

A Comparison of Internationalization Indicators of Evaluation for Higher Education among the Three Quality Assurance Agencies in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

In line with the internationalization of higher education, the quality assurance and evaluation of higher education is a global phenomenon. It is critical to examine whether internationalization is considered one of the crucial indicators in evaluating higher education. The research aims to examine the internationalization indicators and compare them in the three Quality Assurance Agencies in Taiwan. The methods of documentary analysis and comparative analysis were employed in the study. Based on the results, it can be concluded: in terms of internationalization as an indicator for higher education evaluation, of the three QA agencies in Taiwan, the TWAEA and the IEET take it into account; in contrast, the HEEACT has it as part of its purposes. Because international competence is essential in a globalized employment market, the university is responsible for internationalizing its students. Although a diversity of evaluation indicators is expected in Taiwan, some indicators are considered universal, including internationalization.

Keywords: internationalization, higher education, Quality Assurance, evaluation, Taiwan

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The evaluation of higher education is a global phenomenon (Steinhardt, Schneijderberg, Götze, Baumann, & Krücken, 2017), and after that, the appearance of quality assurance agencies worldwide. Almost the period, there has been increasing importance on the internationalization of higher education (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Haddad, 2006). Internationalization of higher education is seen as one of the ways a country responds to the impact of globalization (Qiang, 2003). Higher education has become a natural part of globalization (Kreber, 2009). As a result of this process, higher education can no longer be viewed in a strictly national context. As internationalization matures, it becomes more critical and complex (Knight, 2011). The issue of internationalization is thus raised in the evaluation of higher education. It is essential to consider whether internationalization is considered one of the crucial indicators in evaluating higher education.

The study aims to examine the internationalization indicators and compare them in the three Quality Assurance Agencies in Taiwan. The methods of documentary analysis and comparative analysis were employed in the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Emergence of Evaluation of Higher Education and the Appearance of Quality Assurance Agencies

Evaluation of higher education can be traced to the accreditation systems in the USA, dating from the late 19th and early 20th century (Woodhouse, 2004). Steinhardt, Schneijderberg, Götze, Baumann, & Krücken (2017) has indicated that the quality assurance of teaching and learning has become a primary subject in higher education worldwide. Most European countries have introduced systematic quality assurance as part of an overall governance reform (Serrano-Velarde, 2008).

In line with the emergence of the evaluation of higher education, we have seen that the appearance of quality assurance agencies is typical worldwide. In 1991 the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) was formed to share quality assurance practices across countries (Woodhouse, 2004). Quality assurance agencies in Asia are attempting to enhance their quality capacity through several internal and external approaches (Hou, Ince, Tsai, & Chiang, 2015). Harvey (2006) indicated that national policies and other external effects at the national level mediate the actions of the external agency.

During this period, we have seen the increasing importance of the internationalization of higher education (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Haddad, 2006). Universities' international activities dramatically expanded in volume, scope, and complexity in the past. These activities range from traditional study-abroad programs, allowing students to learn about other cultures. (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Qiang, 2003). Internationalizing higher education has been taken to mean integrating international content or perspectives in academic disciplines (Kreber, 2009). Consequently, higher education can no longer be viewed in a strictly national context (Qiang, 2003)

Internationalization of higher education is seen as one of the ways a country responds to the impact of globalization, yet at the same time respects the nation's individuality (Qiang, 2003). Internationalization of higher education is essential. As internationalization matures, it becomes more critical and complex (Knight, 2011). However, its emergence is a relatively recent phenomenon. Internationalization has become a key theme and widespread phenomenon in higher education (Kreber, 2009). It is argued that internationalization should be considered one of the critical indicators for quality agencies in their evaluation of higher education institutions (Chen, Chen, & Padro, 2017; De Wit, 2010; Sae-Khow, 2014; Stohl, 2007; Vargiu, 2014). It emphasizes the urgent demand for measurements of university internationalization. It proposes a new approach to develop a set of internationally applicable indicators for measuring university internationalization performance (Gao, 2015). Bezanilla, Olalla, Castro, & Ruiz (2019) presents a comprehensive model for the analysis of the implementation of competence-based learning in Higher Education. The model comprises seven dimensions and a set of evaluation criteria. Indicators include the legal and administrative context, the institutional context, the degree program planning process, teaching practices and their assessment, and the review and improvement of the overall

process. This explanatory model can be beneficial to universities for assessing their level of implementation of competency-based learning and identifying their strengths and areas for development.

The Relevant Research

There is increasing literature on evaluation indicators of higher education (Azma, 2010; Bezanilla, Olalla, Castro, & Ruiz, 2019; Chen et al., 2017; Sae-Khow, 2014; Vargiu, 2014). Some of the literature are concerned with internationalization (Chen et al., 2017; Childress, 2009; De Wit, 2010; Gao, 2015; Knight, 2011; Stohl, 2007). Some of the literature are concerned with internationalization (Chen et al., 2017; Childress, 2009; De Wit, 2010; Gao, 2015; Knight, 2011; Stohl, 2007). Concerning Taiwan, several relevant studies are in place (Chang & Lin, 2018; Chen & Hou, 2016; Chin & Ching, 2009; Ching & Chin, 2012; Hou, 2014; Mok & Chan, 2016).

First, Chin & Ching (2009) proposed that internationalization indicators of Taiwan's higher education are 12 dimensions. The indicators are institutional commitments, strategic planning, funding, institutional policy and guidelines, organizational infrastructure and resources, academic offerings and curriculum, internet presence, faculty and staff development, international students and scholars, study abroad, campus life, and performance evaluation and accountability (Chang & Lin, 2018).

Second, Chen (2009) studied five universities and came up with 74 indicators of internationalization grouped into six dimensions: teachers, students, research, curriculum, international visibility, and administration and campus. Chen found that the indicators used by the accreditation organizations needed to be adequate concerning internationalization.

Besides, Cheng (2008) developed a set of indicators and a weighting system for internal and third-party internationalization assessment at Taiwan's technology universities. Cheng's indicators are organized into three levels. The six indicators and weightings on the first level are strategy and planning (32%); structures and staff (12%); academic exchange and cooperation (17%); curriculum and teaching (12%); support and service (12%); and assessment and feedback (16.41%). The indicators and weights on the second level are as follows: (a) "Strategy and Planning" consist of three parts: mission and vision (48%); goals and objectives (27%); and budgeting and implementation (25%). There are thirteen third-level indicators under these second-level indicators. (b) "Structures and staff" have two second-level indicators: decision-making structures and human resources (56%); and faculty and students (44%). These indicators contain eight third-level indicators. (c) "Exchange and cooperation" contain two second-level indicators: academic affiliation and international collaboration (64%); and international research activities (36%). There are thirteen third-level indicators under these second-level indicators. (d) "Curriculum and teaching" contain two second-level indicators: general programs (28%); and language programs (72%). There are eight third-level indicators under these second-level indicators. (e) "Support and service" contains three second-level indicators: general learning support and service (22%), daily support and service (18%), and campus internationalization (60). There are eleven third-level indicators under these second-level indicators. (f) "Assessment and feedback" contains two second-level indicators: performance assessment (59%); and feedback mechanisms (41%). There are seven third-level indicators under these second-level indicators.

Finally, Hsieh (2007) devised several internationalization indicators which can be used as a reference by educational authorities and universities in Taiwan. Hsieh's system consists of indicators on two levels. The first level covers eight significant areas, and the second level includes 61 indicators. The eight major areas are international enrollment; domestic students' international awareness; research achievements; academic exchange; international cooperation; course content; administrative support; and faculty background. Hsieh asserts that international enrollment and students' international awareness are the most important. Among the 61 second-level indicators, Hsieh argues that the most important is the number of domestic students attending exchange programs and establishing an office of international affairs. Hsieh also asserts that the indicators are closely interrelated and can be seen in the administrative affairs of a university.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE THREE QA AGENCIES IN TAIWAN

Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan

The Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT) was jointly established in 2005 by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and all the institutions of higher education in Taiwan. As a third-party professional organization specializing in higher education evaluation and accreditation, HEEACT's mission includes two main areas (The Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan, 2022): 1) conducting institutional and program evaluations of all Taiwan's universities and colleges; and 2) providing quality assurance monitoring of research and development projects at institutions of higher education. Since 2006, HEEACT has conducted quality assurance evaluations of universities' education and research programs. To facilitate the internationalization of higher education in Taiwan and promote quality assurance in higher education, HEEACT has been actively participating in numerous international networks and activities. By doing so, HEEACT has helped to enhance higher education in Taiwan while also giving it greater international visibility (Higher Education Evaluation & Accreditation Council of Taiwan, 2022).

Taiwan Assessment and Evaluation Association

Article 5 of Taiwan's University Act requires all higher education institutions to undergo external evaluation and accreditation by an agency recognized and certified by the MOE. In 2003, the Taiwan Assessment and Evaluation Association (TWAEA) became a non-profit organization dedicated to providing evaluation services and developing and promoting evaluation techniques. Jointly founded by senior members of the academic and business sectors, the TWAEA is committed to providing external quality assurance for any concerned party. From 2004 onwards, the MOE commissioned the TWAEA to conduct some evaluation projects. Along with all the other organizations conducting evaluations of higher education in Taiwan, the TWAEA was officially recognized as a certified evaluation agency in 2009 (Taiwan Assessment and Evaluation Association, 2022).

Institute of Engineering Education Taiwan

The primary purpose of the Accreditation Council of the Institute of Engineering Education Taiwan (IEET) is to determine if a degree-granting program meets specific standards of quality. A program requests IEET accreditation voluntarily. Accredited status is temporary; it has to be renewed through a periodic review to demonstrate the continuing fulfillment of IEET accreditation criteria. IEET accreditation is available for programs authorized by the MOE to award bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degrees. Since 2004, the IEET has provided

accreditation for various engineering, computer science, and architecture programs. The IEET conducts both general and interim evaluations. The general review is a complete review process every six years. In contrast, the interim review is a focused, follow-up review within an accreditation cycle to check on the improvement made by the program based on the weaknesses observed from the last general review (Institute of Engineering Education Taiwan, 2022).

A COMPARISON OF INTERNATIONALIZATION AS AN INDICATOR FOR ASSESSING HIGHER EDUCATION

The three quality assurance agencies provide accreditation for higher education institutions. The indicators used for evaluation are different. The indicators employed by the three agencies are examined as the following respectively:

Evaluation Indicators of the HEEACT

HEEACT uses the following five indicators in conducting its program evaluations (HEEACT, 2022): 1: Department Development, Operation, and Improvement; 2: Teachers and Teaching; 3: Students and Learning.

The purpose of the accreditation includes: (1) To assist colleges and universities in improving the quality of running schools and developing their characteristics. (2) Promote the establishment of self-quality assurance and improvement mechanisms in colleges and universities. (3) Assist in enhancing the international visibility of colleges and departments of universities and colleges. (4) Provide quality assurance information as a reference for the general public to understand the quality and current status of colleges and universities.

Evaluation Indicators of the TWAEA

The evaluation indicators used by the TWAEA for each department at universities of technology are as follows (TWAEA, 2022): 1 Goal and development; 2 Teaching and learning; 3 School performance; 4 Self-improvement; 5 Other features.

Regarding 1 Goal and development, there are five sub-indicators below: 1.1 Educational goals and professional development characteristics; 1.2 Formulation, implementation, and review of medium and long-term development plans; 1.3 Administrative organization, legal system, and resource allocation; 1.4 Cooperate with the school's internationalization policy to construct an internationalized learning environment and promote the implementation of international exchanges; 1.5 Changes or innovations to improve business performance for sustainable development.

Evaluation Indicators of the IEET

There are eight evaluation indicators for undergraduate students as the following (IEET, 2022): 1 Educational Objectives; 2: Students; 3 Core Abilities of Fresh Graduates; 4 Curriculum and Teaching; 5 Teachers; 6 Equipment and Space; 7 Administrative Support Manpower and Funds; 8 Continuous Improvement.

3 Core Abilities of Fresh Graduates comprise 3.1 The ability to apply mathematics, science, and engineering knowledge. 3.2 Ability to design and execute experiments and analyze and interpret data. 3.3 The technology, skills, and ability to use modern tools required for

engineering practice. 3.4 Ability to design engineering systems, components, or processes. 3.5 Capabilities of project management, effective communication, domain integration, and teamwork. 3.6 The ability to discover, analyze, apply research results, and consider sustainable development to solve complex and integrated engineering problems. 3.7 Understand current issues, understand the impact of engineering technology on environmental sustainability, common social good, and global development, and cultivate the habit and ability of continuous learning. 3.8 Understand and apply professional and information ethics, recognize social responsibility and respect diverse viewpoints.

Among all the evaluation indicators of all three accreditation agencies, the relevant indicators are 1.4. establish an internationalized learning environment, and promote the implementation of international exchanges in the evaluation indicators of the TWAEA. Moreover, 3.7 Understand current affairs issues, understand the impact of engineering technology on environmental sustainability, common social good, and global development, and cultivate the habit and ability of continuous learning. of the evaluation indicators of the IEET) is related to internationalization. Moreover, for Evaluation Indicators of the HEEACT, there is no indicator relation internationalization. Nevertheless, internationalization is listed as one of the purposes of its accreditation as (3) it Assists in enhancing the international visibility of colleges and departments of universities and colleges. It indicates that internationalization is part of Taiwan's QA of higher education.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Based on the above, the internationalization of higher education is the key to internalizing students. Intercultural understanding and competence of college graduates are essential for them to be competitive in a globalized employment market. In terms of internationalization as an indicator for higher education evaluation of the three QA agencies in Taiwan, the TWAEA and the IEET take it into account. The HEEACT has no indicator of internationalization but has it as one of its evaluation purposes. All three quality agencies consider internationalization as part of their evaluation indicators or purposes. It is beneficial to lead the internationalization of higher education institutions in Taiwan. Although Significant barriers to its institutionalization exist in the process of institutional transformation (Childress, 2009), internationalization is a principal goal of contemporary higher education institutions. In conclusion, although a diversity of evaluation indicators is expected in Taiwan, some indicators are considered universal, including internationalization.

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