Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education in Africa

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<th>Description</th>
<th>Countries where acronym is used</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AQAA</td>
<td>Accreditation and Quality Assurance Agency</td>
<td>Madagascar</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHE</td>
<td>Commission for Higher Education</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHESR</td>
<td>Council of Higher Education and Scientific Research</td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
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<td>CHE</td>
<td>Council on Higher Education</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
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<td>CNAQ</td>
<td>National Commission of Accreditation and Evaluation of Higher Education</td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
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<td>EVAC</td>
<td>Evaluation and Accreditation Corporation</td>
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<td>Higher Education Accreditation Council</td>
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<td>HEQC</td>
<td>Higher Education Quality Committee</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
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<td>HERQA</td>
<td>Higher Education Relevance and Quality Assurance Agency</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
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<tr>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Masters in Business Administration</td>
<td>all countries</td>
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<td>NAB</td>
<td>The National Accreditation Board</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
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<td>NBTE</td>
<td>National Board for Technical Education</td>
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<td>NCHE</td>
<td>The National Council of Higher Education</td>
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<td>National Commission on Private Higher Education</td>
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<td>NHCE</td>
<td>National Council for Higher Education</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
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<td>NOQF</td>
<td>National Qualifications Framework</td>
<td>Southern Africa</td>
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<td>NUC</td>
<td>National Universities Commission</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
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<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
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<td>QRAA</td>
<td>Quality Relevance and Assurance Agency</td>
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<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern African Development Community</td>
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<td>SARUA</td>
<td>Southern African Regional Universities Association</td>
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<td>TCCA</td>
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<td>TEC</td>
<td>Tertiary Education Commission</td>
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<td>UNISA</td>
<td>University of South Africa</td>
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Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education in Africa

Fred M. Hayward*

I. Introduction:

1. This report focuses on higher education accreditation, audits, institutional academic reviews, and other quality assurance activities at the program, institutional, national, and regional levels in Africa as a whole. It represents a first effort to map, explore and assess accreditation and audits in higher education institutions in Africa as a whole and to focus on several case studies that are illustrative of the process. The data on accreditation and audits in much of Africa are limited. On the other hand, there is a great deal more going on in quality assurance than had been expected. The information presented here, the assessments, and recommendations are intended to inform and assist those interested in quality assurance in general and suggest approaches and strategies for those contemplating university accreditation, audits, and academic reviews.

2. The development and utilization of effective mechanisms for quality assurance and improvement are critical to successful higher education everywhere. Every nation and its university graduates are competing in an environment shaped by its own local and national needs as well as international expectations and standards. The impacts of the latter are increasing. As a result, the success and competitiveness of graduates in tertiary institutions will be affected by those standards and expectations. Educators, policy makers, and faculty members would be well advised to assess their own tertiary systems in that context and strive to set appropriate standards of their own which also draw on and reflect the unique history, needs, and expectations of the nation.

3. Quality improvement and quality assurance are among the most complicated problems facing higher education because they touch on almost every aspect of the system. It is much more than meeting some minimal standard measures of inputs – number of faculty members with PhDs, books in the library, ratio of computers to students. And if quality assurance is to be carried out effectively it must be seen as important to those involved, impart critical information to tertiary institutions, employers, and the public, and be meaningful to the international higher education community and other international actors.

4. Quality refers to “fitness for purpose” – meeting or conforming to generally accepted standards as defined by quality assurance bodies and appropriate academic and professional communities. In the diverse arena of higher education, fitness for purpose varies tremendously...
by field and program. Quality assurance is a planned and systematic review process of an institution or program to determine whether or not acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced. A broad range of factors affect quality in tertiary institutions including their vision and goals, the talent and expertise of the teaching staff, the quality of the library and laboratories, access to the Internet, governance, leadership, relevance, value added, and a host of others. A tertiary institution is only as good as the quality of its teaching staff – they are the heart of the institution producing its graduates, its research products, and its service to the institution, community, and nation.

5. Some of the most important terms used here and in quality assurance, such as accreditation, are employed in a variety of ways and have different meanings in different parts of the world. For example, accreditation in the US refers to a process of review and assessment of quality that results in a decision about whether or not to accredit an institution. In the UK accreditation refers to a Code of Practice by which an institution without its own degree awarding powers is given authority by a university or other awarding institution to offer its degrees to students meeting the requirements. Several key terms used in this study are defined here to clarify our focus and avoid ambiguity. Other related terms are defined in the Appendix.  

6. The most important terms used in this study are accreditation, audit, and academic review. Accreditation is defined as a process of self-study and external quality review used in higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities and higher education programs for quality assurance and quality improvement. The process is designed to determine whether or not an institution has met or exceeded national published standards for accreditation and is achieving its mission and stated purpose. The process usually includes a self-evaluation, peer reviews and site visits. Success results in accreditation.

7. Audit is defined as a process of review of an institution or program to determine if its curriculum, staff, and infrastructure meet its stated aims and objectives. It is an evaluation and assessment of an institution or its programs in relation to its own mission, goals, and stated standards. The assessors are looking primarily at the success of the institution in achieving its goals. An audit focuses on accountability of institutions and programs and usually involves a self-study, peer review and a site visit. The key differences between the two are that accreditation focuses on standards external to the institution, usually national, and an assessment of the institution in terms of those standards. Audits focus on an institution’s own standards and goals and its success in meeting them.

8. An institutional academic review is a diagnostic self-assessment and evaluation of teaching, learning, research, service, and outcomes based on a detailed examination of curricula, structure, and effectiveness of a program as well as the quality and activities of its faculty. It is designed to give an institution an evaluation of its own programs based on a self-assessment by the unit, a peer review by colleagues outside the program, and a report on the findings.

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1 This glossary is modified and drawn from a lengthier version prepared by Fred M. Hayward for the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) in February 2001. See: www.chea.org/international/inter_glossary01.html.
In several countries the term _accreditation_ is used to refer to public universities that were established by acts of Parliament, by statute, or by decree. They are “accredited” _de jure_ (by law) but not as the result of peer review, a site visit, and a report assessing the institution. We do not regard that status as equivalent to accreditation as defined earlier. Cameroon and Kenya are examples of _de jure accreditation_. While we do not include such institutions in our tabulations of accredited higher education institutions, we note their _de jure_ status (see table 1 in Appendix I). The term audit, like accreditation, is also used in ambiguous ways to describe a variety of types of assessments of institutions. It may focus only on financial concerns, on student conduct, or some specific academic matter, rather than on the institution as a whole or a particular academic program. We use the terms accreditation and quality audit only in reference to practices meeting the definitional standards spelled out earlier (or some close semblance of them). For an institution to qualify as accredited or audited for purposes of this study it is expected to have undergone the following:

- A self-study prepared by the candidate higher education institution or program.
- An external peer review which focuses on academic programs, teaching, research, and service as well as the quality and activities of the faculty.
- A site visit to assess the institution or program by a peer review team. That assessment is based on standards or criteria for the process set by the quality assurance agency or in the case of an audit, the institution itself.
- A report on the site visit which focuses on institutional academic quality standards, quality assurance processes, and improvement activities.
- And, for accreditation (but not audits), a decision resulting from the review to accredit or deny accreditation, or some intermediate status such as _candidacy for accreditation or probation_.

While all of the quality assurance agencies examined in Africa are linked in some way to government – as parts of a ministry of education or a semi-autonomous unit – the idea of non-governmental accreditation is seen as important in many countries. It was part of the original plan for South Africa. At least one country is moving toward total autonomy from government for its accrediting agency.\(^2\) Accreditation by autonomous non-governmental quality assurance agencies is a tradition in some parts of the world (e.g. United States). In such cases, the work of accreditors is usually recognized by government, and accreditation is often seen as a condition for receiving government funding. In most cases, accreditation and audits are expected to be carried out periodically (e.g. every 5-8 years).

It is increasingly recognized that quality higher education is central to economic and political development, and vital to competitiveness in an increasingly globalized world. The articulation of this recognition, particularly in the World Bank’s _Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education_\(^3\), has focused increased attention on quality assurance and accreditation as critical factors to ensuring quality improvement and relevance. Recent research findings\(^4\) indicate that expanding tertiary education may promote faster technological catch-up and improve a country’s ability to maximize its economic output. At the

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\(^2\) That is a goal for the national accreditation agency in Madagascar once it is well established.


same time, there is very little data on Africa supporting this link since the processes of accreditation and audits are of such recent vintage that it is too soon to measure the link or its impact. Nonetheless, within Africa, an increasing number of leaders in education and government are convinced of this relationship, or concerned enough about it, that they are pushing for effective quality assurance and quality improvement. For example, senior officials in Ethiopia\(^5\), Madagascar\(^6\), South Africa, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria have expressed concern about quality improvements for tertiary institutions, the need to reassure the public about the quality of private providers, and the importance of ensuring that tertiary education offered in both public and private tertiary institutions meets acceptable local and international standards. For the most part, those statements are expressed in the context of the need to foster national development. These concerns are echoed in other parts of the world with similar initiatives which focus on higher education as a means to establish a knowledge economy.\(^7\)

12. Changes brought about by the transition to a knowledge economy have created a demand for higher skill levels in most occupations. A new range of competences such as adaptability, team work, communication skills and the motivation for continuous learning have become critical. Thus, countries wishing to move towards the knowledge economy are challenged to undertake reforms to raise the quality of education and training through changes in content and pedagogy. Without high quality tertiary education nations lack the trained professionals to meet the needs of highly competitive markets and the challenges of knowledge societies. Accreditation and assessment help foster and encourage high quality and quality improvement in higher education institutions. As noted in the *Statement on Institutional Effectiveness*, of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Committee on Institutions of Higher Education:

> Ultimately, assessment and accreditation share the common goals of enabling the institution to reach its fullest academic potential by providing the highest quality education possible. In pursuing that goal, institutional autonomy should be preserved, innovation encouraged, and the distinct character of each institution recognized and honored.\(^8\)

13. Institutional and program accreditation and quality audits in Africa reflect a wide range of goals that include to:

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\(^6\) The Minister of National Education for Madagascar, in a presentation at the World Bank on March 22, 2005 emphasized that the “Ministry should focus on quality control” – that focusing “more and more on quality” was to be part of their “new orientation.”

\(^7\) In September 2005 India’s Prime Minister stated that India’s universities were “falling behind their peers around the world” and spoke of the “need to make India’s institutions of higher education and research world class.” He argued that investments in higher education institutions and research and development are as important as investments in physical capital and physical infrastructure. See *Chronicle of Higher Education*, “India’s Prime Minister Sharply Criticizes Universities as Lagging Behind.” September 2, 2005. Pakistan’s 5-Year Plan for higher education is recognition of the fact that “knowledge is now the engine for socio-economic development” and an effort to create “the necessary foundations in which excellence can flourish and Pakistan can embark on the road to develop a knowledge economy.” Prof. Atta-ur-Rahman, Higher Education Commission, *Medium Term Development Framework 2005-10*, p. iii.

• assess the performance of tertiary institutions including teaching, learning, research, and service;
• improve the quality of higher education, which in many cases means meeting international standards and expectations;
• protect the public from fraudulent or substandard tertiary education providers;
• provide institutions with an external assessment of quality and performance and encourage quality improvement;
• provide information to potential students, their parents, employers, and the public;
• assess the relevance of academic and professional programs;
• provide for licensure in professional fields (e.g. accounting, medicine, law, teacher education, engineering);
• set minimum standards for higher education institutions (in the case of accreditation);
• examine quality improvement and assessment mechanisms of institutions;
• assess the success of institutions in meeting their stated missions, goals, and vision;
• hold tertiary institutions accountable to the public and stakeholders;
• provide mechanisms for government regulation of higher education;
• assist governments in allocating resources;
• protect the integrity of the meaning of higher education terminology, including “university”, “college”, “professor”, “dean” and related terms as a public good, from misuse and misapplication;
• provide a recognized measure of quality to attract foreign students and investors, insure the transferability of students, and recognition of student degrees internationally;

14. The range of goals, the multiplicity of stakeholders, and the complexity of academic institutions pose major challenges for quality assurance. There are often differences of opinion about what is relevant or about appropriate standards from the perspectives of faculty members, university leaders, employers, government, parents, students, the community, and professional associations. From an institutional view, quality assurance reflects the desire for, or recognition of the need for, external judgments about their performance. For governments, accreditation and audits provide public accountability and information about the adequacy of institutional performance. For the public, the process provides information about the relative quality of institutions, assurances that they meet some minimal standards (in the case of accreditation), and information that can help students make decisions about where to enroll. For employers, accreditation provides assurance and information about the quality of graduates, particularly in contrast to institutions that are not accredited or audited.

15. Some goals may not be compatible. Others may be beyond the capacity of available human and financial resources. There are a host of demands and issues to be considered such as costs and who pays them, standards to be used and who sets them, and the role of international bench-marks and expectations in the face of national needs and cultural factors. Accreditation and quality audits generally focus on quality improvement as well as assessment of current conditions at an institution. Universities are encouraged to promote greater efficiency, provide for transparency in governance, and direct human and material resources to areas most critical to development.
16. Quality assurance can play a key catalytic role in revitalizing weak tertiary education systems. There is emerging consensus that traditional academic controls of quality are inadequate for today’s challenges and that more explicit assurances about quality are needed. Box 1 summarizes the experience of Romania 10 years ago.

**Box 1. Lessons from Romanian Higher Education Reforms**

A 1994 education sector reform strategy introduced by the Romanian Government led to the 1995 Education Law. The new Law replaced centralized Ministry of Education (MOE) control with system oversight through intermediary councils of “buffer organizations”. This was achieved by devolving professional and policy functions from the MOE to four, semiautonomous, intermediary councils: the National Council on Accreditation and Academic Evaluation, the National Council on Academic Titles and Degrees, the Higher Education Financing Council, and, the University Research Council.

The higher education system is now more responsive to the needs of the emerging market economy. This has been accomplished by changing the content of programs, readjusting the size of programs, and building in more flexibility. New fields such as business and modern macro and micro-economics were introduced, while other fields, such as central planning, were eliminated. Over-specialization and over-enrollment in certain technical and engineering fields have been adjusted and interdisciplinary programs have been introduced. Flexibility has been increased through the introduction of short programs, retraining programs and continuing education.

In addition, revitalization of academic programs, through the Accreditation Council, is ensuring higher quality standards, especially in the newly developing public and private universities. Quality of faculty, in fast growing fields, is being upgraded through the development of postgraduate programs to train the next generation of academic staff, while the National Research Council is funding the development of new postgraduate programs and related research.

Source: World Bank 1996

17. Very little research has been carried out about quality assurance in Africa. Information about accreditation, audits, and institutional academic reviews was limited, little was known about their operation, goals, and financing practices; the relationship between quality assurance and national needs; the role of professional organizations in quality assurance and accreditation; issues about the autonomy of quality assurance agencies; or about costs involved in setting up and operating a quality assurance system.

18. This report describes and assesses higher education quality assurance in Africa at the program, institutional, and national levels with a brief commentary about regional efforts. It presents examples of successful quality assurance and accreditation including processes, procedures, and standards and discusses successful efforts at quality improvement. It identifies, assesses, and prioritizes capacity building needs in higher education quality assurance and accreditation and explores options to organize and deliver capacity building services to national

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10 An exception to this is the very interesting soon to be published study by Peter Okebukola and Juma Shabani, “Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa,” growing out of the February 2006 UNESCO Conference on Quality Assurance in Nairobi, Kenya.
quality assurance agencies. The report is based on an overview of tertiary education accreditation and audits in all the countries in Africa and buttressed by six detailed country case studies (Cameroon, Ghana, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa and Tanzania) selected on the basis of six criteria:

- Evidence that the case will illustrate major issues and serve as a model and example of good practice in quality assurance, quality improvement, and accreditation;
- Utility of the case to ongoing and planned World Bank operations in the region;
- Existence of both public and private tertiary institutions in the country;
- Experience with quality audits and/or accreditation;
- Willingness of the respective institutions and/or national body to participate in the study;
- Evidence of effective quality assurance and improvement at the institutional and/or national level.

This report focuses on three major approaches to university quality assurance: accreditation, audits, and academic quality reviews in Africa as a whole. Other tertiary quality assurance activities (such as accreditation of technical colleges, polytechnics, and technikons) are discussed briefly, and mentioned in the case studies, but are not included in a systematic way because: their differences are so great that they make country comparison difficult; information is even more limited than that on university accreditation and quality audits; and there were limitations of time and funding needed to support the additional work required.

The current state of accreditation and quality assurance in Africa varies considerably, ranging from countries such as Ghana, Cameroon, and Nigeria with a history of quality assurance going back to the establishment of the first higher education institutions, to a large number of countries with no formal national programs of quality assurance or accreditation (See Table 1 in Appendix I). There are about a dozen countries with quality assurance and accreditation processes in place (including Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, Seychelles, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda), and several others (including Namibia, Mozambique and Botswana) which are in the process of establishing it. In addition there are a wide range of other quality assurance mechanisms in place in Africa, some of which are explored in the pages below. For example, there is a growing trend to establish national qualifications frameworks to set minimum content qualifications for technical training and many areas of tertiary education, to foster comparability of degrees and to encourage mobility between institutions within the same country and outside – a welcome development that could eventually lead to regional frameworks to promote comparability of degrees in Africa and cross-border mobility of students and skilled workers.

II. Brief History of Quality Assurance in Africa

The history of quality assurance in African higher education goes back to the founding of the first universities in Africa: Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone in 1827, which was affiliated with Durham University in England from 1876; Liberia College, 1852; the University of Cape Town in South Africa, established in 1829, affiliated with the University of London; Makerere University in 1922, also affiliated with the University of London, and University of Ghana, Legon, in 1948, affiliated with the University of London; the University College of Addis Ababa in 1951 (unaffiliated); the University of Dakar, established in 1957, and affiliated with the
University of Bordeaux. The University of Dakar, now Cheikh Anta Diop University, was regarded as part of the French higher education system as late as the 1960s. Authority over the quality of university education in these early days was a function of their governing boards and faculty, and for some, the affiliating institution. With affiliation the institutions became part of the British, French, Portuguese or other systems of quality assurance through their partner universities, and usually gave the degree of the affiliating institution. These institutions were subject to the same kinds of quality control as were British or other European universities with external examiners and other aspects of these systems.

22. As other new universities were established, some of them were also often affiliated with external or internal institutions. Some of the early universities, such as the University of Cape Town, became mentors for the newer institutions. When Fort Hare University was established in South Africa in 1916 it was affiliated with Rhodes University (See Appendix for a list of African universities). Even with affiliation, there was a high degree of institutional autonomy. Quality assurance was seen primarily as the province of the faculty and other governance bodies at each university.

23. At independence, achieved by many countries in the 1960s, the role of state authority over higher education increased. Most departments and ministries of education took an interest in the universities and asserted greater authority over governance and decision-making. That was not always in support of quality. Indeed, in many cases, the increased role of the state in university education coincided with a decline in the quality of higher education and a desire for political control of education.

24. Changes in quality assurance over the years since independence were driven by a number of factors including: the end of mentoring relationships with European universities, weakening (and in some cases the demise) of the external examiner system, tremendous enrollment growth, significantly decreased expenditures on higher education per capita over the years, effects of the brain drain,11 the rapid expansion of private higher education (much of it of questionable quality), growing unemployment of graduates, recognition that Africa was falling further behind the rest of the world in creating knowledge societies, and increased pressure from competition and globalization. All these increased pressure on higher education to institute changes that would improve quality.

25. For many years, the external examiner system, established at many institutions on their own or in conjunction with affiliation with external universities, helped insure that academic programs and final examinations were reviewed on a regular basis by people committed to maintaining those standards. At many universities, the fact of external examiners with substantial power over final marks, helped protect them from the kinds of political pressure that would have destroyed quality and called into question the veracity of final grades. There were a few examples of accreditation of African universities by foreign accreditors including the University of Asmara in Eritrea in 1960 by the Superior Council of the Institute of Italian Universities and the University of South Africa (UNISA) by the Distance Education and Training Council, a United States distance education accreditor, in 1992.

11 The cost of the brain drain to South Africa in medicine to New Zealand in the mid-1990s was estimated to be 50 million rand. Personal communication of research findings: Daniel J. Ncayiyana, April 15, 2006. See also Saffu, Ghana, p. 15-16, regarding shortages and brain drain of professionals.
26. Over time the ties to most mentor institutions weakened as did the effectiveness of external examinations. While the external examination system continued to provide a level of quality assurance in many countries well beyond the end of the colonial era – often using external examiners from neighboring African states – it began to weaken in the 1980s and 1990s. This was due in part to: the growing size of the student populations and the complications that posed for effective external examinations and reports – the inability of external examiners to read all of the examinations in very large classes, and the increasing incidence of a failure of external examiners to write examiner’s reports; the difficulty of maintaining the requirement that external examiners write post-examination reports about the quality of departments and the failure to review them (where they existed) collectively at the end of the examination period; and the high cost of the system itself with the increasing number of examiners, escalating prices of air fares and lodging.

27. During the period immediately following independence, most ministries and departments of education gained legal authority and oversight over higher education, though the level of authority varied widely from one country to another. Some governments established highly centralized authority over higher education (as in Cameroon, Nigeria, and Madagascar) while others provided for high levels of autonomy for public and/or private education either by law or in fact (as in Guinea, Liberia, and the Congo). National governments had their own interests and priorities which were not always in accord with those of the universities. They included increased access, expectations of university contributions to the development of the nation, and in some cases, the desire to control political dissent which was often seen as originating from universities.

28. The rapid growth in student enrollments at most higher education institutions in Africa during the 1980s and 1990s posed additional problems. Higher education enrollments in Ghana, for example, grew from 11,857 in 1991/92 to 63,576 in 2003/2004 an increase of over 400%. Nigeria too saw a tremendous expansion in the number of universities from six in 1970 to 55 universities in 2003 with an estimated student enrollment of 700,000. While the enrollment in Nigeria represented only about 8% of the university age population, that growth had profound negative effects on the quality of teaching and training of university students. Yet, in spite of the increases in student numbers over the last several decades, Africa remains far behind the rest of the world in terms of access and enrollments with an average gross enrollment rate of only 5% in 2002/2003. That added to public and government pressure to increase access. While the annual enrollment growth rate was increasing, the average public expenditures per student in higher education fell tremendously during this period with detrimental effects on quality.

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12 For a very useful overview see Bloom et. al. Appendices B and C which trace the growth of legal and practical authority of African governments of higher education, pp. 49-66.
13 Ibid.
15 See Munzali Jibril chapter on Nigeria, p. 2.
16 David Bloom, et. al., p. 3.
17 The higher education enrollment rates of low income countries grew an average of 8.8% in the 1990s while public expenditures fell 12.3 percent during the same period. World Bank, Higher Education: Lessons of Experience, Washington DC, 1994, p. 17.
Governments also began to face problems related to the rapid growth of private higher education institutions in the 1990s, some sanctioned or recognized by government, others operating on their own, many as for-profit institutions with little regard for quality. At the same time, unemployment grew among graduates of universities, there were demands for greater relevance in the university curriculum, and calls for higher quality from employers and universities themselves. Governments began to recognize the need to be competitive internationally and to meet the demands of knowledge societies. Academics and administrators began to talk about setting national benchmarks focusing on world-class standards. There were calls for changes in higher education from many sectors including business, government, and the public. Faced with a host of problems, as Daniel Ncayiyana notes:

[H]igher education could no longer continue with ‘business as usual’. The old collegial model of quality assurance could no longer be relied upon solely to ensure that the public was being well served, or that the taxpayer was getting value for money.\textsuperscript{18}

As a consequence, the higher education community, governments and other stakeholders sought new mechanisms to improve quality so as to stem the decline in the quality of higher education. Since most departments and ministries of education had been given or assumed greater power over higher education, it is not surprising that they were the major force behind the establishment of new quality assurance structures. Over the years many of them had challenged university autonomy, showed much less deference to the universities and their faculty members than in the past, and insisted on greater control. In addition, some departments and ministries of education had become the focal point of higher education expansion both to meet the growing demand for access and to benefit from the political patronage that flowed from contracts for construction, equipment, supplies and other needs. These decisions were increasingly driven by politics rather than academic needs or the national capacity to support new institutions. As the number of universities grew, there were increasing demands for new higher education institutions to be dispersed geographically (as we have seen in both Nigeria and Ethiopia).

The period of rapid growth in higher education institutions was preceded by one of general economic decline and austerity in most of Africa which saw university budgets shrink as they took their share of budget cuts, or in some cases suffered from punitive measures by governments unhappy with the freedom, autonomy, and what some officials regarded as arrogance of higher education institutions. In a number of countries, as in Nigeria, the decline in university quality was such that graduates increasingly had trouble obtaining employment even when jobs were available. The decline in quality, the growing internationalization of the professions in particular, recognition of the need to monitor an out of control private higher education sector, and a wide range of other concerns about higher education, contributed to the emergence of quality assurance programs in a number of African states. All were initiated by departments and ministries of education, often with the encouragement of university leaders and faculty members from both public and private higher education institutions. They too were eager to stem the decline and to foster a new era of quality and competitiveness for African higher education.

The first formal accreditation processes in tertiary education appear to have taken place in Nigeria and South Africa in the 1980s in technical education. They include those by the

\textsuperscript{18} Daniel J. Ncayiyana, \textit{South Africa}, p. 4.

33. At the university level, the first accreditation agency was established in Kenya by the Commission for Higher Education (CHE), in 1985 by Act of Parliament. The CHE was set up because of “general concern” about the quality of higher education and the existence of several institutions offering “university education whose establishment and development was uncoordinated and unregulated…” Among its functions were accreditation and inspection of institutions of higher education. Standards for accreditation were established in 1989 as were rules for establishing new universities. The actual accreditation process began in 1989 in Kenya only for private universities. Among the first to be accredited was the Catholic University of East Africa. Accreditation in Kenya now is required of private universities, public universities other than those established by an act of Parliament, foreign universities, and any other agency operating on behalf of any of those institutions. Those established by Parliament continue to be accredited de jure.

34. Nigeria was the second of the pioneers in accreditation in Africa. Its efforts focused on program accreditation with the initial accreditation exercise undertaken by the National Universities Commission (NUC) in 1990-91, ten years after the first tertiary accreditation exercise in Nigeria by the National Board for Technical Education. The NUC was established in 1962 to provide oversight to higher education. It was given accreditation responsibilities in the 1990s. A second round of program accreditation was carried out in 1999-2000. The NUC undertakes program accreditation, not institutional accreditation. It has, however, ranked universities since 2004 using 12 performance indicators.

35. Cameroon was also among the first African countries to initiate accreditation, focusing on private universities starting in 1991. That process is carried out under the auspices of the National Commission on Private Higher Education (NCPHE), though the final decision on accreditation is made by the Minister of Higher Education. To date, only 2 private institutions have been accredited. Ghana authorized accreditation in 1993 with the actual accreditation process beginning in 2005. The Ghanaian National Accreditation Board accredits public, private, foreign, and distance education institutions. South Africa began preparation for higher education audits and accreditation with the establishment of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council for Higher Education (CHE) in September 2001. Institutional audits and accreditation of programs began in 2004. Mauritius set up the quality assurance division of the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) in 1997 but did not begin the process of quality audits and program accreditation until 2005 (See Table 2). Other countries are now following this lead.

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20 Ibid., p. 9.
21 For details see section on “ranking” below and Munzali Jibril chapter on Nigeria.
III. Institutional and Program Accreditation, Quality Audits and Academic Reviews

Institutional Accreditation and Audits
36. Institutional Accreditation and Audits focus on the institution as a whole as the primary focus of the assessment process. While the focus of audits and accreditation is quite different, as noted earlier, the processes are very similar including peer reviews, site visits, and a report. The assessments in both cases involve judgments about quality, capacity, outcomes, and the need for improvement. Both accreditation and audits involve substantial commitments of time to carry out effective self-assessments (often a year to 18 months), for peer reviewers, site visits, reporting, and follow-up. Both involve costs for travel, board and lodging for site visits, administrative and faculty time for self-studies and site visits, and administrative time for preparation of data and follow-up. The level of resource needs (discussed in more detail below), appears to be about the same in both processes. The critical difference is the use of standards set nationally – i.e. external to the institution – for accreditation versus standards set by the institution itself and assessed by external reviewers in the case of audits. Most of the active quality assurance agencies in Africa focus on institutional quality assurance and improvement. Of these, 8 carry out institutional accreditation and 2 undertake audits. The one exception is Nigeria which carries out only program accreditation, although it does rank institutions.22 We have the sense that institutional accreditation is better understood than institutional audits, and thus has greater international currency. At the same time, the accreditation process is used in all the case study countries since the two carrying out institutional audits (South Africa and Mauritius) also undertake program accreditation.

Program Accreditation
37. The primary focus of program accreditation is individual academic and professional programs. The process usually involves a self-assessment of the program by the institution, a site visit by peer reviewers, a report of that review, and a decision to accredit, deny accreditation, or put it on probation (or some other intermediary status). Nine of the eleven African countries examined carry out program accreditation or plan to do so. Several countries are committed to review and accredit all programs – as are both Nigeria and South Africa. Some have adopted a more limited approach focusing on the professions only. For many countries, that decision is based on recognition of the magnitude of the task involved in requiring accreditation of all programs (in most countries more than 100 programs exist at higher education levels). A few accreditors have decided to carry out program accreditation as part of institutional accreditation, looking at a representative sample of programs during each accreditation cycle or establishing a schedule to insure that all are eventually reviewed.23

22 As noted elsewhere, in at least three of these countries (Cameroon, Kenya, and Uganda), public universities are called “accredited” de jure but do not go through the processes of self-study, peer review, site visit etc. We thus exclude them.
23 This is the plan in Madagascar, for example.
Institutional Academic Reviews

38. Institutional academic reviews are another mechanism of quality assurance practiced in many of the African countries reviewed. It is a process undertaken by each institution on its own and not part of a national quality assurance, accreditation, or audit process. Academic reviews are a common part of the quality assurance process at most South African universities, and are undertaken in at least a dozen other countries including: Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda. An academic program review provides an opportunity for an institution to:

- review an academic program or unit’s mission and goals;
- evaluate the quality of the academic program, its faculty, staff, and students;
- establish priorities to develop its curriculum and to improve quality;
- determine the financial and material resources needed to support the university’s and the unit’s essential goals, and objectives;
- make recommendations for action by the program, the administration, and others;
- provide information that is essential to quality assessment, the development, and the enhancement of the impact and reputation of the program and the university.
- encourage units to be self-conscious about quality and its improvement.

39. The academic review process usually begins with a self-study by the unit highlighting its programs, successes, weaknesses, and needs. The review is undertaken by a committee established for that purpose. The review committee is normally made up of peers in related fields, at least one person from another disciplinary area, and sometimes an external member from another institution and/or the community. The review committee reads the self-study, meets with faculty, students, and others, and makes a report to the president, vice president, dean, or institutional review committee. The academic unit responds to the report of the review committee and forwards their response. The institution responds to the report of the review committee. The recommendations of the review committee result in some actions designed to improve the unit and build quality, or in extreme cases result in probation, receivership, or closure of the unit.

40. The review process usually includes an examination of: curriculum quality; workforce criteria (e.g. student/staff ratios, teaching and research output); budget resources; quality of students and faculty; output criteria (e.g. quality of students graduated; employment data, satisfaction of employers); efficiency criteria; (e.g. pass through rate, first year failure rates); teaching quality (e.g. peer evaluation of teaching quality, student evaluations of teaching quality); research output; service output and contributions. Some institutions have used this same format to carry out self-assessments of the whole institutions, with salutary results. As Saffu reports in the Ghana case study, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), a university that had been in a downward spiral for some time, was turned around after it carried out an extensive academic review of the institution (see Box 2).

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24 This section draws on work done for the American Council on Education (ACE) on Academic Program Reviews and a related series of workshops by Dr. Fred M. Hayward, Senior Associate, Prof. Donald W. Crawford, University of California Santa Barbara, Dr. Robert C. Shirley, University of Southern Colorado, and material provided by Dean Judith Aikin, Dean of Liberal Arts, University of Iowa.
Box 2. Institutional Academic Review in Ghana

The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi, along with Cape Coast University, have the best established and most effective Quality Assurance Units among all the tertiary institutions in the country. The KNUST Unit is not that old. It was established only in October 2002. There are several reasons for its effectiveness. First, it is combined with Planning. Its full name is Quality Assurance and Planning Unit. Secondly, the Vice-Chancellor has taken a very keen, personal interest in the work of the Unit. In fact, the Unit is located in the offices of the Vice-Chancellor. Third, its Founding Coordinator is an inspirational, hardworking Professor whose enthusiasm for the work of his Unit is truly infectious. Finally, perhaps the most important reason, the Coordinator’s approach to quality assurance and improvement, hence the Unit’s as well, is holistic. Even healthy living, regular physical exercise and medical tests by staff and students, appear to qualify as aspects of quality assurance and improvement, perhaps reflecting the Latin dictum, “Mens sana….”

Although program review has occupied a prominent position in the work of the Unit, as part of a radical restructuring of the organization of the University's numerous Faculties into just six Colleges, with a very substantial decentralization of decision-making to go with it, the activities of the Unit have encompassed: the introduction of regular staff assessment by students; the organization of Capacity-Building Workshops for Staff; a Survey To Determine The Standard of Teaching Facilities at KNUST; the launching of Quality Assurance Management as a Mainstream Idea, through the organization of Staff, Student and Workers' Fora; the publication and distribution of Statutory Directives on Quality Assurance; and the publication and distribution of Quality Assurance Bulletins. A paper by the Coordinator, "Management of Quality Assurance at KNUST--Summary Report on the Activities and Plans of the Quality Assurance and Planning Unit" (September 2005), gives details of these activities.

Source: Saffu, Ghana, pp. 16-17

IV. Mapping Quality Assurance in Africa

41. The first phase of this study and examination of quality assurance and improvement in Africa began in September 2005 – a mapping exercise designed to provide a sketch of the level of quality assurance in Africa, its scope, and level of activity. Building on the Issues Paper, Towards Enhancing Higher Education Quality Assurance in Africa (PO95919), a template was developed by the coordinator (attached), reviewed by several Bank staff, and used as a basis for examining available material on quality assurance and accreditation in Africa. As expected, the amount of data available was limited. No systematic study had been carried out focusing on quality assurance in Africa prior to this effort. Some published material is available on the early quality assurance efforts in countries like Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa though even that is limited. The websites of ministries of education and accrediting or quality assurance agencies, where they existed, were often useful, though most are not up to date. Press reports were also helpful. Some country embassies provided useful information.

Data collection.

42. Fifty-two African states were examined including those in North Africa. As the information was compiled quality assurance and accrediting agencies were identified and contact made by e-mail or fax to check the data and to seek additional information. Much of the contact
information originally obtained was not accurate. A second letter with a draft country template filled in to the extent we had information was sent to the agencies asking them to check the data, correct any errors, and add missing information. The results were extremely helpful but modest. A third effort was made in January 2006 to contact those from whom no response was received. A French version of the letter and questionnaire was sent to the French-speaking countries. Contact was made with a number of individuals in the field. They have been very helpful. Overall, excellent information was received from a number of respondents, but the return rate has been very poor, only about 25 percent of those contacted. The mapping effort was designed as the first stage of the information gathering process. To complete the effort to gather data on quality assurance activity will require additional follow-up and research that is beyond the scope and funding of this project including: additional personal contact with relevant officials, scholars or others who have worked on quality assurance and accreditation in these areas. It would be useful to be more certain about the countries for which there is “no evidence” of accreditation or audit activity. Furthermore, the state of quality assurance is a constantly evolving one with new countries announcing accreditation and quality audit activity.

Case Studies
43. The second phase of the project is the case studies. Much more detailed information was obtained from six case studies undertaken by national consultants with extensive knowledge of the case study countries. They are: Ghana by Prof. Yaw O. Saffu; Cameroon by Prof. Vincent P. K. Titanji, Nigeria by Prof. Munzali Jibril; South Africa by Prof. Daniel J. Ncayiyana; and Tanzania by Prof. Paschal B. Mihyo; and Mauritius by Dr. Fred M. Hayward. These case study countries were picked because they have quality assurance activities in place and offer a wide range of experiences and approaches to quality assurance (see criteria on page 4). The case studies give a detailed picture of accreditation and quality assurance in each of these countries and an assessment of the process, its strengths, weaknesses, contributions, and innovations. The analysis by the authors provides a detailed description of the accreditation, audit, and academic review activity taking place nationally, institutionally, and in some cases regionally. The case studies also provide information about other academic quality assurance processes taking place in each of these countries including those of individual universities, other tertiary institutions, and professional associations in fields such as accounting, business, computer science, medicine, and engineering.

An Overview of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Africa
44. The picture that emerges from the mapping exercise at this stage is as follows. About one fifth of the African states (a total of 11) have quality assurance agencies that are in the process of, or have carried out some institutional audits or accreditation and/or some program accreditation. They are: Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. None of the agencies are autonomous, only four are semi-autonomous. All are dependent on the ministry or department for most or all of their funding. There are at least six countries (Botswana, Egypt, Madagascar, Namibia, Tunisia, and Seychelles) which are currently establishing accreditation programs. In addition, Zimbabwe has just passed legislation establishing a quality assurance agency.25 There are several countries which seem to have accreditation/audit activities underway but about which we do not have adequate information to make a judgment (these include Senegal and Liberia).

45. All eleven of the countries with accreditation agencies focus on accreditation at either the institutional or program levels. Two countries (South Africa and Mauritius) carry out audits at the institutional level. Both countries accredit programs with the long-term goal of accrediting all programs offered by higher education institutions. Both countries have started on the program accreditation process. All of the accrediting agencies have their own boards though the compositions differ with some consisting of vice chancellors while others represent a broad cross-section of universities, government, business, professionals, and the public.

Table 2
National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agencies in Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Date Established</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>National Commission on Private Higher Education (NCPHE)</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Higher Education Relevance and Quality Assurance Agency</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(HERQA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>National Accreditation Board (NAB)</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Commission for Higher Education (CHE)</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>National Universities Commission (NUC)</td>
<td>1990-91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE)</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>Evaluation and Accreditation Corporation (EVAC)</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Higher Education Accreditation Council (HEAC)</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

46. The process of accreditation, as noted earlier, is quite young in all African countries. The process of institutional accreditation is ongoing in most of these countries with several institutions currently under review, in Tanzania and Mauritius for example. Program accreditation has been under way for a decade with more than 1300 programs having been accredited, of which more than 90% are in Nigeria.

26 This is similar to Asia where 13 of the 15 national quality assurance organizations carried out accreditation and two carried out audits. See Marjorie Peace Lenn, *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education in East Asia and the Pacific*, World Bank Paper no. 2004-6, August 2004.
47. In a number of countries the ministry or department of education has specific legal authority over quality assurance and accreditation even though we found no evidence that there was a process in place to carry out these functions. Where we did not find evidence of accreditation or audit activity by a national authority we have noted “none evident” in Table 1 (in Appendix I) under the heading “National Quality Authority”. Nonetheless, we caution that in some cases this “finding” may be more a function of lack of information and limited communication than lack of activity on quality assurance in a specific country.

The Process of Accreditation and Audits
48. Table 3 gives an overview of accreditation and audit processes, functions, and stages. The process in all six of the cases studies involves peer reviews, self-assessments, site visits, and a report; although for Cameroon the self-study is in the form of a detailed application.

49. The functions spelled out for the national agencies differ somewhat, though there is a remarkable similarity between most of them. All assess institutions and/or programs, all approve new programs, all have the authority to approve (or deny approval of) new institutions in private tertiary institutions. All of the agencies set minimum standards for institutions, programs, or both (in the case of audits, minimum institutional standards were not set), had ongoing monitoring functions regarding the institutions reviewed, and had the power to approve or deny permission to operate to foreign institutions. Some agencies had additional functions such as advising government about higher education, ranking institutions, assessing degree equivalence, recognition of credentials, approving admission of students to universities, and monitoring part-time staff numbers to see that they were not excessive.

50. All six of the case study agencies had a number of stages of accreditation which included permission to apply for consideration for candidacy for accreditation; provisional authorization, approval for candidacy for accreditation, and accreditation (See Table 3). At each stage there was interaction with the agency. Institutions and programs seemed to have a clear idea of the process, expectations, and likely outcomes of accreditation and audits.

Standards and Criteria for Accreditation and Audits
51. The standards for accreditation and the criteria for candidacy for accreditation and audits have been the subject of extensive discussion in most countries with accreditation and audit processes underway. Most accreditation bodies circulated the standards and criteria widely and encouraged feedback and discussion before the standards were put in place. The agencies examined seemed to have an acute understanding of the need for great care, consultation, and piloting of standards and criteria. Fears that standards might be either too demanding or not high enough were heard again and again. Consultations with higher education institutions are key to finding an appropriate level and have helped insure that expectations are in line with what is possible. The consultative process in South Africa during development of criteria and standards proved to be especially effective in fostering agreement and legitimacy for the process. It resulted in substantial revision of the original protocol.

52. Madagascar was developing standards for accreditation during late 2005 and early 2006. The Ministry was acutely aware of the need to strike the right balance in trying to improve quality while at the same time have a process that was workable. Thus many of the standards employed terms such as “appropriate to” or “suitable conditions for” or facilities that are
Table 3
Accreditation and Audit Activities of Case Study Agencies
April 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accreditation/Audits &amp; Other QA Activity</th>
<th>Cameroon</th>
<th>Ghana</th>
<th>Mauritius</th>
<th>Nigeria 91</th>
<th>South Africa</th>
<th>Tanzania</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation/Audit Processes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Reviews</td>
<td>x**</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Self-assessments</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Visits</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functions of Accreditation/Audit Agency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess institutions and/or programs</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval of new academic programs/courses</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval of new higher education institutions</td>
<td>x****</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set minimum academic standards</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advise government re Visitations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rank institutions</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual performance/monitoring of Us</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of degrees &amp; equivalence</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oversee/evaluate transfers between</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>institutions</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve admissions to institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardization of academic designations &amp; titles</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equitable access: gender, race, region, econ.</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor part-time staff levels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External examiners coordination</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approve foreign institutions</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages of Accreditation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Permission to apply</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provisional Registration/Authorization</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Registration</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Approval for Candidacy for Accreditation</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Accreditation</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x-prog.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x-prog.</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Reaccreditation (ever 4-10 years)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*   Optional until 2005
**  Includes academic and Ministry officials
*** Institution submits detailed application.
**** Private. Public de jure accreditation
“adequate for” the specific needs. The vagueness of these standards puts a great deal of pressure on the peer reviewers to make judgments about what is reasonable, but it also poses problems of ambiguity. Nonetheless, most people seemed to accept that such relative standards were essential and were far preferable to those which prescribed specific minimum levels such as a percentage of PhDs in the faculty or number of books per subject in the library. As the debate on accreditation of MBA programs in South Africa demonstrated, terms such as “appropriate” do generate a great deal of debate about both its meaning and the level that is adequate. In many cases, the panels had difficulty agreeing about what would be the appropriate level of compliance. Nonetheless, leaving such decisions to panels of peer reviewers seems to have worked well in practice. It also provides flexibility so that standards do not have to be revised too frequently and allows for changes in benchmarks as well as in what is regarded as “world-class” or “state-of-the-art” at any given point in time. Thus, the two clearest lessons about standards were the importance of extensive consultations with stakeholders and the need for flexibility with consensus in defining and interpreting standards.

53. The standards set by the quality assurance agencies vary somewhat in their scope. However all of the case study agencies focus on the mission, academic programs, faculty and staff quality, library and information resources, infrastructure, and finances (see Table 4). Several included standards for governance, internal quality assurance processes, integrity, and planning, among others.

Table 4: Standards for Accreditation/Audits: Case Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Cameroon</th>
<th>Ghana</th>
<th>Mauritius</th>
<th>Nigeria</th>
<th>South Africa</th>
<th>Tanzania</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission and Purpose</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and Evaluation</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Programs</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff – quality, research &amp; teaching</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students -- recruitment, resources, learning</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library and Information resources</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical &amp; Technological Resources</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Assurance Mechanisms</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Development/Service</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Links/Work-based experience</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outcomes of Accreditation

54. For most countries, the object of quality assurance is quality improvement. Nonetheless, one indicator of the seriousness of the process is whether or not institutions and programs are denied accreditation or given some other status such as probation. We can see in Table 5 the results from the nine quality assurance agencies that are far enough along with the process to have made accreditation decisions. As can be seen from Table 5, all but one of the agencies have either denied accreditation or put institutions on probation. The exception, Tanzania, has a process that is incremental with those not meeting the conditions for accreditation having the opportunity to meet the requirements at a later date, in some cases with restrictions on their ability to admit students.27

Table 5:
Accreditation Decision of African Quality Assurance Agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Institutional Accreditation/Audit</th>
<th>Program Accreditation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td>On probation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>x**</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>x**</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>x*</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>x*</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>x***</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>x**</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hayward, Overview, ibid.

* Institutional audits -- no judgment on accreditation or probation
** Public institutions accredited de jure
*** Public institutions originally de jure; accreditation underway
**** Program accreditation mandated December 2005 & forthcoming.

55. A second question is whether or not accreditation results in quality improvement. While we did not specifically try to obtain such information, we have strong evidence from Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, and Tanzania, that it does. In both Ghana and Nigeria business perceptions of the higher education system were very negative – indeed in an earlier World Bank study of higher education in Nigeria, business respondents reported that they wanted to hire Nigerians but not those educated in Nigerian universities. That has changed today. The same is true in Ghana. Furthermore, in both Ghana and Tanzania, consultants saw evidence of responses to both the standards for accreditation in terms of university efforts to improve quality before site visits (e.g. computer access in one private institution) and the responses afterward, as illustrated

27 For a full discussion of the four stages of the accreditation process see the case study the follows by Paschal Mihyo on Tanzania.
by the University of Dar es Salaam and the Muslim University of Morogoro (MUM). In South Africa, the process of preparing self-assessments also encouraged institutions to improve quality to meet standards. In the Ghana case study, Saffu notes that: “The newer tertiary institutions that have sprung up to meet the strong demand for tertiary education are forced by the existence of NAB to be seriously mindful of quality assurance. If they want accreditation they have no choice but to toe the NAB line on quality assurance. The NAB requires them to establish Quality Assurance Units and affiliate to an existing established university for an initial period, and for purposes of mentoring.” Saffu concludes by saying: “NAB is helping to keep in check the entrepreneurs who would have had a field day, unleashing a whole stream of useless but lucrative tertiary institutions to meet the undoubted demand that exists for tertiary qualifications and certificates.” In the case study of Tanzania, Mihyo cites several concrete changes growing out of the quality assurance and accreditation process (See Box 3). Another indication of acceptance of the outcomes is that in only two instances in our six case studies have institutions challenged the decisions of the accrediting agency.

Box 3. Contributions of Tanzanian Quality Assurance and Accreditation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The contributions of quality assurance and accreditation in Tanzania include:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Programme validation which has reduced discrepancies between programmes offered locally and those offered abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Institutional visitation and physical inspection have reduced the potential problem of makeshift universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regulation of admission procedures has helped to reduce the potential for lowering of standards in admission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regulation of promotions and recruitment procedures reduces the problems of sub-standard senior staff in universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Control of use of part-time staff in universities helps to ensure those who teach have time for research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluation and validation of credentials obtained from outside the country has reduced discrepancies between local and internationally recognized qualifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regulation of teaching resources by setting minimum standards helps to maintain the minimum required in terms of human and other resources for an institution to run higher education courses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


56. Many universities are undertaking academic reviews or audits on their own. While information about university initiated academic reviews is more difficult to obtain than that about national accreditation, we found evidence of institutional academic reviews in 20% of the countries examined. The number in reality is probably much higher. The range and variety of quality assurance activities provide a number of models (discussed below) for consideration by nations planning to initiate an accreditation or audit process.

28 Mihyo, *Tanzania*.
29 Interviews with self-study team for the University of Pretoria, March 9, 2006.
57. Assessing the cost of accreditation and audits proved to be a difficult task. Very little research has been done on the cost of accreditation other than a very interesting cost-benefit analysis of accreditation in Nigeria. Part of the problem is the magnitude of the tasks involved and the difficulty of assigning cost. Some costs such as site visits (travel, lodging, meals) are clear cut. Similarly, the honoraria paid to peer reviewers can be calculated. The budgets of the quality assurance agencies are also public information in most places so those costs can be identified. However, there are many subtle costs, especially regarding preparation of self-studies, site visits, follow-up, administrative preparation costs, expenditures made to try to meet standards, and others expenses that are difficult to identify. Many of these costs are hidden. For example, how do you count the time of faculty members who serve on the self-assessment committees? Is this part of their normal duties and thus has no cost? If that is the case, how do you factor in the opportunity costs which result, for example, in a decrease in publications for those involved? What about administrative time? Is that also part of normal university operations? If a separate unit is established to supervise and prepare the self-study, are not those costs to be added to the overall cost of accreditation or audits? These are not easy questions to answer. Nonetheless, some information was gathered from the case studies and is presented in Table 6.

58. Estimates of the total cost of the accreditation/audit agency in five of the case studies varied from $200,000 for Cameroon to $2.3 million for South Africa (see Table 6). The average cost of the four, excluding South Africa, is $450,000 per year. Another way to assess costs is to think in terms of site visits and peer reviewer costs. If we take the cost provided by three of the agencies for a single program review, the average cost is $3700 each. If a country has 150 programs to review and the same audit team does all of them at $3700 each (a very generous assumption), the total cost would be $550,000. The cost of institutional accreditation was estimated at about $5200 per visit. If there were fifteen institutions to be accredited or audited, the total cost would be $78,000 – much less than program accreditation. If a small number of program audits were added to that, ten for example, the total cost would rise to $115,000. Add to that the cost in human resources. Program audits will require four to five peer reviewers per review. Some reviewers may be able to carry out four or five reviews together or over a period of time. Nonetheless for an average country with about 150 programs, that would require at least that many reviewers. Can enough reviewers with distinguished reputations, high quality and good personal skills, be found? Of the six case studies, only Nigeria was able to meet its peer reviewer needs without difficulty. While external peer reviewers can be used as a substitute for limited country capacity, the costs range from $3000 to $10,000 each depending on the distance traveled and the length of the stay. On the other hand, the use of foreign specialists, though costly, has advantages in providing expertise in areas where local expertise is limited and

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32 In a recent manuscript by Okebukola, et. al., “Quality Assurance and Accreditation,” (ibid., p. 6), the total cost for accreditation of the 76 Nigerian universities is given as $4 million, but that cost includes calculations of the cost of investments to meet standards and those required for follow up. We did not have access to that kind of data for the six case studies. The Nigerian figure in the Munzali Jibril chapter and this one reflects figures from the NUC regarding the actual process itself.
in helping to insure that where international benchmarks are important to the process, they are carefully assessed.

Table 6
Estimated Costs of Accreditation/Audit in Case Study Countries
2005/2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Institutional visit cost to Accreditation/Audit</th>
<th>Program Accreditation single program</th>
<th>Total cost of National Accreditor</th>
<th>Honoraria for peer reviewers</th>
<th>Charge to institution for accreditation/audit site visit</th>
<th>Cost to Accreditation/Audit who pays the cost of peer reviewers?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>NA NCPHE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
<td>$240</td>
<td>varies by size</td>
<td>NA NAB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>$12,200</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>NA TEC</td>
<td>NA TEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>$3000-$5000</td>
<td>$1,065</td>
<td>$600,000</td>
<td>$350</td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>NA NUC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>$2,302,424</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Fee charged varies</td>
<td>$25,000 Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>$5000-6000</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>$580,000</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>Fee charged, NA</td>
<td>$20,000 Both</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on an estimate of one institution of the direct costs – i.e. not including staff or faculty salary costs or time spent.

59. The costs to the institutions and programs being accredited or audited is substantial though they are often “hidden costs” that are not taken into consideration in the planning process. Nonetheless, these costs are real, and as the experience in several of our case studies demonstrates, can pose real problems for the long-term viability of the process. Universities in both South Africa and Tanzania complained about the high costs of the process. In both cases, administrators felt they were too high to be sustainable in the long run. Two estimates were given, for $25,000 and $20,000 respectively, not counting staff or faculty salary costs for time spent on the process. In data from Rhodes University in South Africa, it was found that in the 18 month period it took to prepare the self-study at Rhodes, 450 staff, students, and faculty members were involved. That represents a very big investment in time – much of it away from teaching, learning, research, service, and administration of the institution. South Africa is clearly on the edge of demanding more than can reasonably be afforded even by its better endowed institutions. These realities need to be carefully factored into the approach taken. Adjustments may need to be made to accord with what is possible and desirable.

60. Overall, it seems fair to assume that even a modest quality assurance effort in a country with ten tertiary institutions would cost at least $450,000 for the agency and at least $250,000 for the institutions. That does not include the cost to institutions of changes needed to improve their chances of meeting standards (e.g. upgrading science teaching labs, increasing the number of full time faculty, improving access to computers).
61. A related cost that is usually ignored is the post-accreditation cost to the system. If tertiary institutions take the process seriously, they will seek to overcome weaknesses identified, improve their standing relative to standards they had trouble meeting, and seek to improve their performance in terms of international benchmarks of quality. An effective quality assurance process should encourage institutions to seek the additional funds they need for quality improvement. While not all of the weaknesses will have cost consequences, many of them will. An astute president or vice chancellor will use the weaknesses identified in the accreditation or audit report to seek improvement and foster needed changes. It will be important for governments to recognize those needs if the process is to be effective. At the same time, institutions will need to think of alternative sources of funding other than government to help them enhance quality and improve their performance.

V. Challenges and Major Issues for Quality Assurance, Accreditation, and Audits in Africa

There are a number of major issues and challenges for quality assurance, accreditation and quality audits which are explored below.

Quality Assessment

62. A major impetus for accreditation and audits is the desire to encourage quality improvement in institutions of higher education based on a concern that a nation's higher education system is falling behind the rest of the world. Another important driver has been the perception that private higher education institutions were of poor quality and that many were more interested in making money than providing a quality education. In addition, concerns of employers, businesses in particular, about the poor performance of university graduates, have been another impetus for government involvement in quality assessment and assurance. And there were other drivers, some less altruistic, such as concerns about competition of private tertiary institutions with public universities or concerns about the impact of foreign providers. But on the whole, the main forces behind the drive for quality assurance in the countries examined has been the desire to improve quality, be competitive internationally, protect the public from fraud, and make tertiary institutions accountable.

63. In a general sense, everyone is in favor of quality improvement. Yet, when it comes to deciding what that involves and how it will be measured, historically has been a tendency to fall back on things that can be measured easily (books in the libraries, PCs per student, percentage of faculty members with PhDs) and to steer away from those that involve qualitative judgments for fear of subjectivity and bias, or measures that require individual assessment or long-term data collection. Opposition to accreditation and audits at some institutions has centered on concerns that the process would focus on “almost mindless bureaucratic ‘check the box’” efforts to assess quality because it was easier – that it would create another time-consuming, arrogant bureaucracy seeking to impose its will on higher education. The reality in the cases examined is in sharp contrast to these concerns. Indeed, it is refreshing to see that for the most part,

33 See Ncayiyana chapter, p. 1.
34 Interviews in Mauritius, Ghana, and Madagascar with faculty members and administrators concerned about the effects of a national quality assurance agency.
African accreditation and quality audits have avoided those pitfalls and have focused more on value added, outcomes assessment, and performance measures. Furthermore, most of the national quality assurance agencies have consulted with universities about standards, put on workshops for administrators and faculty members, and sent staff to institutions to explain the processes and allay fears. Both the Tertiary Education Commission in Mauritius and the HEQC in South Africa had particularly well-developed and effective programs, workshops, and documentation to assist universities prior to the start of an accreditation or audit process. Finding an approach to quality assurance that fosters improvement, encourages quality inputs, points faculty to areas and resources that will improve teaching, research, and service quality, is a difficult challenge. What is remarkable about the accreditation and audit processes that are in place to date in Africa, is that people are very self-conscious about these problems and are working to meet the challenges. They are searching for the right balance between national needs, national cultural expectations, and external expectations for higher education. The focus on evidence-based approaches to quality assurance is an especially clear indication of that effort. Standards of the quality assurance agencies in South Africa, Mauritius, and Ghana are good examples. All required outcomes analysis as part of the evaluation process including tracer studies, data on employment, and efforts to assess the value added of the academic programs.

While the standards of the six accreditors are very similar, there are some interesting differences that are worthy of comment. Standards focusing on the nature of governance are included in only half the countries – Ghana, Tanzania and South Africa. Similarly, integrity as a standard is used only by the same three countries. Particularly interesting is the requirement in South Africa that universities demonstrate that they are meeting the transformation goals set for higher education. The Framework for Institutional Audits states that “the audit system seeks to be responsive to as well as proactive in advancing the objectives of higher education transformation, as reflected in various policy and legislative documents.” These include increased access and equity for previously disadvantaged groups, increasing the pool of black and women researchers, and improved throughput and retention rates. Mauritius and South Africa also have standards that relate to expectations about university community service. Two of the cases, Ghana and Mauritius, have standards that focus on business and industrial links and opportunities for work-based experience. Quality judgments, in these cases, include expectations that higher education will foster and encourage specific national goals and expectations. In other cases, such goals are seen as outside the purview of quality assurance.

An important aspect of quality assessment is the question of sanctions. Do accrediting agencies have the power to close down institutions that fail to achieve accreditation? Do they publicize the outcomes of accreditation and audit reviews? Does the success, or lack of it, of universities affect their funding? Most of the quality assurance agencies examined here use public information as their main tool in releasing accreditation and audits results. Most publish lists of accredited institutions, though not all of them list those which fail to achieve accreditation. In the case of audits, the audience of the reports is the institution itself. The reports and recommendations are not published in most cases. For accreditation, the publication

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35 Both have extensive web sites on which much of this material can be reviewed. For Mauritius see: http://tec.intnet.mu. For South Africa see: http://www.che.ac.za/hecq/hecq.php.

36 Council on Higher Education Higher Education Quality Committee, Framework for Institutional Audits, June 2004, pp. v & 3. These include increased access and equity for previously disadvantaged groups, increasing the pool of black and women researchers, and improved throughput and retention rates.
of the names of accredited institutions has a powerful effect, whether or not those denied accreditation or losing accreditation are listed, though in most cases the names are published. In Mauritius, the TEC has also has authority over budget allocations. While they have not yet used this authority in connection with program accreditation or institutional audit, their intention is to factor those results into budget allocations in the next budget cycle.37

**Accreditation of Public and Private Institutions**

66. Public higher education institutions have resisted national accreditation processes in many African countries arguing that the process should be limited to private institutions. These public institutions are often listed as “accredited” by the government, as they are in Kenya and Cameroon. They are “accredited” *de jure* – by reason of being government sponsored. In Tanzania only private institutions were subject to accreditation and public higher education institutions were exempted when accreditation began. However, the law was changed in 2005 and now public institutions are subject to accreditation. The experience in Ghana, where accreditation began in 1993, was similar with public institutions assumed to be “accredited” *du jure*. However, there was substantial opposition to the exemption of public institutions both from the private institutions and the general public. After a long and divisive debate, including continued strong resistance from public institutions, the Ghana government resolved the question by decreeing that all tertiary institutions, both public and private, would be subject to accreditation within six months of the Act (2002). The issue of exempting public institutions was hotly debated in Madagascar during the development of an accreditation agency with most public institutions asserting that since they were statutory bodies created by Parliament, they should not be subject to accreditation. Recently, however, most public universities have realized that they benefit from accreditation in terms of the value of the external perspective provided by peer reviews and site visits, the international recognition that results, the need for accreditation for many international credit transfers, and its importance in attracting foreign students seeking study abroad opportunities. It also proves useful in obtaining recognition of the degrees of students seeking admission for advanced study outside the country.

67. Public tertiary institutions have often been among the strongest proponents of accreditation for private tertiary institutions and they have argued that the public must be protected from fraud and excessive entrepreneurialism that they see as a common problem with private tertiary institutions, especially those that operate for-profit. They see accreditation of private tertiary institutions as an appropriate mechanism to set minimal standards and guarantee quality in private institutions. These arguments seem disingenuous in the context of declining quality and the lack of coherent quality assessment at many public institutions. They also ignore the success and quality of a number of private tertiary institutions including some with religious affiliations. Private tertiary institutions often view their inclusion in the process as an unfair intrusion into free enterprise. As one proprietor put it, “the market will decide.” Sadly, this market does not operate in a context of perfect information, or in most cases, good information, and thus needs some kind of autonomous external evaluation to protect the public, students, and their families. Some private providers argue that public universities are using accreditation to limit competition from private institutions which are often more flexible and thus better able to respond to business needs and public demand than public institutions. While there is little hard evidence to support that claim, it seems clear that public institutions in some countries have been

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37 Interviews with TEC senior staff, February 2006.
able to deny private institutions permission to offer new programs which they saw as competing
with their own. The real issue however, is the importance of quality assessment and quality
improvement for all higher education institutions.

68. In the long run, it is hard to imagine an effective national quality assurance system that
excludes public institutions – some of which are badly in need of quality improvement
themselves. Indeed, as Titanji concludes in the case study on Cameroon, which only accredits
private tertiary institutions, Cameroon needs to develop a “comprehensive and standardized
accreditation system that covers all stakeholders: public and private....”38 In the face of the
inability of many public institutions to confront the problem of quality directly, a system of
accreditation which is external to the universities seems essential. In fact, as the discussion in
Madagascar illustrates, it is in the interest of both public and private tertiary institutions to be
part of an accreditation process. Those institutions that are accredited gain an important kind of
recognition nationally and internationally for having achieved standards of quality recognized
nationally and demonstrating a commitment to continuing quality improvement. Quality
assurance in tertiary education, if it is to be effective, legitimate, and in the public interest, must
include both public and private institutions.

**Issues of Human Capacity**

69. Effective quality assurance depends on the availability of highly qualified faculty
members and administrators. The success of accreditation, audits, and academic reviews is
particularly demanding of human capacity since the success of the process is so dependent on the
quality, dedication, and integrity of the people who serve as peer reviewers, and that of the
administrators and faculty members who prepare the self-assessment and collect needed data at
institutions being reviewed. Those efforts are hampered by: the difficulty to find a sufficient
number of academics who are qualified and willing to serve as peer reviewers; the lack of
appropriate training for those involved in the process in the accrediting agencies, at institutions,
and as peer reviewers; and difficulties some institutions face in amassing the data needed for
effective self-studies. Peer reviewers are a key not only to successful accreditation and audits
but also to the legitimacy of the process. Peer reviewers must not only be experts in their
respective fields, but also be accepted as neutral parties in the process, and have the kinds of
personal skills and diplomacy needed to conduct effective site visits. Expertise and appropriate
“bedside manner” do not always come together.

70. One of the of most critical problems faced in all of the cases except Nigeria was the
scarcity of human resources – especially outstanding faculty members and professionals who
could serve as peer reviewers. Even in South Africa, with a very large base of experienced
faculty members and a large pool of outstanding professionals, there was consensus that the
magnitude of the audit and accreditation process was requiring far too much time from
administrators and teaching staff. Added to the existing load of committee meetings and
transformation forums in South Africa, the demands on staff have resulted in a significant
decline in publications over the last few years. Part of the problem is a function of the
magnitude of the program adopted by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the
Council on Higher Education, but part of it is a testimony to the huge staffing needs of
accreditation if it is going to be done well and maintain its legitimacy.

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38 Titanji, *Cameroon*, p. 36.
71. A number of peer reviewers were interviewed during the study. All of them expressed their commitment to the process, indicated that the site visits were thoughtful, fair, and useful, and believed that accreditation and audits were making a significant contribution to improving quality. As one experienced peer reviewer put it in Ghana, “Without the accreditation process, the institutions in Ghana would be rotten.” While that is no doubt overstating the case, the consensus in Ghana was that the process had halted the decline in quality of the last ten to fifteen years and fostered a marked improvement in quality in many areas.

72. Most peer reviewers interviewed noted that the training they received was inadequate. They cited a number of examples of problems including: the training was too short with too little information about the process; there was no training at all – merely providing rating sheets and other practical information about the site visit; lack of information about the institution they were to review; failure to receive the institutional self-study prior to the visit; lack of clear guidelines about how to evaluate the standards and the institution in terms of the standards. In Ghana, for example, peer reviewers spoke about the lack of training and the difficulty they had in getting basic information about the universities to be reviewed prior to their visits. One reported that the agency had sent him on a site visit with nothing but some questions to be answered. While these particular peer reviewers were distinguished seasoned faculty members and felt they were able to provide a good assessment of the institutions, they nonetheless were troubled by the lack of information and training.39

73. The use of peer reviewers had an unintended benefit in many cases in that it contributed to creating a “culture of quality” by involving these faculty members in the accreditation and audit process and thus giving them in-depth exposure to other tertiary institutions. Peer reviewers interviewed talked about the lessons they learned from site visits – lessons they felt were useful for improving quality at their own institutions. Several noted the value for them of having the opportunity to understand the workings of other institutions in detail.

74. The use of external peer reviewers was an issue in several countries. In both Ghana and Mauritius, the accreditors intended to use a significant number of foreign peer reviewers to help insure quality standards and to give legitimacy to the process. As a member of the senior staff at the NAB in Ghana noted, “What we had in mind was to have someone from Europe or the USA on every panel, but the costs made that impossible and we have used only a few from South Africa and neighboring countries.”40 In Mauritius, where the budget of the Tertiary Education Commission is more robust, they have managed to have at least one foreign peer reviewers on each of their panels.41 While the potential benefits of foreign external peer reviewers are substantial, the costs are high even if the visits are coordinated so that a number of universities can be reviewed during the same period of time.

75. Peer reviewers are central to effective accreditation and audits. The number of accreditors needed by a Quality Assurance Agency is very much a function of the approach to accreditation/audits and its scope. Institutional accreditation/audit requires a limited number of peer reviewers, defined primarily by the number of institutions and the frequency of

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40 Ibid.
41 Interview, Mauritius, February 23, 2006.
accreditation desired. Most countries can find the human resources needed for both the peer review and administrative requirements of institutional accreditation. Program accreditation, on the other hand, can create huge demands for staffing. It is the potential scope of program accreditation that can create requirements for very large numbers of peer reviewers and place excessive demands on administrative and faculty time. Where agencies have chosen to review all academic programs, the demand will be very large. If four or five peer reviewers are used for each site visit and there are 150 programs (a not unreasonable number), the demand could be as high as from 600 to 750 peer reviewers. Even though peer reviewers may be used several times, or the same team might review all programs in a particular field (e.g. social work or medicine) at a number of different universities, the requirements are higher than most countries can meet. For these countries, a more appropriate strategy might be to target a small number of programs for accreditation. The choice of field should not be too difficult since there is a tradition of program accreditation in the professions, and because many of the professions already carry out accreditation, or similar reviews, on their own. One strategy that has proven effective is to work with existing professional associations (or groups of professionals) to develop a process which meets both national and professional needs. Such collaboration saves money in that the professional associations have usually been charging fees for these services for a number of years. They are thus less dependent on government funding and this helps keep the cost of accreditation/audits under control.

76. Lessons from initial experience suggest that those thinking about establishing national quality assurance agencies limit the number of program reviews to no more than a dozen – at least at the outset. If finding adequate numbers of peer reviewers is not a problem and the self-assessment process does not seem to be too much of a burden on tertiary institutions, that number could be expanded. Internationally, professional accreditation is the most important to employers. It is in areas such as engineering, computer science, nursing, medicine, and law that competition for jobs is increasingly defined by international standards. Graduates who do not meet these standards, and systems that do not assess these professional programs, are likely to find their graduates and their employers at a disadvantage in the international marketplace.

**Issues of Financial Capacity**

77. The cost of the accreditation and audit process is a critical factor affecting success. In all the cases but one, it posed problems for the quality assurance agency and/or the tertiary institutions being examined. There are a number of issues about the cost of accreditation, audits, and other quality assurance processes that should be examined. Among the issues is who pays the cost of accreditation and audits, the government, the institutions being reviewed, donors, business and professions, or some combination of all of them? Regardless of who pays, however, cost is a real issue. Some approaches to accreditation and audits are more costly than others. While economies can be achieved in some areas, we have not found a single case in which we were told that the accreditor was lavish or reckless in spending on accreditation or audits. Yet in most of the cases examined the reviewers found cost to be a major issue. Even in South Africa, which has a stronger economy than any of the other countries in the study, cost was a serious issue for the institutions, though not for the HEQC – an issue that some institutional leaders felt would derail the process if some relief were not found.42 Few of the other accreditors felt they had sufficient funding to do the job as they wished – a view that was

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often shared by the institutional leaders, faculty members, and specialists. The issue was mentioned as an especially serious problem in the two largest countries, Nigeria and South Africa, and seen as a critical problem in the others.

78. The issue of who pays is a complicated one in systems in which most of the cost of tertiary education is paid by the state, though in South Africa about one third of the cost of education is covered by student fees. For the other countries, shifting the burden from the agency to the universities would probably not make much of a difference to the total state allocation. Nonetheless, as governments continue to insist that universities increase their ability to obtain non-state revenues, such a shift might eventually take some of the burden from the state. Another promising alternative in the area of accreditation of professional academic programs is to shift the burden of financing the process to these professions. They are prime beneficiaries of the process and in many cases already pay some or all of the costs of program accreditation. Partnerships between national quality assurance bodies and professional associations or professional statutory bodies (as in South Africa) have substantially reduced the overall cost of accreditation.

79. In some counties (mainly in Europe and the United States) peer reviewers are not paid for their service; rather it is assumed to be part of normal expectations of service and, in most cases, an honor. In this light, there has been some criticism of the payment of honoraria for peer reviewers in the developing world. Yet, in the context of most developing countries, such payments are necessary to obtain the services of the high quality people needed to make peer reviews function effectively. Peer reviewers are paid on average about $100 per day, but no more than a total of $500 for a site visit, based on the information we were able to obtain. While peer reviewers in some countries are not paid an honorarium for their participation, in a context of low salaries, the need for supplemental income for most academics to make ends meet, and the many consulting opportunities available to those who have the qualifications and academic expertise to serve as peer reviewers, such payments are essential to effective quality assurance. To ask people to forego such income, even for a noble cause such as accreditation, is unrealistic and would confound the existing problem of scarce human capacity.

80. In the wealthiest of the countries involved, South Africa, the issue of cost was more a concern of the institutions than the accreditor. Indeed, we were surprised by the level of apprehension about costs and how often it was mentioned by vice chancellors and other administrators. Even at one of the best endowed institutions, the University of Pretoria, which was preparing for an institutional audit, there were concerns about the ability of the university to afford the quality audit and accreditation processes in the long run without damaging its ability to adequately fund its academic programs. Those with whom we spoke, including members of the quality assurance section at the university, expressed concerns about the high cost to institutions of multiple accreditation visits for programs and the periodic institutional audit. They found the process a strain on both the budget of the University and the time commitments of its personnel. As one of them put it, the magnitude of the process meant that accreditation and audits have become “a major upheaval rather than part of the everyday process of running the university.” These administrators (and faculty members) also noted that even with the on-line

43 We add to the African experience similar reactions in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and many other developing countries.
44 Several accrediting agencies were reluctant to share this information as they regarded it as too sensitive to divulge and a potential threat to their ability to recruit first-rate peer reviewers.
application system recently installed by the HEQC, it takes 18 months to 2 years to complete the self-study process as currently envisioned. They felt that was excessive and distracted from other equally critical issues that these same individuals should be addressing. Their concerns would be multiplied many fold for the less well-endowed and smaller institutions in South Africa. Respondents noted that some of the financial problems were created by the nature of the criteria themselves, the ambitiousness of the audit and accreditation process, and the reporting requirements for areas such as research and service-learning.

81. Looking at issues of finance in general, it is clear that the major contributor to the cost of accreditation is the decision about how broadly to spread the net, in particular that relating to program accreditation. The cost of accrediting all programs is likely to be prohibitive for most countries, and the benefit of doing that is not clear. Both Nigeria and South Africa are reviewing all programs and Mauritius is about to begin the process for both public and private tertiary institutions. Nigeria has undertaken two rounds of program accreditation. Nonetheless, both Nigeria and South Africa have experienced financial strains as a result of the magnitude of this effort. Indeed, in the case of South Africa, the HEQC is looking at ways to reduce the financial burden on institutions.\textsuperscript{45} Our own assessment is that more modest accreditation goals for programs would be appropriate for most countries and will substantially reduce costs. Programs can be reviewed as part of institutional accreditation, be included in institutional self-studies, and reviewed (in whole or in part) during the peer review process. One approach is to pick representative samples from different academic areas (sciences, humanities, social sciences, professions) for review at each institutional accreditation visit. Some choices might be purposive either in terms of requests from the institution itself or the desire of the peer review team to examine particular programs for reasons of their own. Such a strategy would facilitate the review of all programs in the long run, and at the same time, keep costs (and the demand for human resources) within reasonable bounds.

\textbf{Legitimacy of the Process}

82. None of the quality assurance agencies reviewed were suffering from a crisis of legitimacy. Nonetheless, that issue was close to the surface in several cases as a major concern of leaders of the accrediting agency, some peer reviewers, vice chancellors, faculty members, and other interested observers. It was most acute in relation to peer reviewers and the recognition that how they are perceived affects the legitimacy, and in the long run the acceptability and the utility, of the process. The comments and concerns of some faculty members in the post-accreditation survey at Rhodes University in South Africa speak to the point. A minority of those surveyed had negative reactions to the process – especially to some of the peer reviewers, what they felt was lack of preparation and their part, and the amount of work involved for small benefits.\textsuperscript{46} While these were minority views, they demonstrate the fragility of the legitimacy of the process and the damage that can be caused by peer reviewers who are not experts in their fields, those who are unprepared for the site visit, or from those insensitive to the need to be impartial and respectful throughout the site visit and peer review process.

\textsuperscript{45} Options under consideration include a simpler process for smaller institutions, alternative procedures for private single subject (or limited subject) institutions, and self-accreditation for institutions having succeeded in initial audits and accreditation. On self-accreditation status see: CHE, \textit{Framework}, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{46} For more details see Daniel J. Ncayiyana’s chapter on South Africa which follows, especially, p. 17.
83. Training for peer reviewers is another problem that can compromise the integrity and effectiveness of the process. Comments from peer reviewers who felt they were neither sufficiently trained nor provided with ample information prior to site visits, suggests additional problems that can hurt the legitimacy and effectiveness of the process. Evidence from a quality assurance agency that failed because it lacked legitimacy, suggests that once legitimacy is lost, it is almost impossible to regain. Thus the training, choice of peer reviewers, preparation for site visits, deportment and integrity during and after the site visit, are vital to the legitimacy, and long term success, of the process.

84. One indication of the legitimacy of the processes in the six case study countries is the fact that there were very few complaints about either the process or the results. As Mihyo reports for Tanzania, all five of the institutions visited felt that the process had been fair, fast, and efficient, although one felt the conditions imposed were too stringent.

Consultations
85. The importance of consultations throughout the process of development of accreditation and audit programs and during the accreditation, or audit process, is critical. For example, consultations were taken very seriously in Mauritius where the introduction of accreditation for private institutions was preceded by meetings with the institutions and opportunities for them to provide feedback on the guidelines prepared by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). The stakeholders provided valuable suggestions on what was a very contentious issue earlier in 2005 when revision of the TEC Act was under consideration. In the end, private institutions were generally pleased with new legislation and felt that accreditation of their programs by the TEC enhanced their legitimacy. In South Africa the HEQC spent a great deal of time consulting with stakeholders during preparation of policies and standards and, as is the tradition in contemporary South Africa, took those consultations seriously. Indeed, some critics of the HEQC argued that it spent too much time consulting. The director of the HEQC attached great importance to having an “up-front communications strategy” and was sensitive to concerns that while they had communicated well with the universities and technikons, they had not done particularly well in the public domain. They are currently working on improving their public communication strategy. The HEQC has also tried to improve the effectiveness of site visits by conducting post-site visit surveys which have proven helpful in revising their policies and procedures.

86. Part of the consultation process in several countries involved pre-accreditation visits to the institutions and/or programs being reviewed to talk about the process and to give people a chance to ask questions about it. These visits were usually undertaken by agency staff members and were seen as part of the training and legitimation process. They appear to have been very well received.

47 The case of AGENATE in Madagascar prior to this study.
48 Interviews with a number of leaders of private higher education institutions, Feb 17-21, 2006.
49 Interview, March 9, 2006. By November their public information campaign included a half page add telling students and parents what to look for before picking a higher education institution. For example, are its courses accredited? Can students get access to lecturers? The Star, 30 November 2006, p. 24.
Needs of Professions and Business

87. A frequent refrain heard from business, professions, and government officials is that higher education does not understand the needs of employers, that it is not linked to the labor market, that academics are isolated from business and work-related reality. That is a criticism heard about higher education around the world. Indeed, at many institutions there is little contact between universities and employers. For others it is an ongoing problem of how to keep up with the needs of and expectations of business and at the same time be at the vanguard of academic and professional knowledge.

88. The increasing focus on outcomes should help in this area as graduate surveys, employer interviews, and other outcomes assessments are organized and undertaken by tertiary institutions. Universities on their own will also need to find mechanisms to enhance the possibilities of greater input from the professions and business. Program accreditation in professional areas is also increasingly involving professionals. In both Mauritius and South Africa the quality assurance agencies were working to link professional quality assessment more closely to national accreditation and quality audits. At the same time, it will be important to insure that an increased role for the professions in quality assurance does not weaken the vital academic focus and content of the professions (as it did in journalism in the US in the 1980s).

89. Involvement of business and professions in higher education can have other payoffs. The concerns of businesses in Ghana about the decline in higher education quality and recognition of limits on additional state funding, led to creation of the GET Fund – a tax on business – as a way to significantly increase funding for higher education. That effort has been very successful in Ghana and spawned major quality improvements at most universities.

The Professions, Quality Assurance and Accreditation

90. Professional associations and professionals were heavily involved in both institutional and program accreditation in several countries. They had been active in certification of graduates and accreditation of programs for decades, many linked with similar associations internationally. In some cases these associations continued to carry out program accreditation working with the national accreditor or quality assurance agency. In other cases, they were unwilling to cooperate arguing that they preceded the creation of the quality assurance agency. In Nigeria, there are at least ten professional bodies that operate with a Federal mandate to accredit professional training and set standards for members of the professions including: engineering, chartered accountants, law, dentistry, medicine, ICT, nursing and midwifery.

91. One challenge with professional involvement in accreditation is the need to separate the advocacy or trade union function of the associations from the quality assurance functions. To try to do that by law, some countries (e.g. South Africa) have created statutory bodies autonomous from the professional associations, specifically for quality assurance. Those bodies may, or may not, work closely with the national accreditation authority. In Ghana, where there is a good relationship between the NAB and a number of professional associations, the process seems not only to be very effective but to relieve the treasury of the need to fund the process of

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50 The Ghana Education Trust Fund (GET fund) was established by Parliament in 2001 to help finance education. It is funded from 2.5% of the Value Added Tax.

accreditation for those programs. Nonetheless, there is a delicate balance between advocacy and quality review. It will be important for quality assurance agencies, ministries, and departments to put in place carefully thought-out and developed rules on conflict of interest and mechanisms to insure transparency and maintain the legitimacy of the process.

92. The extent of participation of professionals and professional associations in quality assurance and program accreditation was greater than expected in the case study countries. While it is not always easy to identify the extent of quality assurance activity by the professions at the higher education level since most of it is *ad hoc*, with the exception of those countries in which professional quality assurance is carried out by statutory bodies as in Ghana and South Africa, the amount of involvement of the professions is substantial. One interesting question for most countries without such statutory bodies, will be whether or not these quality assurance agencies work out an arrangement to work closely with the national institutional and program accrediting organization or continue to operate on their own. There are clear advantages to cooperation.

**Ranking**

93. Several African countries have considered ranking universities, but to date, Nigeria is the only country in which the accreditor ranks programs and institutions as part of the accreditation process. Program process started in Nigeria with the first program accreditation review in 1990/91. That process was expanded to a ranking of all Nigerian public universities using what were called the *mean academic quality index* scores which resulted from aggregating the ranking of individual programs.\(^52\) A more comprehensive ranking system at the institutional level was used in 1994 employing a combination of scores from program accreditation rankings and eleven other variables including percentage of academic programs with full accreditation status, proportion of academic staff who are full professors, and proportion of academic staff with outstanding academic achievements (see Box 4 for ranking categories). The ranking has been very contentious in Nigeria. It has, however, helped employers make judgments about the quality of graduates and has focused the energies of many universities on improving the quality of low-ranked programs and thus their ranking. On the other hand, experience with ranking in general has mixed results.\(^53\) Even the best system\(^54\) is arbitrary in many respects in terms of the weight given different factors (e.g. quality of laboratory equipment) or mix of teaching to support staff (which surely varies by type of program) and may lead institutions and programs to plan academic programs based on the way ranking is scored rather than on academic needs. In May 2006 an international group of educators, higher education officials, and publishers met in Berlin to set out principles for ranking universities. They agreed on a set of sixteen good practices called the Berlin Principles on Ranking of Higher Education Institutions to provide guidelines for ranking and recommendations about methodology and accountability for the

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\(^{53}\) Pakistan carried out a ranking exercise that took over a year to prepare and substantial resources. The Higher Education Commission was so dissatisfied with the results that the rankings were not released. A ranking of institutions carried out by Centre for Higher Education Transformation and a local newspaper in South Africa, though published, was so unsatisfactory that participants and the higher education institutions abandoned it after doing it once.

quality of ranking systems. This effort holds promise for those agencies wishing to carry out ranking in Africa.

**Box 4. Ranking Nigerian Universities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University League Tables</th>
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<td>Nigerian Universities have been ranked annually, since 2004, by the National Universities Commission (NUC) using 12 performance indicators as follows:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Percentage of academic programs with full accreditation status</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Compliance with enrolment guidelines</td>
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<td>3. Proportion of academic staff who are full professors</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Proportion of staff who are foreign</td>
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<td>5. Proportion of students who are foreign</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Proportion of staff with outstanding academic achievements (e.g. Nobel laureates etc.).</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Internally-Generated Revenue</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Research Output</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Student completion/drop-out rate</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. PhD graduate output</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Stability of university calendar</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Student to PC ratio</td>
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These indicators are used to produce a single composite score to rank each university. In addition, individual rankings of accredited programs are available.


**Technological Change and Quality Assurance**

94. Access to the Internet in Africa has provided important new opportunities to developing nations for significant quality enhancement in terms of the potential for digital libraries, access to current research findings, enhanced teaching and learning opportunities for students, and opportunities to improve administrative productivity and efficiency. The Internet provides mechanisms to enhance quality through distance learning, access to world-wide data bases, and the ability to make place irrelevant. At the same time, the cost of access, infrastructure, and software remains high for universities in much of the developing world. Nonetheless, the potential for quantum improvements in quality is real with access to state-of-the-art knowledge for both faculty and student. In Pakistan, for example, access to its digital library with more than 18,000 journals has been accompanied by a 67% increase in publications over the last 3 years.

95. Quality audits and accreditation process can take advantage of technology change, as several agencies have done. One of the most interesting is the South Africa computerization of its application forms for quality audits. That has made the process much easier for both the universities and the HEQC. As it is perfected it promises even greater efficiencies. The ability of accreditors to use Internet websites has also enhanced communication and information flows. All of the accreditors have web sites, most of them are updated frequently and are very user friendly.

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Quality and Economic Growth:

96. It is increasingly clear that full participation in knowledge societies is essential to economic growth and that higher education institutions are the engine for that growth.\textsuperscript{56} At the same time there is very little evidence about the link between quality education and economic growth for Africa. A great deal more research will be needed to establish it firmly. Nonetheless, the evidence from other parts of the world has sparked interest in quality improvement in higher education institutions in many African countries and helped make clear how very far behind the cutting edge most African universities are at the present time. Participation in the knowledge economy requires that large numbers of people be university trained with an education of high quality that allows them to build on the new knowledge that is constantly becoming available. Almost exactly twelve years ago, in May 1994 in a lecture at Harvard University, Peter F. Drucker, well known scholar of business trends, talked about the emerging knowledge society and the profound changes it had already made in society and to the workforce. He noted that, “Knowledge workers, even though only a large minority of the work force, already give the emerging knowledge society its character, its leadership, its central challenges and its social profile.”\textsuperscript{57} Drucker goes on to say that: “The formal education that is required for knowledge work is education that can only be acquired in and through formal schooling. It can not be acquired through apprenticeship.”\textsuperscript{58}

97. The implications of knowledge societies today have become increasingly clear. Drucker suggested that: “Another implication is that the performance of an individual, an organization, an industry or a country in acquiring and applying knowledge will increasingly become the key competitive factor for career and earnings opportunities of individuals; for the performance, if not the survival,… for a country.”\textsuperscript{59}

98. It is important to emphasize that it is not knowledge itself that is central, but how it is applied and the results it creates in what Castells describes as “… a cumulative feedback loop between innovation and the uses of innovation.”\textsuperscript{60} That is, the individual uses information and learns by doing, then builds on that experience to reconfigure the original knowledge and its product and perhaps find new applications.\textsuperscript{61}

99. There does seem to be a “tipping point” – the point at which creation of a knowledge society begins to have major payoffs. It is not clear exactly what that point is, but some countries like South Africa seem to have reached it. Among the preconditions are high quality tertiary institutions and a high level of computer literacy. Mauritius has set as one of its goals to become a regional knowledge center in Africa. It is that which is driving its quality assurance

\textsuperscript{56} See Constructing Knowledge Societies, ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid. p. 3.
\textsuperscript{60} Castells, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
and quality improvement efforts and is behind the commitment of the Ministry of Education to set world-class standards as the benchmarks for quality higher education in Mauritius.\footnote{Interview with Dharambee Gokhool, Minister of Education and Human Resources, Mauritius, February 17, 2006.}

100. The challenge for Africa in creating knowledge economies is to improve the quality of tertiary education and at the same time increase the number of people trained at high quality levels in appropriate fields. The record to date in this area is not particularly good with many examples of rapid growth in the number of people in higher education while at the same time there is a substantial drop in quality (e.g. Nigeria in the 1980s and 1990s). Recognition of the requirements of a knowledge economy should help quality assurance agencies foster the needed changes and quality improvements.

101. With the recent focus on outcomes as part of accreditation in the US and Europe, greater attention has been paid to teaching and learning, and the relevance of the curriculum for producing the knowledge needed and people trained to build on it. As Peter Smith notes in his thoughtful piece \textit{Curricular Transformation: Why We Need It. How to Support It}, “…extended opportunities for review like accreditation practice and policy must be examined and harnessed to support the kinds of learning organizations that we want.” He goes not to note: “But few areas of higher education will be as challenged as the role of accreditation to assure quality in the face of an increasingly diverse instructional delivery system—where educational outcomes and institutional effectiveness—not particular structures or processes, become the sole earmarks of quality.”\footnote{Peter Smith, “Curricular Transformation: Why we need it. How to support it.” \textit{Change}, January/February 2004, p. 34.} The question is how to focus accreditation in Africa on outcomes and relevance when getting at both of these is difficult, often costly, and sometimes problematic. Three of the six national accreditors in this study require outcomes measures as part of the accreditation or audit process. While these are recent efforts, their success should have a major impact on their ability to improve quality and make progress in meeting the needs of knowledge economies.

\textbf{Accountability and Accreditation}

102. Accreditation and audits should play a major role in assuring accountability by universities and other tertiary institutions. That should be a welcome change since most universities are not held accountable for their expenditures,\footnote{Few countries require public audits of university accounts. Some regard such requirements as an affront on their autonomy. Interviews in Madagascar, March-April 2006.} the quality of their programs, or the teaching and outputs of their faculty members. In many African states the growing demand for accountability is gaining widespread public support. In the private sector it will serve as a badly needed way to identify fraud and poor quality. For public universities, in spite of protestations, it should serve as an impetus for change and as an external standard bearer that will help make the case for increased funding in areas where it is badly needed. Accountability is one of the most important potential contributions of accreditation. While it is too early to say how the accreditation and audit processes have affected accountability generally, in Nigeria, the evidence suggests that it has had a very positive effect at the institutional level and on the ability of employers to make judgments about the quality of graduates from different tertiary institutions.

\footnote{Peter Smith, “Curricular Transformation: Why we need it. How to support it.” \textit{Change}, January/February 2004, p. 34.}
Autonomy for Quality Assurance Agencies

103. It is going to be very important to try to establish autonomy for accrediting/audit agencies in the long run. While this is not currently an issue, as the process continues, and as it becomes contentious in some cases, it will be important to demonstrate that the processes are free from political influence and other inappropriate pressures. The legitimacy of the process depends on keeping the process transparent, open, and free of political and other non-academic influences. South Africa seems to have avoided this problem. Indeed, in South Africa there is general consensus at the present time that this is a non-issue. Nonetheless, the time to provide autonomy for the HEQC is when it is not an issue – before there is political interference on the process.

104. In Pakistan, the founders of the quality assurance process in the Higher Education Commission (HEC) felt the need to make a commitment to autonomy for the Quality Assurance Agency and its Accreditation Councils even though the initial organization is controlled by government and currently has almost no autonomy. In the long run it will be important for quality assurance agencies in Africa to at least be semi-autonomous, if not totally autonomous, if the process is to maintain its legitimacy. At the present time, three of the six quality assurance agencies examined in the case studies are semi-autonomous (Ghana, Mauritius, South Africa). Of these South Africa comes the closest in that it reports directly to Parliament on budgetary matters. But in all six cases the government controls funding. One way to diminish the impact of government funding is to insist on greater institutional participation in covering the cost of accreditation (as South Africa does to some extent). In the long run, it will be important to develop mechanisms that will enhance autonomy and thus protect the legitimacy of the process.

Distance Learning and E-learning

105. Almost all of the quality assurance agencies operating in Africa have responsibilities over distance and e-learning. On the whole, however, very little quality assurance work has been done on either distance or e-learning in Africa. To be effective, quality assurance agencies will need to develop appropriate mechanisms for assessing distance learning and E-learning. In some cases, the quality assurance process is actively involved in these areas, as in Tanzania, where the Open University of Tanzania is preparing to undergo the accreditation process. South Africa has a relatively long history of distance learning institutions with both the University of South Africa (UNISA) and Technikon South Africa having large student bodies and relatively long histories of operation. However, since the actual accreditation and audit processes are very new, there is little experience with national quality assurance in this area. It has posed problems for accreditors in other parts of the world. Cooperation with foreign national and international accreditors who have been carrying out accreditation and audits in this area would be beneficial to African quality assurance agencies which can learn from their experiences and avoid some start-up problems in this difficult but growing area of tertiary instruction.

VI. Quality Assurance in the Regional Context

106. The potential benefits of regional cooperation for quality assurance and accreditation are substantial including: mutual recognition of accredited status,\textsuperscript{66} recognition of degrees,\textsuperscript{67} mobility of students and faculty, cooperation providing peer reviewers and external examiners, and regional accreditation and quality assurance – an especially appealing prospect to small countries with only a few major universities. The difficulties of such cooperation should not be underestimated given the different histories and cultures of the higher education institutions, especially when quality assurance, accreditation, and quality audit programs are in their very early stages of development. Nonetheless, there has been some progress regarding quality assurance including programs of the Inter-University Council of East Africa, the Association of African Universities (AAU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l’Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES). It was created by sixteen heads of state in 1972 in Lomé and has focused on cooperation between higher education institutions in areas affecting quality issues such as recruitment and research. In addition there are a number of regional cooperative structures under consideration including one in which Egypt is playing a major role with its neighbors.

107. The Association of African Universities (AAU) and the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) are in the early stages of planning for regional assistance in quality assurance. The AAU is developing a project designed to provide support for quality assurance at the regional, national, and institutional levels to member countries to: develop quality assurance systems; assist national quality assurance agencies with capacity building; and enhance existing agreements and mechanisms for recognition of degrees, certificates, and academic qualifications. Such regional cooperation in Africa should be beneficial especially at this early stage in the development of quality assurance, accreditation and quality audits.

108. The Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA) formed in 1980 after the dissolution of the University of East Africa, includes Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. It is a regional inter-governmental organization designed to foster collaboration between East African universities, governments, and NGOs. It is currently considering ways to assist with the quality assurance and accreditation efforts of the three partner countries and has participated in a number of quality assurance efforts in the region.

109. The consequence of the lack of effective regional cooperation for accreditation was evident in several of the case studies. As Mihyo notes for Tanzania:

> The emerging challenges of cross-border delivery cannot be met by the Commission operating at the national level. Networking at regional and global levels is necessary. The regulations still envisage a campus university with halls of residence and in situ facilities.

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\textsuperscript{66} Among the most successful regional agreements about recognition of accredited status is the Washington Accord (originally signed in 1989) by which signatory nations agree to recognize the accreditation status of the program accredited by each of the members of the accord. It includes: Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom, and the United States. For information on other international agreements see: Fred M. Hayward, “Multi-lateral Agreements That Address International Quality Assurance,” CHEA, 2000, www.chea.org/international/multi-lateral.html.

for learning and teaching. New modes of delivery that are electronic do not require the type of infrastructure that is required under the Act and its regulations.\textsuperscript{68}

110. The most developed project for regional cooperation is the Southern African Development Community (SADC). It has initiated a number of cooperative projects in higher education included transfer and tuition benefits\textsuperscript{69} for students from SADC countries. Its prospects for making major contributions to quality assurance and other educational opportunities that improve quality, are substantial. Its efforts to date point to the many obstacles and challenges faced by regional cooperation on quality assurance.

**The SADC Experience**\textsuperscript{70}

111. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) was created with the signing of a Declaration and Treaty by Heads of State and Government in Windhoek, Namibia in August of 1992. SADC evolved out of its forerunner, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference of nine ‘frontline’ countries established in 1980, largely to work together so as to reduce the economic dependence of its member states on apartheid South Africa. SADC was subsequently formed to promote social, economic and political cooperation among its member states, now numbering 14, namely: Angola, Botswana, Congo DRC, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

112. The objective in evolving from SADCC to SADC was to shift the focus from coordination of development projects to a more complex and fundamental objective of integrating the economies of member states as spelled out in the terms of the Treaty. The focus would be on achieving complementarity between national and regional strategies and programmes.

113. In SADC’s own statement: ‘The ultimate objective of the Community is, therefore, to build a Region in which there will be a high degree of harmonization and rationalization to enable the pooling of resources to achieve collective self-reliance in order to improve the living standards of the people of the region’\textsuperscript{71}

**SADC position on regional quality assurance**

114. At a summit held in Blantyre, Malawi in September of 1997, the Heads of State and Government signed the SADC Protocol on Education and Training which inter alia established a Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA) ‘to develop and recommend policy guidelines, instruments, structures and procedures that would facilitate equating, harmonizing and eventual standardization of accreditation and certification of qualifications in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[69] In South Africa, for example, SADC students pay the same fees charged South Africans, about one third of the actual cost rather than the full fare normally charged foreign students.
\item[70] This section on quality assurance regionally is an edited, shortened version of the discussion in the chapter on South Africa by Daniel J. Ncayiyana.
\end{footnotes}
Nothing happened until 2001 when the following TCCA programmatic objectives were framed and endorsed by the Education Sectoral Ministers Meeting.

- To facilitate the development of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) in SADC countries.
- To facilitate the harmonization of NQFs of SADC member countries to develop a regional SADC Qualifications Framework (SADCQF).
- To review and strengthen the national assessment and accreditation structure, systems and procedures of SADC countries.
- To facilitate agreement on (the equivalence of) entry requirements to higher education and training.

However, the Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA) has been constrained substantively to implement any one of these lofty objectives for logistical, organizational and financial reasons. The Committee lacks both staff and budget to execute its tasks. The TCCA itself was abolished for a while during the SADC restructuring exercise, and was only resuscitated in June 2004. At a recent meeting of Ministers responsible for higher education held in Kasane, Botswana in March of 2006, the TCCA presented an action programme and a budget totaling $2,098,200 to cover its planned future activities vis-à-vis a SADCQF. The budget was not approved. Instead, the TCCA was given a new mandate to conduct an audit of the current state of higher education in SADC countries as a backdrop to any further action on the SADCQF.

### Threats to a SADC region-wide quality assurance initiative

116. Threats mitigating against quick success in the initiative to establish a region-wide SADC system of quality assurance in higher education are substantial. These include the following:

1. A regional quality assurance system should ideally take its cue from individual country QA systems. But outside of the nascent South African Higher Education Qualifications Commission (HEQC) system, national quality assurance systems are virtually non-existent in SADC countries. And according to a recent TCCA survey, only South Africa and Namibia have functioning NQFs. Most other SADC countries are yet to enact the necessary legislation to enable the establishment of a qualifications framework.

2. Higher education is at different levels of development in SADC countries, ranging from community college-type institutions to fully-fledged universities with robust postgraduate programs. Institutional autonomy varies from country to country.

3. There is a proliferation of private colleges, many of dubious quality, in the SADC, with these institutions constituting the majority providers in countries such as the DR.

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73 NQFs are fundamental to systematic quality assurance. They set out the structure and content description of qualifications, on the basis of which quality may be assessed. Separate NQFs usually exist by profession and type of institution (e.g. for higher education, or for technical training by area such as computer programmer, electrician, x-ray technician). However, NQFs are very complex and are perhaps not as easily harmonized across borders as may sometimes seem to be implied in the SADC documents. NQFs are based on national education and training priorities of individual countries, and these priorities will not always coincide between and among SADC countries.
Congo. Many SADC countries lack the statutory framework to regulate private higher education.

4. There is lack of a common definition of what constitutes ‘higher education’, and whether it includes ‘vocational training’ (however that is defined). Such common understanding is necessary in order to design a higher education QA system that covers the field.

5. Matters of politics, national pride and institutional competitiveness will have to be overcome in order to achieve a region-wide QA system. Currently, national sovereignty of member states remains the over-arching principle of association, and this may serve as a barrier to a cross-border QA system.

6. The SADC countries present a kaleidoscope of educational systems modeled on British, Belgian and Portuguese traditions, which may not easily conform to a unitary QF and QA system.

7. Lastly and perhaps most importantly, capacity may in the end be the most decisive factor in the establishment of both national and regional QA systems in SADC. The South African experience demonstrates that significant human and financial capital is necessary for a viable QA system. While effective quality assurance is essential for improvement in the quality of higher education, for those countries with very limited financial resources, great care will be needed to develop an effective system within their financial and capacity restraints.

The way forward for SADC Quality Assurance: minimalist beginnings

117. Notwithstanding the constraints discussed in the foregoing section, it is feasible to work towards the establishment of national and, eventually, a regional system of quality assurance and accreditation. However, the SADC would need at first to look to establishing minimalist quality frameworks and quality assurance systems, which can then be built upon in the course of time, as circumstances change and conditions improve, and as users become more comfortable with what is on the ground.

118. Discussing qualifications frameworks (which are intimately tied up with quality assurance and accreditation), Raffe observes that ‘the literature on qualifications frameworks suggests that they are most successful when they are modest in ambition and incremental in approach: when they build upon existing structures and practices and on the trust, the mutual understandings and the power relationships that are embedded within them.’

119. The audit with which the Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA) has been mandated will no doubt show some countries to be readier than others to create National Qualifications Frameworks and to put quality assurance and accreditation systems in place. The TCCA could start setting up trans-border systems with those countries that are well positioned, and look to incorporating the others incrementally as they attain the readiness threshold.

120. It seems unlikely that SADC member states will be in a position to fully fund the QF and QA effort in the near term, and the TCCA will need significant injections of external seed funding if its work is to get off the ground. Nonetheless, this is a significant step forward and its

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challenges highlight issues for other regions that chose to move toward greater regional cooperation in quality assurance.

**VII. Innovations and Promising Practices**

121. The quality assurance, accreditation and quality audit processes examined provided evidence of several interesting innovations and practices that may be suggestive for those interested in or involved in accreditation, audits, and academic reviews.

**Pilot Quality Audits and Accreditation Reviews.**

122. South Africa made extensive use of pilot audits and pilot accreditation reviews during the development of the accreditation and audit processes. They proved to be very helpful in pointing out processes that were cumbersome or needed clarification, identifying standards and criteria that were too complicated or lacked utility, and helping the agency simplify a process that had become overly complex. It also proved beneficial to the institutions in giving them a dry run in the process, early feedback on quality and quality assurance procedures, and experience they could share with other institutions. Such assessments for all new accreditation and audit programs are recommended.

**Institutional Quality Assurance Committees**

123. Several accreditors encourage the establishment of quality assurance committees at each higher education institution. This provides a central focus and contact point for institutional accreditation and audits, program accreditation, and academic reviews. It also creates a base of information and institutional memory from one accreditation or audit review to the next (especially important where there are multiple program accreditation reviews), facilitates staff and peer review training, and can help foster a culture of quality on campus. With that in mind, among the first steps taken in Sudan in establishing the accreditation process was to encourage and assist in the establishment of evaluation units in thirty-eight tertiary education institutions.

**Institutional Mentoring for Higher Education Institutions**

124. Some countries have developed mentoring systems for new universities, or for private universities in two of the case study countries, not unlike that employed in an earlier era for some of the first universities in Africa. In Cameroon, as Vincent Titanji discusses in that chapter, the government has a mandatory system of mentoring in which private higher education institutions choose a mentor from among the public institutions and sign a mentorship agreement with the state and/or the accredited university as part of the conditions for accreditation. The costs of this relationship are borne by the private institutions being mentored. In these cases, the degree granted is that of the state university.

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75 This process is elaborated further in the chapter on South Africa by Daniel Ncayiyana which follows.

76 In Pakistan such a project started as a pilot program with start-up funding for each institution for a quality assurance cell to be headed by someone at the level of dean.

77 Interview with the director of the Evaluation and Accreditation Corporation (EVAC), Nairobi, Kenya, February 8, 2006.
125. Ghana has a somewhat similar process for its private universities, which has been helpful to the development of a number of private universities according to several heads of private institutions. It is not without its critics, especially given the fees charged and proposed by the mentoring institution – recently set at $17,000 by the University of Ghana. Private universities do have the option, after four years if they fulfill certain conditions, to become universities in their own right and dispense with mentorship. One private Ghanaian university is in the process of seeking full university status at the present time.

Encouraging Academic Reviews Independent of Accreditation

126. In most of the case study countries some universities carry out independent institutional academic self-assessments of their own. Several excellent examples of institutional academic reviews independent of the quality assurance process are described in the case studies on Ghana and South Africa. What they suggest is the powerful advantages accruing to those institutions that do them. These institutions take on the burden of regular quality assessment, identify weaknesses on their campuses prior to any external review, and thus have the opportunity to quietly rectify problems and deficiencies identified. The case of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana is an excellent example. The ongoing efforts of its vice-chancellor and its Quality Assurance Unit helped transform the university and raise quality standards at a time when standards were generally falling in Ghana. Similar examples are noted in the case study on South Africa.

127. The success of these autonomous institutional academic audits suggests that quality assurance agencies would be wise to encourage higher education institutions to undertake academic reviews of departments, programs, and faculty on their own, outside the accreditation process. This is an excellent way to foster a culture of quality and to help institutions upgrade their faculties, departments, and programs without the public embarrassment of mediocre accreditation results. Workshops could be organized to demonstrate the methods and utility of such academic program self-assessment. Additional funding might be provided to assist universities in starting academic reviews or to help them with start-up costs to set up Quality Assurance Units at their institutions.

VIII. Recommendations

128. The development of accreditation and audit process in Africa marks a significant effort by the countries involved to improve the quality of higher education, to insure that vital goals such as increased access, do not come at the expense of quality, but rather come in tandem with it. The case studies examined here are typical of the efforts being made throughout the continent to bring higher education to quality levels that will allow its citizens to take advantage of technology, knowledge production around the world, and the opportunities that await its citizens who become part of the global economy. While each country will need to develop its quality assurance system to meet its particular history, needs, and experiences, the process itself is not new and there is a great deal of knowledge, training opportunities, and lessons learned that can be shared and exchanged in ways that will foster and enhance the process of quality assurance,

78 Interviews in Ghana, February 2006.
79 See Yaw Saffu, chapter on Ghana, which follows.
accreditation, and quality audits in Africa for those counties with quality assurance agencies in place and those just beginning the process. The diversity of Africa, including the difference in the size and number of universities by country, will require different solutions for different settings. For smaller countries, it may be useful to think about regional accreditation bodies both to pool resources and to make comparisons more meaningful. For example, it might make sense for the Gambia to join with Ghana and Liberia, to develop a single regional accreditation system, and perhaps with Senegal, Mali, and Guinea as well. That would broaden the base of peers for site visits, provide some economies of scale, and help limit suspicion of favorites. Examples of quality assurance in large countries such as Nigeria and South Africa may have more to offer similar large systems (e.g. Egypt) than their smaller counterparts such as Mauritius.

129. A number of recommendations are drawn from this review for consideration by existing quality assurance agencies and those in the process of starting such programs.

- **Cost:** The case studies demonstrated that cost is a much more critical factor than had been realized even in states with relatively robust economies. In addition to the costs of running the process, costs to the institutions need to be assessed carefully, even where processes are in place. In several cases, the costs far exceeded the expectations of the agencies and the participating institutions. In at least two cases they threaten the success of the process. For new quality assurance agencies, a careful analysis of costs (including "hidden costs" to institutions) is important to success. For existing institutions, such a review might help the agency and institutions find ways to bring costs within reasonable bounds where they seem excessive or potentially detrimental. It is important to recognize the considerable institutional cost of site visits, self-assessments, and program reviews. Institutional requirements, self-study expectations, and site visit policies need to be carefully thought through to insure that the human investment and the cost of the process result in a comparable quality assurance benefit and enhance the process of quality improvement. As has been shown, there are ways to cut costs significantly. The benefits of different approaches to accreditation (and audits) must be weighted against the appropriateness of the costs. There are a number of approaches which promise significant saving. Assessing costs carefully is important to the long term success and legitimacy of the process.

- **Human resources:** Human capacity is a second critical area to assess. Five out of the six case studies demonstrated problems resulting from limited human capacity, especially the difficulty of finding adequate numbers of peer reviewers who could devote time effort audits and accreditation. It is clear that the magnitude and implications of this shortfall were not anticipated. These examples suggest the importance of such an assessment before the process begins, but also that human resource needs and capacity should be examined once the process is underway, but while changes in approach can be made without undermining its integrity.

- **Institutional and/or program quality assessment:** There is enough information to make choices about whether to focus on institutions and/or programs. For those considering the establishment of a quality assurance process, the case studies suggest that a useful strategy would be an initial focus on institutions accreditation. It is far less costly than program accreditation and allows an agency to review all institutions in a relatively short
period of time. A quality assurance agency could decide to review some programs as part of institutional accreditation (e.g. a representative sample) if desired. If programs are reviewed, a modest approach would be to start the process with a focus on the ten to twelve professional programs where this makes the most sense in the context of the country. The case studies suggest that it is wise to move slowly in initiating program accreditation, starting with those most critical so students and employers first – for example engineering and computer science where employment opportunities are increasingly global and accreditation expected.

- **Foreign peer reviewers**: Foreign peer reviewers have been used in most of the countries examined here. Foreign peer reviewers have had an important impact in several of the countries, especially at the outset by providing experience and giving legitimacy to the process. This has been the case in Mauritius where they have provided expertise in areas where local capacity was lacking as well as fostering legitimacy for the process. Similarly, external examiners used in the review of the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania helped give credibility to a very critical report on the University and played a significant role in the follow-up to the original quality assessment report. The results were major changes and significant improvement in the quality of the University. They can also help ensure that setting “world-class standards” as benchmarks is meaningful. At the same time, for most countries, cost factors require careful thought about how extensively foreign peer reviewers are used and where they will be most cost-effective.

- **Information strategies for quality assurance**: It is important for quality assurance agencies to develop an information strategy to inform the public, students, parents, employers, and other stakeholders. That effort has borne fruit with all the accreditors reviewed as part of this study. South Africa has been particularly resourceful in using the Internet, newspapers, radio and television. If accreditation and audits are to be effective, the public must understand the process and know how to access the information about accredited and audited institutions that will help people make decisions about institutions and protect them from fraud.

- **Audits versus Accreditation**: For those contemplating quality assurance programs, are there lessons from these case studies? What kinds of choices should those thinking about national quality assurance consider? Should the focus be on accreditation? Audits? Academic review? Some or all of them? At the present time, most African countries carry out accreditation rather than audits. Both approaches have their strengths, as has been mentioned earlier. Accreditation appears, however, to have several advantages over audits. First, it focuses on national (and usually international standards) as opposed to an institution's own standards. That has important cachet internationally for employers, other universities, NGOs, and governments. It suggests comparability and common benchmarks. If a country is going to carry out institutional quality reviews only, it is advantageous to choose accreditation rather than audits. It is more readily understood internationally and it is what most countries are using in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere.

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80 Interviews in Tanzania, February 2006.
IX. Conclusions

130. As we have seen the accreditation and quality audit processes are underway in about one fifth of African states with several others just starting the process. That is a substantially higher number than expected at the start of this project. While there is substantial variety in the accreditation, audit, and academic review processes, most include self-studies by the institutions or programs being reviewed, utilize peer reviewers, carry out site-visits, and produce a report and recommendations. For audits, these are recommendations to the institution, often involving follow-up by the agency. For accreditation the report includes either a recommendation to accredit, deny accreditation, or some intermediate stage such as probation or candidacy. What is striking is the high level of convergence of the accreditation and audit process in Africa. For the most part, they are very similar to those found in much of Europe, Asia, and the Americas, facilitating comparisons and creating the potential for mutual recognition of accreditation processes and decisions internationally.

131. For those at the early stages of developing accreditation or audits processes, or contemplating quality assurance agencies, there are a number of critical choices to be made. Among them are: whether or not to undertake academic audits, or accreditation, or both; whether to undertake only institutional accreditation or audits; whether to focus only on program accreditation; or whether to carry out both institutional and program accreditation; the breadth of program accreditation – that is selecting only a few programs for accreditation (in most cases some of the professions) or all programs.

132. A wide range of options concerning institutional and program audits and accreditation were used by the countries examined in Africa. They can be categorized as follows:

1. Institutional accreditation only (Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar)
2. Institutional accreditation and accreditation of all programs for private universities (Cameroon)
3. Institutional accreditation and accreditation of all programs for all universities (Tanzania, Uganda)
4. Institutional accreditation and limited program accreditation (Ghana)
5. Institutional audits and accreditation of all programs (South Africa and Mauritius)
6. Accreditation of all programs only (Nigeria)

133. The choice between audits and accreditation depends primarily on the aims of the process. The difference between the two is primarily that an academic audit is usually defined as a process of review of an institution or program to determine if its curriculum, staff, and infrastructure meet its own stated aims and objectives. It is an evaluation and assessment of an institution or its programs in relation to its own mission, goals, and stated standards. The assessors are looking primarily at the success of the institution in achieving its goals. An audit focuses on accountability of institutions and programs and usually involves a self-study, peer review and a site visit. Accreditation, as noted earlier, is usually defined as a process of self-study and external quality review to scrutinize higher education institutions and/or programs for quality assurance and quality improvement. The process is designed to determine whether or not an institution has met or exceeded national published standards for accreditation and is achieving its mission and stated purpose. The key differences between the two are that accreditation
focuses on standards external to the institution, usually national, and an assessment of the institution in terms of those standards. Accreditation is usually concerned about institutional achievement of some set of minimal national standards. These are increasingly coming to be seen as international standards.  

The amount of funding likely to be available for the accreditation or audit process should affect choices. Where funding is likely to be limited, the most appropriate strategy is probably to limit activity to institutional accreditation or institutional audits (though the latter may have less international appeal). Where funding and capacity are limited, if program accreditation is carried out it should be limited to critical professions, probably not more than ten to twelve of the more than 150 higher education programs existing in most countries. Even those with long-term aspirations to accredit all programs, would do well to start out with a few of the most critical at the outset. For most African countries starting this process, institutional accreditation either without program accreditation (approach #1) or institutional accreditation with limited program accreditation (approach #4) of those professions for which it is most important, is probably the best approach to adopt. The number of programs assessed can be expanded at a later date if funding and academic capacity allow. The accreditation processes at the institutional level and the program level are very similar except that the latter is a more focused and more detailed analysis of a program. On the other hand, that same detail could be given to targeted programs (e.g. programs critical to the institution, those thought to be in trouble, a random sample of programs) during institutional accreditation. Relying only on program accreditation tends to leave out of the assessment some of the institutional processes that are essential to high quality teaching and research such as: institutional programs to support improved teaching and learning, institutional research support, a participatory governance system, an environment supportive of young faculty, a sense of community (or lack of it), a campus “culture of research” and “culture of quality,” institutional support for recruitment of outstanding new faculty, or an institutional “culture of student learning.”

**Capacity Building**

135. As we have seen, the most critical needs for establishing effective quality assurance, accreditation and audits are for capacity building. That includes training for staff of national accreditors, professional accreditors, university senior staff and quality assurance units, peer reviewers, and others. One of the ironies of the problems posed for African accreditors and quality assurance agencies which have great difficulty getting the trainers needed, workshops organized, and essential training material, is that what they need is available or occurring around the world on a regular basis in universities, national, regional, and professional accrediting organizations. The challenge is how to link those opportunities with African colleagues who need them or how to get these colleagues to the capacity building training currently going on in cities around the world. The amount of funding that would be needed to facilitate that is small in

81 For example, in the recently released presidential MAP (Plan d’Action Madagascar, 2012) a major goal for education was stated as follows: “Nous allons créer un système éducatif avec des standards de classe mondiale en quantité et en efficacité, qui stimule la créativité et aide nos étudiants à transformer leurs rêves en réalité, et qui donne à Madagascar les ressources humaines nécessaires pour devenir une nation compétitive et un acteur ayant du succès dans l’économie mondiale.” (Government of Madagascar, Office of the President, Draft of February 2006, p.7).

82 In work done by the Bank is Pakistan for the Policy Note in 2005 & 2006, there were 165 programs in higher education.
comparison to the benefit that would accrue. Having reviewed and participated in the establishment of a number of quality assurance and accrediting process around the world, it is clear that the beginning of the process is among the most critical stages in the development of effective quality assurance. If accreditation and quality audits get off to a bad start, the whole process is likely to be tainted, its legitimacy destroyed, and its utility limited.

136. The ability of quality assurance agencies to send peer reviewers, for example, to peer reviewer training sessions or workshops on self studies, could be the difference between quality assurance efforts that are carefully crafted, focus on academic standards, and outcomes and those that are plagued by administrative hurdles, poor planning, and standards or criteria that are not very useful. The contacts made in such workshops often live long after the events themselves and allow people with related problems to exchange ideas, experiences, and suggestions. Alternatively, experienced trainers from the best quality assurance agencies around the world could be sent to African countries wishing assistance to put on workshops and to carry out programs to train agency staff and trainers for peer reviews and site visits. Added to that is the wealth of knowledge that exists around the world, examples of standards and criteria for accreditation, handbooks for self-studies, guides for peer reviewers, and a host of other material that would help in the development process. It is not that this material has the answers to the issues and problems posed in establishing an accreditation process, but it has many useful lessons, and can serve as a basis for thinking about appropriate material for an individual country. Efforts should be made to unlock this knowledge, make it available, facilitate access to the tremendous amount of training already going on, as well as to provide opportunities to assist with local capacity building efforts, including with custom made programs to meet individual country and quality assurance needs.

Quality Improvement

137. Accreditation, audits, and institutional reviews are relatively new phenomena in African academic life and it is thus difficult to make an assessment about their impacts on quality improvement. Nonetheless, a number of observations can be made at this point based on the case studies, interviews, and assessment of the data gathered. In comparison to the system of external examinations and examiner reports about departments (where they existed), the quality assurance processes represented by accreditation, audits, and institutional reviews are much more self-conscious about quality and quality improvement. The same can be said of a comparison with oversight by Senates or Councils of institutional quality in the pre-accreditation/audit period. Quality assurance in the current context is much more than a measure of success on examinations, a review of syllabi, or the sense of quality obtained by reading final papers. The elaboration of standards sets broader goals and expectations for both institutions and reviewers (accreditors, auditors) and includes almost every aspect of academic life. The focus on student learning, for example, seems much clearer than even a decade ago, employing multiple measures (student evaluations, peer reviews, examination of material) in contrast to the past where it was often overlooked altogether. So too the focus on outcomes such as: employability, relevance, value added, student satisfaction, employer satisfaction. The process itself forces universities to look at themselves in terms of each standard and in terms of their own goals. It is clear from interviews that preparation for, and writing up, the self-study usually fosters quality improvement. As for outcomes in the long run, it is too soon to say. But, as has been noted in the cases of Ghana, Nigeria, and Mauritius in particular, there are examples of significant quality improvement resulting from the accreditation process. The breadth, depth, and flexibility of the
accreditation, audit, and academic review processes in Africa, reviewed for this study, show
great promise for significantly enhancing and improving higher education quality.

**Placing the Onus and Responsibility for Quality on the Institutions:**

138. In the course of reviewing a tremendous amount of writing about accreditation and
quality audits in the form of documentation about the process of accreditation, standards, criteria,
handbooks for self-assessment, and frameworks for qualifications, it is remarkable how often one
comes across a phrase something like this: “the primary responsibility for quality assurance and
improvement rests with the individual university.” That is part of the mantra of quality
assurance in higher education. Yet it is striking how little that seems to be believed in the
development and operation of quality assurance, accreditation, and quality audit systems.
Indeed, one is often struck by the top down nature of the accreditation process in Africa. That is
quite in contrast to the history of accreditation in the United States which began with institutions
seeking external feedback on the quality of their academic programs and inviting external peers
to visit and report on what they saw. On the other hand, the crisis of quality in African higher
education has not been solved by the institutions themselves, or non-government organizations
set up by them to deal with the problems. Most people would agree that some kind of external
pressure was needed to foster quality improvement. That force turned out to be the national
governments. One of the ironies of that intervention is the fact that some part of the blame for
the decline in quality surely belongs to the governments that insisted on increased access at the
same time that they were cutting funding, and demanded quality outputs while they interfering in
university governance, the choice of vice chancellors, the hiring of faculty members, and the
freedoms and autonomy that are regarded as essential to creativity and learning in higher
education. In the long run, effective quality assurance must involve strong review and
implementation mechanisms at the institutional level and clear external requirements for
assessment. Martin Hall notes the sensitivity of the balance:

> One strong theme that emerges from international experience is that quality
> assurance systems that overly rely on compliance to externally-imposed
> regulation may work against the interest of quality development in universities.
> This is partly because academics are intrinsically motivated, accustomed to
> autonomy and oriented towards a tradition of collegial peer evaluation. It is also
> because of the drain that compliance systems place on participating institutions;
> it has been argued that these sorts of quality assurance regimes require an
> unacceptable sacrifice of time by academic staff who would otherwise be
> conducting the primary functions of teaching and research.83

139. South Africa is experimenting with the idea of self-reaccreditation and self-audits for
institutions that have done well on previous reviews and meet certain requirements. There is also
pressure to reduce the complexity and the data demands of some aspects of accreditation. In
other countries, discussions are taking place about limiting the number of program accreditations
to lessen the load on universities which would otherwise have to entertain quality reviews for all
of their programs. These are complex issues, but it is encouraging to see discussion underway
about appropriate mechanisms to guarantee and foster quality without imposing undue and

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counterproductive burdens. In the long run, quality assurance and improvement rest with institutions and their faculty members. At the same time, it is clear that in Africa institutions cannot do, and have not done this alone – that governments must play a central role in inaugurating, encouraging, and funding accreditation and audit processes – though once that has been done the legitimacy and effectiveness of national agencies would be strengthened by obtaining autonomy. The challenge is to make this happen while exercising great care to protect institutional autonomy and the legitimacy of the quality assurance processes.

140. These early, preliminary findings about quality assurance agencies in Africa suggest that they are having a significant impact on tertiary institutions in encouraging quality improvement and moving some institutions in the direction of world-class standards. They have helped foster a new sense of concern about improving teaching, learning, research, and public service in many higher education institutions. That in turn should help make institutions, their graduates and nations more competitive and able to operate effectively in the knowledge environment of the contemporary era. In a number of cases it is clear that the accreditation and audit processes have reversed or slowed the downward trend in the quality of higher education, with Nigeria and Ghana being prime examples, and begun to move institutions and systems in the direction of international standards and global competitiveness. One should not over glorify the results, but they are, nonetheless, striking. On the other hand, serious problems remain in terms of limited human capacity and lack of adequate funding. It is important to emphasize that for most African states, the process of quality assurance through accreditation, audits, and institutional academic reviews, has yet to begin.

141. In the end, most would agree that the quality, the creativity, and the power of higher education institutions, to the extent they have it, come from the excellence of the faculty members and the nature of the environment and academic support students, faculty and staff receive. To the extent that their efforts are fettered by external regulations, time commitments, and obligations that hinder their creativity, their teaching, research, and service, quality is likely to suffer. Yet in the sometimes isolated world of African academics, as in higher education institutions around the world, there is need for external stimulation – even if at times it seems an unwelcome intrusion – to point the direction toward world-class standards, better teaching, first-class research, dreams of innovation, and creation of the conditions that foster knowledge societies, encourage development, stimulate students, and foster discovery. The challenge for quality assurance in higher education is to find the proper balance between external demands for quality and the creation of the conditions and the freedoms that allow the genius of Africa to flower as it should.
Appendix I

Table 1
African Quality Assurance Database for Higher Education
May 2006

[Insert Here]

KEY to Table 1

What follow are the abbreviations used in table 1, what data were used, and a description of the variable.

**National Quality Authority** = the existence of a national body (an agency, ministry, or organization) that has responsibility for accreditation/audits of universities and is actively carrying out that function. Where no information was found or there was no evidence of activity the notation “none evident” was used.

**Accreditation Agency** = The acronym of the name of the agency. The full name is spelled out in the Acronyms listing attached to the table.

**Auton.** = Is the agency autonomous? Autonomy means that it is totally independent of a Ministry or other government agency. Semi-autonomous is indicated by: its own budget, a board of directors (or equivalent), a non-governmental majority on the board, and decisions about accreditation, probation, or non-accreditation made by the agency.

**Institutional acc/q.assur.** = institutional accreditation/audits of private universities, public universities, both, or a decision not to do institutional accreditation or audits.

**Program accreditation** = same as above for program accreditation

**Board** = does the accreditor have a governing board or equivalent? Yes, No, planned.

**Public # acc/rec total/v.acc.** = Number of public universities in total and number accredited or recognized (second number)

**Private # accred. total/v.acc.** = same as above for private universities

**Programs acc. # instit. total/v.acc.** = Programs accredited by institution; total number of institutions v. total number with programs accredited.

**Programs accredited total/v.acc.** = Total number of programs versus total number accredited.

**Other Gov. Qual. Ass.** = The number of other governmental quality assurance organizations
NGO Qual. Assurance = Quality assurance/accreditation provided by non-governmental organizations. Number of organizations.

University Academic Reviews = Do universities carry out their own academic reviews; yes or no.

Reviewed by org. = Has confirmation been received from the organization of the details listed for the organization? Yes; No.

Foreign providers = Does the agency have responsibility for review of foreign providers? Yes or No. Shown only where we found evidence of activity or that it was specifically outside the purview of the agency.

Distance & E-education = Does the agency have responsibility for accreditation of distance education and Internet providers. Yes or No. Shown only where we found evidence of activity or that it was specifically outside the purview of the agency.
Appendix 2

Glossary: Quality Assurance and Accreditation

Dr. Fred M. Hayward*
Consultant to the World Bank for Higher Education

Accreditation: The process of self-study and external quality review used in higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities and higher education programs for quality assurance and quality improvement. The process is designed to determine whether or not it has met or exceeded the published standards for accreditation and is achieving its mission and stated purpose. Success results in an accredited institution.

Audit: A process of review of an institution or program to determine if its curriculum, staff, and infrastructure meet its stated aims and objectives. An audit focuses on accountability of institutions and programs.

Criteria: Standards for accreditation or certification of an institution or program. These involve expectations about quality, effectiveness, financial viability, compliance with national (US: state and federal) rules and regulations, outcomes, and sustainability (see standards). In the UK, refers to standards for degree awarding powers and the title university.

Institutional accreditation: The process of external quality review and self-study of an institution for quality assurance and quality improvement. The process is intended to determine if an institution has met published standards for accreditation and is meeting its mission and stated purposes. It results in accreditation, denial of accreditation, or probation (or related status). Program accreditation is similar but focuses on academic or professional programs.

Peer review: External review and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of an institution’s academic programs, staffing, and structure, carried out by a team of external evaluators who are specialists in the fields reviewed and knowledgeable about higher education in general. Reviews may be based on standards set by the accrediting organizations or institutional quality standards.

Performance Indicators: Representations, usually numeric, of the state of, or outcome from an organization, its programs, or processes. Sometimes called a management indicator. Regarded as tangible measures designed to provide public accountability. Often includes admission and graduate data, research records, employment of graduates, cost per student, student/staff ratios, staff workloads, student relevance, class size, laboratory and other equipment, equity, libraries, information technology and other learning resources. Should be subject to informed interpretation and judgment.

Program/Professional Accreditation: The process of external quality review and self-study of an academic program or professional program for quality assurance and quality improvement. The process is intended to determine if the program has met published standards for accreditation of the program and is meeting its mission and stated purposes. It results in accreditation of the program, denial of accreditation, or probation (or related status).
Quality: Refers to “fitness for purpose” – meeting or conforming to generally accepted standards as defined by an accrediting or quality assurance body.

Quality assessment: A diagnostic review and evaluation of teaching, learning, and outcomes based on a detailed examination of curricula, structure, and effectiveness of the institution or program. It is designed to determine if the institution or program meets generally accepted standards of excellence.

Quality assurance: Planned and systematic review process of an institution or program to determine that acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure are being maintained and enhanced. Usually includes expectations that mechanisms of quality control are in place and effective. Also (UK), the means through which an institution confirms that the conditions are in place for students to achieve the standards set by the institution or other awarding body.

Quality audit: A test of an institution’s quality assurance and control system through a self-evaluation and external review of its programs, staff, and infrastructure. Designed to provide an independent assessment of an institution’s system of accountability, internal review mechanisms, and effectiveness with an external body confirming that the institution’s quality assurance process complies with its standards, mission, and stated goals.

Quality improvement: The expectation that an institution will have in place a plan to monitor and improve the quality of its programs. In most cases, quality assurance and accrediting agencies require that procedures be in place to ensure that this is an ongoing process.

Self-study: The review and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of an institution’s own academic programs, staffing, and structure, based on standards set by an outside quality assurance body, carried out by the institution itself. Self-studies are usually undertaken in preparation for a quality assurance site visit by an outside team of specialists. Results in a self-study report.

Site visit: Evaluation by a team of peer reviewers who examine the institution’s self-study, interview faculty, students, and staff, and examine the structure and effectiveness of the institution and its academic programs. Usually results in a report of the evaluation. Normally part of the accreditation process, but may be initiated by the institution itself.

Site Visit Report: The report of the evaluation resulting from a site visit by assessors of a particular institution or program. Results in an accreditation or quality assurance recommendation or denial (an adverse action).

Standards: The level of requirements and conditions that must be met by institutions or program to be accredited or certified by a quality assurance or accrediting agency. These involve expectations about quality, attainment, effectiveness, financial viability, outcomes, and sustainability.

*This glossary is based on a more extensive version prepared by Fred M. Hayward for the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) in February 2001. See: http://www.chea.org/international/inter_glossary01.html.
Appendix III

Country Consultant Review Template

Name of consultant: _________________________
Date of Consultant Review ____________

Part I:
The data in Part I below was collected as part of our mapping exercise to obtain preliminary
information about quality assurance and accreditation in Africa. Please check this information,
correct any errors and add information that is missing where you can. If the question is not
applicable mark it NA. If there is no information available mark it NI. Then go to Part II.

Country: ___________________________ Date: ____________

Name of Accreditation Agency/Organization:

Contact Information:
Address:

Phone: ___________________________ Fax: ___________________________

Website: ___________________________
E-mail: ___________________________

Director/head (or equivalent): ___________ E-mail: ___________
Title: ________________ Phone: ________________ Fax: ________________

Description of agency/organization:

Scope of Authority (e.g. public universities, private universities, foreign tertiary providers,
institutional accreditation, program/professional accreditation):

Brief history and structure:
(Date founded, governing authority such as Ministry of Education, when actual accreditation
process began, etc.). __________________________________________________________________________
• Does the organization have its own Board or Commission or equivalent? (Yes/No) If yes, what is its composition? __________________________________________________________

• Is the organization autonomous? (Yes/No) Elaborate if necessary. ____________

• If “no”, to whom does it report? ____________________________

• What are its sources of financing? (e.g. Primarily government, member dues, fees to universities). ____________________________________________

• Are institutions charged fees for the accreditation process? ________________

Activity of the agency/organization:

Institutional accreditation/audits (explain briefly): ______________

• How many tertiary institutions (universities, colleges, institutes) have been reviewed overall? ____________
• How many accredited/recognized overall? ____________
• How many placed on probation or similar status overall? ____________
• How many denied accreditation/recognition overall? ____________
• How many accredited/audited in the last full year? ____________
• On probation in the last full year? ____________
• How many denied accreditation/recognition in the last full year? ____________

Program/specialized accreditation (explain briefly): ______________

• How many programs accredited overall? ____________
• How many were granted candidate status? ____________
• How many put on probation? ____________
• How many programs denied accreditation overall? ____________
• What are the totals for accreditation for the last full year? ____________
• Granted candidacy for accredited during the last full year? ____________
• Put on probation in the last full year? ____________
• Denied accreditation in the last full year? ____________
**Process of review:**

- Do institutions/programs carry out self-studies as part of the process? (Yes/No)
- Does the process involve peer reviews? (Yes/No)
- Does it involve site visits? (Yes/No)
- Frequency of reaccreditation? ___________________
- Frequency of reporting requirements if one exists (e.g. annual, every 5 years)?
  ___________________

**Purpose and goals:**

Formal purpose of accreditation (e.g. quality improvement, consumer protection, minimum standards):

**Other Accreditors:**

Do other organizations in the country have quality assurance or accreditation responsibilities at the tertiary level? (List: note their areas of authority and whether recognized by government).

_________________________________________

**Other Quality Assurance Activities (e.g. institutional academic program reviews):**

_________________________________________

_________________________________________

Please check the attached list of public and private universities to be sure it is accurate and make any corrections needed.

_________________________________________

Mapping data prepared by: _____ (initials)