MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Six months after the historical event of the changeover, and I can say that the HKCAA is still busy - and even more so than before - in providing the community and the government its service of quality assurance in higher education. We have proceeded as planned accreditation work involving the Lingnan College, Hong Kong Institute of Education, and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. The steady pursuit in this area of the Council's work is indicative of the continuous belief in the importance in upholding quality in Hong Kong's higher education.

Echoing the broad theme of striving for quality in Hong Kong's future education and manpower, the HKCAA finds itself being commissioned to conduct a number of consultancies. Mainly, these projects lead to comparability studies of qualifications or education systems which are not familiar or are new to Hong Kong. In order to maintain Hong Kong's international and regional uniqueness, it is necessary to keep up our exposure to other systems. The exposure will only be beneficial if the 'foreign' elements can be understood and used locally. Indeed, our heavy commitment in assisting the Government to register courses offered by non-local institutions (see separate section) is symbolic of this development.

Such engagements - by government and institutions - bespoke the importance and recognition of an objective and external accreditation body to provide a quality perspective to all sorts of educational issues affecting the local community. I believe that the HKCAA, given its vast experience in accreditation and immense international exposure, will play a fulfilling and rewarding role in contributing to the quality development of Hong Kong's education.

As this issue of *Accredit Note* reaches our readers, it should be at the beginning of the Chinese New Year. May I take this opportunity to wish everyone health and prosperity in the Year of the Tiger.

Dr Andrew S L Chuang, JP
Chairman
Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation
February 1998

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

We have included some brief notes to introduce our new Council members.

Mr Hui Ho Ming, Herbert

Mr Hui Ho Ming, Herbert, aged 39, is the Managing Director of Guangdong Investment Limited ("GDI"). He is also a director of Guangdong Brewery Holdings Limited and Guangdong Building Industries Limited which are subsidiaries of GDI listed on the Stock Exchange and the Australian Stock Exchange respectively. Mr Hui has 5 years experience in merchant banking and 8 years experience as a securities regulator. Prior to joining GDI, Mr Hui was the Deputy Chief Executive and Head of the Listing Division of the Stock Exchange. He has a Bachelor of Laws degree from the School of Law, University of Hong Kong. Mr Hui holds a number of public positions, including part-time membership of the Central Policy Unit of the Hong Kong SAR Government, membership of the ICAC's Citizens Advisory Committee on Community Relations, the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation and Council Membership of the Institute of Directors. In addition, he is an independent non-executive director of Hsin Chong Construction Group Ltd.

Mr Eddy Li Sau-hung

Mr Li is the Managing Director of Campell International (Holdings) Limited. He is also the President of Hong Kong Economic & Trade Association, Advisor to China on Hong Kong affairs, Member of the First Selection Committee for the Government of Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong, Member of the Guangdong Political Consultative Committee, Member of the Municipal Political Consultative Committee of Guangzhou, Member of the Standing Committee of the Qingyuan Political Consultative Committee and the Vice Chairman of Beijing Federation of Youth.

Mr Li was honoured as one of the 'Ten Outstanding Young Persons of 1991 HK' and as the 'Young Industrialist' in 1993. Mr Li holds a number of positions both in private and public sectors. He is the director of various listed companies, and member of the Trade Advisory Board of the Trade Department, Hong Kong Trade Development Council and Hong Kong Productivity Council. He is also on the boards of the Federation of Hong Kong Industries, the Chinese Manufacturer's Association of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Chinese Importers & Exporters Association.

Mr Li is the advisor on the special area of China trade to the China Trade Society of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the City University of Hong Kong and the Baptist University of Hong Kong. He has also been invited to be the Visiting Professor of various universities in Mainland China such as Capital University of Business and Economics, Xi'an Jiaotong University and Southwest Jiaotong University.

Mr Li is interested in the study and research of economic theories. He has a MBA degree, and was also awarded a PhD degree in Economics. Mr Li regularly publishes articles on the Hong Kong and Mainland China economies, in newspapers and magazines.

COUNCIL MEETING

The Sixteenth Council Meeting was held on 5 December 1997. At this meeting, Council continued with the consideration of Council's work in relation to the implementation of the Non-local Higher and

From left: Mr Eddy Li, Council member, Mr Li Ling, Xinhua News Agency, Dr Andrew Chuang, Council Chairman, and Mr Edmund Leung, Council member, at Council dinner on 5 December 1997.

Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance.

The meeting also discussed in detail a draft Code of Recommended Practice which was intended as good practice guidelines for overseas institutions offering non-local courses in Hong Kong.
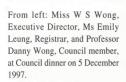
There were activity reports on accreditation and qualification assessments. The principles relating to the assessment and comparability of qualifications were reviewed.

The meeting considered new consultancy projects currently being undertaken by the Council, which were commissioned by government bureaux and departments.

Council also considered and approved the Council's plan of activities and the budgets and estimates for 1998/99.

HKCAA Council members and staff members at the Sixteenth Council Meeting.

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From left: Miss W S Wong, Executive Director, Ms Emily Leung, Registrar, and Professor Danny Wong, Council member, at Council dinner on 5 December 1997.

From left: Professor H K Wong, Council member, Miss W S Wong, Executive Director, Professor David Dunkerley, Council member, and Professor Edward Chen, President, Lingnan College, at Council dinner on 5 December 1997.

STAFF NEWS

We are sad to report that Ms Emily Leung, Registrar, had resigned with effect from 8 January 1998, Emily joined the HKCAA in October 1996 and, with her strong professional background and her zest for quality assurance in education, contributed immensely to the work of the Council. She has impressed her colleagues and others by her strong sense of commitment and her devotion to principles of good quality, as well as being a most congenial colleague to work with. She and her husband and lovable daughter will head towards Sydney. She will be dearly missed and we wish her well in her future endeavours.

Dr Herbert Huey, Registrar, has been retitled as Senior Registrar since January 2, 1998.

Miss Amanda Li, Executive Officer I, had finished her secondment with the Council, and would return to the ranks of the Civil Service as from December 1998. Her successor at the Council is Mr Wallace Kwong, Executive Officer I, who had worked previously at the Education Department, Efficiency Unit and the Home Affairs Bureau.

Mr Kwong is a graduate from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Dr Andrew Chuang, Council Chairman, presenting souvenir to Ms Emily Leung, Registrar on the eve of her departure at Council dinner on 5 December 1997.

REGISTRATION OF NON-LOCAL COURSES

The Council has continued with its work in advising the government on the registration of non-local courses offered in Hong Kong under the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance.

The Secretary for Education and Manpower officially announced on 20 June 1997 that the Ordinance and its related Rules came into effect from that date, and applications for registration were invited. The offence provisions had come into effect on 1 December 1997 and this means that after that date, new courses cannot commence unless they are exempted or registered. The statutory 6-month grace period for existing courses to obtain registration or exemption status will end on 1 June 1998.

Although application was open as from 20 June, the majority of applications only reached the Education Department in September/October and cases were progressively referred to the Council for advice. As at end of December 1997, 195 applications had been referred to the Council, of which 191 are in respect of courses leading to academic qualifications and the rest professional qualifications.

The Standing Committee on Non-local Courses under the Council, chaired by Professor John Leong, held its

first meeting in mid-June to discuss the Standing Committee's roles and functions, as well as the criteria and procedures for the assessment of courses. At the second meeting held in early December, the Standing Committee considered the first batch of applications and a proposed Code of Recommended Practice for Non-local Courses. The Code will soon be finalised and released to course operators and interested members of the public as a guide to best practices.

As the Council is expected to complete the assessment of all applications referred to it latest around mid 1998, the Council will be heavily involved in the assessment of these courses during the next few months. It is also expected that a growing number of the Council's local subject specialists will be enlisted to help provide expertise advice where necessary.

CODE OF RECOMMENDED PRACTICE FOR OFF-SHORE COURSES

Quite apart from its involvement in the review of non-local courses seeking registration in Hong Kong under the NlHPE Ordinance, but also arising from this involvement, the Council has been drafting a Code of Recommended Practice for Off-shore Courses to act as a good practice guide for both operators and users of non-local courses. This Code is distinct from the requirements for registration stipulated under the Ordinance and it is not intended that the courses to be registered in Hong Kong are required or expected to adopt this Code.

The Council recognizes the freedom and autonomy of a tertiary institution to adopt measures of quality assurance which it considers appropriate to its missions and culture, for the maintenance of standard of its off-shore and/or distance learning programmes. However, the Council is also aware of the difficulty and the limitations likely to be faced by a non-local institution in attempting to export a quality programme to an environment with which it is unfamiliar, and having to monitor the quality of its delivery from a distance. The Code is therefore intended as a useful checklist to assist non-local institutions and/or their local representatives where they do not already have their own Code of Practice, or are in the process of setting up or reviewing their own quality assurance mechanisms.

The draft Code is divided into sections dealing with Institutional Policy, Programme Approval, Programme Design, Delivery and Teaching, Staffing, Programme Administration, Quality Assurance, Promotion and Publicity. The Council is now in a process of consultation regarding this draft Code and the final version should be ready sometime in mid 1998.

VISIT TO TAIWAN, CHINA

As part of its continuous effort to keep up with developments in education in the region, the Council visited Taiwan, China, in January 1998 and in addition to visiting a number of universities, paid a special visit to the Ministry of Examination (MOE).

The MOE is responsible for examinations leading to the appointment of civil servants; and for examinations leading to professional qualifications. The latter is of special interest to the Council and detailed information was obtained pertaining to the different types of professional examinations.

Examinations are conducted at two levels for a number of professions; at the senior level these are held for professions such as lawyers, accountants, architects, technical personnel, medical practitioners, practitioners in Chinese medicine, veterinary surgeons, marine personnel, fire service personnel etc.; at the junior level examinations are held for assistant medical personnel, assistant veterinary surgeons, insurance personnel and others. Some of these professions are subdivided into further categories and there are in total more than forty types of examinations for different professions. There are detailed regulations and requirements for each type of examination.

Examinations are held in a variety of forms including written, oral, practical examinations, and assessment of publications, transcripts etc. as appropriate. There are also other routes of examinations for academics teaching in a special subject who hope to attain a professional qualification, and for those who have obtained overseas professional qualifications.

The visit provided a valuable source of information for the Council for a better understanding of the educational systems and the professions in Taiwan.

CONFERENCE

The Executive Director attended the National Conference on Higher Education held 8-9 December 1997 at Dublin Castle, Ireland and was a panel member for a keynote session during the Conference. The Conference organised by the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA), had as its theme, "Quality Assurance in Higher Education: the next 25 years". Participants were selected and invited by the NCEA. Dr Christian Thune, HKCAA Council Member, and Dr David Woodhouse, former Deputy Executive Director of HKCAA and currently President, International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), gave keynote speeches. Excerpts of their papers are given below.

HKCAA Executive Director Miss W S Wong and Council member Dr Christian Thune attending the National Conference on Higher Education held 8-9 December 1997 at Dublin Castle, Ireland.

"The European Systems of Quality Assurance: Dimensions of Harmonization and Differentiation"
Dr Christian Thune

Setting up Systematic Evaluations in Western Europe

Today in most of the fifteen member states of the European Union national systems of evaluation have been or are now being developed. These systems have of course similarities as well as differences. Methodologies are adapted to the specifications of each country and they try to meet the particular circumstances of each member state.

Methodology

There has been a general agreement on the importance of self-evaluation, of peer review, of site visits, and on the value to be obtained from evaluation reports, which are then published. But within this general consensus European discussions have been fed by differences in national interpretations and experiences of the operational implications of setting up procedures.

All the European agencies share the practice to make the self-evaluation of the institutions an essential part of the evaluation process. Practically all agencies provide guidance or manuals for the self-evaluations, even if only a minority provides actual training on doing self-evaluations. In this context it could in passing be mentioned that the exporting of self-evaluation procedures and manuals has been a major phenomenon of systems export from the older to the newer systems.

The self-evaluation ideally should reflect a subtle balance between qualitative and quantitative data. But there is no doubt that especially the quantitative part, bordering on performance indicators, causes considerable work and some apprehension at the institutions. Not all European agencies request these kind of data, but those who do share the experience that many universities are not yet geared to compile and deliver that kind of precise data.

In the qualitative context the self-evaluation should be used to put more stress on inviting the study programmes to analyse their mission, values, goals and strengths and weaknesses respectively. Therefore the second and perhaps even more important purpose of the self-evaluation is to provide the institution and the study programme with a commitment and valid procedure and method to continue a process of quality assurance. It is very important to stress that the long time perspective of the effort vested in the self-evaluations is not only delivering the material for a control process, but also contributing towards local quality improvement.

The Role of Experts

The appointment of experts to the visiting panel is a

critical part of the evaluation project. There is a consensus among European agencies that the experts need a thorough understanding and knowledge of the subject matter under scrutiny and that they must be independent of the study programme and the institution being evaluated. It must also be ensured that the external panels do not reflect biased views in relation to the environments about to be evaluated.

The latter goal is difficult to obtain with the use of national experts, and a special problem is therefore the ambition of some national systems to invite international experts. The problem is that international experts may possess the true externality via-a-vis the process, but at the same time they lack the basic knowledge and understanding of the national system in question. Accordingly it is necessary to be aware of the need to avoid the frustrations caused in the institutions of higher education if an international panel demonstrates lack of understanding of the educational-political premises within which the study programmes function. Another implication of the use of international experts is the need of preparing the data in English and communicating with the experts in English. In some institutional environments this is considered to be a hindrance to the process, which could make a successful dialogue difficult.

The composition of the visiting panels and the qualifications of the individual experts are another crucial issue. In most countries the peer concept is applied and the panels consist of so-called single professional peers who are experts in the disciplinary field(s) under evaluation. In a few countries a broader peer concept is in use, and visiting panels may include experts in fields connected to higher education, e.g. institutional management, financing or pedagogics/didactics. Further there is a growing tendency that representatives of employers are included in the visiting panel.

The Site Visit

There is general agreement that successful site visits must provide the necessary supplement and perspectives to the self assessment, provide participants with the opportunity of expressing their view points on strengths and weaknesses of the programme, secure that institutional representatives have already by the end of the visit been provided with input to further quality improvement by the themes broad forward for discussion by the steering committee, and finally that institutional representatives and the steering committee all interpret the evaluation process as a quality improvement process and conduct the visit accordingly.

Performance Indicators

The problem for many national agencies is the enthusiasm of politicians and ministries of finance for performance indicators and quantitative result-based approaches. Most agencies seem to agree that there is no necessary link between performance indicators and quality, which is about much more than output measures. It is also about inputs, about the quality of the teaching and lecturing staff, and about the quality of the equipment and laboratories available within universities and colleges. It is also important to look at processes when one is assessing quality. More than anything perhaps it is essential through the evaluation procedures to achieve some relevant idea of the extent to which the educational and teaching processes provide the students with value-added in terms of their basic entrance qualifications.

The Relevance and Role of Stakeholders and Users of Higher Education in the Quality Process

Generally stakeholders are not very visible in the European evaluation procedures. For most national systems it seems as if the focus is on the evaluation process as a fundamentally academic phenomenon. There seems to be an apprehension that the dialogue between stakeholders and institutions cannot be properly balanced in such a way that the integrity and independence of the institutions are not in question.

Students are a real group of users whose input may to great advantage be used in quality assurance of higher education.

This is also the case in all systems at least at the level where interviews with student representatives are an import element in site visits. On the other hand it seems

as if not all systems take care that institutions and programmes do provide the students with a substantive role in the self-evaluation process.

The Comprehensiveness of Evaluations Systems

The European systems vary in terms of the scope and level of institutions and activities targeted by evaluations. These different interpretations of the relevant comprehensiveness are firstly evidenced by the fact that almost all European systems do make a distinction between evaluation of higher education at the level of universities and the level of non-university institutions, i.e. short range programmes, medium level programmes, "fachhochschule", polytechnics, or whatever terms are used to identify this second level. In fact almost all the European agencies have at least a focus on University level institutions.

A second aspect of comprehensiveness is evident in the various national designs for programme evaluations.

Some countries such as the Netherlands and Denmark benefit from their smallness in the sense that within a given discipline area they evaluate all programmes at the same time on a nation wide basis. Other bigger countries such as England due to the number of programmes must subdivide discipline areas. In this perspective small is probably beautiful. An evaluation procedure which encompasses a whole national discipline area provides for a consistency in judgements and for a further stimulus for professional identification with the discipline area and for cooperation among universities in the field.

A third aspect of comprehensiveness may be identified in the relationship between evaluation at the institutional or programme level. Most European evaluation systems target the level of programmes. But of course even when through a systematic approach eventually all programmes have been evaluated within a university there would still be no basis for drawing conclusions on the quality of the partial elements (programmes) to the quality of the whole university.

A fourth and final aspect of comprehensiveness has recently been introduced in the Danish context, where

the parliament in the spring of 1998 is planning to discuss a proposal to set up an agency covering all education from primary to tertiary level within the same basic methodological approach.

Comparison, but no Ranking

Evaluation may well lead to relevant comparing of study programmes at different institutions. However, there seems to be a consensus among national systems that there should not be any "Michélin Guide" approach to reports, i.e. that higher educations institutions should not be ranked along single dimensions and listed by numbers. The shared arguments are that institutions have different aims and different objectives. Considering the diversity of institutions, which exists within national higher education systems, it is important that quality assessment should assess the extent to which institutions actually achieve the aims and objectives, which they set for themselves. This assessment of the relationship between objectives and actual achievement focuses on the core of the quality issue.

A European Perspective

The European international organisations should see it as their task to achieve at the European level what cannot be achieved at the national level.

The implications of this argument may be traced through the following analysis of the European Pilot Project. The Project for Evaluating Quality in Higher Education was initiated by the European Commission, Directorate General XXII: Education, Training and Youth, in November 1994. The project involved 17 countries - the 15 member countries, Norway and Iceland - a total of 46 institutions. The project was officially concluded in December 1995 with the finalisation of the European report, which presents the results of the project.

The European Pilot Scheme

The Commission proposed undertaking European pilot projects focussed on the evaluation of teaching and

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learning in a number of selected disciplines with the use of a common methodology. The project were approved by the Education Committee of the Council in June 1994.

Each member state set up a *National Committee* which was responsible for the implementation of the project at the national level and for analyzing and presenting the results of the project in a national report. A *European Committee* composed of the chairmen and secretaries of the National Committees was responsible for the European report based on the national reports from the participating states.

The main objectives of the projects were to enhance the awareness of the need for evaluation in higher education, enrich existing national evaluation procedures, spur the transfer of experience among the member states and thus impart on a European dimension to evaluation.

The method rested on the following elements:

- autonomy and independence in terms of procedures and methods concerning quality evaluation both from government and from higher education institutions,
- self-evaluation
- external assessment by a peer review group (group of experts) and a site visit
- publication of a report.

The methodology was based on the principles which could be identified as the common indicators of the four existing, national evaluation systems in Denmark, France, the Netherlands and United Kingdom. There is, however, a fundamental consensus on essential procedures and methods which made it possible to set up a common platform based on the experiences from these countries by adaptation of the best elements of the systems.

The project focussed on the evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning as well as the impact of research activities on the teaching process, but it did not include an evaluation of the research activities as such. The participating disciplines were found in two broad discipline areas in the university and non-university sectors respectively.

The project should enable the higher education institutions, via European cooperation, to set measurable objectives for quality based on methods which are both objective and comparable at Community level.

The participating institutions were allowed to adapt the methodology of the project to their specific national traditions and cultures. Accordingly, the project did not aim at creating a European system of evaluation, the responsibility for instituting evaluation systems resting with the participating countries.

The Coming European Quality Network

A primary objective of the pilot project, was the transfer of experience between the member states. In this context the project has of course ensured that a number of institutions and experts in each member state have gained an experience with assessment which other institutions and relevant authorities can draw on.

The steps towards the establishment of a formal quality network and the beginning of a preparatory phase were taken at the outset of 1997 by the Commission in cooperation with an advisory group of experts and with the French and Danish evaluation agencies. The planning and elaboration of an organisational framework and a formulation of specific objectives and activities took place during this phase. During a meeting in November 1997 of the educational committee of the European Commission a formal decision on the network was taken and a number of activities should now be able to take place in accordance with the recommendations in the Pilot Projects, e.g. workshops and exchange of information on the Internet. The day-to-day-management of the network will be the responsibility of a secretariat shared by the CNE and the Centre for Evaluation.

Another principal task of the network will be to provide the members with support and training on methodological aspects in connection with the planning, the implementation and the development of evaluation and quality assurance activities. Furthermore the network will arrange workshops and seminars which will enable larger groups of members to discuss common methodological problems, e.g. different types

of evaluation, quality definitions or meta-level evaluations.

It is important to stress, however, that the cooperation and the exchange of experience are done with respect to the large differences in national educational legislation, national academic cultures and educational structures. The cooperation is by no means aimed at harmonizing the educational or evaluation systems in Europe but at developing strengths and addressing weaknesses of the quality of the teaching and learning available and of the systems set up to evaluate the quality.

Conclusion: A Future of Harmonization or Differentiation?

Seen from the level of the various national actors it is of course on the one hand a reality that national higher education cultures do constitute a very differentiated picture. On the other hand there is the evidence of the relative harmony that is the consequence of basic European agreement on methodological approaches and priority on evaluation of teaching. Thus, even different national characteristics do not seem to have an influence on the need for cooperation among those working with systematic quality assurance. The quality assurance systems are continuously being developed, and all systems are regularly faced with new challenges. There is a common belief both among the less and the more experienced that regular exchange of experience among those working in the field of evaluation and quality assurance of higher education is valuable for the continuous improvement of the national evaluation and quality assurance procedures.

Seen from the level of European cooperation in the EU and other fora there is a distinct interest in furthering a basically harmonious European framework for quality assurance. This framework is surely supposed to be nationally based but should at the same time be consistent, transparent and comparable in terms of results in order to provide the necessary basis for the free flow of merits, students and graduates among the member countries.

However, there seems little doubt that after the first decade of relative closeness and similarity of approaches the future may well imply more differentiation among national systems. Till now it has been striking that practically all the Western European agencies have concentrated on one specific methodological approach whether this be evaluation or auditing of institutions or evaluation by discipline or programme area.

As far as the European Union goes some member states are very cautious towards any decisive moves towards actual harmonization within the area of culture and education. A fairly safe prognosis is therefore that the differences among Western European national systems of higher education will still be with us in the foreseeable future.

The essential harmony among national systems of quality assurance will also be there in terms of the agreement of basic methodology (a self-evaluation report, expert visits, public reports). But a move towards transeuropean evaluations will run into the difficulties of language, differences in educational systems and the other elements that would make any comparison of educational quality across borders a very difficult issue indeed.

"Quality Assurance in Higher Education: the next 25 years - a global perspective"
Dr David Woodhouse

The 21st century will see continuing economic and social change, while higher education (HE) will become more flexible in source, nature, location, length, means of provision, funding and 'packaging'. Current HE systems are still largely designed around scarcity, and they will need further adjustments to: i. cater for more clientele, ii. cater for different clientele, and iii. cope with more competition (including international competition).

Lifelong learning brings a plethora of new features, including dealing with a totally different student clientele from the traditional school leaver. The role of the academic will change somewhat: there will be no less need for the discipline expert and the mediation of information, but there will be more need for knowledge of pedagogy and learning styles, and for coaching students in accessing and interpreting information.

Course lengths must vary from the very short to the multi-year, with more attention being paid to processes and outcomes than to entry qualifications and course length. The development and provision of educational support for lifelong learning may become the major income source for higher education institutions (HEIs).

Within 25 years, much - maybe most - learning will be provided to the home or workplace. More employer commitment is needed, including funding.

As employers play a bigger part in the education of their (adult) employees, and as HEIs play a bigger part in the education of adults, we need to consider how employer-run courses fit into the standard HE system, or rather how the two systems fit together. HEIs will have to be more attentive to the needs of industry and the professions in order to provide the desired courses; the corporate university needs to be fitted into the HE system; and the next few years will see HEIs increasingly working with media conglomerates in creating the substance of the educational material.

The external quality assurance (EQA) agency will have to cope with the increasing differentiation and flexibility in HE, and its role in this area will be the complex task of providing firm pathways through the shifting sands of academic flexibility. It will validate the skein of lifelong learning courses; it will judge the balance between education and entertainment (not of course that education should not be entertaining!); it will accredit the employer-provided courses so they fit into a framework; it will audit the virtual university and pronounce on the students' educational experience; it will assert the relevance (or otherwise) of courses purported to be for specified purposes; it will protect the international student from careless or unscrupulous providers of education. As it becomes impossible for the single academic to be the sole arbiter of the student's 'success' in a programme that is assembled from a wide range of sources through a wide range of modes, the EQA agency will have to provide a context and support.

The scope of governmental concern may widen if it is interested in the export of services. Firstly, it may wish to offer its education to foreign students, in other words to export education. Secondly, it may wish its graduates to be able to work abroad, e.g. in consulting

projects, thus earning export income. In either case, it wants the quality of its education to be recognised in those countries to which it is exporting. Furthermore, free trade agreements are increasing the pressure on countries to accept foreign qualifications, and a government is likely to be happier about this if it is satisfied about the security of the EQA system in the foreign country.

Large, especially multinational, employers have an international outlook. They want to be able to move employees across borders, secure in the knowledge that the employees' qualifications will be accepted; to employ people for similar jobs in different countries and be assured of consistency of academic and professional competence; to set up their own extensive training programmes (or even a corporate university) and have these programmes mesh with the academic sphere generally, not just in one country. With the transnational mobility of professionals, even small employers have the problem of evaluating courses and qualifications from other countries.

EQA agencies should take account of these individual and professional needs (whoever 'owns' the agency). Quality enhancement should be aided by professional associations co-ordinating their activities with other agencies (owned by governments or institutions), and the consequent devising of creative solutions to the challenges posed by globalisation.

There is a need for a global accreditor, or for national accreditors to be more tightly linked.

Two contrary global movements are apparent today, namely towards regionalism with smaller political entities **and** towards larger groupings of nations. These contrary trends are opposite sides of the same coin.

Systems need to be bigger for economy; but people need a point of identification of 'manageable' size. Therefore they want **communities** to be smaller. The increasing speed, distance and capacity for transporting people and information gave rise to the phenomenon of apparent closeness that Marshall McLuhan dubbed 'the global village'. Paradoxically the same growth in the amount and accessibility of information that permits the existence of the global system can also provide

support to the small community so it **can** be smaller.

The converse need for increasing size and economies of scale suggests the value of a global accreditation agency, or at least of a tighter and more formal linking of agencies.

In 1995, the Global Alliance for Transnational Education (GATE) was established to address issues relating to the quality of educational offerings that cross national boundaries. It has drafted Principles (a code of practice) to which HEIs should adhere in these activities, and has set up a process for certifying institutional adherence to the Principles. Certification is normally sought by the HEI. A further variant is that national quality review agencies may adopt the GATE principles as part of their own checking process of their institutions.

INQAAHE is the only vehicle linking national accreditors world-wide. Full Membership is open only to bona fide EQA agencies, and applicants' procedure are checked to ensure they satisfy this criterion before the Board approves their admission as members. This could form the basis for formal mutual recognition of agencies.

Notice that our image is of a one-to-one relation between the EQA agency and each of its HEIs. Perhaps we should move on from this and encourage more interaction between institutions, with the EQA agency relating to groups of institutions. Taking this further, perhaps the emphasis on the inter-institutional interaction should be on benchmarking, with the detailed management level parameters being shared between the institutions, but the more global descriptive parameters being revealed to the EQA body or bodies. If the HEI cluster spans various EQA jurisdictions, the EQA agencies should co-operate in their interaction with the group.

ACCREDITATION NEWS

Hong Kong Institute of Education

Institutional Review - Follow-up Visit

In October 1997, the Council arranged a follow-up visit to verify the progress indicated in the HKIEd's response to the Institutional Review Report. The Panel was an abbreviated one of the IR Panel, comprising the former panel Chairman, one overseas member and all the local members. The timing for the visit was such that it preceded the validations of the BEd(Hons) in Primary Education and PGDE programmes - being a condition prescribed by the IR Report. At the conclusion of the two-day visit, the HKCAA was satisfied with the progress made by the Institute.

Validation of BEd (Honours) (Primary) Course

The Council had in November 1997 validated the Bachelor of Education (Honours) (Primary) degree course to be offered by the Hong Kong Institute of Education. This is a four-year full-time pre-service teacher education course targeted at admitting prospective Secondary 7 graduates who wish to prepare to be a primary school teacher.

After careful consideration of the rationale and objectives of the proposal and the plans for its implementation, the Council recommended that the course be approved for implementation for four student intakes, from 1998/99 to 2001/02 inclusive, subject to one condition and one requirement.

Validation of PGDE (Primary)

The new part-time Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Primary) course was validated in early November 1997. The course was approved subject to one requirement, for three student intakes from 1998/99 to 2000/2001, inclusive.

Contribution of Article: Any article (or information) relating to accreditation or quality assurance issues in higher education is welcomed. Please send your contribution to Editor, *Accredit Note*, c/o HKCAA , 14/F., Ruttonjee House, 11 Duddell Street, Central, Hong Kong