



# Quality & Standards in Education: The Path for Excellence

Sponsored by International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

Organized by Arab Academy for Science & Technology and Maritime Transport (AAST)

28<sup>TH</sup>- 30<sup>TH</sup> June 2005  
Alexandria, Egypt

## *Abstracts of speeches given by representatives of AdeQuaTE/CSEND, Geneva*

### **Presentation 1: “Economic Growth, National Competitiveness and Educational performance”, Dr Raymond Saner**

High quality education can positively influence labour factor conditions of a country’s economic development. The availability of a highly skilled labour force is a factor contributing substantially to national economic development. Most countries consider investment in education as being of strategic importance to enhance national competitiveness and to increase opportunities to attract foreign direct investment.<sup>1</sup>

Analyses of factors ensuring competitiveness and prosperity of leading European and North American regions have shown a consistent pattern. Summarising the results of a cross-regional survey covering 20 regions in Europe and North America,

---

<sup>1</sup> Michie, Jonathan (2002), “Foreign Direct Investment and Human Capital Enhancement in Developing Countries, Competition & Change”, 6, pp. 363-372.

Koellreuter<sup>2</sup> identified 50 factors, which have an influence on a region's economic advantage. The most decisive factors in ranking order (1 being most important) are a) Availability of highly skilled labour (1); b) Price/performance of highly skilled labour (2); c) Price/performance of skilled labour (5); Availability of skilled labour (6).

Making education fit a country's current and future needs in the fields of economic and social development is crucial to the country's ability to adapt to the continuous changes of the world's economy. Adequate educational systems are needed to ensure the availability of a skilled and highly skilled labour force without which economic and social development will be jeopardized and local and foreign investment discouraged.

**Presentation 2: “The ISO 10015 Quality Standard: A driver for continuous improvement and Return on Educational Investment”, Dr Lichia Yiu,**

Mass higher education coupled with greater diversity of educational sector has triggered governmental initiatives on issues of quality assurance. Traditional, often informal procedures for quality assurance, suitable with only a few institutions and relatively small enrolment, are now seen as insufficient for the more diverse circumstances of a larger system of higher education.<sup>3</sup> This shift to formal systems of quality assurance is among the most significant trends affecting higher education over the last decades. Emergence of knowledge society and the commercialisation of the educational services have further strengthened the sense of urgency.

Accreditation, standard setting, self-study, external review and public ranking are some of the broadly accepted approaches to evaluate and ensure quality of higher education. Nevertheless, debates continue over the role and proper form of evaluation and quality assurance for higher education. There is an increasing recognition that these widely accepted approaches focus primarily on the “qualification” of the educational institutions to offer programmes and to grant degrees, in addition to their intake “capacity”. In contrast, these quality assurance instruments have paid much less attention to the learning processes and the learning outcome of higher education.

---

<sup>2</sup> Christoph Koellreuter, “Increasing Globalisation: Challenge for the European Regions”, BAK International Benchmark Report, 1997, Basle.

<sup>3</sup> El-Khawas, Depietro-Jurand & Holm-Nielson, 1998, *Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Recent Progress; Challenges Ahead*. Paper contributed by the World Bank at the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education, October 5-9. Paris.

Similarly, there exists also the perception that existing quality evaluation systems are often designed from the perspective of the regulatory authority and their needs. Diverse forms of evaluation are meant to provide feedback to the authority for the policy evaluation and planning purpose. These systems tend to be externally driven by the authority which uses resource allocation as leverage for control and improvement.

In a diversified higher education system, these instruments need to be supported by additional quality assurance tools such as ISO 10015 to ensure proper return on investment (resource utilisation and economic and social benefits) and consumer satisfaction (employability and social mobility). This additional battery of quality assurance instruments should have the following characteristics: independence, results based, process oriented, and self-regulatory.

### **Presentation 3: “Defining and Managing Performance Excellence in Education: Experiences from China and Switzerland: Implications for Egypt”, Dr Raymond Saner & Dr Lichia Yiu**

High quality education can positively influence labour factor conditions of a country’s economic development. The availability of a highly skilled labour force is a factor contributing substantially to national economic development. Most countries consider investment in education as being of strategic importance to enhance national competitiveness<sup>4</sup> and to increase opportunities to attract foreign direct investment.<sup>5</sup>

In the 1990's, a few countries – most of them in the northern and eastern parts of the European continent – started to evaluate their higher education sector (institutions or educational programmes) often in conjunction with governmental reform efforts, e.g. within the concept of New Public Management, starting in the 1970s and 1980s. Ten years later, with a very few exceptions, the European countries have all created some form of accreditation/evaluation agencies. The Bologna Declaration (1999), whose aim is to create an integrated education area across the European continent, could lead to, among other, the creation of such accreditation agencies to make sure

---

<sup>4</sup> Raymond Saner, "Prerequisites for successful participation in CAN, FTAA, & WTO: Capacity building of high quality of human resources", (in Spanish) in Marco A. Becerra & Raymond Saner, (2002), "Trade Negotiation Cases, Analyses, Strategies at Bilateral, Regional and Multilateral Levels: Bolivia 2001", La Paz, pp 27-37.

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Michie, (2002), "Foreign Direct Investment and Human Capital Enhancement in Developing Countries", *Competition & Change*, Vol. 6(4), pp. 363-372; See background note to OECD Development Centre Technical Meeting: FDI, Human Capital and Education in Developing Countries, December 2001, OCED, Paris.

that the quality of education supplied in the committed countries is guaranteed at comparable levels.<sup>6</sup>

The examples given in this final presentation are focused on a developed and a developing country, namely Switzerland and China. Both countries are very different in regard to size of population, GDP/per capita, endowment by nature in regard to raw materials and energy sources etc. However, both countries are keen observer of the international education markets and astute actors in regard to making the necessary amendments to their current educational systems to ensure that their respective knowledge, skills and competence sets prepare their students and teachers' for the challenges of globalisation.

---

<sup>6</sup> One of the objectives of the Bologna Declaration is the "Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies.", Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education, "The European Higher Education Area", 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1999, Bologna, p. 2.