

UNESCO

UNESCO



2nd Global Study

External & Internal QA

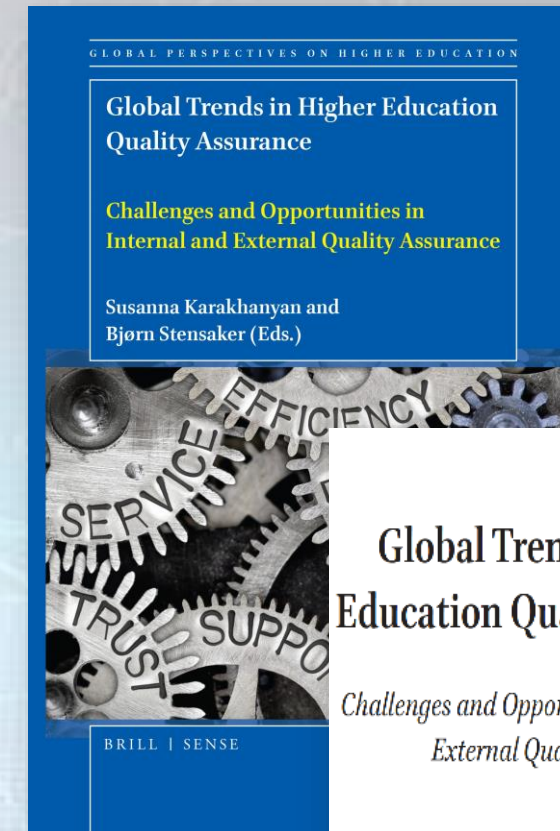
1st Global Study
Mixed-method approach

Scoping Studies:
Survey based

External QA

The 1st Global Study: key findings & uses

- Historical developments and contexts
- Global and regional developments affecting the EQA and IQA of tertiary education
- Global trends in external and internal quality assurance in terms of **legitimacy/trust, efficiency and relevance** by
 - endeavoring to link with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, especially goal 4 on Education and the extent to which QA is supporting promotion of the Goal;
 - exploring the extent to which the qualifications frameworks are supported by quality assurance and promote recognition of qualifications;
 - examining the extent to which quality assurance (internal and external) supports measurement of teaching and learning and achievement of the intended learning outcomes across the diversity of delivery modes, research and knowledge development.



Global Trends in Higher Education Quality Assurance

*Challenges and Opportunities in Internal and
External Quality Assurance*

Edited by

Susanna Karakhanyan and Bjørn Stensaker

II Global Study: the purpose and scope

Overall Objective

To explore, observe and interpret global trends in internal and external quality assurance of tertiary education in terms of ***efficiency, relevance, and transformative power*** of QA provisions globally and regionally.



Specific Objectives

To conduct an in-depth study on the TE landscape and state of the art in internal and external QA

To better understand the trends and challenges of higher learning and needs peculiar to each region

To explore the current trends in and effectiveness of the three helices: *quality assurance – qualifications frameworks – recognition of qualifications*

To identify new opportunities for QA to contribute to recognition of learning (formal and non-formal) and qualifications regionally and globally

To produce a synthesis report on the seven regions

To produce recommendations on future enhancements.

Key Concepts

Definition of Quality

Efficiency

Relevance of QA

Transformative Power

Western Europe



ENQA
EUA
ECA
ENAAEE, EASPA
EQANIE
INQAAHE
Member EQAPs

North America



CHEA
ASPA
CONAHEC
FIMPES
INQAAHE member
EQAPs

Asia-Pacific



APQN
AUN
PNQAHE
INQAAHE
member EQAPs

Eastern Europe



CEENQA
EUA
INQAAHE Member
EQAPs

Latin America & Caribbean



RIACES
CANQATE
REALCUP
CONAHEC
SIACES
INQAAHE
member EQAPs

Arab States



ANQAHE
AUA
AQAAIW
INQAAHE
member EQAPs

Africa



AfriQAN
EAQAN
RAFANAQ
AUA
CAMES
SAQAN
INQAAHE Member
EQAPs



***Regional and global engagement, on voluntary basis,
with a noble mission to contribute to the regional and
global TE quality cause***

~ 30

**Regional and international organizations, including
UNESCO IESALC Higher Education Office**

~ 80

Quality assurance and tertiary education experts

37

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21 NETWORKS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE BODIES IN TERTIARY EDUCATION AND 9 NETWORKS OF TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS SUPPORTED THE STUDY WITH DATA COLLECTION AND SHARING THE EXPERTISE

NETWORKS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE BODIES IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

AfriQAN: The African Quality Assurance Network

ANQAHE: Arab Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education

AQAAIW/IQA: Association of QA Agencies in the Islamic World

AQAN: ASEAN Quality Assurance Network

APQN: Asia-Pacific Quality Assurance Network

ASPA: Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors

AUN-QA: ASEAN University Network-Quality Assurance

CANQATE: Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education

CAMES: The African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education

CEENQA: Central and East European QA Network

CHEA: Council for Higher Education Accreditation

EAQAN: The East African Higher Education Quality Assurance Network

EASPA: European Alliance for Subject-Specific and Professional Accreditation and Quality Assurance

ENQA: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

ECA: European Consortium of Accreditation

EQANIE: European Quality Assurance Network for Informatics Education

ENAE: The European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education

RAFANAQ: Le Réseau Africain Francophone des Agences Nationales d'Assurance Qualité

RIACES: La Red Iberoamericana para el Aseguramiento de la Calidad en la Educación Superior

SAQAN: South African Quality Assurance Network

SIACES: The Ibero-American Quality Assurance System of Higher Education

NETWORKS/ASSOCIATIONS OF TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

AAU: Association of African Universities

AArU: Association of Arab Universities

AUN: ASEAN University Network

CRUP: Network of private universities in LAC

EUA: European University Association

CONAHEC: Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration

FIMPES: Network of private universities in Mexico

PNQAHE: Pakistan Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education

REALCUP: Network of private universities in LAC

*Organization of the book:
In publication with Brill|Sense*

Part I: the Global Trends

**5: UNESCO:
SDG& RCs**

4: IQA

3: EQA

**2: Global
Mega-
Trends**

1: Intro

2021-2025

Part II:

Regional Trends

*Organization of the book:
In publication with Brill|Sense*

North
America

11

LAC

10

Europe:
EE & WE

9

Asia-
Pacific

8

Arab
States

7

Africa

6

2021-2025

TOKYO

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The Methodology

Data collection spanned from 2023-2024

Literature Review & Document Analysis

UN directives
Regional frameworks of QA and QF
Relevant research
Reports from international and regional organizations dealing with tertiary education and QA

Baseline Data

Collected from 196 countries from diverse sources, sometimes through personal contacts with national regulators
Number of TEIs, QA bodies, recognized QA bodies, NQFs, signatories to UN Regional and Global Conventions

Case Studies

Some regions also carried out case studies to delve deeper into unique practices



Surveys

Surveys addressed to TEIs and QA bodies
Administered in seven languages
989 responses from TEIs
241 responses from QA bodies
99 countries represented

Focus Group Discussions

34 focus groups were conducted: 17 with EQABs and 17 with TEIs
82 countries across 7 regions
277 participants: EQA (130) and IQA of TEIs (147) participated in the focus groups
Focus groups were conducted in three languages: English, Spanish, French



Key Findings

What are the expectations from QA at large?

UN Millenium Development Goals 2015



**Universal access to primary
EDUCATION**

UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030



**Access to *QUALITY EDUCATION* at all levels,
including LLL**

QUALITY [and] EDUCATION are also the key terms in all UN directives related to qualifications recognition including the UN Regional and Global Conventions

- ❑ Out of 196 countries:
 - ❑ 132 have NQFs
 - ❑ 83 have ratified the UN Regional Recognition Conventions
 - ❑ 37 have ratified UN Global Recognition Convention

- ❑ Out of 5 UN Regional Recognition Conventions only the Lisbon Convention has achieved its optimum level of implementation
- ❑ Supporting structures for the Global Convention are yet to be established

Qualifications Recognition

Diversity

- Balancing harmonization with respect for diversity remains a critical challenge as systems work to develop standardised frameworks while preserving educational traditions

Digital Transformation

- Advanced technology is revolutionising recognition processes through blockchain-secured credentials, offering solutions particularly valuable for refugees and displaced persons

Innovative Quality Assurance Frameworks

- Innovative quality assurance frameworks must be more flexible to accommodate both traditional and emerging educational modalities like online learning and micro-credentials

Qualification Recognition

- Quality assurance is the cornerstone of qualifications recognition
- There is dire need for building trust between educational systems globally while promoting student mobility and cross-border opportunities

Recognition Mechanisms

- UNESCO regional and global conventions establish legal frameworks enabling countries to develop recognition mechanisms based on principles of non-discrimination, mutual trust, transparency, and fairness
- Yet, a quality assurance mechanism building trust at a global level, hence supporting the Global Convention implementation is still missing

Some Insights: Internal Quality Assurance of TEIs

*The effort that those who work in IQA put into protecting and enhancing the quality of tertiary education should be lauded
The analysis of IQA data demonstrates what it takes to keep the system strong from the inside, so that those on the outside can
be confident that students will be well-served, financial support is deserved, and the benefits to society are preserved*

Definition of Quality



- International norms for effective quality assurance have largely been incorporated into institutional IQA practice
- While definitions of quality and their interpretations vary significantly across the regions, their operationalisation, the tools, and standards used are remarkably similar
- Further, the definitions most cited are not obviously operationalised in actual processes and practices
- The definitions have a convenient vagueness that allow standards to be flexed in support of institutional narratives of successful educational activities

IQA Functions



- There is a notable trend of IQA functions centralisation and institution-wide standardisation of IQA policies and practices, which drives efficiency through reduction in duplication of functions
- However, it also suggests a tension with faculty autonomy
- It unwittingly encourages organisational silos by dissolving expertise among faculty for institutional priorities and replacing it with a narrow interpretation of QA functions

Relevance

- On the plus side of efficiency, IQA systems know the culture of the institution, are responsive and flexible with respect to local idiosyncrasies
- EQA lacks understanding of the specific institutional context, is not fit for purpose or does not fit the specific institutional profile
- The context for the external review and the institutional effort needed matters more than the fact that a review is required - a clear warning sign for QA when the constituents most intended to benefit are indicating frustration with the process rather than appreciation for the service
- The mismatch between IQA and international standards was interpreted as a flaw in the local standards, not an error in the relevance of the global model
- Relevance is seen more like an institution wanting to be heard, seen, and appreciated by idealised experts than it is about connecting with needs and interests specific to its regional geography

Efficiency

- IQA and EQA are often in tension, with a sense that the EQA is not worth the financial and human resource effort
- More well-established institutions felt they have less to gain from external reviews and suffer from accreditation fatigue
- The cost-benefit analysis of the external review is questioned to a large extent
- IQA is more about bureaucracy, is time consuming and the processes can be redundant with EQA demands

Transformative Power



- Rhetorically, yes IQA is a transformative activity, but specific examples of where and how it has been effective were rare
- Even still, in the real world, IQA has the ability to compel better activities and constrain worse ones, build bridges across institutional silos and is the focal point for international networks and the overall reputation of the institution.
- In most regions, IQA has a strong focus on student success - a good example of how IQA policies can balance institutional activity for the greater good and as a key aspect of transformative power
- Transformations are felt more at institutional level rather than at the level of the core - teaching and learning - that matters more

The Global Landscape of TE and its QA

Year	World population	Student population	Number of TEIs	Number of EQABs	Number of Recognised EQABs
1995	5.7 b	82 m (16%)	~21 k	~100	18 (USSE recognised)
2020	7.8 b	222 m (40%)	~60 k	332	121
2024	8.1 b	256 m (42%)	~100 k	801	178

❑ Around 15% (30 out of 196) of countries globally have yet to establish EQA systems at national level

❑ Regulatory frameworks of most countries have accreditation as a voluntary measure

❑ The capacity of QA to serve its role is quite limited with roughly less than ~50% of TEIs globally being covered by QA

❑ Even fewer TEIs are covered by EQA bodies that have been externally reviewed and recognised as reliable (22%)

Trends in External QA: turning challenges into opportunities

Definition of quality

- Still no convergence, vague or no links between the QA standards and quality definitions

EQA capacity:

- Constructive, when it comes to organisational matters
- Due to its reactive nature, the EQA capacity to respond to rapid diversification of TE is questioned
- Unbalanced coverage globally both in terms of internal and external QA

Shift in the roles – TEIs vs QA bodies - and the blame game

- TE community, faculty and staff are dissatisfied from the EQA practices, while the EQA bodies keep putting the blame on the lack of capacity of TE providers to take a proactive role.

Expansion of cross-border QA due to:

- The distrust of some governments in the capacity of their own national accreditors
- The lack of adequate EQA methods at national level to measure relevance of TE provisions
- Commercialisation trend of QA bodies

Politicisation:

- QA as a mechanism for governmental control, shaping educational policies to align with political agendas rather than academic excellence

Diversification of QA:

- Expansion of missions beyond initial purposes
- Rapid growth in professional accreditors whose primary scope of review is supposed to zoom into the professional standards, hence industry needs

Growth in the number and importance of QA networks:

- Promoting convergence through offering collaborative platforms to join efforts in facing challenges, exploring innovative solutions and offering capacity building in diversity of QA aspects

Dire need in ensuring trust and credibility of EQA

- Absence of a universally recognised regulatory framework has led to an increase in questionable accreditation practices, with some QA bodies offering low-quality or even fraudulent certifications

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