

ACQUIN

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Accreditation abroad: Clash of cultures?

A Diversity of Approaches in Cross-Border External Quality Assurance

EQAR Seminar on Cross-Border External Quality Assurance

Bayreuth, 29/30 April 2014

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Intercultural misunderstandings



Caution when using own values as a reference point!

Accreditation abroad – the general procedural framework

- Same professional and quality standards as in national accreditation procedures
- Clear assessment criteria (ESG, INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice in QA, national regulations)
- Composition of the peer panel: minimum 4-5 peer reviewers (student representative, representative of the labour market, scientific peers), nomination of the peer group by Standing Expert Committee of ACQUIN
- Impartiality of the peers
- Preparation and training for reviewers

Accreditation abroad – the general procedural framework.

- On-site-visit (duration, language): discussions with lecturers and administrative staff, president/rector of HEI, students, representatives of the quality assurance unit
- Expert report with accreditation recommendations
- Statement of the HEI to the report
- Statement of the responsible Standing Expert Committee of ACQUIN
- Accreditation decision by the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN (accreditation without conditions, accreditation with conditions, negative accreditation, suspension of the accreditation decision)

Case example: German-Chinese Double Degree Program

- Duration of the accreditation procedure, early planning
- Self report: check of the draft necessary?
- Composition of the expert group: two members of the peer group were very familiar with the culture of the international partner and the Chinese higher education system
- One or two on-site visits? (Germany and China) Two site visits with representatives from both higher education institutions (discussions with management of HEIs, students, lecturers, QA and administrative staff)

Case example: German-Chinese Double Degree Program

- Language: English and German, (language has to be clarified in advance, translation required?)
- Helpful: Close contact to the German HEI and the director of the study program as contact person (collecting information about the international partner and the national context of the study program abroad)
- Different levels of autonomy and degrees of freedom in curriculum design between the two educational systems

Some empirical insights

Accreditation agencies have to consider:

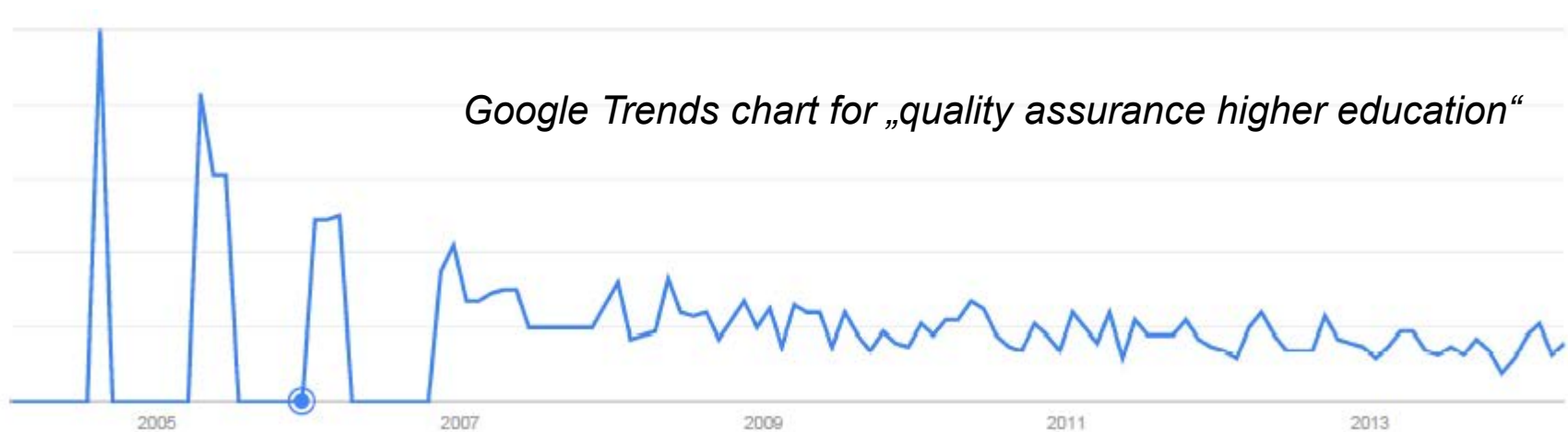
- different terminologies and concepts,
- different social and political contexts,
- different perspectives on quality

when carrying out accreditation procedures abroad.

Terminologies and concepts matter

„Quality assurance“ is

- a concept, which has continuous attention,
- a more contested concept than quality itself,
- a term, which suffers from fuzzines in translations.



Social and political contexts matter

Social context

- Social values, standards and culture (e.g. post-materialism)
- Status and prestige of higher education

Political context

- Influence of governments on standards in higher education, especially national regulation
- Financing of higher education systems

Perspectives on quality matter

Quality as...

- value for money
- consistency
- excellence
- fitness of/for purpose

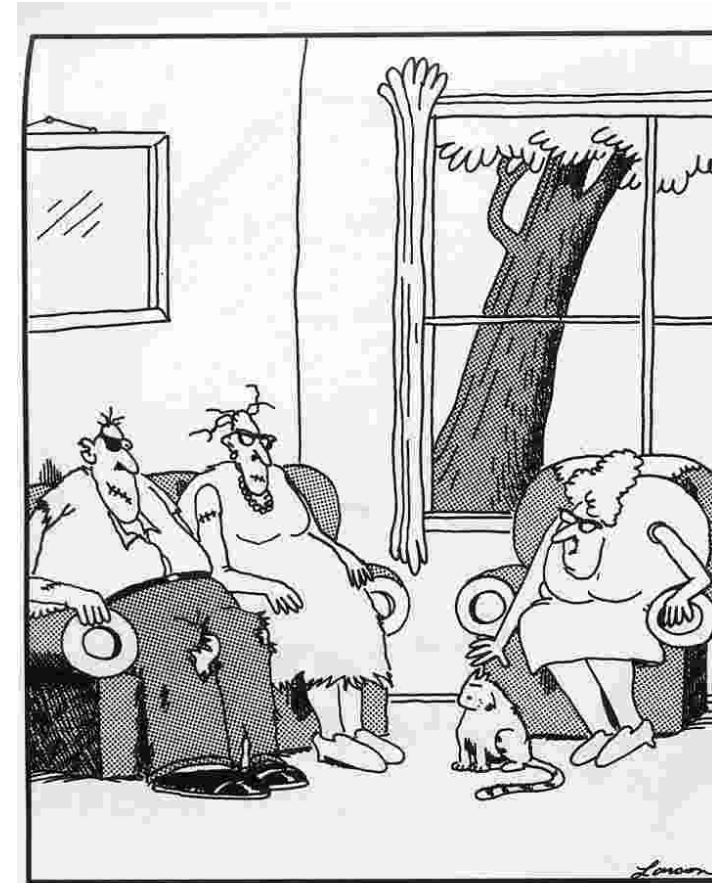
→ Quality cultures might clash!



Stumbling Blocks and Intercultural Challenges

Training of peer-reviewers is essential:

- ✓ Be sensitive also to non-verbal communication
- ✓ Be open-minded
- ✓ Be flexible (organisation of on-site visits)
- ✓ Be a critical friend



“Oh, what a cute little Siamese. ... Is he friendly?”

Thank you for your attention!

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