



## **CRITICAL ISSUES IN INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION: OBSERVATIONS FROM A MULTI-COUNTRY PERSPECTIVE**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The last two decades have seen a spectacular growth of higher education with enrollments world-wide increasing from 13 million in 1960 to 82 million in 1995.<sup>1</sup> It is estimated that by 2010 there will be 120 million students.<sup>2</sup> In the midst of this growth has been an increasing awareness of the challenge of not only maintaining quality, but the need to enhance it. At the World Conference on Education in 1998, the importance of broad-ranging quality in higher education was recognized as vital to development. The ensuing document emphasized that: “Internal self-evaluation and external review, conducted openly by independent specialists, if possible with international expertise, are vital for enhancing quality.” The text goes on to note that: “Independent national bodies should be established and comparative standards of quality, recognized at international level, should be defined.” And all this should take “institutional, national and regional contexts” into account.<sup>3</sup>

The critical nature of higher education for development was emphasized by a World Bank report of 2002 which noted the: “emerging role of knowledge as a major driver of economic development,” and emphasized that: “Tertiary education is necessary for the effective creation, dissemination and application of knowledge and for building technical and professional capacity.” They went on to note that “Developing and transition countries are at risk of being further marginalized in a highly competitive world because their tertiary education systems are not adequately prepared to capitalize on the creation and use of knowledge.”<sup>4</sup> The authors went on to demonstrate that no nation develops without a high quality system of tertiary education.

The twin goals of expanded higher education and high quality have spurred a drive to quality improvement and quality assessment. That has been marked by significant growth in higher education accreditation. We are all aware of the tremendous expansion in the number of countries carrying out institutional and/or program accreditation. As I noted in a presentation to this group in 2006, in the developing nations there are at least sixteen national accreditors in Asia and the Pacific,<sup>5</sup> eleven in Africa<sup>6</sup>, at least ten in Latin and South America<sup>7</sup>, as well as several in

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO, *World Declaration of Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action*, 9 October 1998. Article 11, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> John Daniel, Asha Kanwar and Stamenka Uvalic-Trumbic, “A Tectonic Shift in global Higher Education,” *Change Magazine*, July/August 2006. <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/chage/sub.asp?key+98&subkeyy=1841-85k>

<sup>3</sup> *World Declaration*, *ibid.*, Article 11, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank, *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education*, Washington DC, 2002, p. xix.

<sup>5</sup> They are in Australia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan (2), Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, China, Pakistan, Philippines (2), Thailand, and Vietnam. For further information see especially Marjorie Peace Lenn, “Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education in East Asia and the Pacific, World Bank Working Paper No. 2004-6.

the Middle East. In Africa and Asia, 22 of the 27 have been established since 1990. Quality assurance, improvement, and accreditation have become central to higher education systems around the world as the link between effective national development and high quality tertiary education has become clearer.

In addition, there has been a broad movement toward “internationalization” of standards in recognition of the effects of globalization with competition in many areas being on a global scale – especially in professions such as engineering, information technology, medicine, the sciences and quantitative social sciences. We see that in the UNESCO’s recognition of the need to bridge the growing gap between the developed and underdeveloped nations. Among the “priority actions”<sup>8</sup> recommended at the UNESCO meeting are recognition of the need for an “international dimension to permeate the curriculum, and the teaching and learning process”<sup>9</sup> because there are international standards that all institutions must meet if they are to be competitive, while paying attention “to specific institutional, national and regional contexts in order to take into account diversity....”<sup>10</sup> This concern was expanded upon in a draft resolution to UNESCO from Norway, Mozambique, Iceland, Japan, and Tanzania urging members to recognize the importance of “assuring quality of global higher education and promoting access to the knowledge society as a means for sustainable development” for all nations.<sup>11</sup>

In short, there is general recognition around that world that successful development requires high quality education and that the benchmarks for quality are, whether we like it or not, international. That is increasingly a consequence of the rapid globalization of the last decade. All of us are competing to some extent in an international context in which the standards and benchmarks are high. That has been noted in Europe and the Americas as well as the developing countries. For example, in the Yearbook of International Law, Jan de Groof notes that there is a growing shared conception of quality assurance. He suggests that: “The modern concept of quality assurance accepts as a norm the completely independent assessment of programs, institutions, or components of institutions by peers on the basis of international expertise and standards.” He goes on to say that this holds true even “...for programs that are embedded in the national tradition, culture, and/or language such as language and cultural sciences or jurisprudence.” He was talking not about the developing world, but about integrating quality standards for higher education within the Flemish Community with those of the Dutch

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<sup>6</sup> The accreditation agencies are in the following African countries: Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. See Fred M. Hayward, “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education in Africa,” paper prepared for presentation at the *Conference on Higher Education Reform in Francophone Africa: Understanding the Keys of Success*, June 13-15, 2006. Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. See website:

[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1121703274255/1439264-1137083592502/QA\\_accreditation\\_HE\\_Africa.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1121703274255/1439264-1137083592502/QA_accreditation_HE_Africa.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> They include one regional organization, El punto de encuentro de la Educación Superior Pública Centroamericana (CSUSA), formerly the Sistema Centroamericano de Evaluación y Accreditation de la Educación Superior (SICEVAES) which covers: Guatemala, Belise, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama. In addition there are national accreditors in Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Paraguay, Trinidad and Tobago, Chile (2), and Jamaica (2).

<sup>8</sup> *World Declaration*, *ibid.* p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> *World Declaration*, *ibid.* p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> Draft Resolution, UNESCO, “Higher education and globalization: Promoting quality and access to the knowledge society as a means for sustainable development,” 27 September 2003, p. 1.

Community in the Low Countries.<sup>12</sup> But his point is equally valid for the rest of the world. It is not that standards must be homogenized, but that our teaching, research, advice and council must be state-of-the art if our graduates and our countries are to be competitive in this globalized world. Although those standards are constantly changing, they are the standard against which graduates will be measured around the world.

As Pakistan expands its accreditation process beyond the four new Accreditation Councils established by the HEC and the seven existing Councils<sup>13</sup> and moves toward institutional accreditation, it seems an appropriate time to look at institutional accreditation around the world, to explore some of its successes and challenges, as well as to examine some of the goals and assumptions involved.

## II. ACCREDITATION AND QUALITY AUDITS

Sometimes it is useful to go back and look at our origins. Accreditation and quality audits<sup>14</sup> have a long history going back more than 100 years.<sup>15</sup> Early quality reviews were informal efforts sponsored by universities themselves in an effort to obtain external expert feedback from other academics and professionals who came to campus, reviewed the academic programs and infrastructure, and made comments about how they thought the institution was doing. The goal of these efforts was to have an independent evaluation of the institution's quality and to obtain outside advice about any deficiencies or quality improvement external reviewers might identify. Since that time the process has become more formal and structured through various governmental and non-governmental agencies with goals and objects more clearly spelled out. Some of the major goals and objectives of accreditation worldwide are noted below:

- **Quality assurance.** Providing the public and students with assurance that the higher education institutions and programs they are choosing meet quality standards in terms of the curriculum, the faculty, facilities, IT, libraries and other services.<sup>16</sup>
- **Accountability.** Accreditation is a mechanism designed to assure accountability of public and private higher education institutions to the public and in terms of their mission, goals, and vision.
- **Quality improvement.** Although we have often assumed that all higher education institutions are committed to quality improvement we have ample examples of declining quality in institutions all over the world for a wide range of reasons. Part of the role of accreditation is to insure that institutions are “more evenly capacitated and resourced ...to provide high quality education and training within a range of diverse institutional missions.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Jan De Groof, “Transnational Models of Accreditation: Aspects of the International Cooperation in the Field of Quality Assurance,” *Yearbook of Education Law* 285-97 2004. p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> They are the National Computing Education Accreditation Council, the National Agriculture Education Accreditation Council, the Teacher Education Accreditation Council, and the Business Education Accreditation Council. In addition there are several existing Councils linked to the HEC. They include Councils for Architects and Town Planners, Engineers, Medical and Dental practitioners, the Bar, Veterinarians, Pharmacy, and Nursing.

<sup>14</sup> Hereafter I will use the word accreditation to cover both the processes of accreditation and quality audits.

<sup>15</sup> For a brief history of US accreditation see: Judith S. Eaton, *An Overview of U.S. Accreditation*, (2000) which can be viewed on the CHEA website at: [www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org).

<sup>16</sup> See Eaton, *ibid.* p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> CHE, *Founding Document, Higher Education Quality Committee*, January 2001, p. 1.

- **Insure minimal levels of quality.** While any multi-institutional system or systems will have substantial variations in quality, accreditation is an effort to insure that all institutions (public and private) meet at least minimal standards – to insist that those below these standards raise them if they are to operate and to encourage all to have an ongoing quality improvement program.<sup>18</sup>
- **Employer confidence.** In many countries, accreditation of tertiary institutions is critical for the job market. Employers will not consider graduates for employment unless they are from accredited institutions. Accreditation usually focuses on the relevance of the curriculum for national needs.
- **Credit transfer and recognition.** Accreditation is often an important part of credit transfer in countries in which it is possible for students to transfer from one institution to another. Accreditation facilitates recognition of transfer credits by guaranteeing minimum quality and by assuring some level of comparability of programs and degrees.
- **High quality training.** A number of countries have focused in particular on accreditation as a tool to insure that graduates meet the high level skills and competencies needed for social and economic development.<sup>19</sup>
- **Access to funding.** In many countries access to national, regional, or local funding is dependent on accreditation. Only accredited institutions are eligible for funding from government.<sup>20</sup> In a number of countries private institutions that are recognized or accredited may also qualify for some government support.<sup>21</sup>
- **Social justice.** In several countries, accreditation includes expectations that tertiary institutions facilitate social justice and enhance opportunities for access.<sup>22</sup> The quality review includes an assessment of compliance in these areas.
- **Program validation.** Most program accreditation is designed to insure that professional programs in particular meet minimum standards and have uniform standards with similar programs offered around the world.
- **Mobility.** To ensure that tertiary institutions have standards and programs that enable graduates to seek employment around the world and meet international expectations for similar programs and degrees (e.g. civil engineering, organic chemistry).
- **A response to massification.** Education leaders, governments, and some sectors of the public have become alarmed about the move from traditional elite universities to their massification. They fear that standards have fallen and quality declined. Part of the response to those fears is accreditation. As Peter Scott puts it, “Quality systems must be devised to reassure those alarmed about academic standards.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Madagascar has a three step process leading to accreditation recognizing that many private tertiary institutions will need time to reach minimum standards for full accreditation. See: Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, Madagascar, *Standards for Higher Education Accreditation and Criteria for Admission to Candidacy*, (2007).

<sup>19</sup> See for example, South Africa, *Founding Document*, *ibid*, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> See Eaton, *ibid*.

<sup>21</sup> In Pakistan, select private institutions are now able to obtain government funding for some types projects.

<sup>22</sup> Both Mauritius and South Africa have accreditation requirements that focus on national development service, and social justice. See Hayward, *Quality Assurance & Accreditation*, *ibid*, p. 22.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Scott, ed., “Massification, Internationalization and Globalization,” *The Globalization of Higher Education*, Buckingham, Open University Press, 1998, p. 115.

- **Value for money.** In several countries, criteria for quality audits and accreditation include assessments about effectiveness, efficiency and value for money in terms of the purposes of higher education.<sup>24</sup>

### **III. INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION**

There are two types of accreditation carried out in most parts of the world, institutional accreditation, which looks at the whole institution, and program accreditation, which focuses primarily on individual academic and professional programs. In most countries program accreditation is limited to the professions – areas in which it is important to licensure, certification, or employment. This is the case in the United States, Pakistan, and a good many other countries. To accredit all academic programs would be a Herculean task. Pakistan, for example, has more than 160 different programs, the US many times that number. Think about preparing 160 sets of standards just for openers. The organization required even in medium sized countries would be massive. To set up an accreditation body for each of those would be a major and costly undertaking. In a few countries, including South Africa, all academic programs are accredited and institutions are audited. As South Africa has put this process in place, however, they have found it difficult to organize and almost impossible to find enough peer reviewers for such a massive operation.

Most nations have found that their needs are adequately served by program accreditation for a small number of professional programs and depend on institutional accreditation for quality assessments of all higher education institutions – public and private. Assessment of academic programs is incorporated into institutional accreditation on a rotating basis or depending on the needs in each case. Institutional accreditation takes a broad view of quality, looking at a wide range of areas including: infrastructure, laboratories, libraries, ICT, academic programs, student outcomes, faculty teaching, research and publications, service to the community and the nation, financial health, governance and administration.

In this presentation, I am focusing on institutional accreditation because it encompasses the broadest assessment of higher education institutions and gives the best picture of both the health and quality of individual institutions and of the system as a whole.

### **IV. CRITICAL ISSUES FOR ACCREDITATION**

As we look at accreditation around the world, there are a number of critical issues that are worth examining in some detail. They include issues power and control, legitimacy, equity, standards, transparency, process, corruption, and effectiveness. Let's begin with the question of power and control.

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<sup>24</sup> This is the case for South Africa as noted in its “Approach to Quality.” See: CHE, Founding Document (2002) *ibid*, p. 9.

**A) *Quality Assessment and Power***

We usually do not think about quality assessment and accreditation in terms of power and yet the process involves decisions and processes which have major impacts on institutions, students, faculty members, administrators, parents, graduates, business, government, the public. While the goals of quality assurance, as we have noted them, are not about power, the process is one in which many actors exercise a great deal of power. There is the power and authority to set standards, measure compliance, and set consequences for those who don't meet requirements. Who should do that? The state? An autonomous agency? Universities themselves? Governments? Does it matter who has the power and authority? Whether or not it is dispersed or concentrated? Whether or not it is seen as arbitrary, capricious, fair, legitimate, coercive, or enlightened? Does it create new sources of power and power relationships? If it does, do they foster quality or mediocrity? We know that power sometimes creates situations in which there are opportunities for abuse of power, cases in which it is indeed abused, and those in which there are wide spread perceptions of abuse. Louise Morley reminds us that at times "quality intersects or collides with equality issues..." She notes that: "If quality assurance is about standards and conformance, what place is there for difference and diversity?"<sup>25</sup> These are important issues that need to be explored and problems to be avoided. Can we create systems of accreditation which are seen as fair, open, equitable, accountable, and result in the quality improvements and excellence desired? Let us look at some of the issues.

- ***Whose accreditation is it?***

There are many stakeholders in the quality assurance process including: higher education institutions, the public, students, faculty, alumni, government, business and professions. They have a wide range of stakes in the accreditation process such as verification of quality standards, protection against fraud, certification of graduate training, eligibility for state funding, and recognition that an institution meets expected national standards. In the field of accreditation we are fond of saying that the ultimate responsibility for quality rests with the institution. Though we may hold the institution responsible for meeting quantity standards, we want compliance tested from the outside. In most countries the authority over accreditation rests with the national government, which gives varying degrees of autonomy to the accrediting agency.<sup>26</sup> Accreditation in the United States, New Zealand, and Japan<sup>27</sup> is administered by non-

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<sup>25</sup> Louise Morley, *Quality and Power in Higher Education*, Berkshire, England: Open University Press, 2003, p. ix.

<sup>26</sup> In South Africa, the Council on Higher Education has near total autonomy from the Ministry of Education with its budget approved directly by Parliament. In Pakistan, the HEC, plans include eventual autonomy for the QAA which carried out institutional and program accreditation. On the other hand, in the Cameroon, the Minister has final approval of all accreditation decisions.

<sup>27</sup> Note that Japan has two accreditation agencies, one governmental (The National Institute for Academic Degrees) focusing on recognition of degrees, evaluation of research and other activities, and the non-governmental Japan University Accrediting Association which accredits public and private universities – currently about 40% of the public and private universities. See Lenn, *ibid.*, pp. 49-52.

governmental organizations. The critical issue for accreditation is whether or not decisions are influenced by factors beyond the focus on institutional or program quality. That is a difficult question to answer in cases where accreditation is run by government or where government is represented on the accreditor's governing body, as they are in China and Australia.

Who makes the decisions on accreditation? One of the critical questions for accreditation is that of who makes the decisions. Is it government? Is it an autonomous governing body? Is it officials in a ministry or in the accreditation body? Related to that question is that of: who makes the rules? Institutions, government, some collection of institutions, others? Related to that are questions about how the assessments are made? Is the process transparent? Is it clear to participants? Does it seem to be fair?

All these issues pose questions that accreditors need to address and revisit from time to time. Let me draw on my experience with accreditation over several decades to note what seem to me to be the areas in which the most difficult problems arise and to suggest what might be done to limit them.

- ***Autonomy of decision making***

A key concern about accreditation is the autonomy of the decision-making process. Lack of autonomy is hard to prove but easy to assert. To the extent that governments seem to control the decision-making process, there is a perception of lack of autonomy. At the same time, experience in setting up accreditation agencies in developing countries shows that authorization and funding by government is vital to success. In most developing countries accreditation has been initiated and funded by governments. This was true in all of the cases in Africa. Without that support the process is unlikely to have either the funding needed or the legitimacy to operate effectively.

A good example of the problem comes from Madagascar in the experience of the Agence Nationale d'Evaluation (AGENATE). It was established as a semi-autonomous agency in the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research in 2000 with a budget from the Ministry and some external funding from the World Bank. In an effort to assert its autonomy, its leaders refused to be part of the ongoing Ministry structure and did not report regularly to the director of education. While this was not their intention, their absence from the ongoing operations of the Ministry meant that little was known about their activities in the Ministry and there was no one to make the case for their programs other than at rare meetings of the director with the Minister or in written reports. Over time, their budget declined. Their lack of identification with the Ministry also limited their legitimacy in the eyes of many of the country's universities. Over the next seven years they carried out only a handful of audits on a voluntary basis and some of those never did result in final reports. By 2006 their budget was miniscule. In 2007, the Minister abolished AGENATE. While AGENATE suffered from other problems, my own observation of its

decline is that it moved too far away from the Ministry asserting an autonomy that was counter productive. Without a strong link and support from the Ministry, they were doomed to failure.

At the other end of the continuum is the Higher Education Quality Committee of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) in South Africa. Although it was originally to be an autonomous body with a separate budget when established in 2001, at the last minute the Cabinet decided to place the CHE in the Ministry of Education. Over time, it developed a reputation for independence, high quality assessments, and dependability as well as obtaining a separate budget line to Parliament. It managed to gain its autonomy from the Ministry though integrated into its ongoing operations. By 2008, it was in effect autonomous and there were moves in government to grant it total autonomy from the Ministry.

The key issue is a combination of perceptions and practice. In neither the Madagascar nor the South African case were the decisions of the body reviewed by the Ministry. On the other hand, the profile of the HEQC in South Africa was one of cooperation with independence. That of AGENATE was of defiance, limited contact, and a low profile. In the end, that stance was fatal for AGENATE.

- ***The Nature of Assessment Process***

Critical to accreditation is the nature of the process of assessment of the institutions. How is it done? Who does it? How are the individuals chosen? In most cases, the assessment of institutions is carried out by peer reviewers (see discussion below). By definition, peer reviewers are professionals and academics who are regarded as experts in their fields and who are viewed as qualified to judge whether or not appropriate standards are met.

Some quality assurance agencies use their own staff to make such judgments. That has the disadvantage that staff can not have the broad range of expertise that can be tapped in peer reviewers. It runs the risk that decisions will not be based on expert knowledge. It also puts a great deal of power in the hands of the quality assurance agency and its staff and makes accountability more difficult.

## ***B) Corruption***

We don't like to talk about corruption in academic life. Most of us believe our institutions are above corruption, that integrity is part of what we do. But, it does happen and the best defense against corruption is to institute a variety of protective measures. As Philip Altbach notes, "Not only is corruption undermining the core values of higher education in some parts of the world, it is creating problems of credibility as societies link universities with unsavory practices. After all, higher education's bedrock mission consists of the pursuit of

knowledge and truth.”<sup>28</sup> The problem of corruption in quality assurance and accreditation is one that needs to be faced directly. It is also a problem that can be prevented or limited if appropriate steps are taken to make it difficult, if not impossible.

In reviewing a number of accreditation agencies over the years, I have heard allegations of corruption on numerous occasions. Some people assert that the reviewers are corrupt, others that the agency is corrupt, that its employees require bribes for certification of quality, others that the process is perverted to favor particular institutions, regions, or groups. There have also been allegations of accreditor bias against private institutions. It is hard to know how many of these allegations are true, but the frequency of these allegations is cause for alarm. And there are enough verified examples to demonstrate that the problem is real. Let me give several examples of cases that bear out this concern.

One of the most publicized cases involves corruption in both the licensing and accreditation of higher education institutions in the Ukraine.<sup>29</sup> The authors of one report note that in 2004 they carried out surveys with 43 rectors, vice rectors and administrators at five private universities as well as a large number of interviews with students and faculty members. They conclude that in the Ukraine: “The main area of corruption appears to be centered in the Ministry of Education and the large state universities controlling licensing and accreditation.”<sup>30</sup> Based on their interviews, the authors report that: “A consensus emerged that successful licensing or accreditation applications, with few exceptions, required some form of bribery.” They note that: “Licensing, which is required only of private institutions, might require a bribe of U.S. \$200—about two months’ salary for a typical academic—while accreditation might call for a 10 or 20 times greater “gratuity.”<sup>31</sup> In Ukraine there was a culture of corruption in higher education generally – it was not limited to quality assurance. In other interviews the authors noted that while almost 80 percent of student and faculty respondents said that bribes for grades or admission was inappropriate, 10 percent of students reported that either they had given bribes for such services or personally knew of people who had done so. Twelve percent of faculty members acknowledged that they had taken such bribes or knew someone who had.

In another case in this author’s experience, Ministry employees took bribes in exchange for registering tertiary institutions and certifying that they met minimal Ministry requirements to operate. Ironically, some institutions reported that although they had paid the bribes, they did not receive recognition. The individuals involved reported that they had done nothing wrong since “this did not hurt anyone.”<sup>32</sup> Yet, in reality it did hurt someone – especially the students who

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<sup>28</sup> Philip G. Altbach, Academic Corruption: The Continuing Challenge,” *International Higher Education*, Winter 2005, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> See: Joseph Stetar, Oleksiy Panych, and Bin Chen, “Confronting Corruption: Ukrainian Private Higher Education,” *International Higher Education*, Winter 2005, pp. 13-15. Reprinted in Philip G. Altbach & Daniel C. Levy (Eds.), *Private Higher Education: A Global Revolution*, Rotterdam, Sense Publishers, 2005.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> The country involved remains anonymous to protect the source but the information has been verified from other evidence.

believed that these institutions met required standards. It also hurt the credibility of private higher education institutions generally. In addition, there was a great deal of public cynicism about certification since knowledge of the corruption was wide spread.

Another example of corruption comes from interviews with Tanzanian peer reviewers.<sup>33</sup> As is the tradition in many countries, each institution that is to be reviewed is sent a list of the people selected as peer reviewers for the institutional accreditation site visit. The purpose of that courtesy is to allow the institution to identify any conflict of interest that might have been missed by the accreditation agency in making its selection or not revealed by the peer reviewer. It also allowed institutions to request the removal of anyone they felt to be hostile or biased toward that institution. An unintended consequence of that effort in at least one case, was that the peer reviewers selected were contacted by the institution (in itself a breach of propriety) and offered bribes to assess them favorably. That put the peer reviewers in a very awkward position. In this case, they requested to be removed from the site visit team, reported the incident, and requested that the names of peer reviewers in the future, remain confidential.

I cite these examples to draw your attention to a real problem. While my experience suggests that actual corruption is largely limited to countries in which a culture of corruption is endemic and to rare individual cases in other countries, it is critical that all accreditors establish procedures that make corruption difficult and remain on guard for instances of corruption. Furthermore, as the case of the Ukraine emphasizes, once a culture of corruption is established, it can spread throughout the system, and call into question the very legitimacy of the learning process, grades, the meaning of performance, the value of degrees, and in the end, the very meaning of the “university” itself. Public trust of higher education is critical to its long-term success. Without public trust quality assurance is no assurance at all.

### **C) *Who evaluates? Peer Reviewers and Others***

Most assessments of higher education institutions are carried out using peer review teams for site visits. There are a few cases in which Ministry staff or those of the accreditation agency carry out the evaluation. Where accreditation goes beyond infrastructure, data, and financial reviews, these are of limited value and also pose the potential for corruption as noted earlier. Careful review of academic programs requires a broad range of expertise which can not be found among the staff of a ministry or accreditor, no matter how talented. Thus, the focus here is on peer review.

Peer reviewers are a central and critical part of most quality assurance processes. They provide the expertise required for effective assessment of programs and institutions, bring technical credentials to the process, and vital experience with tertiary education. They are at the heart of accreditation in that they make the judgments about quality and assess whether or not the institution meets quality

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<sup>33</sup> Interviews by the author, February 2006.

requirements. Thus, the choice of peer reviewers, their training, effectiveness during site visits, and on-going post-site visit reviews of their performance is critical to the success of accreditation and audits.

In this context, it is worth reviewing the processes used to insure high quality peer reviewers by several accreditors. One of the most highly regarded accreditors in the United States is ABET, which accredits college and university programs in applied science, computing, engineering, and technology. It is a federation of 29 professional and technical societies representing these fields and has carried out accreditation for the last 75 years. ABET has a pool of about 1500 peer reviewers and goes to great length to insure that they are well qualified, properly trained, and reviewed after each site visit. Peer reviewers are recruited by ABET member societies who look for individuals who are highly regarded in their academic and professional fields, up-to-date, effective communicators, open-minded with good interpersonal skills, work well in a team, are committed to high ethical and professional standards, and well organized.<sup>34</sup>

Candidates are scrutinized in terms of standards of conduct and notified of ABET's "Conflict of Interest Policy."<sup>35</sup> Those selected are given a mentor and invited to undertake a six part training program on the web which precedes face to face training. That training focuses on an overview of the accreditation process, the role of the program evaluator, basics of assessment, application of the criteria (standards), and the program evaluator appraisal process. The initial work is on line and includes tests of understanding at several points. The mentor assigned to each new evaluator works with the evaluator to answer questions and support the face-to-face training. In the face-to-face training, the peer reviewer participates in an experiential workshop which is designed to educate the evaluator about site visits and simulates an actual site visit (including potential problems) to the extent possible using the *ABET Policy and Procedure Manual* and the *Guide for Visit Observers*. Peer reviewers prepare a program evaluator report, worksheet, audit form, and exit statement during the workshop. The peer reviewers in the training program are evaluated during the process. Trainers look for those who seem to lack good judgment, those with a particular agenda, lack of understanding of criteria (standards), personality conflicts, or those who do not have a neutral attitude – do not seem to be fair minded. The training process lasts nine months. Candidates who successfully complete the training requirements are added to the pool of potential peer reviewers. The first site visit of a peer reviewer is as an observer, not a voting member of the review team. In addition, peer reviewers are assessed after each site visit as a way of spotting problems and avoiding difficulties in the future.<sup>36</sup>

Most accreditors have a large pool of peer reviewers. As noted, ABET has 1500. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Higher Education has a pool of about 1200 people. The Commission on Collegiate

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<sup>34</sup> ABET Program Evaluator Competency Model, [http://www.abet.org/\\_TrainingCD/index.htm](http://www.abet.org/_TrainingCD/index.htm).

<sup>35</sup> ABET, "Standards of Conduce" and "ABET Conflict of Interest Policy," <http://www.abet.org/code.shtml>, dl. 9/15/2008.

<sup>36</sup> Interviews with ABET Staff members George Peterson, Executive Director and Kathryn B. Aberle, Associate Executive Director, Planning and Operations, October 16, 2006.

Nursing Education has about 600. In Madagascar, the target is 100 peer reviewers, with training currently underway. Most accreditors try not to use a peer reviewer more than twice a year.

The site visit team members are selected based on the characteristics of the institution or program to be reviewed. If it is a program review, the major criteria relate to the specifics of that academic program. For institutional accreditation, teams usually include a university president, a finance specialist, someone in human resources, several faculty members in fields in which the institution has major programs, perhaps a library director or IT person. An effort is made to have people appropriate not only to the type of institution but to the conditions in which it operates such as urban or rural areas, large scale or small. In some smaller countries, such as Mauritius, the accreditation agency tries to have at least one outside specialist from elsewhere in Africa, Europe, Asia, or the United States to give breadth to the team and provide an international perspective. That was a goal in Ghana as well but the cost has made that prohibitive in most cases.<sup>37</sup>

Interviews with administrators at institutions reviewed generally show favorable reactions to peer reviewers and the site visit. A review of post-accreditation reactions to the process carried out by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in the North East of India is typical.<sup>38</sup> Over 90 percent of the institutions felt the composition of the team was appropriate, members were viewed as experts in their fields, their questions and work were appropriate, and the outcome useful. The authors noted that: “Many colleges considered the peer team visit inspiring and motivating. They were able to inculcate a sense of responsibility, hard work and team spirit in the minds of both teaching and non-teaching staff of the colleges.”<sup>39</sup> The authors noted that: “the peer team visit has contributed intangible benefits to the institutions in this region.”<sup>40</sup> They conclude by suggesting that: “Obviously, the process helped the institutions in creating an academic ambience and in improving activities related to quality enhancement.”<sup>41</sup>

Not all responses to peer reviewers was positive. In a post-accreditation survey of faculty reactions to the process at Rhodes University in South Africa, some faculty members were very critical of the qualifications and operation of the peer reviewers. A significant minority of those interviewed felt that the peer reviewers were unprepared for the site visit, demanded too much of faculty members during the visit, and required a great deal of time and work from them with very little benefit.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See Hayward, *ibid.* p. 31.

<sup>38</sup> K.N.M. Pillai & G. Srinivas, “A Study of the Post-0accreditation Scenario in the North Eastern Region of India: a meta-evaluation of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council processes and procedures,” *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol. 12, No. 1, April 2006, pp. 95-106.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* p. 101.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* p. 103.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* p. 105.

<sup>42</sup> See Fred M. Hayward, “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education in Africa,” 2006, *ibid.* And also: Daniel J. Ncayiyana, “Quality Assurance and Accreditation in South Africa,” June 2006, p. 17. and Daniel J. Ncayiyana, “Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation in South Africa,” June 2006. Unpublished manuscript.

The perspective of peer reviews about the site visits is also interesting and suggestive. In 2006 the author interviewed a number of peer reviewers in six African countries as part of a general study of accreditation in Africa.<sup>43</sup> Most of the peer reviewers indicated that the training they received was not adequate. They noted that the training was too short, included too little time focused on standards, few instructions about the site visit process, or what was expected of them. They also noted that in most cases they were given little information about the institution. In some cases they did not receive the self-assessment from the institution prior to the site visit. These reports came from seasoned, distinguished, faculty members and professionals, who felt that nonetheless they were able to do a good job in making their assessment, but were nonetheless troubled by the lack of training and information.<sup>44</sup> In other African cases such as South Africa, the training was felt to be excellent and the individuals well prepared for site visits.

The peer reviewers interviewed felt that the process was useful for them too as a learning experience and helped create a national “culture of quality” based on their experiences. The exposure to other institutions, other approaches, and different programs was useful in helping them rethink their own teaching, research, and service and provided useful inputs into quality improvement at their own institutions.

Peer reviewers also help protect against corruption in a number of ways. First is the individual integrity of the people chosen – a screening designed to insure their expertise but also their honesty and integrity. That in and of itself helps prevent clandestine institutional approaches to peer reviewers in the first place. In addition, the existence of a large pool of peer reviewers (as we have seen, as many as 1500 in one case) limits the opportunities for corruption. These pools of peer reviewers are far too large to corrupt, unlike a small staff of reviewers in a Ministry. In addition, peer reviewers are required to reveal any conflict of interests they may have with particular institutions (e.g. a spouse or child employed there, recent consultations for the institution, employment at the institution in recent years, dismissal by the institution) and to recuse themselves. That would hold for any unethical contact with the institution prior to the review. The fact that a site visit team is usually composed of at least four members, and often more for a large institution, makes tampering difficult. So too does the fact that the peer reviewer team is not picked until shortly before the site visit. Finally, professional ethics make the consequences of corruption very costly to anyone suspected of unethical conduct. That will be their last appointment as a peer reviewer and they will be shunned by their colleagues and profession.

Overall, the contribution of peer reviewers to the accreditation process is a critical one – to its effectiveness, integrity, and ability to protect and enhance quality in higher education. The critical challenge for accreditation is to insure their effectiveness which requires great care in choosing individuals as peer reviewers, initial and ongoing training, and review of individual peer reviewer performance

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<sup>43</sup> See Fred M. Hayward, “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education in Africa,” 2006, *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Interviews by the author in Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Tanzania, and South Africa. See Hayward, *ibid.* pp. 30-32.

during site visits. In achieving the results desired, programs such as that of ABET provide excellent models and have proven their worth in the test of more than 70 years of accreditation.

#### **D) *Legitimacy***

The success of institutional accreditation is largely dependent on the legitimacy of the process. A review of accreditation in many national settings suggests that there are a number of actions that can foster legitimacy.

- ***Transparency***

One of the keys to success is transparency – providing institutions and the public with a clear view of the process and how it works. That is important not just on college and university campuses, but for the general public as well. The public needs to understand what accreditation means, why it is important to decisions about where to send their children, its implications for jobs on graduation, transfer to programs in other countries, and successful national development. Some accreditors do an excellent job of making their process clear. They best spell out the goals, the process, and the results of accreditation in publications, on the web, and to the public. They provide information about the purposes of accreditation. They list institutions that have been admitted to candidacy for accreditation, gained accreditation, been denied accreditation, or put on probation. They also share their standards or criteria for accreditation, provide information on accredited institutions, list diploma mills, and provide other information of use to universities and the general public.

- ***Standards and who sets them***

One of the critical issues for accreditation is who sets the standards? How are they established? Who has input into the decisions? In most cases, the standards are put together by the accrediting agency in consultation with higher education institutions, distinguished faculty members, and in the case of the professions, professional associations. As standards are prepared, revised, or additional standards added, they are circulated to institutions, professions, and the public for their comments. This is an important part of the process of standard setting and usually results in some changes in the original texts. In the US, South Africa, and Madagascar, for example, the comment period frequently results in significant changes which reflect problems identified by universities, faculty members, professionals, and professional associations. In Madagascar in 2007, although standards had been reviewed and discussed with institutions from the outset, as a result of meetings with stakeholders near the end of the review process, temporary changes were made to lower several standards to reflect a realization that more time was needed to

allow institutions to achieve the level of quality desired. Thus lower requirements were instituted for an interim period of two years.<sup>45</sup>

The standards themselves play a critical role in perceptions of legitimacy. Part of creating that legitimacy is whether or not institutions have an active part in standard setting. Are they consulted? Do they perceive the standards to be fair and reasonable? Are new or changed standards subject to their review before they are put into place?

○ *Quality versus Conformity*

One of the dangers confronting accreditation is that the standards developed will turn into an exercise in conformity and have the effect of limiting creativity. Standards need to be flexible so that they encourage creativity and allow for the rapid changes that occur in most fields.

○ *Appropriate benchmarks*

Standards need to be appropriate to the different goals of institutions. While the benchmarks should be focused on international standards, they need to reflect the needs of individual institutions and the kinds of graduates they are trying to produce. The level of knowledge and experience required for technical programs may not need the sophistication or theoretical knowledge of state-of-the-art theory but it should be of the same high quality. For example, the standards for technical training of surveyors in engineering will have different requirements than the standards expected of a chemical engineer. In addition, financial realities need to be recognized when assessing whether an institution meets appropriate standards. As one Vice Chancellor in Uganda put it, “While we have tried to have a state-of-the-art computer science program, but we do not have the funds needed to meet ABET standards. What are we to do?”<sup>46</sup> These local realities have to be recognized and factored into decisions about accreditation.

○ *Equity*

There is a danger in setting standards that existing inequities will be reinforced. There is a tendency to codify desired goals in the context of today’s hierarchies, be it a ranking of academic programs as more important, gender hierarchies, race, or religion. As Louise Morley reminds us: “Men and women in the academy often appear to be on different career trajectories. The quality movement is reinforcing this. The socially constructed indicators of career success reflect existing divisions of labour, with research

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<sup>45</sup> Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, “Dispositions transitoires d’Accréditation et des sujets connexes d’Assurance Qualité; jusqu’au janvier 2010,” December 13, 2007.

<sup>46</sup> Comments of a Vice Chancellor, Uganda, July 19, 2004. Notes by the author.

at the top of the hierarchy. Women are already disproportionately concentrated in areas and institutions with the lowest levels of research funding.” She goes on to note: “There is a danger that women will be squeezed out of high status research work. This has implications for women’s career development.”<sup>47</sup> Recognizing these issues, those involved in the process need to acknowledge existing inequities and factor them into the quality assurance process in ways that foster equity of opportunity whether we are talking about particular academic fields, gender, race, religion, or other disparities.

Equity also does not mean “dumbing down” standards to some low common denominator. It means fairness in quality determinations – that standards need to be transparent and operate in ways that do not confuse existing hierarchies, biases, or traditions, with creativity and excellence. In that sense, legitimacy in quality assurance grows out of the care and fairness with which we carry out the process of accreditation.

○ *Effectiveness.*

Part of the legitimacy of accreditation depends on perceptions of effectiveness. To what extent does it seem to improve quality? How good is it in distinguishing between poor quality and high quality? Is it seen by institutions as fostering quality or as just another bureaucratic hurdle that must be dealt with as part of the business of running a higher education institution. In most cases reviewed, the accreditation process is viewed positively, as we saw in India earlier. In all the countries reviewed, some institutions had been turned down for accreditation. Interestingly, few of those cases were appealed, indicating that the results were regarded as valid and legitimate.

An indication of the effectiveness of accreditation and campaigns to inform the public in several countries about its importance is the rapid expansion of use of the Internet by parents checking on the accreditation status of higher education institutions when considering enrollment options for their children.

One striking indication of the effectiveness of accreditation found during my review of African accreditors was the pre-accreditation impact of standards and criteria. In Madagascar, as soon as the standards were published in 2007 and circulated in draft form, several tertiary institutions began to make changes to insure they met the requirements. Of particular concern to some private institutions were the requirements about the percentage of full-time staff and PhD requirements. Several institutions moved quickly to

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<sup>47</sup> Morley, *ibid.* p. 155.

expand their full time staff numbers and focused their recruitment on faculty with PhDs. Similar results were seen in Ghana in 2006 where several institutions began major programs to upgrade both their computer laboratories and the libraries in response to forthcoming accreditation visits.

**E) *A Free Market Approach to Higher Education – “Let the market decide.”***

Over the years there have been many challenges to accreditation from private providers. One is the “free market” argument. At a meeting on accreditation with the heads of private tertiary institutions in Ethiopia in 2003, I was told: “We do not need accreditation. Let the market decide if what we offer is good quality. Accreditation is a violation of our freedom.” That was not the last time I was to hear such a comment. What is at stake? Why should governments or NGOs carry out accreditation? Why not let the market decide?

I suspect every one of you has experienced the consequences of “let the market decide.” The victims are the students who receive an inferior, and sometimes bogus education or degree. It is the parents who pay the fees, the business that hires the graduate thinking the education and training provided has value, and the nation as a whole which wastes scarce resources on programs of little or no benefit to the nation or the individual. Quality assurance and accreditation were once carried out by institutions themselves, but for reasons we noted earlier, external validation is expected today. The current environment requires some level of minimal standards, protection of citizens from fraud and low quality, and assurance that the nation has institutions that provide the kind of training needed in today’s competitive environment. That can not be provided in a totally free market, in part because the average citizen lacks adequate information about these institutions, in part because most of the public lacks the expertise to make such judgments, and in part because the government has an obligation to insure that tertiary education has value and meets national needs.

**F) *Faculty Resistance***

In a number of cases, faculty members have mounted strong resistance to accreditation. Several studies have identified both the magnitude and the nature of academic resistance to quality assurance. It is worth reviewing that literature and taking these concerns into consideration as one considers ways to assure quality improvement and undertake accreditation. As one study points out, “Such studies identify a range of possible reasons for the frequently hostile responses of academics to quality assurance processes. Potential explanations include issues relating to the distribution and exercise of power, differences in defining and understanding the notion of quality, concerns about the effectiveness of quality assurance processes, doubts about the reliance on quantification often associated with quality assurance mechanisms and the time spent complying with quality requirements.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Gina Anderson, “Assuring Quality/Resisting Quality Assurance: Academics’ responses to ‘quality’ in some Australian universities,” *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol. 12, No. 2, July 2006, p. 162.

Another key factor in faculty resistance is faculty members' assumptions that the process itself is part of the "managerial agenda" of the institution<sup>49</sup> rather than a real commitment to quality improvement. They resent the use of the accreditation process as a mechanism of power and control by management – seeing them as hijacking the process for their own ends. In the study in Australia the authors identified two aspects of the process, student evaluations of teaching and performance appraisals as examples of those concerns. Both allow the management a great degree of latitude in how they interpret data and both put the faculty member in a situation in which others are making performance judgments. The shift from self-evaluation in Australia to external evaluation in 1999 marked the onset of faculty concerns. They saw this as a move from a relatively value free model of quality assurance to one "reflecting a particular power-knowledge regime."<sup>50</sup> They saw these evaluations as a kind of "surveillance" that could be used against them; that it shifted power to administrators and away from faculty members and the academy.

The performance appraisal, though filled out by the staff member, is usually reviewed by the head of department or a senior member. Student teaching evaluations were equally seen as shifting authority to the administration rather than the faculty. It was also viewed as a shift to a "consumer determined perspective of quality"<sup>51</sup> rather than an academic measure. While faculty did not object to student evaluations of teaching per se, they did not believe it was a reliable way to measure teaching quality; that it was often manipulated by both students and faculty. This also reflected a difference between faculty and management over the meaning of the word *quality* with management seeing quality as accountability to stakeholders as opposed to faculty who saw it as "excellence" in the traditional sense of academic excellence at universities.<sup>52</sup> The issue of quantification of quality also came into play in the debate as well as the hostility toward management's role in the process. Thus, for those faculty members dissatisfied with the process, compliance represented resignation and forced performance rather than acceptance of the utility of the process.<sup>53</sup>

There are other arguments against accreditation made by faculty members including the amount of time it takes, their sense that there are no positive outcomes, that even when deficiencies are identified (e.g. lack of laboratory equipment, outdated libraries, lack of access to the Internet, few teaching aids) there is never funding to resolve the problems. The issue of the amount of time faculty members had to put into the quality assurance process was a particularly contentious one in Britain and sparked major debates about quality assurance audits and the QAA.

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<sup>49</sup> Anderson, *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Anderson, *ibid.* p. 164.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* p. 166.

<sup>53</sup> On this issue see Trowler's assessment of what he called "dramaturgical performance." P. Trowler, *Academics Responding to Change—New higher education frameworks and academic cultures*, (Buckingham, Open University Press, 1998.

Faculty resistance to accreditation is one of the most critical issues that can be faced by accreditation because, in the end, it is the faculty members who both define quality and foster quality improvement if it is to happen. They and their professional colleagues are the peer reviewers. They are the ones who keep up in their fields or do not, produce research that is state-of-the-art or fail to be productive. It is the academics' definition of quality that creates centers of excellence and high rankings. And it is the faculty members collectively who create a culture of research, a culture of quality, and culture of outstanding teaching and service. It is a combination of their teaching, research findings, knowledge creation, service – their creativity or lack of it that defines the quality of the institution. Presidents, vice chancellors, deans, and department heads are important, but in reality they are primarily care-takers and facilitators who create or fail to create the conditions that make a university work effectively – the infrastructure, facilities, support staff, funding, laboratories, IT, and other support that make it possible for faculty members to be creative, stimulating, provocative, productive,

We thus must take faculty concerns about accreditation very seriously. Effective quality assurance and improvement must be integrally connected to the faculty. To be sure, the work environment needs to meet conditions of excellence. But high quality universities grow out of the work of high quality faculty members. They must be committed to excellence and to state-of-the-art teaching, research and service.

Yet, we are all familiar with cases in which there has been serious slippage in quality, much of it attributable to faculty members who seem satisfied with the status quo. Lectures are missed, the curriculum has remained unchanged for years, research is unknown, and members spend more time anywhere but on campus. De facto standards are set at such institutions, but these standards are unacceptable. Such cases usually have multiple causes of long standing including diminished levels of funding, eroding salaries (which sometimes require second jobs for survival), loss of prestige, campus unrest, and political instability. In situations such as Afghanistan, where the universities have suffered from the ravages of more than 25 years of war, the decline is understandable. I know from my own work on strategic planning with six universities there that faculty members are very eager to do whatever it takes to rebuild the institutions and to meet world-class standards.

In some other places, the problems are more difficult and relate to a culture of indifference, irresponsibility, and lethargy. I have seen far too many of such campuses. Under such circumstances, resolution usually requires a mix of interventions and facilitation including incentives, provision of an appropriate infrastructure, recruitment of new high quality faculty members, and new leadership. Yet in every case in which a concerted effort has been made to bring about quality improvement with reasonable provisions of support, some incentives, and dedicated leadership, positive results have been achieved. No one wants to be at a third-rate institution. None of us like to operate under shoddy conditions. We all want our work to be respected and appreciated. Sometimes,

little more than that and good leadership is all that is needed. And if this leadership can be provided by faculty members, so much the better.

The challenge then for accreditation is to insure that the process is understood by the faculty, that they are an integral part of it, that they buy into the process, and are in agreement with accreditation and quality assurance bodies about the meaning of quality, the standards set for universities, and the mechanisms used to assess them. The standards for accreditation, in the end, needs to be faculty-driven, not administratively driven. That means that the power, in the end, has to rest with the faculty. The process has to reflect their values of excellence, quality, and standards. Those of us in management are the facilitators – a vital role for success, but one that must in the end be subsidiary to that of the academy – the faculty writ large.

You may argue, “but the faculty members do not want to take the time to deal with standards, with definitions of excellence, with the time involved in preparing a self-study, or in the process of accreditation. Faculty members will see it as taking away from their research, teaching, professional obligations, service.” To be sure, there will be some for whom that is true, but in general, those committed to high quality higher education, state-of-the-art teaching and research, and ongoing quality improvement are not going to want others to define excellence, set standards, impose conditions that might stifle the exchange of ideas, or limit creativity, discovery, genius, and exploration. The process can be facilitated by others, but the critical issues must remain in the hands of the outstanding faculty members in each field.

That said, since the university is a community of many stakeholders, we must include input from all of them. They too must be respected, treated fairly, protected, rewarded, and allowed a participatory voice in the process. Students, for example, should have a voice in quality assessment. Their assessment of faculty teaching is important. They have a lot to say about their courses, the interest of their professors, and their views about the utility of the courses they are taking. But unlike consumers, they are not in a position to order a grade of “A” or to define *excellence* for their field of study. If we teach them well, they will in due course be able to do that. Society too has an important stake in higher education and in supporting quality institutions. Their voices need to be heard. They have the right to accountability. They are also concerned about quality. Administrators and staff have a role too, not only in making the institution function as it should to produce high quality results, but in facilitating the well-being of the institution, its students, teachers, staff, graduates, and community. On the other hand, accreditors need to understand that though presidents and vice chancellors may be the first among equals, in an effective university devoted to excellence, they are not the definers of knowledge, creativity, or excellence.

As we establish accreditation bodies, review our standards, implement new ones, foster quality improvement, we need to walk a fine line between facilitation and administration always mindful that it is knowledge, creativity, and excellence that are our goals. Our objective as accreditors must be to respect those goals and to operate in ways that foster, guide and preserve the conditions that create quality.

## V. CONCLUSIONS: MAKING ACCREDITATION WORK

Central to national development today is the high quality higher education needed to create the knowledge societies that are essential to national development, employment opportunities, and citizen well-being. Quality improvement and quality assessment is essential to that process, as I have suggested earlier. Yet quality assurance is a complex and delicate process that can, as we have seen, be counter productive to the goals of excellence and creativity. As we think about our own accreditation and quality improvement system it is important to reflect on how we can create processes that meet the tests of legitimacy, transparency, fairness, and equity. How can we build the trust needed to foster broad support for the process? What do we do to create a “culture of quality on our campuses?” How do we make accreditation understood as an opportunity rather than an ordeal, nightmare, or punishment as some have described it? We do that in large part by focusing our efforts on creating excellence in the long run, building environments that promote creativity, support genius, foster discussion and exchange of ideas.

Over the last decade we have seen a phenomenal growth in quality assurance and in accreditation, as noted early in this presentation. And, it is likely to continue to grow because the needs are so great and the stakes so high. Globalization<sup>54</sup> has brought great advantages to us in the way of access to information and the ability to communicate instantly with most of the rest of the world. Globalization has created problems as well, which we need not dwell on here. It has changed the nature of university education around the world in what Peter Scott calls the “radical decentralization of scientific capacity.”<sup>55</sup> While not every nation can afford to industrialize or produce high tech research centers, every nation can build on the fruits of discovery – can create its own knowledge society and thus use new knowledge to be at the cutting edge of creativity – and in many cases reap the rewards of those findings in ways that improve the economy, provide employment to large numbers of its citizens, and improve the well-being of the people. To do that, however, requires high quality tertiary institutions, as I noted at the beginning of this presentation. Quality assurance is about creating the conditions for that kind of development and providing the vehicles needed – high quality universities that will train and foster the talent, creativity, and genius that resides in every society.

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<sup>54</sup> Following Knight and de Wit, I define *globalization* as “the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, ideas across borders.” While, as they note, “globalization affects each country in a different way due to a nation’s individual history, traditions, culture, and priorities,” it is not a process from which a nation can abstain. In addition it is a process that has been part of higher education from the beginning of the first universities many years ago. See also: Jane Knight and Hans De Wit, *Internationalisation of Higher Education in Asia Pacific Countries*, European Association for International Education, Amsterdam, 1997, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> Scott, *ibid.* p. 120.