A. Background

The EU development policies with Africa emphasize the importance of cooperation in higher education to build high-quality tertiary capacity through networking, mobility of students and scholars, and institutional support and innovation. Staff and student mobility within the African continent are considered as a means to address challenges such as the supply-side problem of limited access, sharing of expertise, capacity building, harmonisation, regional and continental integration. These are all areas which are addressed in the Second Action Plan of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy.

In addition to being pre-conditions for successful staff and student mobility programmes, quality assurance, the recognition of qualifications and qualification frameworks are major complementary responses to the need for high quality provision of education and training and are relevant for the internationalisation agendas of both the EU and of Africa. The fact that so many countries are engaged in similar developments enhances the need for information and exchange of experience. The aim of this workshop which brought together 60 practitioners from South Africa, Africa and Europe was to trigger mutual learning from these developments to improve the relevance and quality of learning systems.

The workshop worked around two themes:

(i) What is the role of quality assurance in contributing to teaching, learning, assessment and institutional practices?

(ii) Transparency and comparability as a way to facilitate recognition and mobility?

Website links

http://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/node/1744/ (exact address when posting)


Outcomes

After welcomes from Prof. I. Rensburg, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Johannesburg, Ghaleeb Jeppie of the South African Department for Higher Education and Training and Nils Jansons of the EU Delegation to South Africa, keynote addresses by the Merle Hodges, President of the International Education University Association of South Africa and Prof. C. Kiamba representing the Ministry of Higher Education of Kenya and COMEDAF highlighted the importance of quality assurance as an instrument for trust in international cooperation and of the recognition of qualifications for mobility and international cooperation.

Demands for quality in education are posing challenges to quality assurance systems and as mobility across the African continent increases, the demand for trust and mutual recognition
among education systems will also increase. Trust is to be built through training, policies, collegiality, networks, quality and equality, common visions and the promotion of innovation and diversity.

In terms of recognition of qualifications, the issues that Europe has and is to some extent still facing are not so different from Africa, although mobility moved drove the European Qualifications Framework whilst increasing access is currently the main driver in Africa. It is important to move towards a common terminology. Harmonisation is about transparency and understanding each others qualifications. We need to look beyond qualifications and move towards learning outcomes and the recognition of other learning.

Dr. James Keevy of the South African Qualification Authority brought the group through the recognition of qualifications, the challenges and opportunities presented by qualification frameworks, current model and repositioning of credential evaluation and the Southern African response to these issues. This was followed by an EU perspective looking at quality and recognition beyond higher education presented by Arjen Deij of the ETF.

**Quality culture within institutions**

The issues touched upon in the first session were quality culture within institutions, what needs to be done and how can quality assurance build up mutual trust in international cooperation. The group heard from Sania Gafour about quality culture process at Alexandria University, Egypt, followed by quality in the TropEd network for Education in international health by Bernadette Peterhans from the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute and then Luclaire Airey of Cape Pensinsula University presented how quality training and promotion are essential for ensuring a quality culture within institutions.

In the second session, the group looked at quality in teaching, learning and assessment. Wicher Schreuders, the coordinator of the Erasmus Mundus European Master Programme in Law and Economics at Erasmus University of Rotterdam gave a presentation showing how quality assurance was incorporated into the programme from the first stage of programme design through to post graduation. Karen Basiye, the Head of the Erasmus Mundus Alumni Association-African Chapter looked at issues to do with QA from the students' point of view, illustrated by examples of good practice she had encountered. Arlene Gilpin, Senior Tuning Expert from the Deusto Tuning Academy used the Tuning methodology framework to emphasise the key role in QA and enhancement played by the teachers on programmes. Without their continuous involvement QA is a system and enhancement theoretical.

The common messages taken from the discussions were:

- Internal and external stakeholders in quality assurance should be clear;
- Quality assurance should be explained;
- Need for strategies for continuous enhancement of quality at institutional level and at regional and transnational level;
- Need to sustain a culture of quality within institutions through promotion and comprehensive training;
- Capacity building of quality assurance units is required;
- Need for shared visions, standards, procedures, benchmarks, reviews, guidelines and values for building a sustainable quality culture;
- Need for professionalization in quality management;
- Need for quality assurance practices to operate at course and programme level;
- Need for teacher development for higher education, incentives, promotion and equitable workloads;
- Need for proper well designed teacher development and examiners training programme and eventually accompanied by a scholarship programme for promotion;
- Need for team planning approaches in curriculum design and the use of multiple teaching methods;
- Need to properly coordinate and integrate teaching and learning responsibilities;
- Quality should look at the interaction between teaching and research, ensure conformity with standards, the labour market perspectives and the quality of teachers;
- Student feedback should be continuous (administration, planning, feedback and reaction, external examination, academic integrity);
- Practitioners protocols for student workload are required;
- New methodologies for teaching, learning and assessment can be applied in all institutions, even where those that have no international dimension. Issues should not be generalized however and should reflect reality.

Accountability and qualifications as instruments to support harmonisation, transnational education and mobility.

Axel Aerden of the Netherlands/Flemish Accreditation agency used the Dutch/Flemish example as an angle to more generally go through the trends and challenges in recognition, both national and international, stressing that there is no external evaluation without internal evaluation. Discussions started on Bologna, highlighting that whilst it was a voluntary process, its outcomes were almost treated as directives. A similar initiative could no doubt be lead in South Africa but it might not work. Importantly, Bologna was launched, multilaterally with involvement of the biggest countries in Europe. Had it been only one of them, it would probably not have become the success it did. Also, once the critical mass was reached, all countries wanted to join and made tremendous efforts internally to comply - still entirely voluntarily. But someone must take the lead and there must be an interest, although this interest may simply be the fear to be left out, once a critical mass has been reached.

It seemed to be very widely agreed that the Arusha Convention must now get the status it deserves and requires to be effective. The self-regulating effect of accreditation was repeated. A well-functioning system will self-regulate the education market to a considerable extent. This is important in South Africa considering the advance of private HE which is likely to surge further under future demographic pressure. The same will apply for professional higher education which must find its place.

The second session looked at the recognition of qualifications as an instrument to support transnational education and partnership with a presentation by Prof. Jan Botha of Stellenbosch University, followed by how to foster mutual recognition presented by Axel Aerden representing the European Consortium for Accreditation this time and finally, the benefits and strategies for harmonisation within the African continent by Prof. Olusola Oyewole of the University of Agriculture of Abeokuta.

The main messages from these sessions are the following:

- Importance of setting up clear agreements between institutions without grey areas and understood by all partners (certification, leaning outcomes, funding etc.) for mutual trust;
- Partnership should be sustainable (equal partners, win-win situations, benefits for both parties);
- Whilst difficult to implement, agreements on substantial differences allows for much quicker recognition;
- Learning outcomes to become a standard for recognition;
• Importance of having national registers linked up to regional registers of recognised higher education institutions and accredited programmes and qualifications;
• Standards and Guidelines need to be central to all recognition activities;
• Lack of recognition is an obstacle for mobility;
• Students and universities need information, guidance and counselling;
• Credit systems are necessary nationally and across countries;
• More clarity on minimal academic standards and specific learning outcomes needs to be developed for the different types of programmes and higher education programmes (diversification).

These challenges for building trust in quality processes and the recognition of qualifications in higher education were brought together in the final session by Ms Lomthandazo Mavimbela of the SADC Secretariat.

Next steps

• List of useful references to be published on Africa-EU website
• Report on workshop to be circulated to Africa-EU higher education mailing list
• SAQA to approach the South African Council on Higher Education (CHE) to lead work on the recognition of qualifications and the benchmarking of quality assurance systems in higher education within the SADC context
• Regional/continental level to use existing structure to further develop the African Standards and Guidelines for QA (ASG)
• ACDE, AAU, AfriQan, African Youths Bureau of COMEDAF to mandate the development of ASG.
• AfriQan to start cooperation with ECA and AAU to encourage universities to start bilateral and multilateral collaborations around learning outcomes and minimal academic standards
• Harmonisation and Tuning pilot project to begin looking at learning, teaching and assessment in Health Sciences, Educational Sciences, Agricultural Sciences and Engineering 2nd half 2011.

Non-exhaustive list of useful references


African Association of Universities (AAU) http://www.aau.org/

African Council for Distance Education (ACDE) http://www.acde-africa.org/


AfriQan http://afriqan.aau.org/

Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)
http://www.adeanet.org/adeaPortal/

Association of Arab Universities (AArU)

Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in the European Higher Education Area (ENQA) Standards and Guidelines

Association of West African Universities (AWAU)

Bologna Process and European Higher Education Area http://www.eheia.info/

Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES)
http://www.cames.bf_refer.org/


Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
http://www.comm.ecowas.int/dept/stand.php?id=e_e1_brief&lang=en


European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc50_en.htm

European Network of Information Centres and National Academic Recognition Information Centres (ENIC-NARIC) network http://www.enic-naric.net/


Europe Africa Quality Connect Project http://www.qaconnect-africa.eu/

European Consortium for Accreditation http://www.ecaconsortium.net/


European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) http://www.eqar.eu


Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) http://www.iucea.org/

Lisbon Recognition Convention http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/recognition/lrc_EN.asp

New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) http://www.nepad.org/


Réseau Interuniversitaire des Grands Lacs (RIGL) http://www.bi.refer.org/spip.php?article1


South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) http://www.saqa.org.za/

Southern African Development Community (SADC) http://www.sadc.int/index/browse/page/715

Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) http://www.sarua.org/

Tuning Educational Structures http://www.tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/