



Quality Assurance Review in Arab Countries

Labib Arafeh¹

Abstract

The ultimate goal of the paper is to assess the progress of quality assurance (QA) in higher education (HE) in Arab countries. This includes the establishment, structure and affiliation, accomplishment, future strategic plans, finance and role of the national QA agencies or commissions, or relevant ministerial departments. Thus, the national as well as regional trends and status of higher education quality assurance will be obtained and updated. The paper scans and reports the international trends in QA, most of the regional QA initiatives in the last decade, as well as the Arab countries' national profiles. This assessment is an analytical and comparative literature and desk review-based study of the currently available national QA institutions and initiatives in all Arab countries that are members of the Arab League. Thus, this study depends heavily on the information available on websites, the published documentation provided by the individual national QA bodies, and any other published QA initiatives.

There has been some promising progress in the field of QA in higher education in a very limited number of Arab countries with different levels, and the rest are obviously lagging behind. However, all of these efforts are not sufficient in the world of knowledge, competitiveness, rapid transformation and rising demand for enrolment. It is worth mentioning that few QA institutions have presentable, clear, interactive websites such as CAA in the UAE and AQAC in Palestine where information, lists of documents, procedures/guidelines, reports, accredited institutions of higher education and programs in two languages (Arabic and any other foreign language). It has been observed that all QA bodies use QA terminologies, such as accreditation and auditing, loosely and sometimes interchangeably. In conclusion, the paper points out that Arab countries have, to some extent, achieved a reasonable but insufficient level of QA promotion, and must urgently do much to promote a QA culture and enhancement within higher education institutions themselves, self and external institutional and program evaluation for both state as well as private universities.

I. Introduction

The twenty-first century has begun with an extraordinary demand for HE, (the Arab World is expected to increase from 15% in 1996 to 20% in 2010), and an increased awareness of its vital importance for socio-cultural and economic development, and for building a future where

¹ Associate Prof., Al-Quds University, Palestine, E-mail: larafeh@eng.alquds.edu

younger generations need to attain new skills, knowledge and principles. HE is faced with great challenges and difficulties related to improved staff development, skills-based training, QA and enhanced teaching, research and services, program relevancy, graduates' employability, financing, establishment of efficient co-operative agreements, equitable access and regional/international co-operation. QA refers to review procedures designed to safeguard academic standards, and promote learning opportunities of acceptable quality for students. The 1998 HE World Conference² (WCHE) defined HE quality as a multidimensional concept that should embrace all its functions (teaching and programs, research, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, community services and the academic environment). It drew attention to internal self-evaluation and external review, and recommended the establishment of independent national bodies. It underlined respect for institutional, national and regional contexts to allow for diversity and avoid uniformity without losing international dimensionality, and the integral part of stakeholders in the institutional evaluation process. Moreover, it integrated the HE stakeholders in the institutional evaluation process that may identify internal and external QA types. Internal QA ensures that a HE Institution (HEI) / program has policies and mechanisms in place to meet its own objectives and standards. External QA is performed by an external organization, which assesses operation of the HEI / its programs to determine whether it meets the predefined standards.

The Arab Countries have realized the importance of reviewing their HE systems. Arab Ministers of HE and SR (AMHESR) called for establishing national QA institutions to address HE QA in their regular meeting in Cairo in 2001³. UNESCO had organized a meeting of HE partners in 2003, to evaluate progress in implementing the World Declaration, to measure the impact that the Conference has had on the development of HE at the world level. The report stated that Jordan established a national board for accreditation in 1996 to license new HEIs and approve their programs. Other countries (Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Palestine) have established QA bodies. Furthermore, some universities have started a self-assessment process, while others have sought accreditation by international accreditation agencies. AMHESR recommended a study on establishing an independent Arab-reliance in 2003⁴, emphasized in 2005, and its findings were presented in 2007⁵. The study "Feasibility study on the forms of cooperation for QA in HE in the Arab States", published in 2008⁶, recommended the creation of an Arabic Establishment for Program QA (AEPQA). The proposed AEPQA will have a supervisory and funding board of trustees, a managerial executive office and facilitating commissions including capacity building and will start with Education, Business Administration, Agriculture and Architecture. ALECSO published its plan for developing education in the Arab countries in 2008 (ALECSO, 2008) in which it called for setting Arab standards for quality and academic excellence.

The methodology of this review is based on a desk and Internet review of published QA related initiatives and information. QA regional initiatives in Arab Countries will be briefly covered, followed by brief national profiles' presentations. Discussion and the main findings will be presented in the fourth section while section five will conclude the paper.

² http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/wche/declaration_eng.htm

³ http://www.alecso.org.tn/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=684&Itemid=601&lang=ar

⁴ Meeting of HE Partners, Paris, June 2003, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013130341/001303/e.pdf>

⁵ http://www.alecso.org.tn/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=928&Itemid=325&lang=ar

⁶ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org>

II. Regional Initiatives

An important international body that includes regional QA networks and national agencies is the International Network for QA Agencies in HE (INQAHE)⁷. INQAHE's main functions include the sharing of information, developing theory and practice in assessing, improving and maintaining HE quality; and developing a Good Practice database, a QA Clearinghouse and a QA professional qualification.

An obvious trend is formulating regional QA networks. America has the *Ibero-American Network for QA in HE* (Red Iberoamericana para la Acreditación de la Calidad de la Educación Superior (RIACES)⁸, the Caribbean Area Network for QA in Tertiary Education (CANQATE)⁹, the Association of Specialized & Professional Accreditors (ASPA)¹⁰, and the Canadian Association of Accrediting Agencies (AAA)¹¹. Europe has the European Association for QA in HE (ENQA)¹², Central and Eastern European Network of QA Agencies in HE (CEEN)¹³, the Nordic QA (NOQA)¹⁴, the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA)¹⁵ and the Eurasian QA Network (EAQAN)¹⁶. Africa has set up the African Network for QA (AfriQAn)¹⁷ and Asia has established the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN)¹⁸.

The Arab region has witnessed several similar and overlapped QA initiatives. These include the UNDP HE (subject assessment) project exploiting the British QA Agency's guidelines for the Enhancement of QA and Institutional Planning targeting universities¹⁹ in 14 Arab Countries. 73 reviewed programs in Computer Science (15 universities), Business Administration (16 universities), Education (23 universities), and Engineering (19 universities). Furthermore, the project has generated regional agendas of academic reform, and has built QA regional capacities of experienced peer reviewers. In Palestine for example, several UNDP Project-trained evaluators have been involved in institutional and national committees to review programs, establish institutional QA units, and lobby to promote QA issues at their institutions and in their communities at large.

An independent, Arab, non-profit NGO "Arab Society for QA in Education (ASQAE)" was established²⁰. ASQAE supports studies to prepare regional academic reference standards for teaching Arabic language and Islamic curricula²¹. The Association of Arab Universities (AAU) had produced institutional framework guidelines for self and external assessment, measurements and general conditions for assessment and accreditation and established the Arab Council for QA

⁷ <http://www.inqahe.org/index.php>

⁸ <http://www.riaces.net/home.aspx>

⁹ <http://www.canqate.org/>

¹⁰ <http://www.aspa-usa.org/>

¹¹ <http://www.aaac.ca/>

¹² <http://www.enqa.eu/>

¹³ <http://www.ceenetwork.hu/>

¹⁴ <http://www.noqa.net/>

¹⁵ <http://www.eaconsortium.net/>

¹⁶ <http://www.eaqan.org/>

¹⁷ <http://www.aau.org/qa/>

¹⁸ <http://www.apqn.org/>

¹⁹ www.undp-equip.org

²⁰ www.asqae.net.eg/

²¹ Minutes of the meeting of Policy Dialogues between various QA initiatives in the Arab Region on the 27th of June 2008, Cairo, Egypt published at http://english.anqahe.org/cms.php?id=publication_details&pub_id=8

and Accreditation²². The Arab QA and Accreditation Network for Education (ARQAANE)²³, which is an international non-profit independent association established in Belgium, aims at raising the Arab world education's quality. ARQAANE provides accreditation services in association with the Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation (FIBAA)²⁴. The Arab Network for QA in HE (ANQAHE)²⁵ is a non-profit nongovernmental organization which aims to create a mechanism for the Arab Countries to exchange and disseminate good QA practices and information, develop standards to establish / support QA institutions, and strengthen cooperation with QA counterparts in different countries. ANQAHE's full membership is restricted to national / regional QA bodies and HE institutions. Currently, it includes eight QA bodies (Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and United Arab Emirates).

International donors have contributed in promoting HE QA. These include the World Bank-funded HE projects in Egypt, Tunisia, Palestine and Morocco. In partnership with UNESCO, the World Bank has launched a Global Initiative for QA Capacity (GIQAC)²⁶ to support HE in developing countries. The GIQAC project supported policy dialogues between all QA regional initiatives and a scoping study to define the needs of the national QA organizations. The British Council²⁷ funded a regional QA activity in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) aiming at producing common guidelines to facilitate developing regional standards and subject benchmarks to redesign the curriculum, develop approaches to learning/teaching and assess student performance against desired learning outcomes. Participating countries are Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Morocco, Tunisia and Libya. It is expected to have 10 Academic Reference Standards for medicine, dentistry, physics, literature, law, engineering, technical engineering, IT, pharmacy, and languages. The German DAAD's activities focus on international dialogues via conferences, visits and professional training in self and external evaluation and capacity building²⁸.

III. National Profile

Among the few previous studies on QA bodies in the Arab Countries include the *QA in the Arab Universities* (El Amine, ed. 2005) that addressed practices of QA in HE in countries including Jordan and Egypt and universities in Lebanon, Sudan, Morocco, and the Arab Open University. Upon request of AMHESR, UNESCO conducted a feasibility study on the best ways and means of cooperation and coordination between Arab countries to ensure the quality of HE (El Amine et al, 2009)²⁹. The study described and analyzed the QA status in 13 Arab States. The study proposed to establish a regional program QA establishment. The latest regional study³⁰ was the scoping study to map and define the state and needs of national QA organizations in the Arab region against international good practices accomplished by ANQAHE. The main findings include a lack of, and a need to establish, national QA bodies in most of the Arab Countries.

The presented study, in the following sections, reviews the QA status at all Arab Countries³¹;

²² www.aaru.edu.jo

²³ www.arqaane.org

²⁴ <http://www.fibaa.de/en>

²⁵ <http://english.anqahe.org/>

²⁶ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015159197/001591/E.pdf>

²⁷ www.britishcouncil.org/egypt

²⁸ <http://www.daad.de/en/index.html>

²⁹ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018182395/001823/a.pdf>

³⁰ <http://english.anqahe.org/>

³¹ <http://www.arableagueonline.org/>

namely, the Democratic and Popular Republic of **Algeria**; Kingdom of **Bahrain**, Union of **Comoros**, Republic of **Djibouti**, Arab Republic of **Egypt**, Republic of **Iraq**, Hashemite Kingdom of **Jordan**, State of **Kuwait**, Republic of **Lebanon** Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, **Libya**, Islamic Republic of **Mauritania**, Kingdom of **Morocco**; Sultanate of **Oman**, State of **Palestine**, State of **Qatar**, Kingdom of **Saudi Arabia**, Republic of **Somalia**, Republic of **Sudan**, Arab Republic of **Syria**, Republic of **Tunisia**, United Arab Emirates, and Republic of **Yemen**. National profiles are briefly presented below.

1. ALGERIA

HE is provided by universities, university centres, national schools and institutes, and higher teacher training institutes (Ecoles Normales Supérieures), which fall under the responsibility of MHESR and institutes run by other Ministries. The Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique (MHESR)³² approves a standardized curriculum for each field of study. A National Conference of Universities was created in 2000 which is headed by the Minister of HE. A council for the evaluation and/or accreditation of HE was considered in Algeria, in 2003. Two of the Algerian universities are members of a consortium (EvQua-Meda Project)³³ that aims at self evaluation, external evaluation and strategic reflection on QA starting with Engineering education. A related initiative is the UNESCO Chair in Evaluation of HE in Algeria, established at the University of Mentouri-Constantine³⁴. It aims to promote an integrated system of research, training, information and documentation in the field of sciences of education, and to serve as a means of facilitating collaboration between high-level, internationally recognized researchers and teaching staff of the University and other national institutions and in Arab States. Some of the QA functions are accomplished by a governmental committee that reports to the Minister of MHESR³⁵ to approve a centralized curriculum rather than accredit them. Recently, some QA processes were encountered to cope with the educational system changes to the European LMD scheme as reported at the MHESR Arabic and French languages website³⁴. Any solid document to reflect QA structure, reviews, guidelines framework, or tools could not be cited.

2. Bahrain

Bahrain's Ministry of Education has a HE Council that has SR and accreditation and evaluation³⁶ directorates. Bahrain has a National Education Reform³⁷ classified into four initiatives including the establishment of an Independent QA Authority (QAA) to promote quality throughout all educational levels that reports to the Council of HE. In 2008, an independent QA Authority for Education and Training (QAAET)³⁸ was established and affiliated to the Council of Ministers. QAAET operates under the direction of a Board of Directors which has the overall responsibility for the conduct and strategic direction of the organization. QAAET's main partners include Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA)³⁹, Nord Anglia and Cambridge International Exams in UK.

³² <http://www.mesrs.dz>

³³ http://www.ciep.fr/evquameda/www.evquameda.org/ANG_Presentation.htm

³⁴ <http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/>

³⁵ <http://www.AAU.org> accessed on 24 Mar., 2009

³⁶ <http://www.education.gov.bh/english/organization/index.asp> accessed on 24 Mar., 2009

³⁷ http://195.216.196.131/~educatio/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4&Itemid=5 accessed on 24 Mar., 2009

³⁸ http://english.anqahe.org/files/ArabLeague08/ArabLeague08_Bahrain_QAAET.pdf accessed on 24 Mar., 2009

³⁹ <http://www.auqa.edu.au/> accessed on 24 Mar., 2009

QAAET has reported conducting reviewing visits to HEIs. However, no guidelines, procedures, nor related QA documents have been published at the QAAET website⁴⁰. The author could not find any relative documents, reports to support its claims of site visits. Furthermore, QAAET is an independent QA body responsible for all levels of education.

3. Comoros

Comoros is a small poor country, discontinued territory with no university⁴¹. Its socio-economic, institutional and political instability seriously obstructs development. Comoros faces more urgent challenges to tackle than QA in HE.

4. Djibouti

Djibouti is a small country where Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de l'Enseignement Supérieur (Ministry of National and HE, MNHE)⁴² is the responsible body for accreditation. MNHE established a Comité Supérieur de l'Education (Higher Committee for Education (CSE)) to supervise the governmental Djibouti University⁴³ following the European LMD scheme.

5. Egypt

QA initiatives in Egypt began with a World Bank-funded HE project in 2002⁴⁴. One component was the QA and Accreditation Project (QAAP). In its first phase, A National Committee for QA and Accreditation was established to address the QA and accreditation of HEIs and programs. During the voluntarily evaluation of faculties at several universities capacity building was accomplished through self and external evaluation. In 2007, the National Authority for QA and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE)⁴⁵ was established by a Presidential decree as an independent governmental body that reports directly to the Prime Minister. NAQAAE is the accrediting body for all Egyptian educational institutions. NAQHHE has a clear published mission, objectives, organizational structure with an internal QA unit to serve all national educational institutes. NAQAAE has the authorization to take the necessary measures to set a strategic plan for educational QA towards institutional evaluation and accreditation, develop instruments to promote educational quality awareness among academic institutions, and set up evaluation measures for the institutional fulfilment of accreditation standards. NAQAAE has accomplished several capacity building trainings, developed and published QA and accreditation related standards and guidelines⁴⁷ in Arabic and some in English. NAQAAE aims at undertaking QA Review, Program, Institution, Evaluation, Audit, Assessment, and Accreditation every 5 years. Its financial resources include membership fees, grants, and accreditation fees. There is no published evidence of being accredited by an external QA body.

6. Iraq

Iraq is still suffering from daunting social, economic, and political problems after the 2003 invasion. Documentations that address the Iraqi QA status are few including QA Strategies of HE in Iraq and Kurdistan (Kaghed et al., 2009). The Iraqi MHESR's implemented two strategies to

⁴⁰ <http://www.qaa.edu.bh/> accessed on 4 May, 2009

⁴¹ www.alecso.or.tn accessed on 23 Mar., 2009.

⁴² www.education.gov.dj accessed on 24 Mar., 2009.

⁴³ <http://www.univ.edu.dj/> accessed on 24 Mar., 2009.

⁴⁴ www.qaap.net accessed on 25 Mar., 2009.

⁴⁵ www.naqaae.org accessed on 4 May, 2009.

improve QA in HE. The first was a pilot study at the University of Babylon that initiated a quality development process focusing on capacity building of senior academics and quality reviewers. The second strategy was implemented in the Kurdistan Region Governorate that conducted an initial evaluation of quality practices in Kurdistan Region Governorate universities by UK reviewers. In 2005 UNESCO organized a round table on revitalizing the Iraqi HE. This offered Iraqi academics and MHESR representatives an opportunity to enter into open dialogue with the international community⁴⁶. Recently, a monitoring and scientific evaluation section within MHESR directorates has been established⁴⁷. It is clear that a QA body and function is missing.

7. Jordan

Jordan was the first Arab country to establish accreditation laws and guidelines to license and approve private universities and programs. Since mid 1990s, this has been headed by the Accreditation Council (AC) that reports to the HE Council (HEC) and works closely with MHESR⁴⁸. HEC has the authority to formulate HE policy, endorse the establishment of new HEIs, issue instructions concerning administration and finance of the HE sector, and evaluate the quality of HE (sufficiency & efficiency). Al-Hussein Fund for Excellence (HFE)⁴⁹ is an NGO non-profit QA body honorary chaired by the King, established in cooperation with the British QA Agency (QAA) and funded by the Jordanian Central Bank. HFE aims to assure the quality of the Jordanian HE and enhance the performance of HE programs. HFE has utilized international reviews for both institutional QA and the evaluations of specialized programs in all public and private institutions. In addition to the quality review of all HEIs, international bodies have carried out program evaluations in every private and public HEIs in such areas of nursing, law, banking, accounting, and English language and literature. In 2007, Jordan established an independent HE Accreditation Commission (HEAC) to cater for the accreditation issues of HEIs and programs⁵⁰. HEAC superseded AC along with its guidelines, criteria, and accreditation and addresses all public and private HEIs.

8. Kuwait

The Kuwaiti Ministry of HE (MHE)⁵¹ has the responsibility for HE (including the governmental Kuwait University) and research⁵². The MHE established a semi governmental Private University Council (PUC)⁵³ chaired by MHE Minister, and 8 experts. PUC has the power to set rules, guidelines and requirements to license and accredit private HEIs. The guidelines, licensing and accreditation rules, requirements, licensed and accredited private universities are published on the PUC website. PUC requires that a private university to be approved must have an affiliation or association with an international university that commits itself to carry out quality assessments of the scientific programs of the institution pending license⁵⁴. PUC's main funding resource is the government.

⁴⁶ http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=39383&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html accessed on 29 Mar., 2009.

⁴⁷ http://english.anqahe.org/files/ArabLeague08/ArabLeague08_Iraq_.pdf accessed on 28 Mar. 2009.

⁴⁸ <http://www.mohe.gov.jo/> accessed on 28 Mar. 2009.

⁴⁹ <http://www.husseinfund.jo/> accessed on 28 Mar. 2009.

⁵⁰ http://english.anqahe.org/cms.php?id=member_details&member_id=8 accessed on 4 May 2009.

⁵¹ <http://www.mohe.edu.kw/> accessed on 29 Mar. 2009.

⁵² <http://www.kuniv.edu.kw/> accessed on 29 Mar. 2009.

⁵³ <http://www.puc.edu.kw/en/> accessed on 4 May 2009.

⁵⁴ http://english.anqahe.org/files/ArabLeague08/ArabLeague08_Lebanon_Quality.pdf accessed on 4 May, 2009.

Measuring Kuwait University's quality performance was not stated within the related cited literature. Thus, PUC is a governmental QA body that addresses only the private universities.

9. Lebanon

The Lebanese Ministry of Education and HE (MoEHE), specifically the HE General Directorate (DGHE), is the national authority licensing HEIs. The Council of HE (CHE) overlooks HE issues and advises the Council of Ministers on new HEI licenses. The CHE contains technical committees responsible for the implementation of license standards and for the continuous review of HEI status⁵⁹. However, periodical institutional/program auditing is not yet available. A European Tempus-funded project (Lebanese Engineering Programs Accreditation Commission (LEPAC)) was initiated aiming to build a QA capacity and create an independent Accreditation Board in Lebanon to guarantee the quality of European partners and produce an appropriate legislating accreditation system to be adopted by the Lebanese MoEHE⁵⁵. No official document related to QA was published; therefore, a national QA body is still missing in Lebanon.

10. Libya

The General People's Committee for HE Libya (GPCHE)⁵⁶ supervises HE issues including governmental universities licensing and accreditation. In 2006, a financially-independent QA and Accreditation Centre (QAAC)⁵⁷ reporting to GPCHE, was established. QAAC has a mission and objectives to promote QA culture, license, evaluate, and accredit HEIs. QAAC encompasses institutional QA, Accreditation and equivalency units. Several QA relative documents and procedures are available at the QAAC Arabic-language website including licensing procedures, forms, institutional and programs accreditation guidelines. QA related activities were accomplished including QA awareness, capacity building in program and institutional self-evaluations. Thus, QAAC is a governmental QA and accreditation body (main funding body is governmental) that exercises its power of licensing and accrediting HEIs and programs for both public and private HEIs, a list of all accredited public and private HEIs is available on the website. However, it is not clear how QAAC accredited the listed HEIs. Committees were established to accomplish a HEI licensing process without published reports that reflects their decisions!

11. Mauritania

A small country with one governmental University of Nouakchott⁵⁸ and 4 HEIs supervised by Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale (Ministry of National Education (MNE))⁵⁹ that has responsibility for HE issues. A 15M\$ World Bank-funded HE Project (HEP) was granted to support the Government's strategy to improve education service delivery. HEP aims to improve the quality of the learning environment, the relevance of education and establish educational, administrative and financial management systems in the HEIs⁶⁰. MNE's website is inactive.

12. Morocco

MINISTERE de l'Éducation Nationale de l'Enseignement Supérieur, de la Formation des Cadres

⁵⁵ www.ec.europa.eu accessed on 31 Mar., 2009

⁵⁶ <http://www.higheredu.gov.ly/> accessed on 31 Mar., 2009

⁵⁷ <http://www.qaa.ly/> accessed on 4 May, 2009.

⁵⁸ <http://www.wes.org/eWENR/researchAfrica.asp?country=103#Mauritania> accessed on 31 Mar., 2009

⁵⁹ www.mr.refer.org/ipn accessed on 31 Mar., 2009

⁶⁰ <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/> accessed on 31 Mar., 2009

et de la Recherche Scientifique (Ministry of National Education and HE, Managerial Training and SR (MNEHEMTSR)⁶¹, is the official body authorized to enforce QA regulations, evaluation and accreditation. MNEHEMTSR has a reforming initiative aimed at adopting measures to improve the quality at HE levels including mechanisms of licensing and controlling private HEIs. HEIs are responsible for internal QA, whereas external QA is supervised by the National Commission for the Coordination of HE (CNCES)⁶². The National Agency of Evaluation (NAE) promotes and handles institutional QA issues and accordingly sets national procedures for evaluation, and accomplishes the external evaluation for periodic accreditation purposes⁶³. Private HEIs come under the regulations of a governmental Private HE Coordination Committee. Accreditation of 350 curricula programs has been achieved. NAE participated in the NENA project⁶⁴. Regional workshops have been carried out that shared experiences, built capacity, and addressed QA in HE. It appears that Morocco has a governmental QA commission that accredits curriculum targets private HEIs aiming to promote QA, develops and publishes related guidelines and records best practices on its website in Arabic & French Languages.

13. Oman

The HE Council (HEC)⁶⁵, chaired by the Minister of Omani Diwan of Royal Court, is responsible for drawing up HE, scientific and academic research policies in HEIs tailoring them to meet Oman's needs and cultural, social, economic and scientific goals. The Ministry of HE (MoHE)⁶⁶, the Omani Accreditation Council (OAC)⁶⁷ in particular, supervises the HE sector and reports to HEC. OAC has developed national frameworks to facilitate the development of the HE⁶⁸ combined by Oman's Education Framework. These include Standard Classification of Education Framework (OSCED)⁶⁹ that describes all possible fields of study, Oman Institutional Classification Framework (OICF)⁷⁰ that sets out criteria for defining types of HEI, and Oman Qualifications Framework (OQF)⁷¹ that sets out types of qualifications. OAC accredits programs and HEIs. Private HEIs are monitored by MoHE's Directorate General of Private Universities and colleges according to the same procedures used for government institutions. Furthermore, OAC has provided a capacity building National Quality Training Program⁷² to members of the informal Oman Quality Network (OQN)⁷³. The establishment of OQN is a good practice forum where members share some of their successful and innovative QA and quality enhancement activities. Thus, OAC is a governmentally-funded and organized QA body responsible for the external QA and quality enhancement of HEIs and programs that exist with all its developed documents, forms and guidelines for self-study, institutional and program accreditation and auditing, published on its website in English. Lists of licensed institutions are published on the OAC website.

⁶¹ <http://www.dfc.gov.ma/>

⁶² www.enssup.gov.ma

⁶³ http://english.anqahe.org/CMS/files//1214476820_ROYAUME_DU_MAROC.pdf

⁶⁴ <http://www.britishcouncil.org/morocco-society-quality-assurance-09.htm> Accessed in 31 Mar., 2009.

⁶⁵ <http://www.omanet.om/english/oman2000/sec31/.asp> 31 Mar., 2009

⁶⁶ <http://www.mohe.gov.om/> 31 Mar., 2009.

⁶⁷ <http://www.oac.gov.om> 31 Mar., 2009.

⁶⁸ <http://www.oac.gov.om/frameworks/>

⁶⁹ <http://www.oac.gov.om/frameworks/osced/>

⁷⁰ <http://www.oac.gov.om/frameworks/oicf/>

⁷¹ <http://www.oac.gov.om/frameworks/oqf/>

⁷² <http://www.oac.gov.om/qe/training/>

⁷³ <http://www.oac.gov.om/oqn/>



14. Palestine

In Palestine, HE was started by public, non-governmental initiatives, and later organized through the Council for HE in the 1980s. The Ministry of HE (MoHE)⁷⁴ has the authority to license, accredit, and enforce QA measures to all governmental, public and private HEIs. In 2002, the Accreditation and QA Commission (AQAC)⁷⁵ was established aiming at improving the quality of HEIs and programs and reports to the MoHE's Minister. AQAC is responsible of accrediting programs, licensing and accrediting new HEIs and its decisions are ratified by the Minister. AQAC reviews and updates accreditation criteria and this is published on AQAC's web site in Arabic and English languages. AQAC's mission, objectives, guidelines and procedures and an on-line system are accessible by stakeholders on its website. An ongoing comprehensive self and external assessment of all sectoral programs of study that grant academic degrees was started in 2003. General external reports are published. Financially, AQAC is supported through fees received for its services and governmental via administrative staff and space provided. In 2005, a World Bank and European Commission-funded 15M\$ Tertiary Education Project (TEP)⁷⁶ was launched aiming at improving the quality of HE. TEP's components include supporting AQAC, increasing HEIs internal and external efficiency by institutional QA units capacity building and strategic planning, and improving the HEIs quality through Quality Improvement Fund (QIF). QIF aims to improve the relevancy of HEI's programs and develop income-generating programs. AQAC is also involved in the NENA and Tempus projects including QA and Improvement in Tertiary Education⁷⁷. An internal review and SWOT analysis was accomplished in 2006. However, AQAC needs to introduce internal and external reviews to optimize its achievements and minimize its failures.

15. Qatar

The Supreme Education Council (SEC)⁷⁸ has established a diversified educational system that directs nation's education policy. SEC plays an integral role in the development and implementation of the education reform effort. The HE Institute (HEI)⁷⁹, one of the SEC institutes, advises individuals about career options and opportunities for HE in Qatar and abroad, and administers scholarships and grants. HEI encompasses several offices including the Institutional Standards Office (ISO)⁸⁰, responsible for ensuring quality of HEIs inside and outside Qatar and granting licenses for the educational institutions based on the policies and procedures set by the HEI. ISO licenses and accredits programs of HEIs, ensures all private HEIs abide by criteria, and provide assessment-based licenses and accreditation to private institutions. Qatar has the governmental University of Qatar and private HEIs. Licensing and accreditation criteria are followed; there is no evidence listing licensed / accredited HEIs, nor any guidelines. There is no document that supports Qatar claims of the ISO office or HEI guide containing the policies and procedures of establishing HEIs in Qatar and obtaining accreditation and licensing. The author could not cite any solid documentation that reflects a QA body in Qatar.

⁷⁴ <http://www.moehe.gov.ps/> accessed on 30 Mar., 2009.

⁷⁵ <http://www.aqac.mohe.gov.ps/> accessed on 30 Mar., 2009.

⁷⁶ <http://www.tep.ps/> accessed on 1 Apr., 2009.

⁷⁷ www.eu.etf/Tempus accessed on 1 Apr., 2009.

⁷⁸ <http://www.english.education.gov.qa/> accessed on 7 Apr., 2009.

⁷⁹ <http://www.english.education.gov.qa/section/sec/hei> accessed on 7 Apr., 2009.

⁸⁰ <http://www.english.education.gov.qa/section/sec/hei/iso> accessed on 7 Apr., 2009.



16. Saudi Arabia

The Ministry of HE (MoHE)⁸¹ supervises the execution of the country's HE and universities policies proposed by the Higher Council of Education (HCE)⁸² that supervises implementing these policies in SR, and reports to the Prime Minister. Also, HCE supervises the financially independent National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA)⁸³. NCAAA has a 17-director board chaired by MoHE's Minister and has authority for all post-secondary education accreditation except military education. NCAAA establishes rules, criteria, regulations and procedures for academic evaluation and accreditation, accredits new HEIs, periodically reviews and evaluates public and private HEIs and programs, and publicizes accreditation-related information. NCAAA organised a pilot of external HEIs evaluation. However, NCAAA has not published its claimed documents, forms and procedures, external review reports, good practices, accredited HEIs and programs on its English-language website. NCAAA's main funding resources include the government, accreditation fees and grants. NCAAA does not have an internal nor external QA mechanism, thus it urgently requires to review its functioning and needs to update its website.

17. SOMALIA

HE includes the governmental National University of Somalia (NUS) and private HEIs in Somaliland, Puntland and Mogadishu⁸⁴. However, the bloody conflict that tore Somalia apart has destroyed some of these HEIs. Somalia needs an urgent and rapid holistic approach in the reconstruction efforts. Needless to say, there is no QA system in Somalia!

18. Sudan

The Sudanese MHESR⁸⁵ is the official body that sets up policies, plans and programs for HE SR. The National Council for HE and SR (NCHESR)⁸⁶ is responsible for planning and coordinating policies and for educational and research plans. NCHESR is represented in all aspects of evaluation and QA of HE by the High Commission for Evaluation and Accreditation (EVAC)⁸⁷. EVAC, established in 2003 (originally, Evaluation and Accreditation Corporation, EVAC⁸⁸) (Palgrave, 2007), is chaired by the Minister and aims to assure that institutions of HE are implementing their activities (teaching, SR and community services) efficiently, capably and with high quality. EVAC has accomplished capacity building activities, developing institutional self evaluation units and evaluating sectoral programs. EVAC's publications⁸⁹ are on its Arabic and English website. EVAC is a governmental commission within the MHESR body with an annual budget. EVAC's main activities include promoting institutional QA and accreditation culture, but there is neither a published list nor reports of evaluation or accreditation of HEIs on the website. Although, EVAC is concerned with both evaluation and accreditation, all published documents mainly focus on QA and evaluation. Procedures of old and new HEIs accreditation are missing. Furthermore, most capacity building activities are accomplished using national funds.

⁸¹ <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/Arabic/> accessed on 3 May, 2009.

⁸² <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/Arabic/HigherEducationCouncil/> accessed on 3 May, 2009.

⁸³ <http://www.ncaaa.org.sa> accessed on 4 May, 2009.

⁸⁴ http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/inhea/profiles/Somalia.htm

⁸⁵ <http://www.mohe.gov.sd/eng/> accessed on 10 Apr., 2009.

⁸⁶ <http://www.mohe.gov.sd/eng/content/council.htm> accessed on 10 Apr., 2009.

⁸⁷ <http://www.mohe.gov.sd/eng/Directorates/Evaluation.htm> accessed on 10 Apr., 2009.

⁸⁸ <http://evac.edu.sd/> accessed on 3 May, 2009.

⁸⁹ <http://www.mohe.gov.sd/eng/content/publications.htm> accessed on 8 Apr., 2009.



19. Syria

The Ministry of HE (MHE)⁹⁰ is responsible for HE and SR. MHE encompasses four councils including the Council of HE (CHE). In 2006, CHE⁹¹ modified its regulations to accommodate licensing and accrediting of new HEIs. Among the various CHE committees are the Private HEIs Committee that carries out the needs analysis of HEIs, studies and recommends approval of new HEIs; and the QA Committee (QAC) proposes accreditations regulations, evaluation plans and methods of implementation to the CHE. All related decisions are published on the MHE website in Arabic. Recent QA initiatives⁹² include initiating a pilot self evaluation activity aiming to SWOT analyze and promote QA awareness at governmental universities. Other initiatives include EU Tempus, UNDP sectoral assessment, NENA projects, and the EU-funded Upgrading HE Sector⁹³ project that aims at establishing a National Commission for QA and Accreditation (NCQAA) that will be affiliated to the CHE. Thus, Syria has active and promising QA initiatives and programs aiming to promote the QA and accreditation.

20. Tunisia

The MHESRT⁹⁴ sets policy, strategic plans and supervises HE. The culture of evaluation within Tunisian universities started with the implementation of the World Bank-funded HE Reform I project⁹⁵. A governmental Comité National d'Evaluation (National Committee of Evaluation (CNE) is appointed by the MHESRT Minister. CNE aims to provide incentives to encourage universities to review their curricula in order to strengthen the quality of education and academic attainment. CNE conducted internal institutional evaluation, at first voluntarily and then on a compulsory basis. The HE reform II World Bank-funded project⁹⁶ started in 2006 aimed to expand access, improve the quality of education and institutional performance and provide quality grants. In 2006, a HE QA Program (PAQ) was set up that aimed to improve the quality of HE teaching and grant more autonomy to Tunisian HEIs. Moreover, a Fonds National d'Appui à la Qualité (FNAQ) was established to address evaluation and accountability issues and enhance the quality and relevance of undergraduate study programs. Furthermore, Tunisia has participated in NENA and Tempus projects. A new law has been adopted to establish independent QA and Accreditation in 2008⁹⁷. However, a QA body has not been established. Also, no evidence of self-evaluation external reviews accomplishments is available.

21. United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The MOHESR⁹⁸ is responsible for policy making, planning and coordinating HE. The Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA)⁹⁹ aims to ensure that UAE HEIs and programs meet international QA HE standards and reports directly to the MOHESR Minister. CAA's mandate includes licensing private HEIs, accrediting programs and supporting HEIs to develop institutional QA system. CAA

⁹⁰ <http://www.mhe.gov.sy/> accessed on 8 Apr., 2009.

⁹¹ <http://www.mhe.gov.sy/servers/gallery/20070401125254-.doc> accessed on 8 Apr., 2009.

⁹² www.english.anqahe.org/CMS/files/1214476768_syria-bc608.pdf accessed on 8 Apr., 2009.

⁹³ <http://uhes-sy.org/>

⁹⁴ <http://www.mes.tn/anglais/>

⁹⁵ <http://www.universities.tn>

⁹⁶ <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=64312881&piPK=64302848&theSitePK=40941&Projectid=P075809>

⁹⁷ http://english.anqahe.org/files/ArabLeague08/ArabLeague08_Tunisia_PAQ.pdf

⁹⁸ <http://www.mohesr.ae/>

⁹⁹ <http://www.caa.ae/>



has published its documents on its English-language website including criteria, licensing and accreditation standards, procedures, service provider, list of approved service providers and a list of licensed HEIs, but not the governmental HEIs¹⁰⁰. CAA provides full accreditation and re accreditation every five years. Decisions on final licensing and accreditation are taken by the MOHESR Minister¹⁰¹. It is clear that CAA is a well organized and governmentally funded body that has established internal feed-back demonstrated by versions of its standards. However, there is no evidence of external evaluation in compliance with international QA bodies.

22. Yemen

The Yemeni MoHESR¹⁰² is responsible for governing the HE sector and providing HE in response to national needs. The Supreme Council of Universities (SCU)¹⁰³ aims at setting HE policies, licensing and accrediting private universities. In 2005, a new law governing the authorisation of institutional establishments was approved that involves evaluation of accredited institutions and programs. Furthermore, an Accreditation Council (AC) was formed from HE stakeholders along with Ministry representatives¹⁰⁴. A World Bank-funded project (Yemen HE Development Project¹⁰⁵) in conjunction with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada was launched to encourage professional development academics to revise their teaching methods and program content. In addition, MoHERS has another project through the Netherland Program for the Institutional Strengthening of Post Secondary Education and Training Capacity (NPT)¹⁰⁶ to introduce a new governance model for the HE and SR sector. There is no evidence of the AC, the MHESR-affiliated QA body, accomplishing or setting standards for assessment. Thus, there is no QA body in Yemen.

IV. Discussion

According to the 1998 WCHE, HE should display evidence of being able to sustain quality at national, regional or international levels. The new ICT is a vital tool in this process, owing to its impact on the acquisition and transfer of knowledge and know-how. The author will adopt the WCHE context of quality in HE as a reference that includes the multidimensional concept embracing its functions including teaching and programs, research, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, services to the community and the academic environment, in addition to the internal self-evaluation and external review conducted towards governmental and private HEIs, and the establishment of independent national bodies. Although all QA bodies are publicly-financed, an independent QA body reports to the Prime Minister / head of state (President/King/ Prince). QA bodies reporting to a Minister will be considered as governmental. Accreditation that is based on assessment that meets minimum requirements (INQAHE's description) will be adopted loosely in the following discussion.

Arab Countries are working relatively hard to address these characteristics. Overlapped regional initiatives have been conducted including establishing networks, societies and councils and

¹⁰⁰ http://www.mohesr.ae/heinstitutions_hct.html

¹⁰¹ <http://www.caa.ae/caa/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=5&tabid=12>

¹⁰² <http://www.moheyemen.org/>

¹⁰³ <http://www.moheyemen.org/ar/contents.php?topics=supremeconcil&id=18>

¹⁰⁴ Schade, A, "An Introduction to QA and Accreditation for Yemen", 10_dies_schade_Yemen.ppt

¹⁰⁵ http://www.aucc.ca/programs/intprograms/multi_banks/yemen_e.html

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.utwente.nl/cheps/research/projects/yemen.doc/>

implementing internationally-funded projects. Arab Countries' responses to WCHE has been to call, international QA initiatives and AMHESR conferences in 2001, 2003, 2005 and 2007 to establish national QA bodies.

1. Five independent QA bodies from an affiliation viewpoint are well-organized (NQAAC, Egypt; NCAAA, Saudi Arabia; OAC, Oman; QAAET, Bahrain; and HEAC, Jordan). None of these have road map/plan to re-accredit HEIs. NQAAC is developing standards and has not moved from a pilot reviewing (accomplished 3 years ago) into a comprehensive review. OAC has well-documented standards targeting private HEIs. HEAC inherited well-established accreditation's procedures targeting private HEIs. It is not clear how HEAC will target (review/address) public HEIs and its overlapping functions and mission with HFE, the other body that has accomplished sectoral reviews at all HEIs, assuming complementary rather than competitive roles.

From the type of HEIs they are addressing, QA bodies can be classified as:

- a. Two independent QA bodies claim to target all types of HEIs, including NQAAC, Egypt and HEAC, Jordan.
- b. Two independent QA bodies claim to target only private HEIs, including OAC, Oman and QAAET, Bahrain.
- c. The independent NCAAA, Saudi Arabia has not clarified its targeted HEIs.
2. Five governmental QA bodies from an affiliation viewpoint. Namely, CAA, UAE; EVAC, Sudan; AQAC, Palestine, QAAC, Libya; and PUC, Kuwait.
 - a. CAA has well-established QA criteria for licensing private HEIs, accrediting programs and accomplishing reviewing and site visits. CAA aims to ensure that UAE HEIs/ programs meet international standards QA in HE.
 - b. EVAC, a well-organized governmental QA body, evaluated programs at all HEIs a few years ago, but evaluation reports have not been published. Accreditation of programs and HEIs that involves reviewing has neither been seriously addressed nor planned.
 - c. AQAC is a governmental well-established QA and accreditation body. Self and external evaluations of all offered programs by all types of HEIs started in 2003, and are still under going. Published general reports are available at AQAC's website. Institutional self and external evaluation was accomplished at one university. Licensing criteria and procedures are published on the website and implemented to new programs and HEIs. However, self and external HEIs review has yet to be planned.
 - d. QAAC, Libya is a new established governmental QA body that has used licensing and accreditation procedures but there are no published reports to demonstrate its transparent procedures. Furthermore, it is not clear how QAAC accredited all listed HEIs.
 - e. PUC, Kuwait is a governmental QA body targeting private universities. Lists of licensed/ accredited HEIs are available on the PUC website. It is worth mentioning that one major requirement to license any new private HEIs is its affiliation with an international HEI.
3. The remaining twelve countries have not established QA bodies. These are sub-classified into two main categories:
 - a. The first category includes countries that have exercised some QA and reviewing tasks through committees affiliated with HE Ministries or directly by Ministries' directorates. These category includes:
 - Yemeni Accreditation Council focused on Ministry's capacity building, and does

- have licensing / accreditation procedures;
- Tunisian CNE looks after the evaluation. The author argues that an adoption of some QA processes have been accomplished while converting the educational system into the European LMD scheme. However, there is a lack of evidence of self-evaluation or external systematic reviews accomplishments nation-wide;
 - Algeria does not have a QA body or accreditation procedures. The author argues that an adoption of some QA processes have been accomplished while converting educational system into the European LMD scheme. However, there are no published documents or reports that support this argument.
 - Morocco does not have a QA body, but has addressed QA and reviewing tasks. MNEHEMTR supervises external QA through CNCE. The National Agency NAE handles institutional QA issues and accomplishes external evaluation for periodic accreditation purposes. An accreditation process of curricula programs is undergoing.
 - Lebanon has not yet established a QA body. However, the DGHE performs licensing of new HEI by a technical committee that recommends to the Ministers' Council. Self and external evaluations of HEIs have not been addressed.
 - Syria has not yet established a QA body. However, the CHE that regulates licensing and accrediting of new HEIs has the Private HEIs Committee that accomplishes HEIs needs, studies and recommends approval of new HEIs. The author could not cite any documentation or regulations to support these claims.
 - Qatar has not established a QA body. However, the ISO Office that operates within the HEI institute develops policies and criteria related to the quality of HE including licensing and accreditation requirements, licenses and accredits programs of HEIs, and provide licenses and accreditation to private institutions based on assessments. The author could not cite any reports that support these claims.
- b. The second category includes countries that do not have QA processes including Iraq, Mauritania, Comoros, Djibouti and Somalia. All suffer from wars.
4. Limited countries (Palestine compulsory and Egypt voluntary) have comprehensively accomplished self and external evaluation of offered programs. However, Palestine alone has also conducted one self and external institutional review.
 5. No country has a plan of reviewing to re-accredit HEIs. NQAAC has developed standards according to its five-year strategic plan.

Considering the funding issue, International donors have played a major role in promoting a QA culture including licensing, accreditation, self and external evaluation. These funding bodies include:

- The World Bank has funded HE reforms and QA promotions in Egypt, Mauritania, Palestine, Tunisia, and Yemen, and ANQAHE.
- The UNDP funded along with the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and Finland, sectoral program assessment in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, UAE and Yemen.
- The British Council funded QA initiatives and capacity building through the NENA project that involved Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia;
- The EU Tempus Program has funded QA related joint projects in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia.

Most of the established QA bodies are financially dependent on governmental or /

and international funds which raises the vital issue of sustainability. It is also worth noting that there is no Arab funding body.

Considering the QA bodies' structuring models and aims, they fall into the following categories:

- An ambiguous relationship between the two Jordanian QA bodies (HENC and HFE) was noted;
- Some QA bodies are targeting private HEIs as in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and UAE;
- QA establishments and HE directorates have not presented their QA system, procedures guidelines, or disseminated professionally their achievements, reports, initiatives on reliable websites in Arabic and other foreign languages.

The author believes that most of the developed QA standards and criteria are of an international origin which reflects the international dimension. Also, he could not cite QA body self/external evaluation reports that reflect accountability, efficiency, measuring positive and negative impacts and assessing performance. However, Egypt has an internal QA unit, and UAE has conducted a self evaluation activity. All QA bodies must be assessed and externally accredited. QA bodies are urged to adopt the ISO 10015 standard. No evidence could be cited to report conducted staff/students national/regional mobility. Although QA capacity building projects have produced highly skilled and trained QA experts, most of the QA bodies are highly dependent on foreign experts. ANQAHE is the most active QA network which is trying to combine QA efforts and share experiences. ANQAHE is a promising forum to combine and disseminate QA information and reports.

V. Conclusion

The paper has reviewed Arab QA status a decade after the WCHE's recommendations. Based on desk and Internet review of QA published information, it has sighted most of the QA initiatives at regional and national levels. It can be clearly stated that there has been promising progress in a very limited number of countries at different levels, but many are lagging behind. Generally, the efforts are insufficient in today's world of knowledge, competitiveness, rapid transformation and students' increased demand for enrolment.

Regional QA cooperation has been in evidence. These embrace UNDP HE, EU Tempus, NENA and DAAD's projects; HEIs association (AARU), a society (ASQAE); and network of QA bodies (ANQAHE). An attempt to share and exchange information on most of these initiatives in a QA policy forum was conducted. Serious attempts must be initiated to restate complementarily objectives and identify roles. In addition, the proposed AEPQA, which will offer a different QA regional body, is required to assess these bodies on different dimensions including objectives, quality of management, performance, positive/negative impacts, achievements, strategic plans and their expected outcomes.

Finance and willingness to act are essential factors. The AMHESR forum has called on countries to establish national QA authorities in the last four successive 2-year meetings 2001 – 2007. 23% of Arab countries have succeeded in establishing independent QA bodies, only 9% target all HEIs that comply with WHEC recommendation, and 14% target only the private HEIs. Thus, after a decade of QA promotions, two countries have succeeded in establishing independent QA bodies that target private and public HEIs. This reflects the seriousness of countries' decision-makers in addressing QA in HE and the QA priority levels. Also, it demonstrates the dominant role of public HEIs in national decision-making. 23% countries have governmental-style QA bodies that function within the HE Ministry. This indicates that 23% of the established QA bodies are limited in the scope, mandate

and budget of a Ministry. Optimistically, 45% countries have established either independent or governmental QA institution. In addition, 32% countries have exercised limited QA and reviewing tasks. This form of QA organization pushes QA functionalities and importance further away from the Ministries' priorities. Unfortunately, the other 23% countries have made almost no effort towards addressing HE QA. These figures demonstrate the lagging status of HE and QA in Arab Countries.

Most of the structures of established QA bodies have a governmental affiliation. However, to avoid politics and interference, QA bodies are urged to promote affiliation to the presidential, royal, or prime Minister, with an annual budget, rather than functioning under a Minister's umbrella and within the budget of the Ministry.

It is worth mentioning that few of the QA institutions have well-presented interactive websites such as CAA, UAE and AQAC, and Palestine, where full information with lists of documents, procedures, guidelines, reports, accredited HEIs and programs in bilingual form (Arabic and any other foreign language). Showing all procedures, guidelines and decisions reflect issues of accountability and transparency nationally, regionally and internationally.

The author believes that offered programs and HEIs dominate, and most of these are government/public (although this needs further investigation). Thus, accreditation of all these programs and HEIs should be started. A transition period could be given after which all have to be re-accredited. 4/ 5 programs and 1 HEI in Palestine have been assessed.

It is obvious that most of the QA institutions depend on international projects and funds and these have a vital positive impact on capacity building, expertise and knowledge transfer. Side effects include the sustainability and financial burden of expenses. All QA authorities and HEIs use QA terminologies loosely/interchangeably and the adoption/harmonization of unified QA terminologies is required. Monitoring of QA establishments is essential to ensure accountability and this requires internal and external assessment of QA institutions.

Arab countries have, to some extent, achieved a reasonable level of QA promotions, and are urged to do a lot more in establish/enhance a QA culture within the HEIs themselves, self and external program and institutional evaluation for private and governmental HEIs. The issue of self evaluation and accreditation of the established QA institutions must be addressed later.

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