INTRODUCING A QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK
FOR EAST AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

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University level Educational Development in East Africa

- **Prior to 1963 there was a college in each country affiliated to the University of London**

- **1963: University of East Africa established, consisting of three constituent colleges, one in each country**

- **1970: Three independent universities established, one in each country**

- **In the the 1980s: More universities started in each country**

- **Present situation: Many new ones established (public and private), about 50 of them**

The IUCEA and Its Genesis

- In 1970 an Inter-University Committee was established with the aim to foster and facilitate collaboration among the newly established three universities

- Present day IUCEA was established in 1980 in place of the Committee as a regional inter-governmental organization that facilitates contacts between East Africa universities by:

    - Providing a forum for discussion on a wide range of academic and other matters relating to higher education in East Africa

    - Helping maintain high and comparable academic standards in East African universities

The Current Status of the IUCEA

- **Facilitating, coordinating and promoting sustainable and competitive development of universities by responding to challenges facing higher education.**

- **Helping universities to contribute to meeting national and regional development needs through various activities.**

- **IUCEA membership exceeds 45 universities and university colleges, both public and private.**

Functions of the IUCEA

- **Coordinating inter-university cooperation**

- **Facilitating the strategic development of member universities**

- **Controlling and promoting the quality of higher education through development and application of a harmonized higher education quality assurance framework**

Need for QA Common Framework for East African Universities: Background

In September 2005 the IUCEA Governing Board observed that there was need to establish an East African QA Framework in order to address the need to:

– Participate in and to promote cross-border education within and outside East Africa

– Set higher education quality standards for East African universities in view of on-going expansion of the same

– Safeguard the quality of outputs from East African universities against international competitors as a result of globalization, etc

Initial Processes Towards an East African QA Framework

In 2005 the IUCEA set up a QA committee that in preliminary meetings observed that:

– There was need to take QA issues at regional level in order to safeguard academic quality in East African universities

– National QARA agencies had appropriate QA frameworks which could be a starting point for establishing a regional framework

– There were QA practices at universities but not formalized and varied among institutions

– Need to identify and establish quality benchmarks for East Africa

– Common East African quality assurance framework urgently needed in view of rapid expansion of cross-border education in East Africa

IUCEA QA Committee Recommendations

- **IUCEA to constitute forum (Committee) to address promotion of QA and the exchange of best practices**
- **Universities be encouraged to use national as well as IUCEA set QA framework**
- **IUCEA should address benchmarking, quality assurance and quality control**
- **IUCEA should establish forums to discuss process towards regional QA framework so that the latter is internalized within institutions**

IUCEA Governing Board Established QA Standing Committee in March 2006 with following Functions:

- **Advising IUCEA Governing Board on all QA issues within a regional framework**

- **Promoting and constantly reviewing QA mechanisms in East African universities**

- **Maintaining QA linkages among universities in East Africa, and between universities in East Africa and the rest of the world.**

- **Carrying out any other activity relating to the promotion of best QA practices in East Africa.**

Process Towards an East African Quality Assurance Framework: DAAD Involvement

In January 2006 DAAD sponsored 30 senior university managers, and quality assurance regulatory and accreditation administrators from the three East African country (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) for a two week visit to various German universities so as to introduce them to aspects of regional quality assurance framework as practiced by European countries, within the Bologna Process

Conclusions from the German Visit

For effective regional higher education quality assurance management and control the IUCEA should take the lead in:

- Strengthening QA at universities
- Strengthening/consolidating existing national QARA agencies
- Exploring the possibility to establish a more market oriented QA framework with a supra-national agency for accrediting the national agencies (Something that would be akin to the German Accreditation Council)
- Starting a regional QARA forum
- Establishment of an East African Quality Assurance Network (EAQAN)
- Development of national and regional QA management systems
- Training of QA managers

Further Observation After the German Visit

- **The IUCEA had a challenge to sensitize universities and the community on the need for a common regional QA framework**

- **The IUCEA should aspire to create a viable QA system that will ensure maintenance of appropriate higher education quality among universities within the region**

Conceivable Roadmap for the Establishment of an East African QA Framework

- IUCEA should organize planning meetings for establishment of regional QA Framework

- IUCEA should Identify processes leading to the QA framework

- IUCEA should establish QA organizational structures for a common regional framework

- IUCEA should identify key institutional QA players

- IUCEA should conduct follow up workshops as a process towards establishing a common East African QA framework

Follow up Activities in East Africa

Regional workshop held in June 2006 involving:

– **Ministers and other politicians**

– **Top university managers**

– **CEOs of the national QARA agencies**

– **Some academicians from all the three countries**

– **Some QA experts from other countries within Africa and beyond**

Observations and Recommendations from the June 2006 Regional Workshop

- There was need to harmonize university QA regulatory and accreditation through establishment of a common QA framework in East Africa

- There was need to establish regional QA office, preferably within the IUCEA to set uniform higher education benchmark quality standards for all universities, whose adoption would be purely on a voluntary basis

- IUCEA *Protocol* gives the Council the legal mandate to undertake QA activities in the region

- IUCEA should prepare a QA Handbook for East African universities

Why Prepare an East African QA Handbook?

- **To spell out the objectives and goals of a common East African QA framework and establish appropriate QA instrument**

- **To define QA and give benchmark standard guidelines for university core activities**

- **To be distributed to all universities in East Africa as a common QA instrument**

Status of the QA Handbook

- Has already been prepared and now in the final editorial stages
- The IUCEA Governing Board already formally endorsed the Handbook
- Final draft already distributed to all universities in the region for final comments

What is the Focus of the Handbook?

Supporting East African universities in:

– **Implementing good quality assurance practices**

– **Applying similar standards and criteria, as formulated by competent authorities**

– **Developing an adequate internal quality assurance system that fits international developments in higher education**

– **Making universities discover their own quality by offering internal self-assessment instruments**

Important Aspects of the Handbook

- Covers the common denominators of higher education QA practices in East Africa, in a broad and general approach.
- The QA instruments will have to be adapted to the national context of each country
- The instruments will have to be adapted to each university's own situation
- Within university they will have to be adapted to the specifics for a particular faculty or programme

Who Can Use the QA Handbook?

- Top university management in discussing and implementing QA policies

- University QA officers in promoting and facilitating institutional quality and QA process

- University QA officers in conducting staff training sessions as Handbook contains basic training materials

- Faculty deans for programme level self-assessment

- Staff and students for better understanding of need for QA and for better understanding of the instruments.

Institutionalization of the QA Handbook

- IUCEA is in no way trying to impose the Handbook upon universities in East Africa

- Use of the Handbook and applying the ideas will be absolutely voluntary

- However, being IUCEA members means that the universities should try to apply the membership rules including adopting the Handbook

- Moreover it is expected that aspiration for international recognition will motivate universities to adopt the Handbook

Pending/Planned Activities

- **Training of Institutional QA Officers**
- **Training/sensitization of University Management (DVCs and Deans)**
- **Piloting internal and external evaluation processes**
- **Assessment of experiences from the piloting processes**
- **Training of East African QA Peers**
- **Regional program evaluation**
- **Internalization of the East African QA framework**

Acknowledgement

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Thank you for your attention