European Quality Assurance Forum, EQAF
Taking stock and looking forward
QAA and UCL Institute of Education
London, 19-21 November 2015

Quality assurance of cross-border higher education – an increased burden or fruitful cooperation between regions?
The European approach

Rafael Llavori

ANECA, Spain

Índice

Is there a European "approach" on QACBHE?

The QACHE Project a starting point:

- **The survey and country reports: basis for a diagnosis**

- **The Toolkit: a means not a panacea**

Conclusions

(Posible) Way forward

1. **Is there an European approach on QA of CBHE?**

Is there a European "approach" on QA-CBHE?

- European Higher Education Area is considered by QAAs and stakeholders as a "special" CBHE case

- Based on trust after more than 15 years of collaboration and definitions of tools

- More than national but not completely transnational: "a third way" in comparison with relations with other regions (Asia-Pacific, Latin America…)

The "Ianus dilemma"

Is there a European "approach" on QA-CBHE?

- The <u>risk</u> of CBHE outside Europe is not normally represented by bogus HEIs acting as a degree mill

- <u>Main risk</u> perceived by governments and QAAs: a HEI coming from countries with a recognised HE system offering qualifications without matching abroad the quality of the home-institution

- <u>Paradox</u>: main risk could came from the national QA system and the national legal framework

Is there a European "approach" on QA-CBHE?

- The main trend is to actively "push" and engage HE institutions abroad

- In combination to develop highly attractive national HE systems for international students

Paradox**:** *Not all the systems are as "open" to receive foreign providers as they are to encourage other systems to open their borders to receive their own institutions*

Openness is no always referred to the recognition of foreign qualifications

2. The QACHE Project: a starting point:

- **The survey and country reports: basis for a diagnosis**

- **The Toolkit: a means not a panacea**

Overview of the QACHE PROJECT

- Erasmus Mundus Project (QACHE) "Quality Assurance of Cross-border Higher Education"
- Coordinated by ENQA 2013-2015
- 5 QA Agencies and 3 QA networks

Overview of the QACHE PROJECT

- **Project's innovative aspect**
  - Creation of a common European QA approach to cross-border higher education
  - Contribution to the promotion of European higher education in other parts of the world.

- **Project's activities:**
  - Surveys (regional networks and European providers)
  - Country reports
  - Regional events
  - the Toolkit

After Pisarz and Llavori, 2015

The 2014 QAA survey: goals

- To map the role of agencies in QA of CBHE…if any

- Criteria and procedures used for QA of CBHE (if any)

- Identify good practices to be shared

- The impact of international guidelines (if any)

- To collect information for QACHE's outcomes:

  - The toolkit for QA agencies and HEIs

  - To develop CBHE QA principles and guidelines

The survey: technical details

1. 39 European QA agencies (ENQA members)

2. Responses: 33 QA agencies (100%)

3. Blank or incomplete: 6 questionnaires (18%)

4. Refusal to publish results: 12 QAAs (36%)

5. 38 questions gathered in 5 groups

6. Average number of response/question (38): 17

7. Nr questions below 11 responses: 3 responses

7. Average response/question 35: 24

The survey: "clusters" of questions

1. Tipology of CBHE practices and jurisdiction for QQAs
2. Specific QA regulations / framework of exported CBHE
3. Recognition/authorisation issues
4. Information and students' protection
5. QAAs collaboration and networking

Conclusions of the European QAAs Survey

- No news ≠ good news at all

- No news = lack of information

- Scattered data and frameworks to present them for comparative purposes

- We were at the beginning of the journey in terms of clarifying the setting of QA of foreign delivery

- A blurred picture that surely needs to be refocused and clarified

Conclusions of the European QAAs Survey: (2)

- <u>Challenges raised in the survey. ("Other business" cell)</u>

  - The cost of collaboration

  - Troubles on recognition (ENIC-NARIC colaboration)

  - Language barriers (EMOI-British Council or do we have other ways to do that)

  - Particularities from cultural contexts

  - Methodological QA differences

  - … (Fill-in at your will)….

Country reports:

- France
- Germany
- Spain
- United Kingdom

- Various scenarios showing the diversity of the European HEIs activities in CBHE

- Similar deregulated settings in QA of CBHE

- Different QA "attitudes" towards out-bound delivery

Blurred picture...or slightly out of focus?

How can contribute QACHE to focus the picture?

- QACHE's regional fora:
  - ✓ London, November 2014
  - ✓ Bahrain, December 2014
  - ✓ Macau, January 2015

- No blueprint but : QAAs networks are a useful framework to create favourable conditions for good practices in CBHE

- QA-networks can also act as an active clearing-house to promote transparency and share information about HE systems

- ENQA should align its strategy concerning recognition in the terms defined by the Lisbon Recognition Convention (1999)

- The QACHE Toolkit will be designed and used to push QA-networks to promote QA of CBHE

3. The QACHE Toolkit: a means not a panacea

THE QACHE TOOLKIT

- Primarily for QA agencies, but includes also recommendations for QA networks and HE providers

- Aims to complement the UNESCO/APQN Toolkit's (2006) effort to support the implementation of the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines (2004)

- Offers guidance on how QA agencies can promote mutual understanding, trust and cooperation required to 'share the responsibility of QA of CBHE

- Sets out general recommendations supported by explanatory text and good practices

- Respects the autonomy of different national systems

- Organised in *Information, Cooperation and Networks*

The Toolkit Part 1: *information sharing (QA agencies)*

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

- have clear and easily accessible policies for the quality assurance of inbound and outbound CBHE

- make easily accessible a list of those institutions which they have quality assured, including any eventual list of quality assured CBHE provision, either inbound or outbound, and associated reports

- seek to establish regular channels of communication to facilitate information sharing, strengthen mutual understanding, and explore ways in which to cooperate in the quality assurance of CBHE

THE QACHE TOOLKIT

The Toolkit Part 2: *cooperation in Quality Assurance*

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

- contact the counterpart agency whenever undertaking review of inbound or outbound CBHE

- seek ways to make use of or rely on each other's collected information or quality assurance decisions

- seek ways in which review activity of CBHE could be undertaken jointly

THE QACHE TOOLKIT

The Toolkit Part 3: *network of QAAs*

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

- facilitate information sharing about quality assurance and higher education systems in their member agencies' countries

- strengthen cooperation with other networks to promote policy dialogue, information sharing, and dissemination of good practice on the quality assurance of CBHE

- undertake projects and initiatives aimed at supporting agencies in implementing the recommendations included in this Toolkit.

The Principles behind the Toolkit:

- should be considered as a "**New Deal**" in terms of transparency and information sharing among QAAs and networks;

- **reinforces previous efforts** on QA of CBHE made by international organisations such as OECD and UNESCO;

- is an unique opportunity to "***mise en valeur" the existing QA mechanisms** in CBHE at the national or QAA level (avoid re-inventing the wheel1)

- **raises awareness** among QA bodies and networks to be active in QA assurance of CBHE

The Toolkit: some principles behind

- The Toolkit should be treated as a **point of reference** and a means of good practice within a broader international strategy of the organisation

- Such strategy should be **focused on the regional context** with practical actions and tasks and clearly linked to the OECD/UNESCO Guidelines.

- The Toolkit **cannot be used as an obligatory document** to be officially approved and ratified, but a **public compromise** before the public opinion and the international actors

- **New Deal but a fair deal**: within the international provision of HE the same standards should be matched (and quality assured?)

The Toolkit: some principles behind

- It **cannot be considered as a contract** binding the higher education institutions to accomplish particular QA procedures in the receiving country,

- **It is not a proxy QA procedure** that could replace its obligations with both its inbound and outbound bodies

- The Toolkit **should contribute to ensure** that QA of CBHE focusing on three different dimensions:

  - ✓ student protection,

  - ✓ the QA of the education delivered and

 - ✓ to inform local QA authorities and/or QA bodies

4.Conclusions

Some conclusions to be borne in mind (<u>not to comply with!</u>)

- QA should not be a the centre of CBHE, but can should be a diligent '*silent companion*'
- Student protection as a priority in dealing with QA-CBHE
- "Collateral damages" to students could result from bona fide HEIs and fair practices derived from lack of information
- Student protection vs market-driven practices?

- QAA networks as a trustworthy source of information for both students and (foreign) providers

- QAA networks as an useful tool of information for decision makers at the national and international level

- Cooperation with UNESCO transparency portal and similar initiatives (**remember the GIQAC Initiative**)

- Need to promote OECD/UNESCO Guidelines: <u>updated</u>?

- Need to develop good practices/broad guidelines: **QACHE's Toolkit**
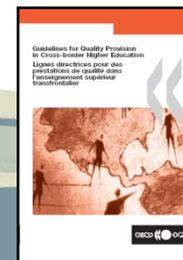
QA networks can strive for:

- a balance between public interest through information

- improving evidenced-trust among systems avoiding the traditional barriers and difficulties to internationalisation of HE

Do we need to reinvent the wheel discussing on QA of CBHE?

- We should make the most of the fora and the organisations working on these issues: UNESCO, OECD, World Bank…

- **GIQAC Project 2.0?**: UNESCO-World Bank/…

National QQAs as members in the networks can put forward agreements sharing responsibility on QA of CBHE

The QACHE approach– an increased burden or fruitful cooperation between regions?

Fitness for purpose?

Whatever initiative coming from QA networks will be accomplished, it has to be fit for purpose and flexible to meet different region's expectations and problems and *shared* by the regional stakeholders
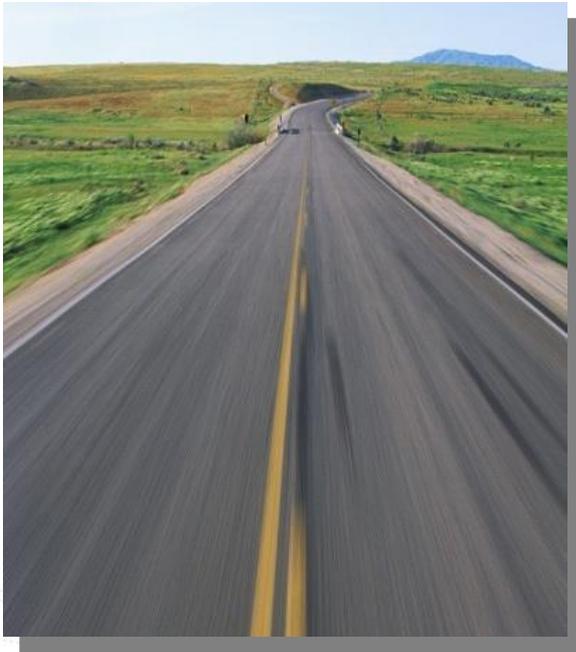
4. (Possible) Way forward

What's next ?

- An international debate on updating a new set of Principles/guidelines?

- To disseminate the Toolkit

- Are QAA agencies ready?

- What role for QAA networks? (if any)

- What is the role for multilateral bodies: EC, OECD, UNESCO, etc. (if any)

- What is the opinion of HEIs at this regard?

- Are governments ready to open the borders to all kind of providers and modes of provision?

What's next ?

- What is the role for the regional networks?: Think tanks fostering the political debate?

- Have the regional networks a road map for future trends in CBHE?

- Should the regional networks spearhead the process of the international activities of HEIs?

- Can the regional networks act as an informed partner on CBHE debates at the global level?

What's next ?

- (E.g) Should ENQA have a say/informed position on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) concerning the (not yet existing) agenda on educational services?

- Should APQN and the Latin American counterpart have a say/informed position on the Trans-Pacific Partnership signed in October 2015?

Thank you for your attention

rllavori@aneca.es