CROSS-BORDER QUALITY ASSURANCE THROUGH CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION – DIES PROJECT IN CENTRAL AMERICA

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1. Establishing the Regional Accreditation System for Higher Education in Central America.

2. Some results
It has been a complex 15 years process

Aspects/steps:

- awareness building, 1996-2006
- concept clarification and training,
- design, consensus building and decision making,
- establishing a **regional evaluation system for quality improvement only**, SICEVAES 1996-1998
- self evaluation and external peer evaluation for quality improvement, 1998-2011
- design, consensus building and decision making for a **wide regional accreditation system** that ended with the establishing of CCA, 2001-2003
- design, consensus building and decision making for establishing **regional and new national accreditation agencies**, ACAAI, ACAP, CONEAUPA, SHACES…. 2004-2011
The Central American Quality Assurance System is a two layers multinational and multisectorial system. It includes the participation of stakeholders and universities from 7 countries: Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. It also includes the direct participation of public universities, private universities, ministries of education and professional bodies (university graduates) from the whole region.

In one layer it includes a Central American Accreditation Council (CCA) in charge of setting good practice principles for accreditation and standards for the accreditation organisms which operate in the region. A Council in charge of carrying out the metaevaluation of the accreditation agencies and its procedures, and awarding regional recognition or accreditation to the accreditation agencies. In the other layer the system are the accreditation bodies themselves, in charge of accrediting the universities and or their study programs.
CENTRAL AMERICAN FOR FOR QEA OF HE.
“Stake holders” from the region:
- Public and private universities,
- Ministries of education,
- University professional bodies,
- National academies of science,
- National Organizations of Science and Technology bussiness sector

CCA
Accreditation of accreditators
Regional and National

SINAES
SICEVAES
Cdsn
CNEA
PDAP
APPACCFIA
SHACES
ACER
ACAII
ACAP
OUPRICA

PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES AND THEIR STUDY PROGRAMMES
PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES AND THEIR STUDY PROGRAMMES
PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES ONLY

Evaluation for improvement
Regional Status recognition
University degrees and titles awarded by study programs, accredited by accreditation agencies accredited by CCA are recognized by those that signed the CCA agreement.

Therefore, accredited quality would be the basis for a much more flexible international recognition of university degrees between Central American countries. This would facilitate mobility within the region.
2. QUALITY EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA: SOME RESULTS
Cuadro No. 1
Resumen de los procesos de evaluación y acreditación realizados en la última década en la región.

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Notas:
1. Además 13 carreras de URL-Guatemala y 1 de la UMG-Guatemala han sido acreditadas por agencias mexicanas (ACCECISO, COMAEIA y CACECA, COMAPROD, CACEI, CONAET, CONAED).
2. El Instituto Centroamericano de Administración de Empresas (INCAE) se encuentra acreditado por SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 1994), AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, 1999) y EQUIS (European Quality Improvement System, 2003).
3. El SINAES fue acreditado a nivel regional por el CCA y a nivel internacional por la Red Internacional de Agencias de Acreditación de la Educación Superior INQAAHE.
Quality Evaluation and accreditation processes has been completed during the last decade in the region. This include institutional and program evaluations. Only 240 study programs out of a total of more than 5,000 study programs has been evaluated in Central America.

This means that it has been evaluated just about 5% of the total of programs existing in the region. We do not expect to evaluate and accredited all the study programs within the regional system, however, this number indicates that we are just at the begining of the process.

Therefore, by now, the contribution that QA is making to the Quality improvement of higher education of the region and academic mobility within the region is still very limited. But the potential is already there and the process has already initiated.
FIGURA 1
EVALUACIONES Y/O ACREDITACIONES REALIZADAS EN LA REGION CENTROAMERICANA POR
AGENCIA
(Años 2001-2010)

SCEVAES
SNAES
SCAR
ACAI
AUPRICA
CdA
AAPA-CFIA
ADAAC
ACESAR
SUPRICOI
CCA
ACAP
SHAES
CNAE

Número de Evaluaciones Realizadas
FIGURA 2
EVALUACIONES Y/O ACREDITACIONES REALIZADAS EN LA REGIÓN CENTROAMERICANA POR UNIVERSIDAD
(2001-2010)
The university that has concluded more evaluation processes within the region is Universidad de Panamá, followed by Universidad de Costa Rica. They are followed by Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and Universidad Pedagógica Nacional de Honduras.

Although the total number of evaluated programs is still low, it is encouraging to see that, 61 universities has been taking part in these processes (16 public and 45 private). It is 30% of the total number of existing institutions. This includes the main universities of the region.
FIGURA 3
EVALUACIONES Y/O ACREDITACIONES REALIZADAS EN LA REGIÓN CENTROAMERICANA POR PAÍS
(2001-2010)
Costa Rica is the country where more evaluation and accreditation processes have been successfully completed, followed by Panama. Both followed by Guatemala and Honduras.

Processes done in Costa Rica are mainly the work of SINAES and AAPIA-CFIA, while those done in Panama, Guatemala and Honduras are mainly the work of SICEVAES, SICAR and ACAAI.

The majority of these processes have been done by the public universities 71%.

The majority of the evaluated programs are in the area of engineering and technology.
FIGURA 5
EVALUACIONES Y/O ACREDITACIONES EN LA REGION CENTROAMERICANA POR AREA DE CONOCIMIENTO (2001 - 2010)

IGENIERÍA Y TECNOLOGÍA: 67
之间的 54
Cas. Sociales: 24
Cas. Agropecuarias: 23
Cas. de la Salud: 20
Cas. Naturales y Exactas: 15
Cas. Jurídicas: 4

NUMERO DE EVALUACIONES Y/O ACREDITACIONES
Studying hundreds of quality evaluation reports we can now see with empirical data, what are the main and more frequent quality problems in Higher Education Institutions in the region.

Curriculum design and development, Curriculum innovation, Academic level of the academic staff, teaching and research competences of academic staff, are among the main quality problems in the region. This has opened important opportunities for improvement.
Now we are entering the stage of a more massive participation of universities in evaluation and accreditation processes. What we can called an expansion stage.

Our main challenge now is to keep the regional system together, it means to strengthen the leadership of the CCA on the accreditation agencies, and to reach agreements between regional and national agencies to trust each other and to work together in a complementary way.