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INTERNATIONALIZATION INDICATORS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION EVALUATION - THE CASE OF TAIWAN

Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to examine the current role of internationalization in the QA (quality assurance) evaluations of institutions of higher education in Taiwan. The method of documentary analysis was employed in the study. Firstly, a brief description of the structure and contents of this paper is presented. This is followed by an overview of the three organizations currently conducting QA for universities in Taiwan. Based on the results, the following conclusions are made: First of all, in terms of internationalization as an indicator for higher education evaluation, of the three QA agencies in Taiwan, only the IEET takes it into account; in contrast, the other two, the HEEACT, and the TWAEA, do not. Second, it is widely accepted that international competence is essential in a globalized employment market. Finally, although a diversity of evaluation indicators is to be expected, some indicators should be seen as universal, including internationalization.

Keywords:

internationalization, higher education, evaluation, Taiwan

JEL Classification: I23

I. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present the current role of internationalization in the QA (quality assurance) evaluations of institutions of higher education in Taiwan. This presentation has four sections. In the first section I will give a brief description of the structure and contents of this presentation. This is followed by an overview of the three organizations currently conducting QA for universities in Taiwan. Third, I will make a comparison of internationalization as an indicator for higher education evaluation among the three agencies, and a number of suggestions from the relevant studies will be reviewed. In the final section we offer a summary and some concluding remarks

II. An Overview of the Three QA Agencies in Taiwan

1. The 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. Ever since 2006, HEEACT has conducted quality assurance evaluations of universities' education and research programs. As a third-party professional organization specializing in higher education evaluation and accreditation, HEEACT's mission includes two main areas: 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. With the aims of facilitating the internationalization of higher education in Taiwan and promoting 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 (HEEACT, 2013).

2. Taiwan Assessment and Evaluation Association

Established in 2003, the Taiwan Assessment and Evaluation Association (TWAEA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the provision of evaluation services, as well as the development and promotion of 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 TWAEA has been commissioned by the MOE to conduct a number evaluation projects. Article 5 of Taiwan's University Act requires all institutions of higher education to undergo

external evaluation and accreditation by an agency that is recognized and certified by the MOE. 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 (TWAEA, 2013).

3. The Accreditation Council of the Institute of Engineering Education Taiwan

The main purpose of the Accreditation Council of the Institute of Engineering Education Taiwan (IEET) is to determine if a degree-granting program meets certain standards of quality. A program requests IEET accreditation on a voluntary basis. Accredited status is not permanent; it has to be renewed through a periodic review to demonstrate the continuing fulfillment of IEET accreditation criteria.

IEET accreditation is not a ranking system, but a way to ensure that a program continues to achieve its own educational objectives and that its graduates meet certain standards. The IEET encourages each program to establish its own characteristics and to acquire accreditation so as to declare to the relevant professional community, and to the world at large, that it meets the quality standards set by the profession.

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 programs in the fields of engineering, computer science, and architecture.

The IEET conducts both general and interim evaluations. The general review is a complete review process that takes place every six years, whereas 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 (IEET Accreditation Council, 2013).

III. A Comparison of Internationalization as an Indicator for Assessing Higher Education

1. HEEACT

HEEACT uses the following five items in conducting its program evaluations (HEEACT, 2013):

Evaluation item No. 1: Aims, Core Competence, and Curriculum Design

Evaluation item No. 2: Instruction and Learning Assessment

Evaluation item No. 3: Student Guidance and Learning Sources

Evaluation item No. 4: Academic and Professional Performance

Evaluation item No. 5: Graduate Performance and Self-improvement Mechanisms

2. The TWAEA

The evaluation items used by the TWAEA for each department at universities of technology are as follows (TWAEA, 2013):

Evaluation item	Weighting
Visions and Development Goals	10%
Curriculum	10%
Faculty Structure and Quality	10%
Student Learning and Guidance	15%
Facilities (equipment and books)	10%
Quality Assurance Measures	15%
Student Achievement	15%
Research and development	15%
Total	100%

3. The Accreditation Council of the IEET

The nine items employed by the Accreditation Council of the IEET are as follows (IEET, 2013):

Item 1: Educational Objectives

Item 2: Students

Item 3: Program Outcomes and Assessment

Item 4: Curriculum

Item 5: Faculty

Item 6: Facilities

Item 7: Institutional Support and Financial Resources

Item 8: Discipline-based Criteria

Item 9: Undergraduate Courses Designed to Lead to Specific Areas of Graduate Study

To fulfill the requirements of Item 3, students must attain the following outcomes by graduation:

- 1: professional knowledge in a specific field;
- 2: ability to organize and implement a research project;
- 3: ability to conduct professional journal writing;
- 4: ability to think independently and solve problems ;
- 5: ability to collaborate in an interdisciplinary setting;
- 6: sound international understanding;
- 7: leadership, management, and planning ability;
- 8: ability to engage in life-long learning.

Among all the evaluation items of all three accreditation agencies, only “sound international understanding” is directly related to internationalization. This indicates that internationalization does not presently play an important role in the QA of higher education in Taiwan.

IV. Relevant Studies

This section will present a review of three studies which discuss internationalization as a QA indicator.

In “The Internationalized Strategies in Higher Education in Taiwan,” 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 were inadequate with respect to internationalization, because they don’t take adequate account of the international vision of students and the internationalization of courses.

Accordingly, he suggests that the government should invest more resources to encourage universities to establish long-term cooperative teaching and research programs; promote Taiwan as a bastion of Chinese culture, as well as a leading academic and research center; encourage universities to raise their international visibility by participating in international organizations and establishing collaborative relations with foreign universities, developing academic fields that have local characteristics, and establishing differentiation strategies to create competitive advantages. Also, Chen’s internationalization indicators can be used for reference

and evaluation.

Second, in a study titled "Internationalization Indicators for Universities of Technology," Cheng (2008) developed a set of indicators and a weighting system for internal and third-party assessment of internationalization at Taiwan's universities of technology. 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" consists 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" has 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" contains 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" contains 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.

In the third study, "Constructing Internationalization Indicators for Universities in Taiwan," Hsieh (2007) devised a number of 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 major 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 the most important of these are international enrollment and students' international awareness. Among the 61 second-level indicators, Hsieh argues that the most important are the number of

domestic students attending exchange programs and the establishment of an office of international affairs. Hsieh also asserts that the indicators are closely interrelated, and that this can be seen in the administrative affairs of a university.

V. Concluding Remarks

Based on the above, we may make the following conclusions: First of all, in terms of internationalization as an indicator for higher education evaluation, of the three QA agencies in Taiwan, only the IEET takes it into account; in contrast, the other two, the HEEACT, and the TWAEA, do not.

Second, it is widely accepted that international competence is essential in a globalized employment market.

Finally, although a diversity of evaluation indicators is to be expected, some indicators should be seen as universal, including internationalization.

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