

Conference Declaration

Quality Assurance of Internationally Viable Higher Education

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(Introduction and Background Explanation)

Globalization of world economy is continuing to progress. In addition to the increasing sophistication and diversification of means for information transfer, transportation and communication costs are decreasing. What is more, the legislative barriers between countries that impair the distribution of goods, services and capital are tending to be torn down through the efforts of related countries striving for the promotion of free trade. As the barriers are being removed through the self-help efforts of participating countries, government efficiency is being promoted and persons throughout the world are reaping the benefits of numerous technologies and high-quality products and services. Efforts toward deregulation and privatization are related to development of globalization. In addition to these efforts, the role to be fulfilled by governments continues to be important in terms of ensuring social justice by supplying basic public services and fulfilling the function of regulating the principle of market competition. More than these, however, in order for globalization overcoming its problems, to contribute to the formation of a vibrant civil society on a global scale, and serve as an effective means of promoting fair and sustainable growth, each of the countries that compose the European, North American, Latin American, Asian, African and Oceanic regions will be earnestly required to construct an international framework for forming a new order that promotes globalization from the standpoint of equality and mutual benefits for all countries involved.

Global trade with respect to higher education services has primarily been realized in a form in which students physically move among countries. This system of studying abroad will most likely continue to occupy a prominent position in terms of enabling students to grow as human beings through direct contact with different cultures and acquiring of new knowledge and skills through actual experience. However, today there exists on the higher education market a diverse range of means and methods for international distribution of higher education. A few examples of these include the establishment of overseas branch of universities, joint degree programs based on agreements with overseas universities and so forth, and E-learning programs. With respect to E-learning programs in particular, they are quite unique in that the

providing of educational materials, teaching itself and other various services to students are implemented more or less over the Internet going beyond the barriers of time and space, they can be implemented easily by non-profit organizations, profit-oriented organizations and even government agencies depending on the particular case, and the degree of the role played by private companies undertaking the development and supplying of educational materials is growing.

Coupled with the rapid proliferation of E-learning programs, this diversification of the means for providing higher education is further accelerating the pace at which the globalization of higher education is promoted. This higher education naturally also includes various degree programs serving as the foundation for vocational qualifications.

In consideration of these circumstances, higher education quality assurance agencies throughout the world, while considering international collaboration among themselves, are implementing measures for assuring the quality of globally deployed higher education from the same global viewpoint through policies like those described below.

Firstly, quality assurance agencies are endeavoring to self-improve to enhance the objectivity and transparency by making their own quality assurance systems compatible with globalization of higher education. During the course of these trials, it is necessary to establish suitable indicators and organizational systems for evaluating globalization of higher education, as well as study methods for allowing participation of stakeholders of higher education in the evaluating system. It is also important to effectively publicize the results of evaluations to stakeholders, including persons intent upon entering universities, in order to fulfill the obligations of accountability.

In assuring the quality of higher education, the role of independent public institutions (including university communities and academic associations) is important. They will serve as a mediator between the government and private sectors while maintaining the distance between them. It is also necessary to promote the maturity of the pluralistic higher education quality assurance agencies of the government, public and private sectors within society. This will be indispensable for the distribution of higher education services in the global market.

Secondly, in the case of universities under the jurisdiction of their own country

deploying activities by establishing an educational branch in another country, the higher education quality assurance agencies of the country are attempting to establish systems responsible for the quality assurance of higher educational programs being deployed in the other country, while respecting the culture of that country, as a part of the comprehensive evaluation of those universities. In the establishment of such systems, it is essential to seek out ways to collaborate with the higher education quality assurance agencies of country where such an education branch is located, including conducting of evaluation visits employing a joint sponsorship method.

Thirdly, in order to enhance international reliability and transnational validity of the higher educational programs, efforts are being made to establish a system by which the effects of quality assurance on higher education institutions and programs function equally effectively in other countries. In other words, this involves the establishment of a quality assurance system at the international level relating to mutual recognition. This mutual recognition system will serve, with regard to accreditation of educational programs, as an international framework for confirming the competencies of students and graduates. It is also expected to function, with regard to institutional accreditation, as a comprehensive locus of quality management for higher education institutions.

Fourthly, efforts are being actualized towards, in addition to a system of mutual recognition, the sharing of evaluation criteria and indicators among quality assurance agencies across country boundaries in terms of guaranteeing comparability of evaluation results with respect to higher education institutions and programs. The establishment of outcome indicators will likely be an important issue in guaranteeing the abilities of students and graduates to employers.

Fifthly, in order to promote internationally reliable quality assurance activities for higher education, and enhance their validity, the creation of a system for international recognition of the higher education quality assurance agencies of each country is an important challenge for the future. The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) is expected to play a leading role towards the realization of such a system.

[Tokyo Declaration]

It is important to enhance the international validity of the evaluations performed by the higher education quality assurance agencies of each country for promotion and development of sophisticated and diverse education and research by higher education institutions throughout the world. In addition, towards further activation of the distribution of services and goods that goes beyond national borders there is a strong need for the establishment of a system for mutual recognition between countries of higher education institutions and programs, which forms a base of international harmonization of qualifications.

International collaboration among higher education quality assurance agencies around the world will be indispensable for actively promoting efforts towards the enhancement of the international validity of evaluations and the establishment of such a system of mutual recognition among agencies.

In the European region, coupled with efforts towards the creation of a unified economic region in the form of consolidation of the European Union, studies are continuing on encouraging the establishment of quality assurance arrangements for promoting competitiveness and attractiveness of European Higher Education. “Transparency” and “Equivalence” are key words of the Bologna Declaration. The need for the establishment of higher education quality assurance systems, including mutual recognition, is growing rapidly in the Asian-Pacific region as well. The higher education quality assurance agencies of Japan are trying to work together towards establishment of a higher education quality assurance network in the region, and desire to make international contributions while obtaining understanding and cooperation from higher education quality assurance agencies of related countries.

The Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) is a university accreditation association that fulfills the role of assuring the quality of higher education in Japan through transversely evaluating national, public and private universities. In addition, JUAA hopes to make international contributions within the framework of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) collaborating with the quality assurance agencies in the region. At the same time, JUAA is engaged in a broad-based reform of its university accreditation system in order to enhance the international validity of Japanese universities.