

Quality Assurance in Latin America

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Outline of the Presentation

- ▶ Background
- ▶ Quality Assurance in Latin America
- ▶ Case Examples: Nicaragua and Chile
- ▶ Trends
- ▶ Lessons learned

Background



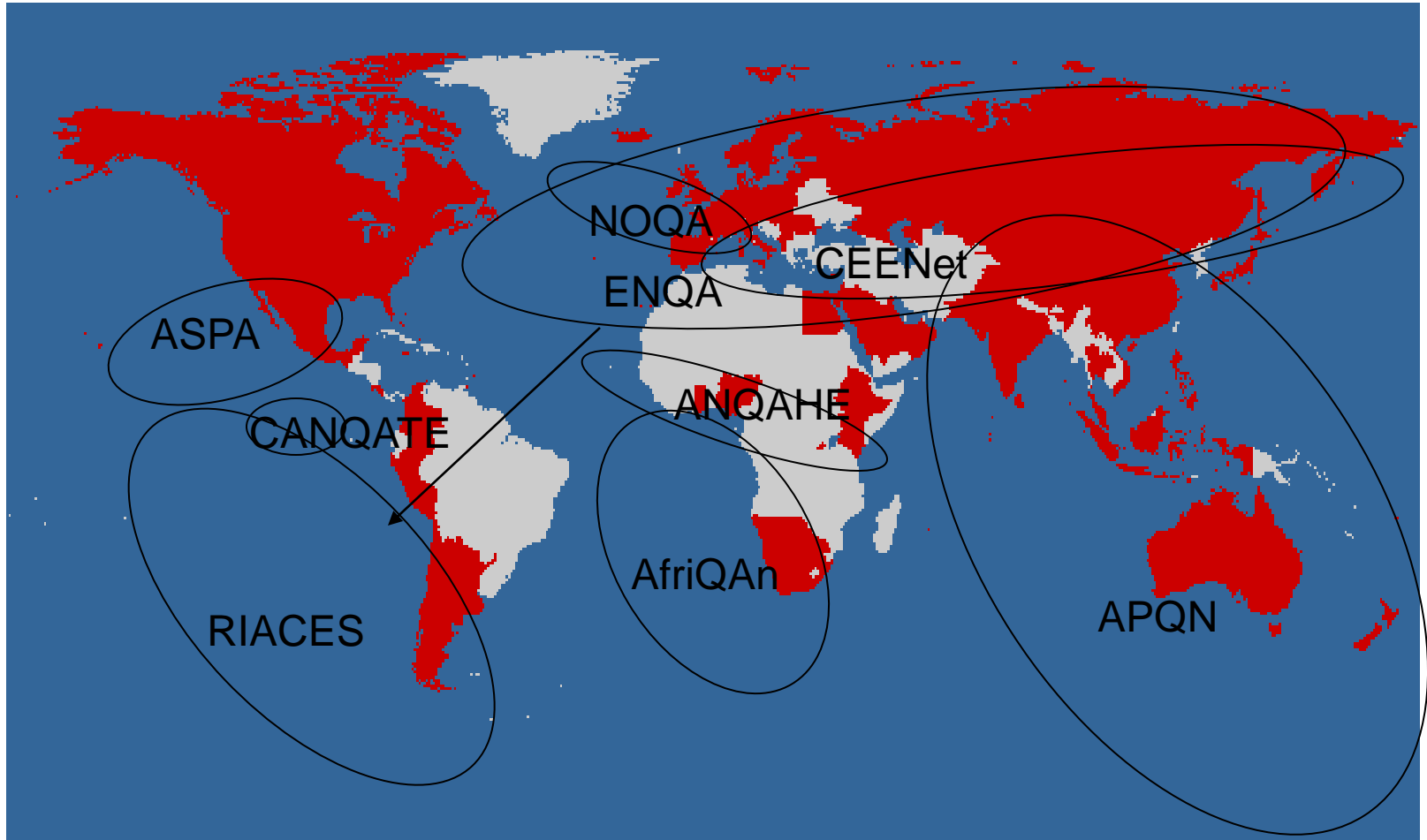
**“Quality assurance of higher education
has become
an important global trend.”**

“Nearly half of all countries worldwide have
created quality assurance mechanisms, of
one type or another, during the last decade
or two.”

IIEP/ UNESCO

(International Institute for Educational Planning)

QA AROUND THE WORLD



In addition, CHEA and other bodies have recognized an increase in:

- cross-border higher education
- quality assurance and accreditation activities which cross national borders.

Latin America (LA)

ALL SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE SPEAKING COUNTRIES IN SOUTH, CENTRAL AND NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN.



Argentina
Bolivia
Brazil
Chile
Columbia
Costa Rica
Cuba
El Salvador
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Guatemala
Honduras
Mexico
Nicaragua
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
Uruguay
Venezuela

History of Higher Education (HE) in Latin America

- ▶ The first institutions of HE in Latin America were established in the 16th century by Spain.
- ▶ Public and private universities were modeled after their counterparts in Spain
- ▶ Following independence, these institutions were in most cases guaranteed public support.
- ▶ These universities functioned autonomously for centuries, with little external oversight. Sometimes this autonomy was formally written into legislation.

De Wit et.al 2005

Historical Perspective on QA in LA

- ▶ Flagship universities played a directive role
- ▶ Responsibility for quality has historically resided with the institution.
- ▶ Development of national/regional QA mechanisms in Higher Education began in the 1990s.

“The end of the 1990s in Latin America saw the emergence of the ‘Evaluating State’ as a consequence of a variety of diverse factors”
(Fernández Lamarra, 2009)
- ▶ Focus on accountability increased with dramatic changes in education seen in LA as elsewhere in the world.

Changes in HE Increase Concern re QA

- **Market factors** demanding work force with increased education/skills
- More students seeking HE / **greater heterogeneity of students**
- Proliferation of private HE institutions to fill this need / high **variability of quality** among HE providers
- Higher student, professional mobility / globalization
- **Decreased funding** for education & **diversification** of funding streams
- HE moves to center stage in most societies; students more **active/vocal consumers**

QA in Latin America



CINDA study

- ▶ The Inter-university Center of Development conducted a detailed study of HE in LA 2006–2007. Participants from 13 Latin American countries as well as Spain and Portugal provided information about HE, including QA agencies and practices.
- ▶ Information on QA was updated in 2009 through Project Alfa
- ▶ National Information is presented in handouts.



Concepts of QA in HE

There is a diversity of perspectives and emphases:
“For academics it refers to knowledge; for employers to competences; for students to usability (employability); for society to respectable and competent citizens; for the State, according to the conception assumed, it can vary from aspects linked with the social and human development to the efficiency and the costs and requirements of human capital”

(Fernandez Lamarra, 2007, p.37)

For QA agencies, the focus is on consistency, in terms of fitness for purpose and fitness of purpose

CINDA report:

- ▶ “Each country of Latin American has been charting its own course and exploring what forms of evaluation and accreditation of institutions and programs is best suited to their needs and traditions, legal, and academic practices. **The result is that there is now a huge variety of national experiences,** which serve as the basis for many processes of learning and sharing.”

CINDA, 2007, p. 296.

A Diversity of Models

▶ Different purposes:

- **Quality control** (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador)
- **Accountability** (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Dominican Republic)
- **Improvement** (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico)

▶ Focus

- **Institutions** (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Dominican Republic)
- **Programs** (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico)

A Diversity of Models

▶ Types of agencies:

- **Autonomous national agency** or agencies, created legislatively, supported by public funds ((Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay)
- **Government** (Ministry of Education) (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico)
- **Consortium of Universities**, Public or Private (Bolivia, Costa Rica, Panama)
- **Multiplicity of agencies** carrying out different aspects of QA (e.g. Columbia)

▶ Methodology

- **Self-Study**
- **External Evaluation/ Verification**
- **Evaluation** of Student Learning (national exams)

“

A Continuum of Development

- Countries with **established, consolidated** systems of QA: Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, El Salvador
- Countries with **moderate degree** of consolidation / experience in QA: Brazil, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Uruguay, Peru, Panama
- Countries with **minimal functional** QA mechanisms or in the process of legislating QA mechanisms : Venezuela, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Bolivia, Ecuador

Case of Nicaragua



Case of Nicaragua

- ▶ Public Law 89 (1990)
- ▶ Establishment of CNU (National Council of Universities) comprised of 10 HEIs
- ▶ Funded by 6% of 18% of national budget
- ▶ ~ 50 Universities and 100+ other HEIs:
- ▶ 7% of population possess degree (2005)
- ▶ Few doctoral level teachers, minimal involvement in research

Recent Progress in Nicaragua

- ▶ 2001 IDB loan to Govt. to facilitate QA in HE
- ▶ All 10 “old” schools and 23 “new private” schools completed self–studies and external evaluations
- ▶ CNEA (National Council of Evaluation and Accreditation) was created
- ▶ Some schools have sought private / foreign / international accreditation
- ▶ Concurrently, Central American QA agencies have developed which serve to raise the bar in Nicaragua and drive further progress.

Case of Chile

- 1990: Establishment of licensing processes for new, private HEIs, Consejo Superior de Educación → regulation of the system
- 1999: Establishment of Comisión Nacional de Acreditación, CNAP, in charge of program accreditation for public and private autonomous HEIs. → programs reviewed against national standards, with participation of international reviewers
- 2001: Development of institutional accreditation, with a quality audit approach

Case of Chile (2)

2004: CNAP was reviewed by INQAAHE and found to meet international guidelines

2006: QA law approved, creation of a national commission for QA, CNA-Chile

2008: Authorization of private QA agencies for program accreditation

Outcomes:

- ▶ Greater legitimacy of private HEIs
- ▶ Over 600 programs have been assessed
- ▶ All universities have gone through the accreditation process
- ▶ Links between accreditation and public funding

Regional Initiatives

- ▶ Central America:
 - SICEVAES 1998 Institutional accreditation. Developed self-study, site visit manuals. 100+ HEI completed self-studies.
 - Program accreditation bodies covering the whole region, for architecture and engineering (ACAAI), agriculture and natural resources (ACESAR), and graduate education (ACAP) (created in this decade)
 - CCA: Accreditation for accreditation agencies (2003)

Regional Initiatives

ARCU–Sur (formerly, MEXA):

- ▶ Agreement among the MERCOSUR countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay) plus Bolivia and Chile
- ▶ Generated shared criteria for evaluation of programs in medicine, engineering, agronomy; dentistry, veterinary medicine, nursing, architecture.
- ▶ Agreement on procedures of evaluation and accreditation applied by national agencies
- ▶ Mutual recognition of accreditation decisions
- ▶ Recognition of degrees awarded by accredited courses
- ▶ Accreditation as fast-track to mutual recognition of degrees (bilateral agreements)

Regional Initiatives

RIACES (Iberoamerican Network for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education):

Purposes and actions:

- ▶ Capacity building
- ▶ Harmonization of standards and procedures following the lead of ARCU–Sur
- ▶ Guidelines for QA agencies, handbook for self assessment of agencies, external reviews

Trends



- ▶ Development of complex systems (with multiple purposes related to QA)
- ▶ From accreditation of programs to accreditation of institutions
- ▶ Increased links with other policy mechanisms, including funding
- ▶ Accreditation of accreditors / quality standards for accreditation agencies
- ▶ Regional coordination / cooperation which maintains national sovereignty

Funding

- ▶ Generally, weak link between QA performance and public funding BUT
- ▶ Some countries have introduced accountability requirements through QA and other mechanisms (Argentina, Chile, Mexico)
- ▶ Funding through international agencies for human development
- ▶ QA Agencies are funded by the state but are autonomous

Partially drawn from García de Fanelli, 2009

Lessons learned



Effectiveness

Social Legitimacy/effectiveness is associated with:

- ▶ Broad participation, led by academic institutions
- ▶ Standards are autonomously developed but linked with national policies and priorities
- ▶ Independence of accreditation decisions from governments, HEIs and other pressures or interests
- ▶ Combine autonomy (institution's concern with Q) with accountability (openness to external scrutiny)
- ▶ Tied to strategic planning of program/institution
- ▶ Openness to the international environment

Dissent:

- ▶ Constitutional Challenges: Nicaragua, Bolivia, Ecuador
- ▶ Private Colleges (*Source: Gregorutti, 2009*)

Positive Impact

- ▶ Significant progress made in short time
- ▶ Reframing autonomy as empowerment
- ▶ Culture of accountability and responsible management
- ▶ Responsivity to input from stakeholders
- ▶ Better internal and external lines of communication
- ▶ Greater use of strategic planning and outcome monitoring – “culture of action steps”
- ▶ On academic side: emerging concern for retention, student success, professional development for teachers
- ▶ Limited creation / continuation of diploma mills

Eduardo González, 2005; Fernández Lamarra, 2009

Risks / Needs / Negative Impacts

- ▶ Distribution of Resources: Risks associated to direct links between QA and public funding
- ▶ Bureaucratization : “paper institutions”
- ▶ Culture of compliance / cosmetic Changes
- ▶ Need for sustainable assessment methodologies
- ▶ QA criteria may lead to unwanted standardization of programs
- ▶ QA may restrict important changes and innovation

Eduardo González, 2005; Fernández Lamarra, 2009

Needs and Challenges

- ▶ Establish or improve national and institutional databases, often incomplete, unreliable or incompatible
- ▶ Develop mechanisms and tools to measure the real impact of QA processes on the quality of management and information

To meet these needs, the work of CINDA continues in its third phase: Alfa III

Thank you!

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