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Introduction

The core of quality assurance (QA) is that internal quality assurance (IQA) be conducted by the institutions themselves. IQA has typically developed in response to external quality assurance (EQA), necessitating the development of IQA within diverse external QA systems, across a variety of countries. On the positive side, this recent flourishing of QA has led to specialized human resource development and significantly improved postgraduate employment results (UNESCO, 2018). At the same time, the very diversity of academic fields and stakeholders also risks creating evaluation burdens and potential redundancies among IQA and EQA practices.

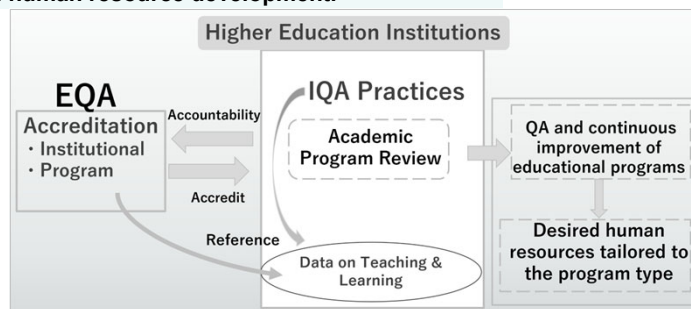
Our Research Project : International Collaborative Research

Purpose To develop an international program review/monitoring model in IQA practices that meaningfully aligns with EQA processes of different countries to enhance program-related human resource development.

Overview and Diagram of QA on which Our Research is Based

Title	International Collaborative Development of Higher Education Program Evaluation Models Linking External and Internal Quality Assurance
Fund Type	Fund for the Promotion of Joint International Research (Fostering Joint International Research (B))
International Team	PI: Toru Hayashi, Kanazawa University Japan: 6 researchers , Some Advisers The United States (US): 3 researchers The United Kingdom (UK): 2 researchers

Online Open Seminar
International Symposium
Publication



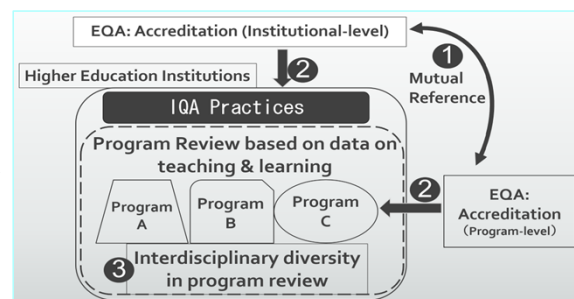
The Issues that Our Research Focuses On

Focusing on issues surrounding program review/monitoring within IQA practices, and the influence of EQA represented by institutional accreditation and specialized program accreditation.

- ① Role distribution between institutional accreditation and specialized program accreditation in EQA,
- ② Influences of EQA on IQA practices
- ③ Diversity among fields in educational program review/monitoring within IQA.

Mixed-Method Approach of Our Research

While investigating the mechanisms and operations of IQA in response to EQA at each higher education institution, we focus on program review processes by selecting specific specialized fields such as engineering, nursing, and social sciences.



Qualitative Investigation so Far

- UK: England (interviews at 5 universities during visits in 2019, 2024 + QAA interview)
- USA: Midwest (interviews at 2 universities in Michigan, 2 universities in Colorado during 2023 and 2024 visits + HLC interview)
- Southeast Asia: Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam (2024 Preliminary interviews regarding engineering education)

Quantitative Investigation

Survey Method
Target: Universities in UK, USA, Japan, Southeast Asia

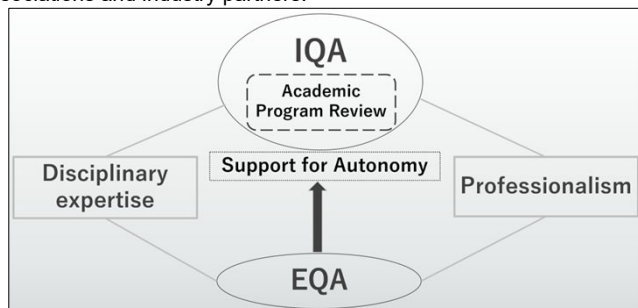
With focus on specific programs

- Engineering
- Nursing
- Social Sciences

Essential Ingredients Towards the Establishment of Sound Program-level QA Framework

Proposed Diagram Towards Sound Program-level QA

- The foundation of QA should be robust IQA practices at the degree-program level, aimed at cultivating program-specific, competent human resources. Strengthening this foundation requires a well-established mechanism that actively involves key stakeholders, such as academic associations and industry partners.



- With EQA providing foundational support, each higher education institution is expected to autonomously ensure quality through its own IQA system. In doing so, it is essential that institutions establish a framework within their IQA systems that enables them to review and evaluate both disciplinary expertise and professionalism.

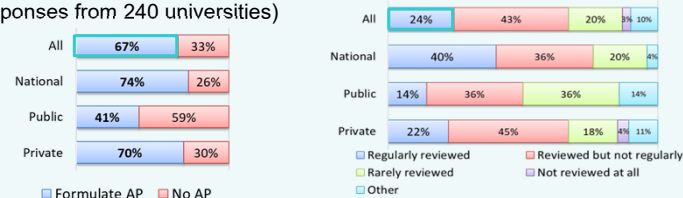
Future Direction

- By positioning the higher education system within society and fostering an ecosystem in collaboration with academic associations and industry, it becomes possible to outline a direction for human resource development that is integrated with stakeholders. This enables the creation of a versatile model that transcends disciplinary boundaries. The social integration of higher education that ensures both the "academic rigor" and "professional relevance" at the degree program level can be realized.

Issues that Japan Faces Towards Sound Program-level QA

Assessment Plan (AP): The internal policy on the assessment of student learning outcomes, including its purpose, common principles and scales for degree programs, qualitative standards to be achieved, and specific implementation methods.

Status of the Formulation of the AP in Japan by Fujiki et al. (2024)
(Responses from 240 universities)



67% of universities formulated an AP, only 24% of which regularly reviewed AP.

Other Issues Summarized by Hayashi (2025)

- The program's QA relies solely on internal self-assessment, lacking both external reference points and independent external evaluation.
- The application of the 'Disciplinary Reference Standards for Curriculum Design' developed by the Science Council of Japan remains inadequate.
- Program accreditation is very limited in Japan. Thus, higher education institutions are compelled to design and implement program review within the framework of their IQA systems.

References & Acknowledgement

References:

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- Hayashi, T. (2025). A Study of Disciplinary Quality Assurance Mechanism in Higher Education: Focusing on External Examiner System in the U.K. and Inspector System in Japan, *J. F. Oberlin University Journal of Advanced Research. Applied Human Sciences*, 5, 152-165.

Acknowledgement:

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