



State of Play Report

Higher Education Quality Assurance in the ASEAN Region

Second Edition, March 2019



SHARE, the European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region, is a four-year initiative by the EU and ASEAN. They have entrusted the implementation of SHARE to a consortium of British Council (leader), Campus France, DAAD, Nuffic, ENQA, and EUA. Launched in Jakarta in May 2015, SHARE aims to support ASEAN in harmonising regional higher education by sharing European expertise. It does this through strengthening regional cooperation, enhancing the quality, competitiveness, and internationalisation of ASEAN higher education for institutions and students, and thereby contributing to a closer ASEAN Community in 2015 and beyond.

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Foreword

Agreed upon and consistent quality assurance processes are essential for well-performing higher education institutions and a precondition for comparability and readability of academic achievements and degrees. In this regard, quality assurance is indispensable for enhanced regional cooperation and mobility and a key to an internationally competitive higher education. Against this global background, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), its member states, regional organisations like the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) and the ASEAN University Network (AUN), as well as numerous higher education stakeholders at both regional and national levels, are committed to further developing quality assurance as a backbone of regional convergence in higher education across Southeast Asia.

The EU Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (SHARE) programme assists ASEAN partners in that endeavour. SHARE aims at strengthening regional cooperation, at enhancing the quality, competitiveness and internationalisation of ASEAN higher education institutions and students, thus contributing to an ASEAN Community beyond 2015. The EU has entrusted the implementation of the four-year project to a consortium composed of British Council, Campus France, Nuffic, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the European University Association (EUA), and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). SHARE focuses on three result areas, one of which covers quality assurance. This result area is mainly coordinated by the DAAD in close cooperation with ASEAN and European partners such as AQAN, AUN, ENQA and EUA.

SHARE has commissioned several studies. Among them is this study on the state of play of quality assurance in the ASEAN region in its second edition. The authors drew valuable recommendations for the way forward towards harmonised regional quality assurance. The process of exploring common ground and developing joint standards has started in the last couple of years and needs a long-term commitment by all relevant stakeholders. Achieving regional convergence is a joint effort of all the higher education institutions in the region; we hope this study encourages and informs the academic community, political decision makers and all relevant stakeholders, thus contributing to the strengthening of higher education in the ASEAN region.

Whereas in the first edition of this study, published in 2016, six of the ASEAN member states were covered, this report adds research on Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand and thus completes the overview of QA systems in the ASEAN. The number stated in brackets under points 6.1 and 6.2. in the table of contents indicates the year when the original research was conducted.

Since 2016, the SHARE programme has been proceeding in its implementation and will conclude the first phase in June 2020. A new phase beyond July 2020 is currently under discussion with the European Union and ASEAN.

As supplementary documents of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF), the SHARE Guidelines for the Review of External QA Bodies and Institutional Assessments were finalised in 2016 by an Expert Working Group (EWG) composed of European and ASEAN representatives. These Guidelines were pilot tested in 2017/2018 as part of SHARE and will be utilised by AQAN in the future.

The SHARE Team

Jakarta, Indonesia, March 2019

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1. Abbreviations

AACCUP	Accrediting Association of Chartered Colleges and Universities of the Philippines
ABET	Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology
ACC	Accreditation Committee of Cambodia
ACSCU-AAI	Association of Christian Schools, Colleges and Universities Accrediting Agency, Inc., the Philippines
ALCUA	Association of Local Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation, the Philippines
APT EMM	ASEAN+3 Education Ministers Meeting
AQAF	ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework
AQAFHE	ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework for Higher Education
AQAN	ASEAN Quality Assurance Network
ASCC	ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEAN SOM-ED	ASEAN Senior Official Meeting on Education
ASECC	ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
ASED	ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
AUN	ASEAN University Network
AUN-QA	AUN Quality Assurance Initiative
BAN-PT	Badan Akreditasi Nasional - Perguruan Tinggi (see 'NAAHE')
BDNAC	Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council
CEA VNU-HCM	Center for Education Accreditation, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
CEA VNU-HN	Center for Education Accreditation, Vietnam National University Hanoi, Vietnam
CEA-UD	Center for Education Accreditation, University of Danang, Vietnam
CHED	Commission on Higher Education, the Philippines
CLM	Cambodia, Lao, Myanmar
CLMV	Cambodia, Lao, Myanmar, Vietnam
COE	CHED's Centres of Excellence, the Philippines
CPE	Committee for Private Education, Singapore
CUPT	Council of University Presidents of Thailand
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
EAS EMM	East Asia Summit Education Ministers Meeting
EdPEX	Education Criteria for Performance Excellence
EEAC	Engineering Education Accreditation Committee, Myanmar
EHEA	European Higher Education Area

ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQA	External Quality Assurance
EQAA	External Quality Assurance Agency
ERF	Enhanced Registration Framework, Singapore
ERP	External Review Panel
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
FAAP	Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines
FEIAP	Federation of Engineering Institutions of Asia Pacific
GDETA	General Department of Education Testing and Accreditation, Vietnam
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HERA	Higher Education Reform Agenda, Vietnam
HEP 1	First Higher Education Project Vietnam, World Bank
HEP 2	Second Higher Education Project Vietnam, World Bank
HES	Higher Education Section, Ministry of Education, Brunei Darussalam
HRK	German Rectors' Conference
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organizations
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LAM	Independent Accreditation Agencies
MMU	Myanmar Maritime University
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MOEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MOL	Ministry of Labour
MQA	Malaysian Qualifications Agency
MQF	Malaysian Qualifications Framework
MQR	Malaysian Qualifications Register
NAAAA	National Agency for Academic Assessment and Accreditation, Timor-Leste
NAAHE	National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (BAN-PT), Indonesia
NAQAC	National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee, Myanmar
NEPC	National Education Policy Commission, Myanmar
NNQAA	National Network of Quality Accrediting Agencies, the Philippines
NQFs	National Qualifications Frameworks

NSSA	National Skills Standard Authority, Myanmar
NTU	Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
NUOL	National University of Laos
NUS	National University of Singapore
OBE	Outcome-based Education
OHEC	Office of Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education, Thailand
ONESQA	Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment, Thailand
PAASCU	Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities
PACUCOA	Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation
PES	Private Education Section, Ministry of Education, Brunei Darussalam
PSG	Policies, Standards and Guidelines
QA	Quality Assurance
QAFU	Quality Assurance Framework for Universities, Singapore
SEAMEC	SEAMEO Council Conferences
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SEAMEO HOM	SEAMEO High Officials Meeting
SEAMEO-RIHED	SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development
SHARE	European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region
SMU	Singapore Management University
SOM-ED	ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Education
STCW	Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers
SUSS	Singapore University of Social Sciences
TQF	National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Thailand
TQR	Thai Qualifications Registry
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
YTU	Yangon Technological University

2. Introduction

Regional integration of higher education (HE) systems is a response to the growing complexity and international interdependence of our globalised world and global education market (Yepes 2006).

In Europe, the HE systems are in the midst of the Bologna Process, an initiative that, among other objectives, aims to harmonise regional HE and to establish and further develop the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The Bologna Process is expected to ensure comparability and compatibility between national HE systems in order to make Europe more visible and competitive as a region. The intended outcomes of the process are mutual recognition of students' qualifications and degrees, student and staff exchange, and mobility. The process can be characterised as the farthest-reaching reform project in European education.

Similarly, in regions like ASEAN, which are characterised by diverse national educational policies and cultures, the issue of harmonising educational processes and outcomes (e.g. degrees) is gaining importance. On a global level, comparability between regional systems (e.g. EHEA and ASEAN) is a demanding yet prospective objective.

However, harmonising educational systems on a supranational level is a complex endeavour, particularly for HE, which is characterised by a comparatively high degree of institutional autonomy and self-responsibility. Additionally, conflicting interests of different stakeholders exist and specific features of different national higher educational cultures need to be cultivated, etc. This means that even the best-planned supranational harmonisation policy can fall short of proper implementation when it fails to involve actors from all levels.

Important instruments to support the harmonisation of HE areas are (external) quality assurance (EQA) frameworks and practices. Quality assurance (QA) frameworks set common standards and guidelines. In return, these create mutual trust for stakeholders (e.g. the regional labour markets and employers) in the quality of the programmes provided and degrees awarded by the higher education institutions (HEIs) of the different countries.

QA has been introduced in many HE systems worldwide in the last two or three decades as an instrument to make universities' achievements in HE visible and comparable. Thus, the expectations towards QA to serve as a crucial instrument in the process of harmonising regional educational policies are high. As one important milestone of the European Bologna Process, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) were adopted in 2005 and revised in 2015 (ENQA 2005, 2015). The ESG are expected to assist actors at HEIs as guiding principles for establishing a supportive QA policy. However, they are not prescriptive in nature and thus leave space for the elaboration of an individualised approach to what quality is at the level of an individual institution. Moreover, the ESG set standards for professional action at the level of QA agencies that are performing EQA procedures. EQA refers to assessment exercises, which are typically carried out by peer reviewers from universities other than the one under assessment and usually managed by an appointed QA agency. In many European cases, these agencies are eligible to award accreditation for individual study programmes (or quality management systems) based on the results of the peer reviews.

The generic nature and the non-binding character of the ESG seem to be important success factors in the European context. In the ASEAN context, the search for an equally successful framework for QA in HE is underway. In this context, the aim of the present study is varied. It strives to identify:

- The current state of affairs of (external) QA in all ASEAN countries in order to set a common ground for a regional policy and to gain an understanding of the countries' different situations and 'points of departure';
- Specific characteristics of the national policies (success factors for the national implementation of a supranational policy) and respective aspects for future development needs;

- Areas for urgent development needs, e.g. in terms of elaborating QA tools or training needs of actors in charge of the implementation of QA procedures; and
- Strengths and weaknesses of national policies and the current supranational approaches to a shared QA framework.

3. Rationale

One of the main objectives of the EU-funded European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (SHARE) project is to give guidance and support to ASEAN HE systems. In this context, the present study takes stock of the current state of affairs in the field of QA in the ASEAN region. Such information is needed in order to support national and regional actors at all levels of policy making and to enable evidence-based activities that contribute to achieving the overall objective of elaborating a shared QA policy and harmonisation of HE policies in the ASEAN region.

Regional harmonisation of teaching and learning processes and outcomes in HE, however, is not an end in itself. It should not remain at the level of policy statements. It is important that the idea of a shared HE area, and the benefits that individual universities can gain from it, is communicated at all levels of the HE system: from governmental bodies (ministries) in charge to the individual teaching staff at a given university. Harmonisation of educational structures and outcomes is a complex change process that requires thoughtful planning and comprehensive change management. One of the experiences with the Bologna Process in Europe is that stating and stipulating a new policy at the political level and its sustainable and successful implementation at the individual teacher or department level are two entirely different phenomena. Thus, the change process needs to comprise strategies for QA that support teaching staff and departments, e.g. with elaborating curricula according to new standards or with new approaches to teaching delivery.

In this context, we chose to examine the current state of affairs in HE QA, drawing on a research approach from the social sciences. We consider a HE system to be a complex social subsystem, within which different actors have divergent (sometimes even conflicting) interests and within which the implementation of a top-down policy (namely the implementation of a regional framework for QA) does not easily follow a 'linear logic' or a paved way to success. The study is thus interested on the one hand in the relationship between binding policies at the governmental or ministerial level and on the other hand with how such policies are implemented by individual actors in universities, given the comparatively high degree of self-responsibility in university management decisions throughout most of the world's education systems. (This is regardless of the fact that there are many examples of a high degree of state regulation for HE in Southeast Asian countries.)

4. Theoretical and Methodological Approach

The study draws on existing research at both national and regional levels. It is nonetheless different from prior studies (e.g. SEAMEO 2012) on the approaches to (external) quality assurance in ASEAN higher education (HE), since it chose an analytical framework inspired by an organisational theory perspective. In the following sections, we will outline our theoretical and empirical approach to the research questions highlighted above.

4.1 Quality Assurance of Higher Education in Organisational Theory

Quality assurance (QA) of HE adheres to a specific form of rationality: the application of QA procedures of whichever type and nature follow the assumption that the outputs of teaching and learning processes (e.g. student achievements, teaching quality, etc.) can be controlled and changed towards more desirable outcomes.

This is why university managements, national governments, and even supranational regional networks elaborate frameworks for QA that presume HE can be managed, and success and failure can be attributed to the respective acting of persons (teachers, students) or organisations (universities) responsible. Such frameworks are publicly available. They come in the form of national education or accreditation laws or appear as regulations for student course evaluations in higher education institutions (HEIs). They are supposed to support HEIs by offering degree programmes that are up to educational and organisational standards and to promote the comparability of similar study programmes and degrees (e.g. in academic disciplines) across different institutions or even national HE systems.

Given the complexity of universities as social (sub-)systems, organisational theory suggests that usually such linear relationship between the planning and implementation of teaching and learning processes is rather unrealistic. The reasons for this are: first, expected learning outcomes are not necessarily fully transparent to everyone involved in the process; second, teaching and learning as a social process is too dynamic to be designed and fully predicted in its course and outcomes; and third, it is hard to control the concrete action and performance of those assigned to teach since universities and their members are usually highly autonomous (at least, they enjoy more autonomy than most of the public sector, such as hospitals, public administration, and the military). Teachers in HE are often researchers at the same time, and as such, they are also members of academic disciplines. As members of academic disciplines, they feel more obliged to the aims, standards, and reputational rewards of their respective scientific communities than to the organisational goals of the university (such as ‘raising the number of excellent graduates’).¹

All of these specific features (which distinguish the university from companies, industries, or other public service providers) result in potential discrepancies between the talk, decision, and action levels of their organisational behaviour (Brunsson 1989, 1992). Organisational sociologist Brunsson introduces these three concepts to the analysis of organisational reforms:

- The **talk level** describes the communication of concepts and plans for the organisation’s development. This means that strategies are outlined and conferred by policy makers in charge, e.g. national accreditation laws or regional QA frameworks that are stated and stipulated by

¹ Teachers are typically classified as ‘professionals’ in the thought of the sociology of knowledge (Stock 2006). The acting of teachers (particularly in HE) is characterised by a high degree of ambiguity and a low level of standardisation. Teaching success is not directly predictable, and this is why rewards (payment) are not directly linked to student achievement.

the government. At the talk level, only some thought needs to be spent on the operational level of the implementation at an individual institution.

- The **decision-making level** refers to the level where elaboration takes place for structures securing the implementation of stipulated policies. For instance, these would be the QA policy statements of individual HEIs or guidelines for the elaboration of self-assessment reports in accreditation processes.
- The **action level** refers to the actual implementation of policies within the individual university or department. The process of implementing decisions happens within the structural framework that has been developed at the decision-making level. However, teachers in HE are comparatively independent of the processes and outcomes of institutional decision-making. They tend to follow a logic different from that of organisational logic: e.g. the logic of professional acting as a teacher and researcher, the logic of academic disciplines, etc. (see above).

Discrepancies between talk, decision, and action results from the fact that there is comparatively only little space for direct intervention from a superior management level to actors that are operating on a lower level (e.g. from deans to individual teachers). Thus, social systems like universities are characterised by only a loose coupling of talk, decision, and action. This means that there is much room for individual actors to interpret abstract policy statements according to their own needs, values, traditions, and cultures.² It is one of the basic assumptions of the present study that the relationship between the different management levels in HE (e.g. individual teachers, departments, universities, ministries) is an important factor for the successful elaboration and implementation of a QA framework that fruitfully contributes to real quality development and overarching management goals, such as harmonisation, the promotion of staff and student mobility, mutual recognition, etc.³

We have performed interviews and focus group discussions to explore different stakeholders' perspectives (refer to the subsequent paragraph for empirical research methods employed). In these interviews, we have focused on the balance of power between the above-described levels: What influence does regional policy making have on institutional acting? What benefits do university representatives expect from a regional policy? What obstacles do they see? In subsequent sections, interviews and focus group discussions exploring different stakeholders' perspectives will be discussed in detail.

4.2 Methodological Approach and Research Questions

The theoretical concept of the potential discrepancies between talk, decision, and action in organisations is mirrored by our empirical approach to the main research questions. These research questions address the following issues:

1. What types (institutional vs. programme, accreditation vs. reviews or evaluations) of EQA systems already exist in all ASEAN member states?

² The very generic and non-prescriptive nature of the ESG could be interpreted as resulting from the need for taking the high degree of autonomy and individuality in HE management into account. Acknowledging the diverse cultures and educational traditions within and between institutions is a highly valued asset in European HE systems. It further expresses the high degree of immunity for individual actors from highly impactful external management decisions.

³ Despite the rigour of the theoretical approach, there is a potential limitation of the present study when adopting the concept of talk, decision, and action. Its assumptions were elaborated for different management levels *within* one organisation. In the case of ASEAN HE QA, we are dealing with three organisational levels that are located in different organisational settings; the ministries in charge, which we mainly assign to the talk level, are separated from the two management layers (university/department management and individual teachers) within the university. EQA agencies is another player who operates within yet another organisational framework. The respective management levels are thus uncoupled by nature in the organisational setting under evaluation. This could result in self-fulfilling prophecies when assigning discrepancies of talk, decision, and action to a loose coupling of organisational levels. However, the basic assumption of the theory is considered to be applicable to the present case under investigation.

2. What are the stipulated purposes of these systems?
3. What are the roles of individual stakeholders (QA agencies, HEIs, governmental bodies, student unions, etc.) in existing QA systems?
4. What are the needs, demands, and priorities of individual stakeholders?
5. What are the strengths and weaknesses of existing QA systems in the ASEAN region?
6. What are the areas with urgent need for new QA tools (e.g. in the field of evaluation research)?
7. Are there commonalities among the systems that might easily allow for intraregional harmonisation?
8. How are individual universities involved in the process of harmonising regional QA policies and what are the needs of HEIs with regard to the future QA framework?

We used different instruments to trace the talk, decision, and action levels:

Talk: Since the talk level refers to the official and publicly available *statement* of policy lines, we performed document analyses. We traced the talk level empirically by analysing relevant documents, such as policy papers, leadership, and governmental statements, etc. We analysed documents in the field of QA policies for all ten ASEAN member states⁴. The main outcome of this approach was a series of country reports that give an overview of QA in HE policy in ASEAN member countries.

Decision-making and Action Levels: In order to trace the decision and action levels comprehensively, we went into detailed case studies of all ASEAN member countries.⁵ We conducted expert interviews (Flick, 2006) and focus group discussions with relevant stakeholders (representatives from ministries of education, quality assurance agencies, and universities).

The expert interviews enabled us to obtain in-depth information on the strategies respective decision-makers connect with enhancing quality in HE. The interviews asked what structures are elaborated at the levels of universities and QA agencies in order to facilitate the implementation of national/regional QA frameworks, and also what actors do in the field of QA in order to achieve their development strategies. Relevant, specific research questions covered the following aspects:

- What overall quality development/enhancement strategies are in place at the national and institutional levels? How are they implemented at these levels?
- In what respect can a supranational framework be beneficial to national and institutional governance; in what ways could it potentially be burdening?
- What development paths should be taken regarding the specific national and institutional background?

The focus group discussions served the purpose of uncovering potential future developments in the field of QA mechanisms by contrasting the interviewees' different perspectives and experiences. We purposively stimulated controversy among the participants, and as a result, uncovered issues for further debate and attention.

Performing expert interviews and focus group discussions uncovered the above-mentioned discrepancies between the talk, decision, and action levels. By asking university representatives about their views on the purpose and benefits of a national accreditation scheme, we were provided with in-depth information about the relationship between EQA and IQA mechanisms, and the extent to which stakeholders are ready to place trust in the EQAs to serve as quality development instead of as a mere external control of performance.

⁴ The ASEAN member states comprise Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

⁵ The study was performed in two phases. Six countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines and Vietnam) were subject to inquiry in a first phase in 2015, followed by the second batch of countries (Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand) in 2017. A first report on the outcomes of phase one was released in 2016. The present study comprises the updated version, which gives a complete overview of the Southeast Asian higher education system's quality assurance approach(es).

5. Data Basis and Data Collection

This section provides a more detailed description of the desk research and the fieldwork performed in Germany and the ASEAN region in two phases (Phase 1 from 27 July to 15 August 2015; Phase 2 from 15 February to 21 May 2017).

In line with the underlying theory and research questions of this study, an iterative data collection strategy was chosen as the most suitable for capturing the state of affairs of quality assurance (QA) in ASEAN.

The study began with a desk analysis with the support of local experts. Available data about all ten ASEAN countries were analysed. One difficulty was the availability of up-to-date data and information in English. The outcome of the secondary data analysis was the basis for fact sheets for each country (see Annex), which were validated and extended through a short survey with external quality assurance (EQA) experts from each country.

The desk analysis was the basis for the interviews and focus group discussions conducted in all ASEAN member states.

5.1 Desk Analysis

The publicly available information comprised of:

- Legal documents:
 - National accreditation/education laws and documents wherever available and applicable,
 - Information on the composition and assignments of QA agencies or QA bodies and on the general purposes of EQA,
 - Information on the national QA procedures, and
 - Information on student exchange (numbers of incoming/outgoing students, policy for the recognition of students' prior learning)⁶;
- Prior research studies and policy papers with relation to our specific research questions (among others):
 - SEAMEO-RIHED (2012) had performed a stocktaking study on EQA mechanisms in the ASEAN region. The information provided by this study was checked for necessary updates.
 - The AQAF (ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework) had been drafted by a consortium of higher education (HE) management expert institutions and practitioners. It is the basic document for the formulation of a supranational, quality-assurance-related policy in the region. It is comparable to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Since the AQAF is setting the stage for QA policy, we will place particular emphasis on its elaboration. The current state will be outlined, and conclusions will be drawn in the recommendations.
 - As a reference point, we drew on different publications and documents for the European case, such as the latest Bologna Process Implementation Report (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice 2015) and revisited a background document on the Bologna Process (EHEA 2015), which was published in the context of the Bologna Ministerial Conference in Yerevan, Armenia in 2015. The latter document summarises the first

⁶ Information on this particular issue seemed revealing since one motive behind the harmonisation policy is to increase student mobility. The analysis on the current state of student mobility within the region and beyond thus provides relevant information on future demands in the field.

15 years of the implementation of the Bologna Process and discusses its strengths and weaknesses.

The country reports (see Annex) are a compilation of the national QA systems' relevant aspects, which we validated case by case according to the information provided by experts from ministries and QA agencies from the respective countries.

5.2 Interviews

The interviews were conducted with individual experts from ministries, QA agencies and higher education institutions (HEIs), following an interview guideline that we had developed prior to the fieldwork. The questions referred to the above-mentioned theoretical approach of talk, decision, and action. We had the opportunity to pre-test the interview guideline during a QA workshop held at the University of Potsdam through a cooperation project on QA capacity building in the ASEAN region.⁷ The attendants were members of the QA community of practitioners, such as QA officers in their home universities. As a result of the pre-tests, no major changes needed to be made to the guideline. The fieldwork for the national case studies, in which experts from 46 organisations in all ASEAN member states took place between July and August 2015 for the six case studies of the first edition and for the additional four case studies of the second edition in February and in March 2017.⁸

For the data analysis, we developed a category scheme that we aligned with the guiding research questions and with the theoretical approach (talk, decision, action). By contrasting the interviews with each other and with the relevant categories, we were able to identify statements that seemed to validate the description of shared views found in the sample.

The sample of interviewees covered the broad range of countries and EQA systems of all ten ASEAN countries. The QA systems of some of the countries are still emerging and are relatively young compared to countries with consolidated QA and HE management systems. The desk research led us to categorise the chosen countries into the following three types:

1. **Consolidated:** Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore
2. **Developing:** Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam
3. **Newcomer:** Myanmar

The interviews and further research after the initial desk study revealed that many of the EQA systems are currently in transition, evolving further, or subject to political discussion regarding sometimes radical changes.

⁷ Further information on the cooperation project that is conducted by the University of Potsdam, Germany, is available at www.asean-qa.org.

⁸ The first edition of this study comprised six of the ten ASEAN member states, namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam and the Philippines. The remaining countries, namely Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore, were added in the second edition on hand.

5.3 Focus Groups

From a methodological point of view, the focus group discussions were very similar to the expert interviews. The interview guideline and a category scheme had been developed prior to fieldwork. It was pre-tested in the above-mentioned workshop in Potsdam, Germany, and the analysis of the data followed a content analysis approach.

Unlike the individual interviews, the focus groups aimed to stimulate controversy among the interviewees in order to probe the stability of their mind-set concerning the research questions under evaluation. In the pre-test interviews, the focus groups were constituted from across member countries in order to involve a range of different perspectives and experiences. This diversity of national approaches to HE management in general and QA in particular is a highly valued asset, which we tried to reflect in the composition of the focus group interviews. However, the pre-test revealed that if there is any controversy about how QA should be performed regionally, it is not across member countries. Presumably, the focus groups would have produced even more relevant results if they had been performed within countries and comprised stakeholders from different management levels. Such a setup for the focus groups, however, would have gone beyond the resource and time capabilities of this study.

6. Results of the Study

The following sections of the report will present the results from the document analysis of the regional state of affairs for quality assurance (QA) and general national overview of all ten ASEAN countries. We will also introduce the current state of regional higher education (HE) integration and governance structures. Then we will draw upon the regional QA actors and highlight current efforts for a regional QA framework.

Ten case studies will be elaborated that concentrate upon national decision-making and action levels, on the basis of our expert interviews. Chapter 6.3 will then present the outcomes of the focus group discussions.

The external quality assurance (EQA) systems are under constant development in most countries with many contextual changes occurring. All information given is based on the situation when the interviews took place (August 2015 and February/March 2017).

6.1 Quality Assurance in ASEAN

Regional harmonisation of study programmes and degrees is a prominent topic in different regions of the world (e.g. Europe, Latin America, and East Africa). It aims to promote student and teaching staff mobility and thus regional exchange and inclusion. A regional QA framework is a common instrument to secure the comparability of HE provisions throughout the adhering countries.

In the ASEAN region, a variety of initiatives have already been undertaken by different actors in the field in order to elaborate a respective QA reference framework document. The first version was drafted and is currently subject to debate and political decision-making. The following subchapters give an overlook of the national QA of all ten ASEAN member states and then focus on the regional process, activities, and actors.

6.1.1 National EQA Systems in ASEAN

The desk research revealed that national HE systems and approaches to QA are organised very differently across the ASEAN member states and follow a wide range of standards and procedures. The following aspects make these differences visible. The full country reports comprise a comparative synopsis of a range of aspects, such as the number of higher education institutions (HEIs), the governance approach (centralised vs. decentralised management), the nature of the applied quality standards, etc.

The main results of the comparison of national approaches to QA are:

- **Different ministries have authority over HEIs.** In some cases, the university system is centrally managed by a ministry of education and/or science. In other cases, different line ministries manage HEIs, which offer study programmes in their respective field (e.g. medical schools are under the management of the ministry of health).
- Most of the ASEAN member countries **host at least one body that is in charge of EQA processes** for study programmes or entire HEIs (e.g. institutional audits). Only in the case of Myanmar a respective organisation has not yet been introduced. The establishment of these bodies is still in flux in some cases. They vary in number, competencies, budget and organisational shape. In the case of Vietnam, for instance, three regional organisations (for North,

Central, and South Vietnam) have recently been founded in order to decentralise the management system that used to be under the central authority of the national Ministry of Education and Training (MOET).

- **Quality standards and their use** in EQA processes vary over member countries. In some cases, there are quality standards for both institutional and programme levels (e.g. Indonesia and Malaysia), whereas others only address one of the two levels (e.g. Cambodia, Lao, and Vietnam with the institutional level) or are in the process of drafting standards, like Vietnam, where programme level standards are soon to be published. The only country that is just starting the process of drafting standards is Myanmar. Some countries like Thailand and Indonesia have separate standards for EQA and internal quality assurance (IQA) managed by different departments/organisations.
- **The level and scope of the evaluation/EQA exercise** varies among the countries. In some cases (e.g. Cambodia, Lao and Vietnam), exclusively institutional audits are being performed; in other cases, the study programmes are the most important level of assessment (e.g. the Philippines). Some of the external exercises are performed on a voluntary basis; other systems require accreditation as a prerequisite for public funding for the institution/study programme. The purposes of the QA systems in use mirror the four main functions of evaluation: control, legitimisation, knowledge gain, and development⁹ (Stockmann 2004). Table 1 gives an overview of the EQA systems, displays the countries' motives for QA in HE and sorts them according to the different QA functions. These functions are not mutually exclusive; e.g. if a national system's emphasis is on the control function, it can also aim to use QA as a development tool. Based on statements for the purposes of QA, we have identified the most emphasised function(s).
- **'Three big issues'**: We tried to derive the three main, current development objectives that are significant to member countries. According to the timespan already invested in the elaboration of a national QA system, and depending on parameters like the socio-economic status of the countries, we found different priorities for political action lines in the statements. For instance, advanced economies like Singapore focus on the promotion of research excellence, whereas 'newcomers' like Lao PDR have to focus on tackling unequal access to HE for disadvantaged groups within the population. Some issues, however, seem to be significant development aims across the ASEAN region: (1) the overall expansion of (public) HE and the provision of an increasing number of universities; (2) strengthening international cooperation and collaboration within the ASEAN region; and (3) improving the quality of teaching and learning processes.

⁹ Being a form of evaluation, EQA systems can have multiple functions and therefore follow different paradigms. Usually evaluations and EQA systems alike follow multiple purposes that are sometimes even conflicting. Stockmann (2004) distinguishes between a) control as in checking if a particular goal has been reached, b) legitimisation as in making information available to stakeholder groups about the whereabouts and success as a proof, c) knowledge gain as in generating information about specific questions of various nature to allow insight into the nature of something, and finally d) development as in having the main function to use the gained knowledge for improvement measures and to the support dialogue of different stakeholders.

Country	Purpose of QA ¹⁰	QA Function is rather... ¹¹	EQA on programme level	EQA on institutional level
Brunei Darussalam (2017)	“Ensure and maintain the quality and standard of educational credentials in accordance with the provisions as set and required by the Government”. (BDNAC Order 2011)	Control	X <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory for private Public with self-accrediting status 	X <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory for private Public with self-accrediting status
Cambodia (2015)	“The purpose of this Royal decree is to establish a judicial mechanism to administer the accreditation of higher education for all higher educational institutions to ensure the promote academic quality for greater effectiveness and quality consistent with international standards and to determine the organization of structures, roles, functions and duties regarding the administration of the accreditation process of higher education for all higher educational institutions which grant degrees”. (Royal Decree on Accreditation of Higher Education, 2003 - unofficial translation by JICA-HRD)	Control/ Legitimation	n/a	X <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory
Indonesia (2015)	“1. Providing national accreditation to all study programs , and the public, private, religion-based, and government service higher education institutions, which are providing academic and professional education programs”. (National Education Ministerial Decree No. 28/2005)	Control	X <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory 	X <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory

¹⁰ The content of this column is taken from national documents on EQA.

¹¹ The content of this column reflects the interpretation of the authors.

Lao PDR (2015)	<p>“Accreditation provides the structure for public accountability and a way of ensuring that educational institutions will continuously seek ways to upgrade and enhance the quality of education and the training they provide.</p> <p>In terms of status, accreditation provides public notification than an institution has met established standards of quality set forth by the Ministry of Education and Sports”.</p> <p>(Center for Educational Quality Assurance, Guidelines for Assessors 2014)</p>	Development	n/a	<p>X</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory
Malaysia (2017)	<p>“The objectives of the Framework include the following:</p> <p>(a) to secure standards of qualifications and reinforce policies on quality assurance; (...)</p> <p>(g) to provide clear and accessible public information on programmes or qualifications in higher education;</p> <p>(h) to promote where applicable, the presentation of qualifications in forms that facilitate their evaluation by any person, including government agencies, higher education providers, students, academic staff, quality assurance and accreditation bodies, professional bodies, examination bodies and employers”.</p> <p>(Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act 2007)</p>	Legitimation/ Control	<p>X</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory for private Provisional accreditation to conduct new programme Full accreditation 	<p>X</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voluntary Comprehensive or thematic Self-accreditation status
Myanmar (2015)	No framework available at the time of the fieldwork in 2015.			

Philippines (2015)	<p>“1. It is the declared policy of the State to encourage and assist, through the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), higher education institutions (HEIs) which desire to attain standards of quality over and above the minimum required by the State.</p> <p>2. For this purpose, the CHED encourages the use of voluntary non-governmental accreditation systems in aid of the exercise of its regulatory functions. The CHED will promote a policy environment which supports the accreditation’s non-governmental and voluntary character and protects the integrity of the accreditation process”.</p> <p>(CHED Order No. 01 2005)</p>	Development	<p>X</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voluntary 	<p>X</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voluntary Based on programme accreditation
Singapore (2017)	<p>For public HEIs:</p> <p>“1. To plan and conduct quality audits, with the help of external review panels.</p> <p>2. To work closely with the institutions on continuous quality improvement.</p> <p>3. To conduct research on quality assurance best practices around the world as part of our continuous enhancement of our own quality assurance framework.”</p> <p>(SEAMEO RIHED 2012a)</p> <p>For private HEIs:</p> <p>“a. to register and regulate private education institutions and persons who offer or provide any service relating, whether directly or indirectly, to private education;(...)</p> <p>c. to establish, implement or support quality accreditation or certification schemes and other measures to enhance the standards of the private education sector, or the education sector generally, in Singapore as the Council deems appropriate”.</p> <p>(Private Education Act, Revised Edition: 31st December 2011)</p>	Development/ Control	n/a	<p>X</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory QAFU for public Compulsory EduTrust Scheme for degree awarding private institutions (2017) Compulsory registration under the Enhanced Registration Framework (ERF)

Thailand (2017)	<p>“An Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment shall be established as a public organisation, responsible for development of criteria and methods of external evaluation, conducting evaluation of educational achievements in order to assess the quality of institutions, bearing in mind the objectives and principles and guidelines for each level of education as stipulated in this Act. All educational institutions shall receive external quality evaluation at least once every five years since the last exercise and the results of the evaluation shall be submitted to the relevant agencies and made available to the general public”.</p> <p>(National Education Act (1999) and Amendments (Second National Education Act (2002))</p>	Control/ Legitimation	<p>x</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory IQA (OHEC) 	<p>X</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory IQA OHEC Compulsory EQA ONESQA
Vietnam (2015)	<p>“Assist the MoET in testing, examinations and quality assurance from basic to post graduate education and training. Study, develop and monitor the implementation of accreditation and quality assurance criteria at all levels”.</p> <p>(SEAMEO RIHED 2012a)</p>	Control	n/a	<p>X</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory

Table 1: Purposes of QA procedures and EQA level application

Altogether, the data obtained in the country reports reveal a high diversity of QA approaches across ASEAN member countries. For example, some countries have started with institutional approaches and others with a programme approach. The documents available provide an overview of the national strategies and cross-country development needs and priorities for the future development. These priorities are in line with the intentions of the SHARE project.

6.1.2 Regional Integration and Governance Structures

At the regional policy level, there are different bodies and organisations dealing with HE in ASEAN. Their relationship and responsibility to build a common HE space for ASEAN countries is not very clear and a formulation of how an ASEAN HE space should look, and what purpose it would serve, has yet to be drafted and agreed upon.

A key player at the policy level is the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) established in 1965. Its Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED) has been in the forefront as a promoter of a common HE space in ASEAN. The SEAMEO is a chartered, international organisation and comprises 11 Southeast Asian ministers of education (ASEAN plus Timor-Leste). SEAMEO's mandate is to promote cooperation in education, science, and culture. The SEAMEO Council comprises the 11 education ministers and is the organisation's governing body. It meets bi-annually since 2013 (before annually since 2011) in SEAMEO Council Conferences (SEAMEC) in line with the two-year terms for the presidency. The SEAMEC is prepared and supported by the SEAMEO High Officials Meeting (SEAMEO HOM).

Additionally, the ASEAN national governments have assigned different sectoral ministerial bodies. In the field of education, the ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting (ASEM), which meets annually since 2006 and is organised back-to-back with the SEAMEC conferences, shows that there is a strong connection between SEAMEO and ASEAN with regard to education.

The ASEM is under the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). The same stands for the ASEAN University Network (AUN). Beneath ASEM, there is also the Senior Officials Meeting on Education (SOM-ED) (ASEAN, 2007), which, similar to the SEAMEO HOM, prepares and supports the ASEM.

Between the ASEM and SOM-ED meetings, there are also other ministerial meetings that take place. Thus, both ministers and senior officials meet regularly during the ASEAN+3 Education Ministers Meeting (APT EMM) and East Asia Summit Education Ministers Meeting (EAS EMM) since 2012. All of these meetings have discussed joint efforts and matters of quality enhancement and capacity building in HE. Similar efforts are being made between Asia and Europe under the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), which comprises the ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting.

In regard to the political endorsement of a regional HE space, in 2008, the SEAMEO Council meeting agreed upon the project proposal by SEAMEO RIHED on 'A Structured Framework for Regional Integration in Higher Education in Southeast Asia: The Road towards a Common Space'. Endorsed by the 43rd SEAMEO Council Meeting, SEAMEO RIHED subsequently organised a conference series on 'Raising Awareness: Exploring the Ideas of Creating a Higher Education Common Space in Southeast Asia' in 2008 (SEAMEO RIHED, 2009), thus starting the process towards harmonisation. This process has led to the establishment of AQAN alongside many other activities and projects. SEAMEO RIHED published an overview of QA practices in Southeast Asia in 2012 (SEAMEO RIHED, 2012a) to support a regional QA framework. The AQAF Task Force started working on the regional framework in 2011.

Generally, all these processes and initiatives are voluntary and as such rely on initiatives either by countries, organisations, or centres such as SEAMEO RIHED and the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), which played a key role in establishing the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN). The AUN with its quality assurance initiative (AUN-QA) and the AQAN, which is leading the AQAF Task Force together with the AUN and SEAMEO RIHED, are other such examples.

Still, an official statement, directive, or published and recognised document that defines an ASEAN HE area or a QA framework at the policy level is missing. Quality is seen to be a crucial step for overall integration, but there is no statement calling for common QA practices in ASEAN at the policy level nor a mandate given to any organisation to draft a regional common framework, such as the AQAF. Intermediate organisations, such as AQAN, the AUN, and SEAMEO RIHED, have been promoting the case for such a commitment in a variety of forums and conferences.

When following the debate on harmonisation strategies, it is noticeable that, on one hand, harmonisation is promoted very strongly as an already agreed-upon political goal for the region and, on the other hand, national autonomy and diversity of educational cultures and traditions is described as the major asset for the regional HE system, which needs to be preserved, cultivated, and protected from external interference. The richness of educational traditions is indeed an important feature of the ASEAN HE landscape. However, if the political aim to promote harmonisation of study programmes and degrees is to be achieved, political decision-makers must identify a core set of commonalities that could form the key features for ‘ASEAN higher education’ and make the regional HE system distinguishable from other regions.

The Bologna Process has forced European universities to navigate a comparably awkward discussion: on the one hand, to gain more global visibility and competitiveness through joining forces, and on the other hand, to not give up the uniqueness of their national HE traditions. Regarding QA, the ESG provided the solution of stipulating very generic standards, which are supposed to be applied in context with national HE systems and traditions.

6.1.3 Actors in the ASEAN Regional QA Arena

Plenty of regional efforts and activities concerned with QA exist, driven by both regional and international organisations. In Southeast Asia, there are three main actors who work on and promote the topic of QA at the regional level:

1) The **ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN)** represents the national EQA bodies and ministries in charge of QA that set, develop, and implement the EQA frameworks on a national level. AQAN is thus an important stakeholder in connection with establishing a regional QA framework. Its members either have decision power or directly consult with national decision-making bodies.

AQAN was established in Kuala Lumpur in 2008 on the initiative of the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED). The AQAN Secretariat is hosted by the MQA. AQAN was accredited as an entity associated with ASEAN in August 2016. At present, AQAN has 13 Full Members, 6 Associate Members and 1 Honorary Member.

The full members of AQAN represent the EQA bodies or departments of the ministries in charge of HE and EQA from the ten ASEAN countries. Furthermore, AQAN has associate members, such as the ASEAN University Network (AUN), SEAMEO RIHED, and the National Agency for Academic Assessment and Accreditation (NAAAA) from Timor-Leste.

The mission of AQAN is to “promote and share good practices of quality assurance in higher education in the Southeast Asia region; to collaborate on capacity building of quality assurance in higher education in the region; to share information on higher education and facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications throughout the region; and to develop a regional quality assurance framework for Southeast Asia” (ASEAN Quality Assurance Network, 2014). The current main initiative by AQAN is the AQAF and its implementation. AQAN organises regular roundtable meetings for its members and also recently, the Forum and Roundtable Meeting for Young Quality Assurance Officers. AQAN is further involved in different regional and inter-regional meetings and seminars, such as the ASEAN+3 Quality Assurance Expert Meeting.

2) The **ASEAN University Network (AUN)** is another main actor involved in QA activities and promotion in the region. AUN was established in 1995 by the ministers responsible for HE from six ASEAN countries. Originating from 11 member universities in 1995, today AUN has grown to 30 member universities. AUN is thus a representative of universities but is limited mostly to the ‘elite’ universities of ASEAN countries due to restrictions on the number of members per country. Since 2007, AUN has become a key implementing agency of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). The Board of Trustees consists of one university representative per country designated by the respective government, the Secretary-General of ASEAN, the Chairperson (Secretary-General of the Office of the Higher Education Commission, Thailand), the Chairperson of the Senior Official Meeting on Education (ASEAN SOM-ED), the Director of Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), and the AUN Executive Director as Secretary. The implementation of AUNs’ programmes and activities is the duty of member universities.

AUN’s current mission is “to strengthen the existing network of cooperation among universities in ASEAN and beyond; to promote collaborative study, research and educational programmes in the priority areas identified by ASEAN; to promote cooperation and solidarity among scholars, academicians and researchers in the ASEAN Member States; and, to serve as the policy-oriented body in higher education in the ASEAN region” (ASEAN University Network, n.d.).

The activities and initiatives of AUN are focused on exchange and collaboration in ASEAN HE. The areas comprise: 1) youth mobility; 2) academic collaboration; 3) standards, mechanisms, systems, and policies of HE collaboration; 4) courses and programme development; and 5) regional and global policy platforms.

One of the initiatives of AUN is the AUN-QA network, which was established in 1998. It promotes QA at the programme level with its own QA guidelines, which have been used for programme quality assessments of member universities since 2007; since 2014, it has also been used for affiliate members of AUN-QA (AUN non-member universities). The assessments are voluntary and aim to support, enhance, and sustain the level of QA at universities. Every AUN member and AUN-QA affiliated university can request that their programmes be assessed by AUN-QA. By the end of September 2017, a total of 238 study programmes had been assessed under AUN-QA. Further since its introduction in 2016, AUN-QA has conducted 4 assessments at the institutional level.

In order to build capacity in HEIs, and to conduct the assessments, AUN-QA organises regular trainings to introduce QA, the AUN assessment process, and how to perform self-assessment as a prerequisite for the AUN-QA assessment at the study programme level (Tier 1 level, ten trainings since 2015). Furthermore, since November 2013, AUN has started to offer advanced trainings that are targeted to future assessors (Tier 2 level, three trainings since 2013).

The **Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED)** is a major regional player when it comes to harmonising HE in Southeast Asia and has been active advocate of the establishment of AQAN.

SEAMEO, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, is an intergovernmental organisation established in 1965 to promote cooperation in education, science, and culture in the region. This is inter alia supported by 21 specialised centres within the organisation and hosted in different countries.

SEAMEO RIHED is hosted by the Government of Thailand and specialises in the development of HE in member countries. Its mission is “to foster efficiency, effectiveness, and harmonization of higher education in Southeast Asia through system research, empowerment, development of mechanisms to facilitate sharing and collaborations in higher education” (SEAMEO RIHED, 2012b). SEAMEO RIHED assists member countries with activities, such as policy forums, workshops, trainings, study visits, information dissemination, and research.

The three organisations have connections and cooperate on various topics and activities. Both AUN and SEAMEO RIHED are an associate member of AQAN, for example, and the Director of SEAMEO is

furthermore a member of the AUN Board of Trustees. The three organisations are also part of the AQAF Task Force led by AQAN.

Since 2011, AQAN, AUN and SEAMEO RIHED have been partners in the ASEAN-QA project, a joint initiative with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), and the University of Potsdam. ASEAN-QA organises and conducts capacity-building activities for EQA and IQA actors in the region in support of harmonisation within ASEAN.

6.1.4 The ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (2015)

The elaboration of a regional QA framework is currently one of the core activities of the HE management scenery in Southeast Asia. Major progress has already been made with regard to developing standards and principles for approaches to QA for universities and QA agencies. Since such a framework forms the basis for acting and decision-making at the institutional level(s), we will place considerable emphasis on the process that gave speed to the development of what is now known as the AQAF.¹² In Chapter 7, we draw conclusions from this process for future development paths.

In 2011, AQAN began the project to develop an ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework for Higher Education (AQAFHE). A task force was established with representative officials from the MQA, SEAMEO RIHED, AUN, Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council (BDNAC), General Department of Education Testing and Accreditation (GDETA) Vietnam, Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) Thailand, and the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU).

The AQAF is driven by the view that harmonisation within ASEAN is a process recognising the diversity of HE systems, cultures, and traditions while promoting common practices and guidelines. The framework is expected to serve as a common reference point and link for QA agencies and HEIs as they strive toward harmonisation amid the diversity in the region.

It is for this reason that the framework's principles and statements are generic, so as to be adaptive to various political, legal, and cultural settings without compromising the country's basic values and traditions.

The framework consists of four interrelated thematic areas, which are based on QA principles. These principles are supposed to give guidance to: 1) EQA bodies and their activities, 2) EQA processes (e.g. accreditation), 3) the elaboration of institutional QA systems (e.g. quality management systems at university level), and 4) the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks. These thematic areas are described as the 'four quadrants' of the QA framework concept.

The AQAF was endorsed in principle by all AQAN members at a round table meeting in Hanoi in February 2013. Refinements were subsequently discussed. In the August 2014 meeting, held in Jakarta, the AQAN members agreed to submit a draft framework to their principals to consider AQAF for endorsement and future adaptation. They also recommended that information on the AQAF should be submitted to the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting to start a formal political endorsement process. Putting the AQAF on the political agenda is still an on-going process. A binding legal basis would be extremely helpful for implementing the AQAF principles at the HEI and QA agency levels (please refer to the recommendations in Chapter 8). As supplementary documents of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF), the SHARE the AQAF Guidelines for the Review of External QA Bodies and Institutional Assessments were finalised in 2016 by an Expert Working Group (EWG) composed of European and ASEAN representatives. These Guidelines were pilot tested in 2017/2018 as part of SHARE and will be utilised by AQAN in the future.

¹² Initially the AQAF was named ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework in Higher Education (AQAFHE). The idea behind dropping the reference to HE was to make it also applicable to the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector.

Each of the four AQAF principles focuses on core statements. The drafted framework is characterised by the following features:

- It is not prescriptive and does not aim to standardise the different national HE cultures, traditions, and strategies.
- It is, in contrast, appreciative of the cultural diversity of the regional HE-landscape.
- It is supposed to promote good practices and serve as a link between EQA and IQA practices and procedures.
- It is based on principles of QA practices that are generic in nature and thus supportive of a diversity-oriented approach.
- However, it also promotes consistency of QA practices across Southeast Asian countries, based on a set of principles and examples of good practice.
- It thus allows for an effective recognition practice and for mutual credibility of national HE outcomes (student learning, degrees, etc.). As a result, mobility in the region (and beyond) is projected to be supported as well.

The AQAF goes into detail about the four quadrants and their specific functions and purposes. Subsequently, the basic principles outlined within each of the quadrants are briefly described. The full version of the specific principles relevant for each of the quadrants can be found as Annex of this study.

1.: Principles of External Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA)

The EQAA is a key player for maintaining and sustaining the quality of education in every nation and puts the interests of students and various stakeholders at centre stage. The establishment of a shared set of values and good practices for EQAA across the region refers to transparency, self-responsibility, and self-management of QA agencies in order to ensure that the professionalism, accountability, and integrity of the agencies are visible to their stakeholders.

2.: Principles of External Quality Assurance Processes

EQA processes (e.g. accreditation at the study programme or institutional levels) are the core activity of a QA agency. In these processes and activities, the interests of students, employers, and society at large take centre stage. The respective statements in the draft AQAF demonstrate the systematic approach embarked upon by QA agencies toward the development of agency standards and criteria, thereby achieving their goals and objectives.

3.: Principles of Internal Quality Assurance

A fundamental principle in QA of HE is that quality primarily rests with the HEIs themselves. The statements following the draft AQAF designated to IQA define the role of the HEI as building and assuring quality to its stakeholders. The drafted statements clarify the processes and quality systems through which HEIs demonstrate their accountability and safeguard the interests of students and society.

4.: Principles of National Qualifications Framework

National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) have turned into key instruments for reforming education, training, and qualification systems in many ASEAN countries and beyond. Increasingly, lifelong learning policies are embedded into the NQF: primarily by addressing the flexibility of educational pathways within the national systems. It also addresses the barriers to access and progression of learning. NQF is expected to facilitate the mobility of students, workers, and professionals across the region and beyond.

These guidelines are supposed to give institutions (both universities and QA agencies) valuable advice on how to operationalise their QA mechanisms and procedures. In order to operationalise these guidelines and to translate them into specific activities and 'QA cultures', it was agreed that a manual for the specific application of these guidelines be established. This handbook is not yet available but is strongly encouraged to be prepared as soon as possible in order to clarify the requirements derived from the guidelines and needs met by given institutions. The respective process can be efficiently

supported by the SHARE project, which has been launched recently as an initiative to give guidance to the system of QA in ASEAN HE.

The results drawn from our desk research paved the way for further research on 10 national case studies that concentrated on expert interviews, which will be presented in the following chapter.

6.2 National Case Studies

This chapter focuses on national case studies and discusses the results of expert interviews held with actors from ministries, agencies, and HEIs.¹³ The interviews concentrated on four main topics: (1) state of affairs of EQA and IQA, (2) opportunities and challenges of national EQA and IQA implementation; (3) opportunities and challenges for a regional QA framework, and (4) the needs that the different actors see for QA in their organisation and country.

In the following sub-sections, we will first outline the current state of affairs of both EQA and IQA country-wise. We will do so according to the information gathered from the interviews and our desk research. Secondly, we will summarise the opinions and information given by the different actors from the external (ministries and agencies) and internal (HEIs) points of view.

We emphasise, that from a methodological standpoint, the presented results cannot claim to be representative. Nonetheless, the provided relevant information mirrors the consulted experts' views. Since we have interviewed 45 experts in ten countries between 2015 and 2017, commonalities in the different interviewees' statements can be interpreted as "cross-validation" of the respective meanings.

The present study is obliged to follow the basic principles of empirical research. We thus protect the interviewees' privacy by anonymising the authorship of the different statements. Risks of de-anonymising have been prevented as securely as possible.

6.2.1. Brunei Darussalam (2017)

The education system in Brunei is closely connected with the system of the United Kingdom and many Bruneians move to the UK for their studies. Public universities in Brunei are free of tuition fees, and the state provides substantial funding for scholarships. There is high competition for access to public universities and scholarships to study in Brunei and abroad. The entry requirements of public institutions have been tightened in recent years, which leaves students who are not able to access public institutions with little choice but to enrol in private institutions.

The first university to be established was the University of Brunei Darussalam in 1985, followed by the Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University and the Institute of Technology Brunei. The latter was granted university status in 2008 and was only recently renamed University of Technology Brunei in 2016. The diploma courses were transferred to the Polytechnic Brunei, and the University of Technology Brunei has been concentrating on bachelor's and master's degrees ever since.

With only around 400.000 inhabitants, Brunei has five public and six private higher education institutions. Most of the private institutions are colleges, offering certificates and diplomas. Three of the colleges offer bachelor's degrees, originating from the United Kingdom and Malaysia.

State of Play in EQA and IQA

¹³ Some countries have both the ministry and agency as an actor included in the case studies, while others have only the ministry or agency. This is dependent on the national setup and responsibilities for EQA of each country.

There are three units in charge of higher education in Brunei: the Brunei Darussalam Accreditation Council (BDNAC), the Private Education Section (PES), and the Higher Education Section (HES) of the MOE. The HES focuses on the management and administration of public universities, whereas BDNAC focuses on QA of public and private higher education institutions and on recognition. The role of the PES is mainly linked to licensing, safety and infrastructure. Further, teachers have to be registered with them. The accreditation function of BDNAC focuses on the academic side and the PES on the operational aspects of private higher education.

The BDNAC was established by Decree of His Majesty the Sultan with BDNAC Order No. 1 to ensure the quality of the qualifications. It is part of the Ministry of Education and its Council is chaired by the Minister of Education and co-chaired by the Deputy Minister. BDNAC has a Secretary, with staff in charge of daily operations of quality assurance, the qualification framework, and recognition.

Currently, the BDNAC places emphasis on the recognition of (foreign) qualifications. It was originally within the scope of BDNAC to make sure that external qualifications meet the standards that are set out for the public service employees. Students can address BDNAC to obtain recognition for foreign qualifications. If a course or qualification is not recognised, the students are not eligible to work for the government.

Public universities are self-accrediting, which means that they can decide autonomously on which programmes they want to run, and they are not subject to external quality assurance. The approval for programmes is awarded by the university's academic senate itself. However, some of the programmes within public universities voluntarily undergo international accreditation, such as in Engineering or Business. For Engineering, it is mandatory to receive accreditation from the respective professional bodies for the purpose of chartership.

For private higher education institutions, the BDNAC looks at both institutional and programme levels, making sure the institutions fulfil the set requirements of the BDNAC Order No. 1 and the internal manual. The BDNAC Council is assisted by the Secretary and subcommittees for different areas, which are appointed by the Minister. The Council takes decisions on accreditation on a case-by-case basis.

Given that private institutions in Brunei currently only run franchise programmes, an external moderator from the degree-awarding bodies will visit the institutions to monitor them biannually. Further, BDNAC will receive biannual reports which will then be validated on site by BDNAC staff according to a checklist. BDNAC will then report back to the colleges and comment on anything in need of improvement within a certain period.

One specific requirement for accreditation is to make sure that local modules are part of the training programme's curriculum (e.g. Malay Islamic Monarchy) or localised to the Brunei context in the privately-run programmes.

The process of the accreditation decision starts in the sub-committees, and when the programmes are approved they are brought to the Council for decision. Programmes can pass, pass with conditions, or fail. The accreditation is awarded for lifetime, unless serious issues are uncovered during the biannual monitoring process.

For the future, there are long-term plans for BDNAC to concentrate more on quality assurance and include public universities in the framework. The role model would be the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA, refer to section 6.2.5) which BDNAC is in close cooperation and exchange with.

Main Findings from the Expert Interviews

In this section, we discuss major findings drawn from expert interviews with representatives from the BDNAC and both public and private universities.

- ***Common wish for quality framework for public HEIs:*** The interviewees from both the BDNAC and the public higher education institutions would welcome BDNAC extending the framework to public institutions to support their QA system and to benchmark with others. Currently, there is the need to relate to foreign countries as a reference.

- **Regional QA framework widely welcome:** All interviewed stakeholder groups do speak in favour of supporting student and graduate mobility in ASEAN. An interviewee from BDNAC welcomes the AQAF as a reference for the upcoming plans to revise the framework. A similar view is expressed by an interviewee from the public universities, who links the idea of a regional quality assurance framework with guiding the ministerial level towards developing QA in Brunei.
- **Need for a culturally sensitive, flexible, and voluntary framework:** However, doubts are expressed regarding the implementation of such a framework: some interviewees emphasise that the framework should be culturally sensitive to the traditions and habits of the different and culturally diverse countries in ASEAN. One interviewee from the university sector expects the initial implementation phase to be difficult, but once the standards are attained it should be no problem and possible to eventually improve. Some of the interviewees from the university side see the need for the standards to be flexible and not too rigid, e.g. a compatibility with other international requirements needs to be provided. An interviewee underlines the importance of the framework being voluntary and more of a reference. It should not be obligatory to follow every single part of the framework.
- **Regional framework influence on private institutions varies:** Given that the private institutions in Brunei run courses and programmes from overseas, they do not see much influence of a regional framework nor opportunities to influence the foreign universities which are outside the ASEAN region. Some private universities, though, have collaborations with neighbouring countries.
- **Trust in the quality of public universities:** According to an interviewee from BDNAC, confidence of society in the quality of domestic universities is growing, notwithstanding the high reputation that overseas provisions enjoy in comparison to the local public universities. The interviewee further states that public institutions are given the trust that stakeholders are involved in the programme conceptualisation and implementation, and that the programmes are subject to a steady quality assurance. Internal quality assurance is perceived as being well established in public universities. Still, new programmes will need endorsement by the BDNAC.
- **Need for information systems and communication strategies:** An improved flow of information and communication strategies is a development need mentioned by interviewees from the universities. Under this topic, interviewees express the need to establish a system that stresses the quality enhancement function of quality assurance at the expense of its control function. The base of an enhancement-oriented system is - in the view of the interviewees - a well-functioning communication system that involves all stakeholder groups.
- **Need for implementation and international exchange on QA systems:** One interviewee from a public institution further sees the need to know about QA frameworks from university systems beyond the region. Another interviewee complements that generally exchange and networking in QA is needed to establish a well-functioning internal quality assurance framework.
- **Capacity building for EQA and IQA:** The need for capacity building is both seen by interviewees from the BDNAC and the institutions. For EQA, the BDNAC interviewees see the need of trainings and workshops. A disadvantage which an interviewee expresses is that Brunei is often excluded from the possibility of being sponsored by international projects due to its financial capacities. However, it would be beneficial to run international development projects on the topic also within Brunei, to reach a wider audience. Interviewees from universities, on the other hand, see the need for training and sharing experiences with other countries. Topics of interest expressed by institutions are generally IQA procedures and didactical aspects of teaching and learning, such as student assessment.
- **Competition as a risk for quality:** Private education institutions in Brunei are in a strongly competitive climate. Some of the interviewees fear this competition will jeopardise the quality of learning. One example given is an overseas diploma which has been approved to be implemented by different private institutions in Brunei. An interviewee sees this as being problematic for a small country like Brunei. The keen competition for the same students

creates the risk that the private institutions may jeopardise the quality of learning for commercial reasons.

- ***Close-meshed control of private institutions:*** Some interviewees from the private institutions perceive a close-meshed control by the ministry, given that multiple units are reviewing and controlling them. The mechanisms focusing on quality assurance are welcome, but other rules and regulations, such as the ceiling on tuition fees, are seen as too much interference.
- ***Need for more alumni tracking and stakeholder involvement:*** One interviewee from the public universities sees the need to track alumni and engage more with external stakeholders.

6.2.2 Cambodia (2015)

Cambodia has experienced a rapid growth in its HE system. From four to five universities in the early 1990s, the number has grown to 110 HEIs in 2015; many of which are private institutions opened in the early 2000s. The ministerial responsibility for HE in Cambodia is very fragmented with HEIs reporting to over ten different ministries. Most of the institutions (63) are under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MOEYS).

QA and HE in Cambodia went through major changes and challenges in recent years. The government is currently following a strategy of establishing flagship universities as role models for the Cambodian university landscape.

6.2.2.1 State of Affairs of EQA and IQA

The Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) was founded in 2003 and is currently the only agency in charge of EQA of HE. At that time, it was under direct supervision of the Office of the Council of Ministers. With the Royal Decree No. ns/rkt/1013/1060 issued in 2013, the ACC has been integrated into the MOEYS. Due to the integration of the ACC into the ministry, now both EQA and IQA are managed by the MOEYS.

According to the Royal Decree, the ACC is a secretariat working directly under the minister. The ACC has a board consisting of 13 members from other ministries and from HEIs, and is chaired by the minister. The board decides on the ACC's policy and approves assessment results and accreditation decisions. Thus, the ACC is independent with regard to decision-making about QA and quality of HE.

The ACC cooperates with the Department of Higher Education, which provides HEIs assistance in the area of IQA. The Department of Higher Education supervises the HEIs with regard to IQA while the ACC is responsible for EQA.

With the support of the World Bank, the ACC introduced its first assessment and accreditation by looking at the so-called foundation year. The foundation year is a requirement for all first-year students and consists of a general curriculum to prepare students for university education. The accreditation scheme of the ACC moved from the foundation year to institutional accreditation with a new set of revised standards approved by the MOEYS in January 2015.

The ACC prepares procedures and conducts assessments at the institutional level. All HEIs awarding bachelor, master, and doctorate degrees must undergo this accreditation process. While the initial nine standards set in 2010 outlined 264 indicators, the revised ones introduced in 2014 reduced the number of indicators. There are still nine standards, however, only 73 associated indicators are outlined. The new standards were drafted with consultation from international experts. They were aligned to international standards and are more qualitative in their nature compared to the older standards. One major change was to include a standard about IQA.

Besides the ACC standards, the Department for Higher Education has recently worked on standards for IQA at the programme level that are translated and adapted from AUN-QA. These standards are yet to be released officially.

In addition to compulsory external accreditation, all HEIs need to have an IQA system in place.

IQA in Cambodian HEIs is still developing. Universities are at different stages of implementing a QA system and/or unit. Although the new regulations state that all HEIs should have an IQA system, not all HEIs have one in place yet. Some have allocated the task to other departments. These HEIs are trying to follow national standards, but the need to establish a QA unit at the institutional level is still a major step left.

Currently, the ACC is in the process of preparing (e.g. assessor trainings) and reviewing their new internal procedures, processes, and standards in the field. Ten universities (five public and five private) are piloting their first accreditations under the new standards, which allows for reflection and evaluation. The aim is to finalise this process by the end of 2015 and to ensure a smooth running of institutional accreditations in 2016 and beyond.

6.2.2.2 Main Findings from the Expert Interviews

In this section, we discuss the major findings drawn from interviews with agency and HEI representatives in Cambodia.

- **Support and capacity building for HEIs as a key priority:** All interviewed actors agree that most importantly, HEIs in Cambodia need support with capacity building. HEIs have need of support for how to set up QA units and for training of staff on different levels. The agency and HEI interviewees perceive that understanding of the national QA standards is still limited and that most HEIs are still relatively new to the concept of QA. In some cases, other units are managing QA as an additional task to their main duties (e.g. international offices).
- **Acceptance and recognition of national EQA:** Both actor groups interviewed confirm that the national EQA system is not well accepted and recognised. One of the main reasons is perceived to be the capacity of the assessors. Some interviewees from HEIs question the independency of assessment from political influence and criticise a missing link between EQA and stakeholders, such as employers and industry. International QA approaches and assessors/experts are better recognised and hold higher reputation.
- **Professionalisation of assessors:** Both actor groups declare the need to professionalise assessors. The HEI interviewees attest to a lack of trust in assessor capacity and assessment results. The agency interviewees are aware of this trust issue and see a need for further training. According to the agency interviewees, there are ideas in the ministry that include international experts in the panel groups, which will, among other things, eliminate concerns, but almost all of the documents are in Khmer and it is difficult to find international experts with Khmer language skills.
- **Use of EQA:** HEI representatives describe the assessments and reports as not useful, as they do not offer solutions to shortcomings. The agency interviewees identify one reason as missing financial or status-related benefits for the HEIs.
- **Function of EQA:** The interviewed actor groups have a different perception of the current EQA system and practice. Whereas HEI representatives perceive EQA to be strongly control oriented, the agency interviewees emphasise the function as geared toward quality enhancement. The agency interviewees state that there seems to be an expectation by HEI representatives that HEIs receive more specific support on how to implement their IQA. Indeed, the HEI interviewees view the national standards and criteria as time-consuming paperwork and as unable to support quality enhancement within HEIs. They underline the need for training and guidance on setting up an IQA unit. The agency interviewees, however, do not see themselves in a position where they can set or propagate more detailed aspects beyond the general framework. They perceive IQA as the duty of HEIs and do not want to interfere in order to leave enough options for HEIs to adapt to their own context and goals.
- **EQA responsibilities:** Since the ACC has been transferred from the Council of Ministers to the MOEYS, one main challenge for the EQA body in Cambodia seems to be the lack of clear roles and responsibilities in general and, specifically, between the ACC and the Department of Higher Education within the MOEYS. There is an expressed need to align QA activity between the ACC and the Department of Higher Education. The agency interviewees further fear that having two kinds of standards might confuse HEIs and increase workloads.

- **Resistance within HEIs:** Both interviewees from the agency and HEIs describe that there is resistance to QA at different levels within HEIs, including management. Agency interviewees reckon that HEI staff is used to a high level of autonomy in their teaching and thus feels reluctant towards new regulations.
- **Use of good practice examples:** The interviewees from the agency see a need for examples of good practice among Cambodian HEIs in order to push and support the implementation of QA.
- **Regional QA framework as an opportunity and concern:** Both actors from HEIs and the agency welcome a regional QA framework to ease student and staff mobility within the ASEAN region. Furthermore, the interviewees also see this as an opportunity to solve the national challenges of EQA acceptance and to catch up with HEIs in other ASEAN countries. The agency interviewees raise the concern of whether Cambodian HEIs will be able to comply with regional standards. Both actor groups agree that Cambodian HEIs will need more time to implement a possible framework compared to other ASEAN countries, as universities are not prepared and do not have the resources to move adequately fast enough. The agency interviewees doubt that now is the right time to implement a regional framework in Cambodia given that institutional accreditation has only just been introduced and first experiences are still to be made.
- **Financial resources for QA:** Both EQA and IQA representatives express the need for more financial resources for QA implementation. The agency interviewees report that there is a need to clarify cost coverage of external assessments. Currently, this is covered by the ACC. From 2016, the ACC will lose the support from the World Bank to set up an EQA system and will rely solely on limited government funding. With this government budget, the ACC can only hire civil servants and is not able to remunerate external experts, such as assessors for its external evaluation exercises.

6.2.3 Indonesia (2015)

Indonesia is the most populated country in Southeast Asia with 260 million inhabitants. The country's HE system stands out compared to others in ASEAN and the world with over 3,800 HEIs. Along with a large number of institutions comes a huge diversity of institutional settings and a wide range in quality. In order to ensure the viability of the HE system, the Ministry of Education is currently putting a plan into place that aims to cluster institutions into different disciplinary fields and to better align HE systems accordingly.

After the presidential elections in October 2014, the Ministry of Education and the HE-sector merged with the research and technology sector. The new Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education (Kemendiknas) was thus established. HE in Indonesia is regulated by various legislations on the educational system and specifically on HE. Referring to QA, relevant decrees have been issued recently: Decree No. 49, 2015, on National Higher Education Standards; Decree 50, 2014, on IQA and EQA; and Decree 87, 2014, on the accreditation processes at study programme and institutional levels. The purpose of this new set of laws and regulations is to strengthen and improve the quality of HE.

6.2.3.1 State of Affairs of EQA and IQA

The ministry sets policies, regulations and standards for HEIs on both programme and institutional levels. Furthermore, it is in charge of IQA for Indonesia in cooperation with HEIs.

Accreditation is compulsory after the first approval to run by the ministry. Within the regulations, there are also regulations about IQA. Every HEI is expected to establish a QA office/unit. The ministry is responsible for IQA and helps to set up QA offices, for example. Nine major universities are granted full autonomy with regard to self-governance; however, their educational provision is still subject to accreditation.

The National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (NAAHE; Badan Akreditasi Nasional Perguruan Tinggi, BAN-PT in the local language) was established under the Education Law 1994-1996 in order to

ensure EQA. It is under the control of the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education. NAAHE has about 60 staff and its board members are functioning as its management. NAAHE is responsible for accreditation of HE, including technical and vocational education and training (TVET). With over 4200 institutions and 22,000 programmes (2015), NAAHE has a heavy load of accreditations to be conducted across the country with its 17,000 islands. By September 2015, 18,712 programmes and 761 institutions were accredited. Due to the vast number of programmes, it is evident that not all programmes and institutions have yet been covered. The outcomes of the accreditation process are forwarded to the ministry in order to enable decisions on follow-up activities. However, NAAHE independently makes accreditation decisions without governmental interference. The accreditation can be granted, denied, or deferred for improvement.

Programme accreditation systems and applicable instruments have been developed by NAAHE for Diploma I to III (higher professional education), for bachelor, master, and doctorate study programmes. External assessors who are appointed by NAAHE conduct the accreditations. The accreditation status is awarded according to quantitative and qualitative assessment and can range from grade A to E, with A ranking highest and E lowest (applicable to both programme and institutional accreditation). The duration of the accreditation cycle depends on when the last accreditation label was granted. It can last for a maximum of five years for A-grade accreditations. The new laws also introduced study programme closure as a potential accreditation outcome.

Recently, NAAHE's role has been in transition, evolving into an umbrella body for accreditation. With the new Higher Education Act released in 2012, the government decided to establish independent and self-financed accreditation boards in order to enhance credibility and recognition on a national and regional level. The new Lembaga Akreditasi Mandiri (LAM, Independent Accreditation Agencies) are accreditation agencies specialising in specific disciplines. The first one began operations in 2014 for study programmes in the health sector. Further LAMs are expected to be established, e.g. for engineering or agriculture. The LAMs can be privately or governmentally operated. They can be established by applying to the ministry and being reviewed by NAAHE. If the proposal fulfils the requirements, NAAHE will inform the minister and he will issue the respective decree enabling operation. The LAMs are intended to be under the supervision of NAAHE, and in the future, they will be audited. NAAHE has thus gained a new role with auditing the LAMs. It will also concentrate on study programmes that are not covered by any LAM and on institutional accreditation. The ministry's expectation toward this new system is a stronger focus on learning outcomes rather than teaching input for the entire accreditation system.

6.2.3.2 Main Findings from the Expert Interviews

In this section, we discuss major findings drawn from interviews with ministry, agency, and HEI representatives in Indonesia.

- **Challenge of number of institutions:** A general challenge for quality and QA perceived by both ministry and agency interviewees is the high number of institutions. On the one hand, there is a huge disparity in the quality of education described, but on the other hand, it is a challenge to externally evaluate the large number of programmes and institutions. According to the agency interviewees, last year alone, about 2000 accreditations could not be conducted due to limited funding, and NAAHE is not allowed to collect any fees to compensate for the gap in funding.
- **Quality disparity of HEIs:** The disparity of HEIs is a commonly perceived challenge by all actor groups. Interviewees from both the ministry and agency feel that it is difficult to have consistent quality in Indonesia. From a statistical point of view, for example, some HEIs employ about 70% of faculty staff with a PhD, whereas others only employ about 20%. Regarding accreditation, some institutions offer study programmes that are rated as 'very good' with grade A as well as international accreditations, while other institutions do not hold any accreditation at all. Both the agency and HEI representatives regard clustering HEIs, as planned by the ministry, as a possible solution.
- **Professionalisation of QA staff:** Capacity building is a need expressed by interviewees from all actor groups. For HEIs, training is needed not only for QA officers but also for faculty staff.

Assessor trainings for the new LAMs are a major need foreseen by the agency interviewees. Additionally, further requirements for capacity building of the agencies' own administrative/management staff are mentioned.

- **Need for more agency independency:** The interviewees from the agency express the need to have more independence with regard to finances, resources, and the conduct of external evaluations, which are based mostly on ministerial decrees. Increased independence is assumed to give more credibility to the accreditation for the other stakeholders. In this regard, both the NAAHE and HEI representatives welcome the newly introduced LAM (discipline-oriented agencies) as a more independent form of accreditation.
- **Organisational challenges:** The agency interviewees express the need to split the managerial role and board of NAAHE, as currently, the board is in charge of both. According to interviewees, this challenge was recognised, and it was decided to separate the board from day-to-day operations and to install an executive arm to manage NAAHE.
- **Transition to the new EQA system:** According to a ministry representative, it is a major concern of the ministry to adjust the focus of EQA processes from an input to a learning-outcome orientation. New laws and decrees were recently adopted that address the shift from input to outcome-oriented evaluation, which also introduce the new discipline-oriented agencies and National Higher Education Standards. The interviewees from all actor groups welcome these new developments. The agency interviewees understand that the new system is an opportunity to shift from a current 'one-size-fits-all' approach of accreditation to a discipline-specialised accreditation. According to the agency interviewees, the former approach was not fulfilling its purpose, but the new system is addressing the current challenges of EQA in Indonesia (e.g. the high number of institutions and programmes).
- **Risk of setting standards too high:** The actors from the agencies and HEIs both describe the new EQA system as having high requirements for most HEIs in the country. The National Higher Education Standards are especially perceived as too difficult for the majority of HEIs in Indonesia to comply with.
- **National before regional:** According to the interviewees from both the agency and the HEIs, the priority of EQA in Indonesia is, and should be, to adjust both EQA and IQA to the new laws and context. Once accomplished, the interviewees from the agency are confident that a simultaneous alignment to new national and regional contexts will be possible.
- **Regional QA alignment:** All interviewees from the ministry, agency, and HEIs support a regional QA framework. The alignment to the AQAF in Indonesia is perceived by the agency interviewees to be a viable task and an opportunity to improve their own capacity. They state that the AQAF is no different from current practices. However, implementation for the breadth of HEIs is expected to be difficult by both agency and HEIs representatives because not all institutions are ready to face regional developments (see quality disparity above). According to the HEI perspective, only some HEIs are familiar with international QA, such as AUN or ABET, and a main prerequisite for the proper implementation of a regional QA framework is a deep understanding of the framework. Clustering institutions and excluding some of the clusters from the requirements of the regional framework could be a solution according to the agency and HEIs interviewees.
- **QA regulations for collaborative programmes:** Collaborative programmes is the main quality concern by a HEI representative with regard to regionalisation. Given the many joint programmes, double degrees, etc., which are jointly implemented with foreign universities from all over the world, there are quality and QA issues that need to be considered. The current accreditation system at the institutional level in Indonesia does not consider collaborative programmes, resulting in a very specific need to address this issue.

6.2.4 Lao PDR (2015)

Lao PDR is one of the least populated countries in ASEAN. It has five universities, of which one university is under the Ministry of Health and the remaining are under the Ministry of Education and

Sports (MOES). In total, Lao PDR has 155 HEIs, including universities, academies, institutes, and colleges. Alongside the five big public universities, there are 35 public institutions under MOES, 45 institutions under other line ministries and 70 private colleges. The biggest university in Lao PDR is the National University of Laos (NUOL). It was established as a result of a merger of ten universities in 1996. The formerly independent universities now constitute the NUOL faculties.

6.2.4.1 State of Affairs of EQA and IQA

EQA in Lao is quite new and in a stage of development. In 2008, the Education Quality Assurance Centre (EQAC) was established, which is in charge of QA for the educational sector and testing. The EQAC is under the MOES and quality of education in general, i.e. not only for HE. The Department of Higher Education of the MOES works closely with the EQAC. Between 2011 and 2013, a set of institutional standards for HE were developed. Since then, further procedures for assessment have been introduced:

- For self-assessment of the institutions;
- For external assessment; and
- For TVET.

Since the finalisation of institutional standards, HEIs that offer bachelor's degrees have received trainings on QA. Until today, two external assessor trainings have taken place, offering support for a total of 55 HE professionals (e.g. rectors, deans, and directors working in both HEIs and non-HEIs, such as NGO professionals). The number of assessments varies between one to four site visits per assessor. The institutional standards can be categorised into the topics of: 'vision & mission'; 'management'; 'human resources'; 'curriculum, teaching, and learning'; and 'infrastructure, information, and research'. EQAC tries to select assessors according to these areas.

In November 2014, a first external, pilot site visit took place at NUOL. Due to the large size of NUOL, and it being the pilot for external evaluation in Lao PDR, the EQAC chose faculties as the unit of assessment. Since then, 23 pilot site visits for external evaluation according to national standards have been conducted at different HEIs.

In 2015, finalised reports were handed to EQAC by the assessors and also sent to the institutions for commenting. Currently, EQAC deals with feedback received from institutions on evaluation reports. There is currently no entity in place that is charged with making accreditation decisions (such as an accreditation board). The rules, procedures, and consequences were already drafted by EQAC, but there is no policy yet to establish an accreditation board.

In the future, MOES and EQAC would like to set up an accreditation system and accreditation committee. Accreditation is not established as a system yet, but there is a system of approval by the ministry. At the moment, HEIs need to undergo institutional and programme approval when a new institution opens.

The ministry and the EQAC are discussing how to promote EQAC as an accreditation agency. It is currently being decided whether and how far the EQAC might merge with other bodies and how to make that body more independent. Both the ministry and EQAC agree that this is a necessary future step, but it is not clear what the time frame will be for that action. The EQAC is drafting a proposal to be handed in to the Minister to set up an Educational Quality Accreditation Committee with the EQAC as a permanent secretariat. Recently, a revision of the education law from 2008 passed the assembly process, which will be announced soon. Regarding QA, a new article states that the setup of an accreditation body and EQA should be done following a five-year cycle at least.

A new decree from June 2015 (No. 177/G), which regulates the IQA for HEIs, will be announced soon. It states that all HEIs must have an independent QA unit and internal network under the board of the institution's directors. These units shall follow the conditions and standards set by MOES. It furthermore discusses the responsibilities of HEIs, such as having an internal quality management system, performing inspection and evaluation, producing information documents and reports, dissemination and transparency of external assessment reports and results, as well as following up on evaluation results.

6.2.4.2 Main Findings from the Expert Interviews

In this section, we discuss major findings drawn from expert interviews with ministry, agency, and HEI representatives from Lao PDR.

- **Challenge of small private HE providers:** According to the ministry and agency interviewees, one main national challenge of HE and quality in Lao PDR is the quality of smaller, private HEIs. An interviewee describes that they are operating without the necessary resources and that they are perceived as delivering subpar education according to society and ministry expectations. In the past ten years, many private institutions operated without strict approval or any evaluation procedures. In 2013, the Department for Private Education set up a new approval process. In 2014, the ministry announced that private institutions are not allowed to enrol any new students for BA degrees, only leaving them the option of offering courses at the diploma level. The decision was made according to data on private HEIs, such as ratio of permanent staff and teacher qualifications that did not conform to MOES regulations.
- **No clear EQA purpose:** An interviewee from the agency states that a clear purpose and function of EQA is missing in Lao PDR. The discussions about the purpose range from a focus on control of HE and a focus on the enhancement of HEIs. The interviewee reckons that currently the EQA system is focusing on control and minimum requirements. This would also be the expectation of society because of trust issues with HEIs.
- **Framework and regulations under development:** Both the ministry and agency interviewees depict the procedure of accreditation/external evaluation as being still under development. Officially, the EQAC is not an accreditation agency and accreditation regulations are missing, such as on the consequences of accreditation. An accreditation board has yet to be established in order to make accreditation decisions. An agency interviewee states that it is yet unclear whether any consequences, and if so which, will be drawn from the pilot results. There are thoughts about binding the right to exist to the outcomes of the accreditation. The EQAC is preparing a proposal to be submitted to the ministry about accreditation regulations that foresees five levels of accreditation: from the need to improve a lot to being an example of good practice. Every level would be connected to different consequences; the lowest level HEIs would receive some time to develop, but if no enhancement is seen, the consequence would be closing the institution. For better institutions, with a rating of 5, for example, re-accreditation would only happen every five years, instead of three for those who reached level 4, and every year for those who reached levels 1-3. The EQAC has also drafted assessor guidelines. According to an agency interviewee, however, they may not be useful without official regulations.
- **Assessor capacity:** According to the ministry and agency interviewees, there is a need to professionalise and build capacity for assessors. An agency interviewee describes that there is a limited number of experienced assessors on which EQAC could rely. EQAC is trying to have specialised experts from different stakeholder groups according to different fields of expertise, but it is having difficulty in finding enough experts. Furthermore, the training content is quite difficult to grasp, especially for assessors who are external to the HEIs.
- **Acceptance of reports:** An agency interviewee states that the reports of the pilot assessments are currently a challenge. Thus, some institutions agree with the pilot evaluation reports, and others have returned them with comments. EQAC is at the stage of balancing the views of both the assessors and the HEIs and is deciding how to handle any open cases.
- **Need for programme standards:** Programme standards do not currently exist but are needed according to ministry and agency interviewees. An agency interviewee reckons that it is still unclear how to cope with the high number of programmes (e.g. 200 programmes at NUOL only) and if there should be different standards for different disciplines or broader standards for all programmes.
- **Regional framework as an opportunity and a concern:** Both the ministry and agency interviewees see no major challenges regarding the technical implementation of AQAF in Lao PDR, as the framework is very basic and generic. The agency interviewee, however, addresses the need for the political backing of AQAN and the AQAF in order to create an opportunity and incentive for setting up an EQA system in Lao PDR. Generally, ASEAN standards are perceived to be of higher

value than of national ones in Lao and have more recognition according to an agency interviewee. An interviewee from the HEIs suggests that it is easier to fulfil the standards and criteria set by the national QA as opposed to the ones set by AUN-QA. There are some concerns regarding a regional HE integration, such as that HEIs cannot fulfil ASEAN standards, and thus their own graduates will not be accepted in other ASEAN countries. The other way around is not seen as a challenge.

- **More practical content and information sharing:** An agency representative expresses the view that especially for less experienced countries, such as Lao PDR, there is a need for more practical content for QA than the current draft of AQAF offers. Furthermore, the agency interviewee emphasises the importance of information sharing at the levels of EQA systems, institutions, and data on the programmes.
- **Capacity building for EQA:** The interviewees from the ministry and agency see the need for capacity building for the agency staff regarding the system of accreditation, standards and policies in particular, as well as the concept of quality in general.
- **Capacity building for IQA:** All interviewees from the three actor groups concur that there is a need for capacity building for HEIs. According to a HEI interviewee, some training events were offered by the EQAC and AUN-QA network, but there is still a need to understand and promote QA practices to both the staff in charge of QA and staff operating as faculty. Faculty members and lecturers see QA as an extra job, and the majority of academics do not understand QA and its relevance. Furthermore, lecturers have difficulties understanding the paradigm of learning outcomes-based education and only focus on their own teaching style. There is expertise missing with regard to curriculum development and revision in Lao PDR.
- **Materials, handbooks and good practice for IQA:** All actors also concur that materials and a handbook on QA in Lao language would be helpful. From the agency perspective, there is a need for guidelines and training materials on how to set up and run IQA, on the one hand, and for a national model that can function as example of good practice for other HEIs, and thus be a possible way to promote QA in institutions, on the other hand.
- **Role of AUN-QA:** An agency interviewee thinks that AUN-QA might sometimes confuse HEIs because they perceive it as accreditation. Thus, a need to clarify the role of AUN-QA in the region was expressed.

6.2.5 Malaysia (2017)

Malaysia has one of the most elaborate higher education systems within the ASEAN region. It has 20 public and 53 private universities, as well as 38 university colleges, 36 polytechnics and 366 community colleges, which are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE).

In order to further develop its higher education system's regional and global competitiveness, the Malaysian government and higher education institutions have taken a range of measures over the past years. Most significantly, the MOHE - established as a separate entity in 2004 - sees itself as an integral part of the continuous reform process. In its "Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education)", released in 2015, the Ministry claims that catalysing transformation among higher education institutions starts with transforming itself towards more efficient processes and procedures. These should be aiming to create partnerships and provide administrative support and services to the institutions, rather than operating bureaucratically in silos.

6.2.5.1 State of Play in EQA and IQA

Malaysian higher education quality assurance rests on a well-established system of internal and external procedures. Both go hand in hand, in the sense that the outcomes of internal quality assurance procedures are made an issue in the external assessments of study programme quality.

New study programmes (at public universities) are introduced (and existing programmes are re-accredited) after consultation by a committee consisting of representatives from ministries (both from

the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, as well as the Prime Minister Department's Economic Planning Unit), from the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) - the national body in charge of implementing external quality assurance procedures and accreditations - and labour market representatives. The decision on the respective approval is based on the programme's evaluation against the standards of the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF), which serves as the main reference for the assessment. The MQF is a generic framework of learning outcomes in eight different learning domains. Universities are free to "go further" and meet higher standards that go beyond the minimum requirements.

A self-assessment report submitted by the university and a peer review serve as the basis for the committee's evaluation. The report displays the results of internal quality assurance and quality development measures such as consultations with professional bodies and peer reviewers. The report also comprises student ratings, which is why students are not immediately involved in the committee.

Approved study programmes are awarded accreditation by MQA, which is a formal recognition that the respective study programme has attained the quality standards and criteria set by MQA and complies with the MQF. Universities make use of the accreditation label for advertisement purposes. Graduating from an accredited programme is a prerequisite for students to be eligible for taking over posts in the public services.

Given the high number of study programmes, MQA has decided to introduce self-accreditation as an alternative path for the universities to reach approval status for their study programmes. In this case the respective universities are granted the right to approve their programmes themselves, provided they have established a well-functioning internal quality assurance system. This internal quality assurance system is in such cases under external evaluation, and the effectiveness with which the university makes use of its self-accrediting power is monitored by MQA at five-year intervals. As of 2017, five out of 20 public universities and four other higher education institutions have been granted the self-accrediting mandate.

Public and private universities undergo a comparable procedure, and additionally a report on retrospective feedback of the first cohort of alumni on the study programme is consulted. For the period until the first cohort has graduated, the university receives a provisional accreditation to launch and implement the study programme.

In addition to the self-assessment reports submitted by the universities, there are other sources of evidence which are used to enrich the quality assurance work, namely the graduate employability survey. This is performed on a yearly basis and informs on the marketability of degrees on the labour market and on the congruence of study programmes' contents with industry requirements. However, such data is not used for control purposes. It is seen rather as an additional source of knowledge to promote universities' self-management competencies (e.g. low enrolment rates do not lead to a central ministerial decision on suspending the programme; the respective power remains in the hands of the universities, although they need to generate the necessary budget for maintaining such programmes).

The range of instruments and available data on higher education quality and quality development needs is conducive to a well-functioning quality assurance system. The strong emphasis on employability as a key quality indicator is justified as a means to protect students' interests and ensuring a return on their investment of time and funds in education. However, this could be seen as an over-emphasis on current labour market and industry requirements (which usually are rather volatile) at the expense of the long-term objectives of academic education, such as interdisciplinary thinking, personality development and problem-solving competencies.

MQA as the national body for external quality assurance procedures also maintains the Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR), which is a data source providing information on accredited study programmes (and other qualifications, such as diploma, certificates, etc.). MQR has been established by MQA on the basis of a national law (MQA Act, 2007, Act 679, section 81). It aims at informing the public on the contents and quality issues of qualifications provided by higher education institutions

and enabling stakeholders to compare the different available provisions (regarding learning outcomes, admission criteria, etc.). It also aims to facilitate credit transfer processes. Detailed information on what is listed in the MQR is available at the MQA website (<http://www2.mqa.gov.my/mqr/>).

6.2.5.2 Main Findings from the Expert Interviews

In this section, we discuss major findings drawn from expert interviews with representatives from the Ministry of Higher Education, MQA and university representatives.

- **Development paths:** For the future development of the Malaysian higher education system, internationalisation (at the regional and global level) and international competitiveness are major issues that are addressed by all interviewed stakeholders. Respective development needs refer to the requisite harmonisation of the higher education systems in the ASEAN region, in terms of administrative issues. There are similarities among some of the member states, but also great differences that need to be adjusted (e.g. education systems that have been adopted from former colonial powers). Student exchange is cultivated with both regional and overseas universities, and Malaysia is an attractive destination for international students. However, the number of incoming students from ASEAN countries like Cambodia that follow a different education system could be increased.
- **Promoting regional exchange:** AQAF is considered, by all interviewees, to be a powerful tool to promote regional exchange of students and staff in future times. However, the readiness of the ASEAN member states for a shared higher education space is estimated to be very different. This is why, for the time being, universities decide on a bilateral basis on the recognition of credits that have been awarded from universities in other ASEAN countries. In terms of overseas cooperation, the Ministry of Higher Education sustains offices in European countries in order to promote student exchange with the EU, while Malaysian-Australian co-operation relationships are already comparatively stable.
- **Acceptance of the QA approach:** External quality assurance mechanisms like programme accreditation or monitoring of the internal quality assurance system (under the self-accrediting approach) enjoy a high degree of acceptance within the universities. This noteworthy progress took place after a phase of insecurity and anxiety at the initial stage, in which many changes were introduced, such as the shift to learning outcomes as the main quality indicator. It thus served as a hint both of a well-functioning relationship of the involved stakeholders within the MOHE, MQA and the universities, and of a stable change management process. The well-functioning relationship is also confirmed by the universities. Even though the standards and mechanisms are described as prescriptive in nature in the first phase of introducing external quality assurance, there has been relaxation of the formal requirements over time, giving enough space for the universities to develop their individual quality strategy.
- **Quality assurance as quality enhancement:** It is emphasised - particularly by university representatives but also by the MOHE and the external quality assurance body - that quality assurance procedures are supposed to be an instrument to support and promote quality development or quality enhancement, rather than merely controlling the universities and monitoring their key performance indicators. Anyhow, the system has been evolving from a top-down to a more bottom-up approach with a considerable level of autonomy and self-management competency on the side of the universities. Consequently, one can state that the development of a quality culture is a shared aim of all involved stakeholders for the future development of the quality assurance system in higher education.
- **Recognition of student achievements:** A problem for the universities that might currently hinder international exchange is what is perceived to be a rigid mathematical orientation of credit transfer systems, and the need to convert different calculations for credits awarded to students. One solution could be prioritisation of the intended learning outcomes' compatibility, instead of a granular mathematical calculation of time investments needed for one credit point. Such relaxation of the "hard mathematical" requirements in the area of recognition of student achievement is already practiced by the universities. However, such a shift

requires stable quality assurance mechanisms and elaborate recognition practice among all sides involved. Another (rather minor) issue that might slow down the development of student mobility is the different academic calendars in the different countries, with some of them starting their lecture periods earlier than others and thus students losing time.

- **Clear structure of responsibilities:** Challenges to the quality assurance system can be found in partly confusing responsibilities for the overall management of higher education, according to university representatives. Most of the universities are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education. However, other ministries are entitled to open niche universities, e.g. specialised medical schools that are supervised by the Ministry of Health. In these cases, the outlined accreditation system that is performed by MQA does not apply, resulting in the utilisation of different sets of standards which might hinder a full compatibility of degrees and learning outcomes.
- **Adaptation of changing standards:** Rapidly changing standards against which the judgments are made pose another challenge for the universities. It can happen that two cohorts of students study under different study documents and regulations due to changes in the respective requirements that have been introduced during a comparatively short period of time. From the viewpoint of the interviewed universities, it is necessary to keep the standards as generic and non-prescriptive but flexibly adoptable as possible.
- **Sustainable institutionalisation of internal quality assurance:** Another challenge is the budgetary situation of small and remote universities, which are in part not able to sustain a quality assurance unit and thus cannot make use of their formal autonomy. Since the Malaysian system of quality assurance is very elaborate, it requires all universities to keep up with the respective standards of managerial proficiency. This is a challenge to those who are not operating under the most favourable conditions. Generally, though, the idea of establishing and sustaining quality assurance units (of whatever nature; be they organised centrally, in a decentralised way, or in the hands of individuals) is a very welcome means of strengthening universities' autonomy and self-management competency.

6.2.6 Myanmar (2015)

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar has recently started to open its HE system and is rapidly changing in order to catch up with international standards and developments. Thus, universities are currently preparing to be more autonomous and setting up offices for international affairs. Besides working on a national qualifications framework, currently there are also efforts to set up a national QA framework. Myanmar's HE system has many smaller universities specialising in a certain discipline (e.g. medicine and engineering). They are under the supervision of different ministries (13 in total), but recently, budgetary matters have all been put under the Ministry of Education (MOE).

There are 158 universities in Myanmar of which 47 report to the MOE. Currently, there is no private university sector in Myanmar. A new law on private HEIs is being drafted and, if agreed, will make it possible to set up private universities in the future.

6.2.6.1 State of Affairs of EQA and IQA

Until now, universities in Myanmar have little-to-no experience with QA. Some technical universities seem to be on the forefront. This is due, on the one hand, to international standards and regulations that have to be complied with in the field of engineering and, on the other hand, to the efforts of the Myanmar Engineering Council, which has established an Engineering Education Accreditation Committee. This committee published an accreditation manual in October 2015 and is promoting accreditation with trainings and initial accreditation exercises as supported by the Federation of Engineering Institutions of Asia Pacific (FEIAP). In October 2015, eight programmes at Yangon Technological University (YTU), and another five or more programme evaluations by the end of the year, will be accredited.

The Engineering Education Accreditation Committee (EEAC) is an independent body and was delegated by the Myanmar Engineering Council, a non-governmental organisation, to be the body for accreditation of engineering programmes in Myanmar. The EEAC accredits programmes that award bachelor's degrees under the Ministry of Education. If and how it is connected to the national EQA framework that will be set up remains to be seen. Similar to the engineering profession, there have been QA activities as well for the medical profession and under the Ministry of Labour (MOL) with the National Skills Standard Authority (NSSA). The Ministry of Labour is responsible for technical vocational education and training (TVET) and is cooperating with the International Labour Organization (ILO) for expertise and training on QA.

Regarding policymaking, a new national education law was amended in July 2015. A working group under the Ministry of Education is in charge to set up a committee for QA to design a qualification framework. The law states that a top body for HE is to be established which will be the National Education Policy Commission (NEPC). This commission will form the National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee (NAQAC), which will be the national EQA body and probably be responsible for the whole HE system. NAQAC will be an independent body, and financed by the MOE, with members from academia. The new body for EQA will have to cooperate with the already existing bodies mentioned above.

The new law further dictates that every institution must have an IQA system and that the national QA body must assess every institution. Once the NAQAC has been established, it will be responsible to set the standards and procedures. Currently, a preparation-working group for NAQAC is starting to draft options for EQA and is also involved in drafting the NQF.

The working group's first ideas for how to setup the EQA system focus on the programme level. Regarding the assessments, the working group plans to deploy experts from relevant disciplines in the assessor teams and maybe include foreign experts as well. Regarding the purpose and function, the working group wants to have the system focus on continuous quality enhancement. These are, however, only first ideas that will need to be discussed and decided in the NAQAC.

Relating to IQA, there are only few experiences in universities in Myanmar. Only a few universities already have QA unit. The Myanmar Maritime University (MMU), who is ISO certified, is on the national forefront on this and has one programme assessed and certified under AUN-QA in the frame of the first ASEAN-QA project. The situation of MMU is special in Myanmar due to its disciplinary focus; it is under the Ministry of Transport and has to comply with the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) standards with regard to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW). Thus, for the last ten years, MMU is one of the first universities in Myanmar to engage in QA.

6.2.6.2 Main Findings from the Expert Interviews

In this section, we discuss major findings drawn from the expert interviews with working group representatives in charge of preparing for the NAQAC, the EEAC, and HEI representatives from Myanmar.

- **Support to setup EQA as a key priority:** According to the interviewees from the working group and EEAC, as Myanmar is only starting with QA, there is a strong need for support and training. One main aspect is the policy and implementation level for the NAQAC, which will act as the EQA body. It is not clear yet, how the committee will work or what it should start to work on. The interviewees from the working group reckon that the committee will need to acquire knowledge on how to create its own standards and guidelines and determine the kind of external evaluation scheme that it wants to adopt. One anticipated challenge found in the interviews is to define the purposes of the EQA system.
- **Assessor capacity:** A further main need expressed by the working group and other interviewees from the HEIs and the EEAC is assessor capacity. Myanmar currently has almost no assessor resources that the NAQAC can rely on. Mixed assessor teams with international experts would be an option that the current working group in charge of preparing for NAQAC is strongly considering.
- **Support to set up IQA:** Not many universities have experiences with ensuring their own QA. To some extent, universities in Myanmar are familiar with AUN-QA. These are mainly the universities under the MOE umbrella, as they partaken in cascade trainings regarding AUN-QA standards. According to some interviewees, universities were mainly involved in ‘touching and reading’ at the moment. National workshops were conducted by MMU and EEAC.
- **Cascade trainings:** Different trainings and workshops on QA knowledge multiplication in the country were already conducted in Burmese. Some of the interviewees state that training in the local language would allow a more speedy and effective multiplication in the universities. The working group, however, sees no challenge in train-the-trainer activities in English. Both EEAC and MMU are active in holding workshops and have received requests to share their experiences. MMU shared their experience with ISO, AUN-QA, and more generally, on quality management systems with universities from different disciplines (engineering, medicine, nursing), the Myanmar Engineering Society (20-30 universities), and the Defence Academy. MMU received requests for training and advice on SAR writing from many HEIs, for example. About 30 universities have received some sort of training by MMU by now. The EEAC is organising trainings for technical universities and is very committed to supporting QA in Myanmar; about two workshops per month are being held, with 11 technical universities having already participated.
- **Funding for QA:** Some interviewees describe funding as being a lesser challenge in comparison to capacity. According to an interviewee, there is currently increased funding for QA available to universities, but universities fail to request it.
- **University management and autonomy:** Both autonomy and university management are new to HEIs in Myanmar and are recognised to be key needs for capacity and understanding by different interviewees from the working group, HEIs, and EEAC.
According to the interviewees, universities in Myanmar will be given more autonomy in the near future. The HE system is transforming from a top-down system with uniformity to a decentralised management system. The HEIs are currently setting up own charters, which will enable them to set up university councils and academic senates. They will have more freedom in teaching and learning, such as offering study programmes, curricula, and financial matters. Currently, ministry and government examination have selected all but support staff, but the government does initiate exchange of rectors on the topic of HE management with other countries. With this transition, HEIs are starting to open new departments, such as international offices and QA units. Generally, where it was difficult to have international exchange and travelling in the past, the processes are now much quicker and easier.
- **Staff rotation as a challenge:** The staff rotation is perceived to be a challenge by almost all interviewees. As all HEI employees are civil servants, the government can decide to rotate staffs about every three years, which includes the rectorate of universities. Most of the staff want to stay in the metropolitan areas like Yangon and do not want to teach in the more remote regions.

This fluctuation makes it difficult for the universities with regard to ensuring knowledge management and planning stability and will also make it an issue for QA.

- **Remote areas:** A concern expressed in some of the interviews was the quality of HEIs in remote areas. The implementation of QA systems in the metropolitan cities is perceived to be manageable, but in the remote states, the connection, communication, transportation, and the higher risk of natural disasters are anticipated to make it more difficult to introduce QA and enhance quality. The quality of education in the remote areas is described as not living up to quality standards in big cities. The reason presented is that most teaching staff does not want to work in remote areas. However, this is the reason why the staff rotation system exists in the first place.
- **Regional integration as an opportunity and a concern:** With regard to a regional QA framework, following regional standards and criteria is seen by the working group interviewees as an opportunity to set up a national system. The working group interviewees are further considering aligning their own standards to the ones established by AUN-QA on a programme level for Myanmar. Some of the interviewees fear that it will be hard for Myanmar, and the CLMV countries in general, to keep up with countries like Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines. They are also concerned that this will have the initial consequence of losing jobs for Myanmar's students/employees. However, this possibility is also described as a strong argument for QA, and a reason why quality and QA must be aligned in the region.
- **Teaching competencies:** An interviewee declares that there is a need for capacity building in the field of teaching competencies because they seem rather low at the moment, and there are currently no centres or units in place that offer training for HE didactics.

6.2.7 Philippines (2015)

The HE system in the Philippines is the oldest in ASEAN and it is still very much influenced by the Spanish and American systems due to its colonial past. The Philippine Accrediting Association for Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU) was registered in 1957, rendering it the oldest accreditation agency in ASEAN and one of the oldest in the world.

Since 1997, education responsibility in the Philippines has been split between the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) for HE, the Department of Education for further education, and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority for technical, vocational, and middle-level education. The CHED is working directly under the Office of the President. The CHED licences, controls, and supervises HEIs, both public and private. The private sector constitutes almost 90% of the total number of HEIs, with a large number of institutions having a religious affiliation. The HEIs are very heterogeneous in their quality and size, with about half of the institutions having only 500 students or less. Many institutions only offer college programmes, as the law states that for HEI classification, there is only the need of a single degree programme. This classification is currently under review.

In comparison with other EQA frameworks in ASEAN, one main difference is that accreditation is voluntary, which makes the system in the Philippines unique.

6.2.7.1 State of Affairs of EQA and IQA

The Philippines have different QA mechanisms in place, both on an institutional and programme level, which are carried out by the CHED and private agencies. Accreditation is one of the mechanisms, and due to its voluntary nature, the accreditation system in the Philippines does not interfere with the institutions' eligibility to award degrees and credits. It focuses primarily on programmes, granting different levels, with institutional accreditation being the highest level.

Apart from voluntary accreditation, there are mandatory and voluntary QA mechanisms directly conducted by the CHED. Unlike public institutions, private institutions need an initial permit and recognition by the CHED to operate and offer new programmes. All private programmes have to receive recognition before the first students graduate. This is mainly achieved by the assessment of inputs.

The CHED reviews the programmes with their own regional QA teams specialised in the minimum standards for different disciplines. The policies, standards, and guidelines (PSG) are drafted by technical panels and go through consultation with the commission and public hearings before they are published. The technical panels, which set the standards and guidelines, cover about 90 programmes.

Another voluntary QA mechanism is the CHED's Centres of Excellence (COE) and Centres of Development (COD) programmes. Institutions can apply with programmes from specific fields outlined by the CHED to become a COE or COD. The applications are assessed according to criteria and by technical experts visiting the institution who then validate the documents submitted. Centres benefit from having priority in the selection of institutional partners, and possibility to receive non-monetary subsidies and awards, such as graduate scholarships for faculty members. They also benefit by having priority for CHED research grants, which increases consideration for conversion to university status and identification as autonomous and deregulated HEIs. Also, COE and COD can request financial assistance through project proposals.

There are different accreditation agencies that specialise either in public or private HEIs. Private HEIs can be accredited by the Association of Christian Schools, Colleges and Universities Accrediting Agency, Inc. (ACSCU-AAI), the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU), or the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA). The three agencies operate under the umbrella of the Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP), which was founded in 1977.

Public institutions can currently be accredited by two agencies: the Accrediting Association of Chartered Colleges and Universities of the Philippines (AACCU) and the Association of Local Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (ALCU). Both operate under the National Network of Quality Accrediting Agencies (NNQA).

The accreditation standards set by the federations are based on the CHED's programme PSGs and go beyond these minimum standards. The process of accreditation follows common self-evaluation, on-site assessment, and peer report and verdict steps. The outcome of accreditation in the Philippines can reach different levels and benefits, as outlined in the CHED Order No. 1, s. 2005 (revised Policies on Voluntary Accreditation and Deregulation):

- The candidate status is given to the institutions or programmes that are pre-assessed by the agencies as being capable of earning accreditation within one to two years.
- Levels 1 and 2 give full administrative deregulation and financial deregulation with regard to tuition and other fees, revision of curricula without the CHED's approval, and priority in awards of grants/subsidies and funding from the CHED. The difference between Levels 1 and 2 is only the length of the granted accreditation time; while for Level 1 it is three years, for Level 2 it is five years.
- Level 3 can be granted only when programmes have been re-accredited. In addition to the benefits already gained, the programme receives the benefits of: offering new courses without prior approval, offering new graduate programmes, offering open-learning and distance education, and offering extension classes and transnational education.
- After five years of Level 3 accreditation status, programmes can apply for Level 4. The benefit that they receive in addition to those of the lower levels is full autonomy for the duration of the accreditation status. They can also offer further new graduate programme, open learning and distance education, and extension classes without need of approval by the CHED.
- Institutional accreditation is granted based on consideration of the general accreditation status of programmes of the institution (e.g. 75% of programmes need to be accredited and at least one programme must have Level 4 status) and an evaluation of the quality of facilities, services, and faculty. The levels are not permanently granted and programmes can theoretically drop from Level 4 back to Level 1 after re-accreditation.

As public institutions already possess most of the benefits reachable by level, regarding the criteria of curriculum and administration, for them, the levels are instead used to recommend budget allocation. Accredited public HEIs enjoy *inter alia* priority for funding assistance from the CHED for scholarships, faculty development, and facility improvement.

The University of the Philippines (UP) is the largest major university in the country and an example of an autonomous university. Comparable to the Vietnam National Universities, it is composed of many faculties that *per se* are like small universities themselves. UP does not have a centre for QA, but QA is assigned to faculty members. Although UP is not obliged to undergo accreditation, the current management is in favour of more formalised approaches to QA. UP currently follows the CHED's policies, standards, and guidelines and currently develops the IQA system. Furthermore, self-assessments at the study programme level are performed unregularly. Although the CHED is in charge of monitoring HEIs, this arrangement does not apply to UP because of its autonomous status.

Without legal force to establish a QA centre in HEIs, QA responsibility is often not in the hands of a respective centre but, for example, put on the other departments, such as the international office.

6.2.7.2 Main Findings from the Expert Interviews

In this section, we discuss major findings drawn from the expert interviews with representatives from the CHED, the agencies, and HEIs in the Philippines.

- **Accreditation coverage:** Both the CHED and agency interviewees regard the number of current accreditations as too low. Not even half of the institutions in the Philippines are accredited yet. State HEIs are described to have zero or almost zero experience with QA because they are not subject to it. Another reason for the limited coverage is the small number of accreditation bodies and their limited resources. The assessors are seen to be at full capacity as their main duties lie within the HEIs. The CHED wants to expand the accreditation system and to reclassify or redefine the classification of institutions both vertically and horizontally. Currently, an institution can have a very limited variety of disciplines and still be classified as a university.
- **Enhance accreditation capacity:** According to an interviewee, the CHED aims to enhance accreditation capacity and to establish professional accrediting bodies for professions alongside the already existing intra-university accreditation bodies. This new movement brought up differences between the CHED and the accreditation bodies. The interviewee thinks that the agencies fear a shift away from an academic approach. While the CHED does not see alternative options to expanding the accreditation system, according to an interviewee from the CHED, others argue that the professional bodies would be incapable of conducting accreditation because they do not come from academia. Other voices in the discussion perceive a potential conflict of interest with peers coming from HEIs.
- **Need for certification of QA agencies:** One major need declared by a CHED interviewee is a sort of certification of the QA agencies in the Philippines. As a regulatory body, the CHED does not consider itself to be in the position to fulfil such a role. A suggestion in this regard is that AQAN could fill this role.
- **Relation between programme and institutional accreditation:** There are currently two schools of thought on institutional QA according to an interviewee. The current approach of the accrediting bodies is that institutional quality is reached when, among other criteria, 75% of the programmes are accredited. An interviewee criticises this approach as a programme-based institutional accreditation that does not reflect the quality of the institution. This is the reason why the CHED pushes for the separation of institutional and programme QA.
- **Shift from teaching to learning:** According to an interviewee, HE in the Philippines is traditionally very teacher centred. Only after much protest in 2002, was there a shift to learning outcome-based education and learning competency-based standards, tests, and policies. Still, the shift is perceived to be very much on paper only, as teachers still execute their traditional way of teaching under the umbrella of academic freedom. The interviewee describes that the concept of learning outcome-based education is still not fully understood in the faculties and that HEIs are not used to it.

- **Shift from input to outcome evaluation:** An interviewee from the CHED characterises current accreditation as being mostly input oriented, which is seen as important per se, but may need consideration as the CHED wants to push for learning outcome-based education and, therefore, needs to revise the use of instruments too.
- **Different QA development stages for private and public HEIs:** An interviewee from the HEI compares the QA capacity of the more advanced private universities, which is generally well developed, with that of the public HEIs, which is not. Public HEIs are assessed to have almost no knowledge about QA, as they are not subject to accreditation.
- **Regional QA framework as a useful and needed tool:** A regional framework for QA is eagerly expected and welcomed by interviewees from all actor groups. A main benefit of a regional QA is seen as support for student mobility. The interviewees all see the framework as a possible reference point that could support their own work, be it for the EQA system, instruments, or the HEIs' IQA. The AQAF is regarded as setting principles that help design their own system and QA equivalent with other ASEAN countries but do not define what QA actually means. A further opportunity pronounced is that the regional framework will help the Philippines' HE landscape know where it stands (particularly in comparison with other national HE Systems in the region) and how to move forward. The regional framework is also welcome, as it can resolve national debates; a CHED interviewee expects the regional framework to be more authoritative, and thus forceful, than the national regulations and policies in the Philippines. In order to unfold its potential acceptance and user-friendliness, a suggestion from the interviews was that it should furthermore be written in the language of HEIs.

An HEI interviewee stated that a regional framework could help push development in HEIs and serve as a background against which an internal strategy could be elaborated and multiplied within. A prerequisite would be transparency regarding the framework's purpose. According to the interviewee, a regional framework should support HEIs in their attempt to develop a home-grown systematic approach to QA. If they are forced, or contradictory with the local understanding of quality, the standards would not be accepted.

- **Too many actors and approaches in the QA arena:** A HEI interviewee perceives a high amount of uncertainty about what the different actors in the region are doing exactly (e.g. AQAN, AUN, SEAMEO), and also internationally, there seems to be the view that too many actors and movements are operating (Washington Accord, Seoul Accord, etc.). This would all be hard to grasp for newcomers, especially when structures are unstable and actors are changing. Available information on what is going on in ASEAN is perceived more as gossip than reliable information that would be guiding policy.
- **Challenge for HEIs to comply with regional framework:** Interviewees from the agency and HEIs foresee challenges for HEIs who are not yet accredited. Many would not meet the national accreditation requirements and, therefore, may struggle to comply with regional standards. Some HEIs are pushing to be accredited now because they are aware of developments in ASEAN.
- **Resistance to regional harmonisation within HEIs:** A HEI interviewee thinks that faculty staff is very proud of their own systems and dislikes the idea of turning HE and graduates into a product that is marketed around the region. With regional harmonisation of HE, some staff fear a commercialisation of teaching and learning.
- **Capacity building for agencies and HEIs:** On the agencies side, there are calls for measurements to support the agencies and HEIs in their attempts to comply with the new ASEAN requirements and to make policy considerations and revisions accordingly. Furthermore, the institutions have to be oriented and guided.

From the HEI point of view, there is a strong need for QA-specific training of faculty members and for the establishment of a 'quality culture'. Internal forces for QA exist and are a prerequisite, but there is also the need for an external driving force, as otherwise, faculties would not understand and engage in (voluntary) QA.

6.2.8 Singapore (2017)

Singapore relies strongly on its well-trained workforce, and thus invests a remarkable 19.96% of its total government expenditure on education (compare: Germany: 11.04%; Japan: 9.58%; UK 12.93%). 35.28% of these funds are allocated to higher education (UNESCO UIS 2013). The higher education landscape is characterised mainly by public institutions, with the recent addition of a sixth autonomous university, the Singapore University of Social Sciences¹⁴ (SUSS). The 35 private higher education institutions are either entirely of foreign origin or local institutes, colleges or schools offering foreign degrees and diplomas. Some of the public universities are among the top universities, not only in the ASEAN and the Asian-Pacific region, but also worldwide (e.g. Times Higher Education Ranking, QS World Rankings).

The Ministry of Education (MOE) oversees all educational sectors, from primary to higher education. The private education sector is regulated by the Committee for Private Education (CPE, formerly Council) under the leadership of the SkillsFuture Singapore Agency which was established in 2016 (SkillsFuture Singapore Agency Act 2016) by restructuring the former Council for Private Education and the Singapore Workforce Development Agency. SkillsFuture is a relatively new statutory body under the MOE, with the responsibility of overseeing training and lifelong learning for the workforce in Singapore. It supervises the entire post-secondary education and training landscape. Private education in Singapore is characterised by transnational education and different models thereof: From local institutions only sustaining the facilities and flying in lecturers from abroad to institutions offering entire study programmes from foreign universities with staff recruited in Singapore. The power to award higher education degrees in Singapore is solely in the hands of the public institutions, whereas private providers are currently not allowed to do so in their own name. The majority of degrees offered by private education institutions thus originate from the United Kingdom or Australia.

6.2.8.1 State of Play in EQA and IQA

Singapore has separate quality assurance frameworks for the public and private higher education sectors.

Since 2006, Singapore has been granting greater autonomy to public universities, starting with the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Singapore Management University (SMU), upon the recommendation of the University Autonomy, Governance and Funding Steering Committee (“NUS, NTU, SMU” 2005). Public universities’ accountability is stipulated under the Quality Assurance Framework for Universities (QAFU), which was introduced in 2004. (“Steering Committee to Review” 2005) The objective of the QAFU is to enhance the overall quality of the institutions and to reinforce institutional best practices. The QAFU focuses on five areas: 1) governance and leadership, 2) management and strategic planning, 3) teaching and learning, 4) service, and 5) research. The purpose of the framework is to ensure that quality education is provided and that the universities’ systems and structures are aligned with their mission. The QAFU is further supposed to encourage continuous improvement by complementing the internal quality assurance systems of the universities.

The QAFU follows a cyclical logic which is completed every five years, taking the steps of an internal self-assessment, and external validation with a five-day on-site visit by a mixed local and international external review panel (ERP) appointed by the MOE. The panel consists of corporate leaders, industry professionals and academics. Upon submission of the panel’s report with feedback and recommendations, the university under review hands in a quality improvement project proposal and reports on the progress of the follow-up on a yearly basis. The framework and review does not include a ranking or comparison of the universities, although the same ERP reviews all the public universities.

According to the Private Education Act (2009, revised 2011) any institution offering secondary education that results in a qualification, certificate, diploma or degree must register under the Enhanced

¹⁴ SUSS is currently being restructured from the private SIM University to become the sixth autonomous and public funded university.

Registration Framework (ERF). This applies to the full spectrum of private education providers, from schools offering single courses to institutions offering bachelor and master degree programmes. The registration focuses on the structures that the institutions have in place to deliver the programmes, by checking corporate governance, legal registration and premises. The curriculum as such is not under review, since that is in the hands of the foreign home university and its legislation.

External quality assurance for private institutions by the CPE is twofold: According to the Private Education Act (2009, revised 2011), the institutions must register under the ERF. The eligibility period varies according to the institution's performance regarding the reviewed criteria. Furthermore, the EduTrust certification was introduced in 2009 as a voluntary quality assurance scheme. A renewed version has been released in the beginning of 2017. Since October 2016, institutions which offer foreign degree programmes must undergo the EduTrust scheme, whereas for non-degree programmes it is still voluntary. EduTrust assesses the systems and processes which the respective institution has in place in order to deliver its study programmes. The framework is based on seven criteria focussing on corporate governance, academic systems and processes, and the overall quality assurance system. Depending on performance, the school will receive a score and a mark. The assessors of the EduTrust system are staff of the CPE.

EduTrust only looks at institutions located in Singapore. The programme itself is subject to the requirements of the source country. The CPE conducts an own assessment of the source country's system to make sure it is robust. Programmes originating from such systems are classified to be legitimate to be offered in Singapore both by foreign or local institutions. The responsibility for academic quality rests with the institution and their partners.

6.2.8.2 Main Findings from the Expert Interviews

In this section, we discuss major findings drawn from expert interviews with representatives from the ministry and both public and private universities.

- **Regionalisation to support mobility and recognition:** A regional quality assurance framework is appraised as being beneficial by almost all interviewees, and estimated to be supportive of promoting mobility and recognition. One interviewee from a university also sees the chance to reduce cultural differences and to be able to expect the same skills and knowledge in the region.
- **Importance of best practice and benefit of a regional framework:** Interviewees from both private and public universities agree that it is crucial for Singapore and its higher education institutions to create benefit from adopting an ASEAN quality assurance framework and the respective standards. For the public universities, though, it would hardly be a challenge to implement such a regional framework, given the fact that the existing system is aligned with best practices of universities across the world. One interviewee stated that regardless of whether the implementation was profitable for Singapore, the opportunities should at least outweigh the potential risks. Another interviewee underlined that such a framework needs to be aligned with best practice for it to be worth implementing, rather than being the politically sound thing to do.
- **Challenge of diversity and language in ASEAN:** Some of the interviewees, originating from all stakeholder groups, addressed the challenge of implementing an ASEAN quality assurance framework amid the different cultures and diversity of the region. One interviewee suggested that students' English language proficiency might not be adequate in the region, and that a common language would help expedite growth. It is also discussed that Southeast Asia is seen to be more diverse than Europe, since political and economic persuasions are not alike. Europe and Southeast Asia are considered to be at different stages of development, and pursuing different objectives of integration.
- **Doubts and difficulty of agreement:** Given the diversity of systems and cultures in ASEAN, one of the interviewees sees the difficulty in agreeing on a certain comparability system, given that the systems and stages are quite heterogeneous. Another interviewee raised serious concerns about the feasibility of implementing a regional framework that will allow countries to award degrees only if accredited by the framework.

- ***Private (transnational education) is not seen to be affected by a regional framework:*** The interviewees from the private education sector see only minimal influence of a regional framework on private education in Singapore, given that the degrees awarded from private institutions are under foreign, non-ASEAN legislation and thus subject to their own QA frameworks. Further, even the admission of students is in the hands of the foreign institution. A university representative apprehends that the foreign education providers might not see the need to meet ASEAN standards. One interviewee pointed out, though, that a regional framework could make it easier to decide on which programmes are approved in Singapore for private higher education.
- ***Challenge of regulating transnational education:*** An interviewee from the ministry sees a challenge in regulating transnational education in Singapore, due to the fact that only a local entity can be regulated and there is almost no Singaporean influence on the programmes or curricula.
- ***Importance of regional exchange and networking:*** In regard to regionalisation, an interviewee from the universities underlines the importance of universities growing together in the region, as they cannot afford to be isolated. Singapore can take the role of facilitating the growth of universities in Southeast Asia by means of student and staff exchange, although outbound mobility from Singapore towards other ASEAN countries is very low. An added value of regionalisation for Singapore is seen in becoming a hub in Southeast Asia to facilitate the flow of talent by building a network of top universities. Through such a network, universities in Southeast Asia would be able to grow.
- ***Benefit from autonomous system:*** The system for public universities is seen to be functioning well, according to an interviewee from public universities. The autonomous system with its accountability framework has enhanced flexibility in comparison to the previous oversight system, and new opportunities have arisen, thanks to the possibility of universities making their own decisions.
- ***Resources as a main quality driver:*** One university representative addressed the importance of resources as being key to quality, especially in the human resources field. Institutions from other ASEAN countries may not have similar resources, thus struggling to meet quality criteria.

6.2.9 Thailand (2017)

The introduction of modern higher education in Thailand dates back to the founding of Chulalongkorn University in 1917, initially with the purpose of training personnel for government service (Prangpatanpon 1996). As with some countries in Europe, the Thai student enrolment numbers are predicted to decrease. Thailand has a Ministry of Education (MOE) supervising all educational sectors. For higher education, the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC) under the MOE is in charge, overseeing 155 institutions, of which 75 are private. During the field time for the study, plans were underway to establish a separate Ministry for Higher Education by upgrading OHEC, in order to give higher education more importance. Such a ministry had already existed in the past with the Ministry of University Affairs, which was dissolved in 2003 and made a part of the current Ministry of Education, together with the former Ministry of Education and the National Education Council.

The Thai higher education landscape is characterised by public, private and autonomous institutions. While the public and private institutions are overseen by the OHEC, the autonomous universities have their own administrative structure and budgeting.

6.2.9.1 State of Play in EQA and IQA

The National Education Act of B.E. 2542 (1999), which was amended with the Second National Education Act of B.E. 2542 (2002), defines the basis for external and internal quality assurance in Thailand.

The internal quality assurance (IQA) is defined therein to be "regarded as part of educational administration, which must be a continuous process. This requires preparation of annual reports to be submitted to parent organizations, agencies concerned and made available to the public for purpose of improving the educational quality and standards and external quality assurance" (Second National Education Act of B.E. 2542 2002).

The National Education Act further included the establishment of an Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA), which is responsible for criteria and methods of external evaluation and for conducting evaluation of educational achievements to assess the quality of institutions. The cycle of external quality assurance is set to be every five years, by the Second National Education Act of B.E. 2542 (2002).

IQA in Thailand is to be carried out by "personnel of the institutions concerned or by parent bodies with jurisdiction over these institutions" (Second National Education Act of B.E. 2542 2002). The OHEC has set up an IQA framework and processes which require the institutions to prepare and hand in an annual self-assessment report at institutional level. Every three years, OHEC will then delegate an assessor team to conduct a site visit. OHEC has a Committee for Internal Quality Assurance in Higher Education which is in charge of developing criteria and procedures to enhance, support and develop IQA.

Since 2013, OHEC has also introduced the assessment of the programme level with two sets of criteria: some of which serve as a minimum requirement and some for further development.

Some universities have negotiated with OHEC to use other systems like EdPEX (Education Criteria for Performance Excellence), which is a quality assurance system based on the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program from the United States. Universities using this system still need to send OHEC a so called "common data set" every year.

With regard to the criteria and guidelines for internal quality assurance in higher education from 9 December 2014, OHEC allows other quality assurance systems such as international frameworks at institutional, department/faculty or programme level like AUN-QA or EdPEX or even systems developed by the institution itself. The self-developed systems need to be approved by the University Council and by the Higher Education Internal Quality Assurance Committee of OHEC.

Universities are categorised in different groups (e.g. to be eligible to call themselves research universities) and are assessed accordingly against the same indicators but with different weight. For example, for one group of institutions the minimum requirement regarding lecturers with PhD is 30%, and for another it is 60%.

There has been a lot of pressure on OHEC to approve other standards too, as universities felt the standards were not always fitting their situation well. For example, some would specialise in teaching and still be assessed against research criteria. That is why OHEC approved other systems and criteria, too. However, some basic information will be required to be submitted to OHEC using a common data set.

The Council of University Presidents of Thailand (CUPT)¹⁵ has developed their own criteria, given that in their eyes the systems of OHEC and ONESQA are not compatible with the vision and strategies of all universities. CUPT therefore submitted a petition to discuss the criteria of OHEC and ONESQA. This way the CUPT proposed to use relevant criteria of OHEC and ONESQA and of the universities themselves (CUPT-QA) in 2013. However, the method of assessment is different, focusing more on the process. CUPT-QA is supposed to serve as a set of indicators, used in a transition phase, in order to help the system(s) to become more mature. Eventually, it is supposed to lead to EdPEX, which is

¹⁵ CUPT includes higher management representatives from mostly the older, more renowned universities.

widely seen as the most advanced system and is widely accepted. It was started by OHEC in 2010, but has remained difficult to implement for universities.

At the programme level, on the other hand, the CUPT opted to use AUN-QA for the future. Currently, some CUPT universities use EdPEX at institutional level and OHEC at programme level. Yet others use AUN-QA at programme level.

ONESQA develops and conducts external quality assurance for all educational sectors in Thailand, from early childhood to higher education. The number of institutions is about 60.000. With the 5-year cycle of assessment that the National Education Act prescribes, ONESQA is conducting roughly 12.000 assessments per year.

ONESQA is a public organisation, and directly under the authority of the office of the Prime Minister of Thailand and as such not under the MOE. The highest decision- and policy-making body for ONESQA is its Executive Board, composed of stakeholders from the private sector and institutions.

The assessment scheme of ONESQA is mandatory for both public and private universities. Until 2017, ONESQA has done three rounds of assessment, starting in 2001. The first round focused on the introduction of the EQA system (2001-2005) and was done without final judgement on the respective programme's quality. The assessment of the second and third rounds was further developed, and the decision of pass or fail was introduced with five possible levels of assessment results: "very good", "good", "fair", "need of improvement" and "lower than average". With "lower than average" the institution would not pass, but it would be able to apply for a site revisit within one year after the first site visit.

The assessment is based on quantitative rather than qualitative criteria. The third round further introduced assessment not only on an institutional level but also at the faculty level. For that matter, assessors were chosen according to their discipline-match with the respective faculty/department.

Assessors are evaluated by ONESQA for each concluded assessment by sending a questionnaire to the universities asking for feedback.

The fourth round should have started in 2016, but due to reforms in education, it had not done so at the time of writing of this study (March 2017). It is finally supposed to pilot in mid-2017. ONESQA has been working with different groups under the Ministry of Education to further develop the QA system.

The planned changes are designed to shift the emphasis to a more qualitative assessment than in the past three rounds. While some basic indicators will remain the same, the changes for the fourth round will be¹⁶:

- The assessment will be on the key performance indicators (KPI) standards set by the institutions themselves (e.g. according to the system they chose);
- ONESQA will carry out the assessment and look at the output, outcome and the impact. It will further emphasise areas of improvement, and which processes are well functioning.
- To introduce assessors with field expertise in the different systems like the Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (EdPEX) and the ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance (AUN-QA);
- OHEC will send one assessor to complement the ONESQA assessors;
- There will be no pass or fail decision, but a four-scale outcome ("very good", "good", "average" and "need for improvement") with recommendations for improvement instead;
- Automated QA will be started, i.e. a system to submit the self-assessment report (SAR) online. In the fourth round, institutions will be encouraged to make use of the online tool. This is expected to speed up the whole process and make it easier to provide more information.

Besides assessments for quality assurance by OHEC and ONESQA, audits at programme level for the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Thailand (TQF 2010) are also conducted

¹⁶ The changes still need to be approved by the cabinet before ONESQA can initiate the fourth round. All information about the fourth round is subject to change and supplied without liability.

on a yearly basis. The OHEC enforces self-assessment reports for TQF 1 to TQF 7, where TQF 1 is the standard national curriculum outline.

If programmes pass the audit at a very good level, they will be recognised and registered under the Thai Qualifications Registry (TQR).

Currently, both OHEC and ONESQA are in a transition phase, with, as yet, an unclear outcome of the direction for the national quality assurance system. The current separation between EQA and IQA is in line with the distribution of responsibilities, with OHEC focusing on input and process, and ONESQA intended to focus on output and outcome.

Given the probable setup of a new ministry in charge of higher education, both OHEC and ONESQA have currently put on hold any new developments of their systems.

6.2.9.2 Main Findings from the Expert Interviews

In this section, we discuss major findings drawn from expert interviews with representatives from OHEC, ONESQA and both public and private universities.

- ***Overlap and confusion between EQA and IQA:*** All the stakeholders that were interviewed highlighted that there has been an overlap of the exercises carried out by OHEC and ONESQA, which places a burden on the universities. Although the exercise by OHEC is labelled “IQA” and the one by ONESQA “EQA”, they are both perceived to be (at least partially) similar by the interviewees from universities. Both work with criteria and standards as well as site visits and reporting. This leaves actors in universities confused about the distinction between internal and external quality assurance. One interviewee went as far as preferring to reset the system to zero, in order to solve the overlap and confusion. Other voices debate that OHEC does not need to conduct site visits and could leave this exercise to ONESQA. These interviewees pointed out that in the past there have been double EQA exercises, in the sense that IQA was actually EQA, given that the National Education Act leaves a lot of room for IQA. There is a lot of uncertainty currently on how to deal with the situation.
- ***National quality assurance frameworks as a burden for universities:*** All interviewed stakeholder groups, including from OHEC and ONESQA, agree that QA from external bodies is a burden for the universities in Thailand. Apart from the different instruments of OHEC and ONESQA, a third mechanism is the TQF. One interviewee pointed out the uncertainty about how far the audits that take place for the TQF are different from QA, and believes QA and TQF should be combined.
- ***Challenge of shifting from quality control to quality enhancement:*** Interviewees from all the different stakeholder groups perceive the challenge for Thai universities as being to shift the mindset of QA in the country from its control function to an enhancement-oriented paradigm, where quality is part of normal, everyday work. The difficulty is seen in shifting from working through a check-list to real, qualitative assessments. According to an interviewee from the universities, this also refers to the external QA systems, which for example check if meetings did take place by requesting minutes and evidence, rather than assessing the quality.
- ***Challenge of resistance and showing QA benefits to faculty:*** A challenge within universities as seen by interviewees from the universities is to make the benefits of QA visible for academics and to promote a quality culture. Often, faculty staff are happy with the status quo, and think the quality of teaching and learning is already good, thus requiring no systematic review.
- ***A regional framework is useful and adoptable:*** All the interviewed stakeholder groups consider a regional quality framework to be useful, adoptable, and desirable for mobility and recognition in the region. Interviewees from ONESQA underline the benefit of the AQAF standards and guidelines in the EQA quadrant. Some university representatives emphasise the importance of such a regional framework for the institutions. From the interviews with ONESQA and OHEC, it is unclear which bodies would be implementing and/or considering which quadrants for their respective work.

- **Challenge of introducing outcome-based education and need for outcome-based QA:** Shifting from classical teaching to outcome-based education is a challenge that was expressed by interviewees from the OHEC and universities. Only some universities and some lecturers are starting to undertake the shift to outcome-based education. As a solution, one of the interviewees from universities voiced the need for renowned external experts to hold workshops and trainings for university staff. With professors and teaching staff being the target group, this would be an important point if one wants to make them interested and willing to accept outcome-based education (OBE). A further idea is to set up an online education and didactics course for the staff to accompany their career, as a form of continuing education. This could be made obligatory for staff and, given the high numbers of staff at universities, would be an effective tool to spread knowledge. An interviewee from OHEC further raised the need for outcome-based quality assurance to support recognition based on learning outcomes and not on degrees.
- **Missing exchange and expertise:** According to interviewees both from OHEC and ONESQA, both institutions have been working quite discretely in the past, only occasionally communicating with each other. This seems to be changing, though. Generally, the interviewees expressed that there is a lack of coordination, information, and exchange within OHEC and its subcommittees, as well as between OHEC and ONESQA. Furthermore, there is the perception that there is a lack of understanding of what the QA system should look like.
- **Criticism on assessments and assessors:** ONESQA has received varied complaints about its assessors. The institutions in question did not feel the recommendations of the assessors were helpful for improvement after the last round. Another criticism raised to ONESQA is that the assessors had different qualifications and judgements. One interviewee from the universities raised the need to have external quality assurance bodies and their processes to be assessed, too.
- **Challenge of comparing institutions with different standards and criteria:** With the new possibility of using individual assessment systems under OHEC and maybe in the future also with ONESQA, one interviewee sees the risk that comparisons will be made between institutions that are not comparable: The EQA body needs to understand each system and understand they are different in difficulty and maturity. Without such understanding, there will be difficulties in announcing the scores, as one university might receive a "need for improvement" with EdPEX which is seen to be a more difficult system, whereas other universities will for example receive a "very good" with a less difficult system. The "comparison" part and "public accountability" part are therefore problematic for the universities, if scores of different systems are being used and compared.
- **Risk of producing regional uniformity and need to allow for diversity:** One of the interviewees sees the challenge of producing uniformity with a regional framework, although the purpose of workforce and student mobility is well-understood and appreciated. A key issue is, however, to preserve the identity of each country. Minimum standards still need to be set for all, if a regional framework is to generate both trust and mobility. Should a regional framework not fit all countries, then its implementation would be challenging. It is therefore crucial to study the systems very well and to serve the diversity from the interviewees' perspective.
- **Need for capacity building in EQA and IQA:** Both interviewees from universities and ONESQA see the need for capacity building on QA in the country. For improvements of EQA procedures, ONESQA wants to take measures for human resource development, such as exposing the officers to higher education systems around the world to learn from them. Furthermore, the different stakeholder groups also see the need for universities to build up a QA culture and to make them understand about QA processes and standards. Another topic for capacity building being mentioned is information systems and data collection (institutional research).

6.2.10 Vietnam (2015)

Setting up EQA and IQA in Vietnam has been pursued since the 1990s and a number of international projects have supported HE and QA in the country. The HE system has grown rapidly (The World Bank, 2008b, pp. 5-8). Vietnam is the most advanced country within the CLMV region regarding its availability and quality of resources. However, it still seems Vietnam has not yet found a suitable quality approach and means for the steady implementation of QA mechanisms.

The government's policy has been supporting more institutional autonomy and independence in HE over the last few years. Thus, a shift in EQA to more independent agencies can be observed and a pilot of so-called 'autonomous universities' is taking place. 11 universities applied for this status with a proposal and were awarded the autonomous university status between 2015 until 2017. These universities were given more autonomy regarding their financial and general decision-making and, in return, committed to fulfilling certain objectives and receiving less public funding.

Due to the current shift from a centralised to a decentralised EQA approach with more independent agencies, Vietnam is a very interesting case for the region and a good example of how frameworks are continuously changing and under development.

6.2.10.1 State of Affairs of EQA and IQA

Vietnam has, on the one hand, more experience with QA than the other CLMV countries but, on the other hand, it is still in an emergent and piloting phase. The EQA system is currently undergoing major changes with a step-by-step approach to enhancing and developing the framework.

About 30% of HEIs in Vietnam report to MOET while the remaining ones report to their line ministry (e.g. Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Finance, etc.). The HE system in Vietnam is very complex and fragmented with many small universities, which are highly specialised, and big universities, such as the Vietnam National Universities, which cover a wide range of disciplines.

QA and accreditation is the responsibility of MOET for all HEIs. The first aspects of QA were introduced in the 1990s. With the presentation of strategies to develop HE by 2010 by the MOET in 1998, a first step to develop an EQA framework was made. With support of the World Bank, the first and second Higher Education Project were carried out (HEP 1 from 1996 to 2006 and HEP 2 from 2007 to 2012). One priority of both projects was QA establishment in Vietnam. The initial focus of HEP 1 was on researching the internal processes of QA, which led to the establishment of the first two QA centres at Vietnam National University Hanoi and Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City in 2000 (Thuy Thi & Yi-Fang, 2014, p. 10).

The main outcome of the support from the HEP 1 was the establishment of national institutional standards for QA and the creation of a department under MOET in 2002, which was renamed to the General Department for Educational Testing and Accreditation (GDETA) in 2003. GDETA is not only in charge of QA but also of university entrance exams and testing across the whole education system. Subsequently in 2004, regulations governing QA were implemented with ten institutional standards for accreditation and a pilot exercise with 20 universities (The World Bank, 2008a, p. 18). These 20 pilot accreditations supported by HEP 1 and the Dutch Government's ProfQim project tested the accreditation methodology between 2006-2007. One of the results of the pilot was that changes were needed to the accreditation framework and that decision rules for performance definition of the universities needed to be established (Westerheijden, Cremonini, & Empel, 2010, p. 192). After the first pilots, MOET stopped the full accreditation process and required universities to conduct yearly self-assessments based on the revised standards and criteria (ten standards and 61 criteria) and to hand in a self-assessment report to MOET without undergoing external assessment. MOET used the meantime to update the regulations, procedures, and standards. The major change within the process was the establishment of independent centres for education accreditation, which support the credibility of the accreditation scheme.

The initial ten standards and 53 criteria were revised resulting in an unchanged number of standards but with an increased criteria to 61. With the revision of the Education Law in 2005, all HEI were

expected to have a QA unit in place. Until June, 2010, 140 universities had established their QA units (Thuy Thi & Yi-Fang, 2014, p. 11).

In October 2008, the National Accreditation Council was established to make accreditation decisions; however, it was abolished with the decision to introduce a decentralised system with independent accreditation agencies (Do and Quyen, 2014). This decision was introduced by MOET in 2010 with the 'Project on Developing Educational Quality Accreditation System in Higher Education and Vocational Education period 2010 to 2020'. MOET and GDETA are therefore only supervising and granting licenses for accreditation agencies and setting the framework. There are two types of accreditation agencies that are or will be set up: from 2011 to 2015, public accreditation agencies set up by the government and at a later stage; and from 2016 to 2020, private accreditation agencies set up by the private sector. A new National Council for Accreditation will be established, which will be in charge of accreditation activities and advise the minister in matters of accreditation agencies (Thuy Thi & Yi-Fang, 2014, p. 13 et seq.). Article 51 of the Higher Education Law of 2012 states that every institution is subject to accreditation whenever required and that MOET regulates the national standards, evaluation, and accreditation criteria. Accreditation results will be used by the government to identify autonomous rights for the institutions and for budget and investment (Van Dang, 2013, p. 322).

According to the website of MOET, the achievements of accrediting the currently 219 universities in Vietnam are listed below (as of September 2015; (MOET, 2015). It is important to underline that external assessment reports have only been sent to a minor selection of the universities who have gone through the accreditation exercise and that no certificates of accreditation have been issued:

- 20 universities have undergone the whole institutional accreditation exercise and received an outcome report
- 20 universities have undergone self-assessment and external assessment
- 160 universities have completed their self-assessment and submitted the report to MOET
- 19 remaining universities are in the process of self-assessment

Currently, there are three centres for education accreditation established at the Vietnam National University Hanoi (CEA VNU-HN) in the North, at the University of Da Nang (CEA-UD) in central Vietnam, and at Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City (CEA VNU-HCM) in the South. CEA-UD is awaiting the official permit to operate while the two CEAs at the major Vietnam National Universities are starting to conduct first accreditations according to the ten standards and 61 criteria set by MOET (last revision in March, 2014). This process starts in October 2015. Universities are free to choose between the three centres, except for the three hosting universities of the centres, which cannot be accredited by their own centre. The plan is to have the centres operating independently in three years' time. The centres are fully financed by the universities without funding by the government.

Institutional accreditation is compulsory for all HEIs (five-year cycle) and if not granted can have the consequence of stopping student enrolment. Furthermore, there are plans to use the accreditation results to classify universities and rank them, as well as to connect the results with budgetary consequences.

Programme standards that are adapted from the AUN-QA external programme-assessment scheme are to be published soon. Programme accreditation will be compulsory with a five-year cycle, too. HEIs are alternatively free to use other international assessment and accreditation schemes, such as AUN-QA and ABET, as these are also recognised by the MOET.

6.2.10.2 Main Findings from the Expert Interviews

In this section, we discuss the major findings drawn from the expert interviews with representatives from the ministry, the agencies, and HEIs in Vietnam.

- **Capacity building for IQA:** The main need of the Vietnamese HE system for QA is unanimously declared to be in human resource development, for interviewees both from EQA and IQA. Concerning IQA, although centres for QA are established in the universities, many faculty members lack experience and knowledge in QA affairs. Many of them are coming from disciplines that are not affiliated with QA or evaluation research. There is a need for training at all levels, from the

managerial positions to the QA staff and people in the faculties. The HEI interviewees furthermore expressed the need for receiving more support to set up QA units and systems, as there has only been the guideline that a QA unit must be set up, with no information on how to do it. Further areas of support needs, according to the HEI experts, are information management and the use of performance indicators. The government is introducing a national ranking system for university stratification, which makes this an important matter for HEIs. Further learning outcomes and how to measure them are high on the training needs agenda.

- **Capacity building for EQA:** The main need for EQA, as mentioned by both university representatives and experts from the ministry as well as from the agencies, is the establishment of more and better-trained assessors. Exchange and expertise from Europe and other countries, who were invited to share their experiences and knowledge, are expected to support their own assessment improvement. The current training for assessors are authorised by MOET, and the selection standards for accreditors are very high (ten years' experience in HE, at least a master's, a foreign language, and computer/IT skills), which some interviewees from the agencies and HEIs regard as being too high given the available experience in the country. After the training, the participants receive a certificate that allows them to join assessment teams. To be a team leader, deputy, or secretary, the assessors need to pass an exam conducted by GDETA. As of August 2015, 136 assessors operated in Vietnam. Some agency interviewees think there is also a need for training the management of EQA on how to lead an EQA agency and for the staff to acquire knowledge about QA. According to the interviewees from the ministry, the new centres for accreditation are under development and many procedures are still unclear and need to be decided upon. They are seen as pilots. In August 2015, the two centres in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City had about 50 universities apply for external assessment. One topic of interest to the ministry interviewees is how to conduct the external assessment so that they are comparable (especially the outcomes).
- **Support for national capacity building:** Both centres for education accreditation in the North and the South are conducting trainings for assessors and university staff. Interviews with the agencies show that there is a need for supporting how to train on QA, accreditation, and other topics, such as quality culture.
- **Acceptance of national EQA:** According to some interviewees, both from the agencies and HEIs, the first accreditation pilots did not reach the desired impact and the universities and society did not perceive the results as being reliable and consistent. The reasons given are, on the one hand, because the standards were not very clear and, on the other hand, because assessors lacked experience.
- **Confusion about standards:** According to some interviewees from the HEIs, many universities feel confused by the number of standards and criteria that are in the national and international discussions, such as ABET, AUN-QA, AACSB, etc. There is also the view that Vietnam is adopting too many different models in too short of time instead of implementing a system according to the country's and universities' own mission.
- **National universities as examples of good practice:** Some interviewees perceive the two Vietnam National Universities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City as functioning examples of good practice in regards to QA for the country. They are the first to implement and test new procedures and mechanisms. Apparently, there were many examples of developments made in the VNUs that were then used nationwide.
- **Resistance in HEIs:** According to interviewees from the HEIs, the concept of QA is still new for many academics in the country and some do not understand why they should suddenly change their ways. There is especially resistance as to why universities need to do the accreditation although the HE law states that every university needs to be accredited with a cycle of five years. Therefore, universities are sometimes reluctant to engage in the accreditation processes and slowed it down in the past. Most universities are described to be in a waiting position, arguing that they are too busy or that they have neither the staff nor the money available to prepare for accreditation.
- **Purpose of accreditation:** According to some interviewees from the HEIs, the purpose for why accreditation should be done is not fully clear and no real consequences seem to be in place either. Only some universities see accreditation as a marketing tool that increases its prestige.

One interviewee voiced the need of HEIs to have MOET explain why they should do accreditation. There is further lack of clarity expressed about which system to choose for their own HEI and programmes.

- **High and changing requirements:** A further challenge reported by interviewees from the universities is that the requirements by MOET are diverse and continuously changing. With the lack of resources and knowledge, universities are struggling to keep up with new requirements. New and private universities are especially challenged by fundamental requirements, such as sufficient staff and their qualifications to conduct the programme (e.g. at least one PhD holder and at least three MA degree holders as teaching staff for an undergraduate programme).
- **International QA:** According to different interviewees, AUN-QA as a regional QA approach is widely known in Vietnam and, like other international sets of standards, regarded to be of higher prestige and quality especially when compared to their own national system. AUN-QA (as well as other international standards) are recognised by the MOET as national accreditation and specifically listed in decrees. The newly developed programme standards are said to be adapted from AUN-QA by interviewees from the agencies and HEIs. Most of the interviewees perceive AUN-QA to be well tested and a good start to QA. Some of the interviewees confuse AUN-QA with accreditation (according to Vietnamese national regulations).
- **Regional framework as an opportunity and need:** The interviewees from the ministry support the AQAF, but its existence and purpose is not yet well known in the universities. Still, the idea of common regional standards (even beyond Asia-Pacific) and a QA framework is regarded as a need for Vietnam and the region for reasons of comparability and mobility by all interviewed actor groups. One interviewee welcomes the three main regional organisations (AQAN, AUN, and SEAMEO RIHED) to jointly draft the AQAF as a more inclusive and representative approach to a regional framework, in contrast to the compared AUN-QA approach. Some interviewees also look beyond the ASEAN region toward Asia Pacific and Europe. Recognising or aligning each other's QA systems is perceived to be a future need to allow for student exchange, for example.

An opportunity connected to a regional framework, as found in the interviews, is to gain more international students. The challenges of implementation are seen mostly in the different levels of development within ASEAN member states and their different HE systems. Systems like Singapore are seen to be more autonomous while their own, like Vietnam, are seen to be more regulated and dependent on the MOET. Some further concerns are that those universities who are already struggling, or are unable to meet the national requirements, will have difficulty to meet regional requirements in the future.

6.3 Focus Group Discussions with Higher Education Institutions

The focus group discussions confirmed the high degree of diversity among ASEAN member states with regard to their HE QA modalities. There is a wide range of approaches to QA, from very centralistic to fully decentralised systems. With the latter, universities enjoy a high degree of autonomy, whereas with the former, management decisions are taken by superior authorities (ministries) and only a small space is left for decision-making by the universities themselves. EQA comes in very different forms. The respective agencies are operated privately or under the supervision of state authorities. Some systems were established decades ago and are well consolidated; in other cases, the entire system of QA dates back to only a couple of years.

The operational levels at which EQA procedures are performed are also diverse. In some cases, only private universities are obliged to undergo EQA, whereas state universities are under no particular external quality control. The focus of the assessment is either on individual study programmes or on entire quality management systems. Finally, the organisation of political power is diverse; in some cases, the science system is under one ministry of education or ministry of science and in other cases, the universities are organised by different ministries, according to their disciplinary constitution (e.g. medical schools are under the management of the health ministry).

More significant than these differences are the aspects appraised in the same way by the interviewees, regardless of which national system they work under. These aspects are very much connected with the current developments that move toward the direction of a shared framework for QA, and they refer to respective demands for change:

- Interviewees from all countries feel that there is a certain degree of uncertainty over what the shared standards will be like and to what extent they will interfere with the already established policies in their HE systems;
- In the countries where established QA systems with a high degree of university autonomy already exist, this leads to a resistant attitude since there is a fear that institutional autonomy is being sacrificed in favour of a regional policy that one would not be in control of.
- With the new-coming countries, the prospect of a supranational framework for QA evokes resistance since stakeholders do not feel well prepared for the required change to come.

However, the interviewees do see the movement's benefit toward a shared framework, which refers to the mutual support that the countries could give one another (mainly from the more advanced to the newly established ones).

The rather reluctant attitude toward the implementation of a regional approach to QA could be interpreted as a classical change management issue. Change provokes aversion by those who are supposed to undergo the change. Change management (according to Kurt Lewin's classical notion) suggests that the change process requires different phases in which: (i) the subjects experience that there is a necessity for change and that the established routines no longer serve the purpose well enough 'unfreezing'); (ii) there is guidance on how to refine and/or replace the 'old' practices and routines ('change'); and (iii) the newly established routines are consolidated ('refreezing').

7. Conclusions from the Data Analysis

In summary of the results of the data analysis, it is worth stressing the following main aspects of quality assurance (QA) in ASEAN higher education. From these aspects, we derive recommendations that are outlined in Chapter 8.

1. The region is growing together. There is a strong will to harmonise higher education (HE) systems and their outcomes for the benefit of the entire region. The regional policy makers have set a demanding goal and have initiated a process that is as complex in nature as the Bologna Process in the European Higher Education Area. There is strong commitment for the overall objectives of this process at all levels, from governmental bodies (ministries) down to QA agencies (be they privately operated or attached to the ministries) and higher education institutions (HEIs). As many QA systems in the region are under development, or are still being built, a regional framework is often seen helping to support their full establishment. On the one hand, it provides principles and guidelines for those who have little experience; and on the other hand, for more developed systems which are moving forward to enhance their systems, a regional framework also provides principles that can help resolve national discourse, such as on the question of how EQA bodies should work and be constituted. Generally, the interviews have shown that acceptance for a regional ASEAN framework is greater than for a national one because external guidelines and standards often have more authority than national ones.

2. However, the overall objectives of the process need to be communicated carefully. In some interviews, it became obvious that the agenda of the harmonisation process can also be seen as a threat. Thus, a forceful adjustment of national HE systems to an unknown set of standards and new routines, which may even be in conflict with the traditions and values of the national HE systems, is feared. The respective apprehensions seem to remain unspoken. However, the strong notion of the need to cultivate national educational cultures can be interpreted as a mechanism to, more or less willingly, slow down the process of regional integration, which can be seen as a need for assigning national competences to a supra-national entity. The same debate has been observable in Europe and its attempt to introduce regionally shared HE policies. The conflict was solved by using standards for QA that are very generic in nature and leave enough space for national systems and individual universities to apply them to a diversity of specific contexts. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that harmonisation requires all those who are in the process to adjust to a minimum of shared values. In Europe, these values refer to higher education's function to educate critically thinking and employable citizens. ASEAN will have to define what a shared educational value is, and it will have to implement a communication process in which the member states and their universities willingly adapt those ASEAN values to their individual routines and practices.

3. From a European perspective, it is interesting to note that some ASEAN countries have 'unfinished' external quality assurance (EQA) frameworks in place, which are developing over time without clear definition of the main aspects of the framework at the time of initiation. 'Starting small' and developing things over the course of time can be a strategy, but the research outcomes suggest that the main pillars of the QA systems should be set (e.g.: purpose, standards, guidelines for evaluation, procedures, cycles, consequences) in order to avoid uncertainties and ambiguous communications. Thoughtful elaboration of frameworks needs political and administrative support. Otherwise, countries set themselves at the risk of remaining stuck in a development stage, having incomplete frameworks that are subject to political activism and unclosed loops. Many countries are in an emergent phase in which different approaches are tested and valued against each other. The fear is that not enough time is reserved to gather evidence on the effects of different approaches. This could potentially result in policy making that is not based on evidence. Any framework will need to be continuously further developed. The uncertainties reported by the interviewees point to the need to draft more or less complete frameworks (especially with a clear purpose, process, and consequences) and then decide on how to implement them step by step.

4. Governmental independence of EQA agencies is scarce or currently in transition to more independence. Ministries are closely supervising most of the accreditation agencies. Only a few of them are going in the direction of independent policy making and are self-responsibly setting up standards for assessments and their effects. Independence is, however, important for the acceptance of accreditation processes and results. If QA is done to build trust in a harmonising HE space, it is crucial to have independent bodies who conduct the assessments and decide upon the award or denial of accreditation so that they can be trusted by all stakeholders (especially the HEIs). These bodies should furthermore have common procedures and standards across ASEAN in order to ensure the comparability of standards and schemes against which universities are being assessed. As of now, the bodies are very diverse with regard to their independence and organisational structure. The different setups range from within the ministry to private independent agencies (see country fact sheets).

5. The interviews have also shown that there is a **strong need to clarify the roles of organisations in the region and to clearly define the purpose of harmonisation and a regional framework**. This is in order to ensure that the stakeholders in HEIs are more knowledgeable and subsequently better able to support these changes instead of voicing growing fears of misleading purposes (e.g. the fear of marketisation), etc. In this regard, one can find a commonality with the Bologna Process: In their 2015 Ministerial Conference in Yerevan, Armenia, the EHEA Ministers of Education stated that the success of the Bologna Process depends on a clear definition of its goals and their communication within the HE system and saw room for improvement in the Bologna Process as such. For ASEAN, one can note that the political agenda also does not seem to be fully understood at the lower management levels of individual HEIs and other actors. The release of a regional QA framework (AQAF) is a strong contribution to the process in this regard. With the AQAF covering the QA bodies in regard to standards and guidelines, the stakeholders in the region should consider how to make sure that the national bodies comply with these standards. This could be solved with a register of regional QA bodies, like in Europe with the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). The body should be independent and consider conflicts of interest that may arise. Therefore, a completely new body could be a better solution. The AQAF should be written and communicated in a way that it is understandable and useful for all stakeholders within the HEIs and not just for a small circle of experts.

8. Recommendations

Finally, we try to break down the findings and conclusions from the expert interviews, focus groups, and desk research in order to make concrete recommendations for future action. We distinguish these recommendations according to the different stakeholders they are addressing. We are aware that not all of the points can be tackled by the SHARE project, not least because of its time restraints. Generally, the SHARE project could function as a change manager, by combining expertise on quality assurance (QA) both from ASEAN and EU and by providing information from the experiences in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

8.1 Recommendations to the SHARE Project

1. *Combination of regional and European expertise:* Interviewees declared that there is a need to introduce international expertise to the process of setting up QA structures. Higher education (HE) management experts from industrialised countries with advanced HE systems (EU, US, Australia, Japan) are preferred and perceived to be a helpful resource. When planning respective consultation missions, it seems to be necessary to consider where and when such experts can contribute best and how regional and national expertise is needed in order to nest the consultation within the national context with its unique features. ‘Western expertise’ as such seems not to be sufficient, since field knowledge about the specific environment is not only required but also extremely important to be included in consultation processes. The local expertise sometimes seems to be underestimated by the locals themselves, and should be valued higher. Conducting activities such as training, coaching and consultations in tandem with national/regional and European experts will benefit the activities and contribute to the capacity building of regional expertise.

2. *Consultancy services for ministries:* The SHARE project should provide consultancy and trainings for ministries. In many cases, it seems the purpose and frameworks set by policies are not clear to higher education institutions (HEIs) and that the ministries in charge too easily change their policy without allowing enough time for the HEIs to react. HE is often only a small department within ministries of education (being also in charge of school education) and one topic of many in the ministry without many resources. The SHARE project could support the policy makers with consultancies on HE strategies and implementation of external quality assurance (EQA) frameworks, especially in the light of the upcoming regional framework.

3. *Mapping national standards and procedures with the AQAF:* The interviews showed that most existing national QA frameworks are estimated to be in compliance with the AQAF with regard to general principles. In some cases, the national higher education system is even considered to be way ahead of the current regional standards for higher education quality, which would make it difficult for sophisticated systems to join into the debate on a regionally shared approach. However, in order to gather initial experiences with national alignment to the AQAF, SHARE could implement its planned institutional pilot evaluations according to the individual standards and procedures of several ASEAN countries, instead of drafting a totally new set of QA standards and procedures. This would mean mapping the national QA standards and procedures, and aligning the national framework with the AQAF in order to conduct the pilots. Apart from piloting an assessment procedure that is based on the AQAF principles, this would put the assumptions of the AQAF into national practice. Such pilots would produce valuable lessons for future national implementation. They may also possibly further develop the AQAF and its practical implementations. Another option is to make institutional evaluations a real-life case by having national agencies conduct them (with support from SHARE). The process could be observed as a part of the pilot agency reviews that the SHARE project has planned in order to ensure that national bodies are complying with the AQAF. As described in conclusion 5 in Chapter 7, there is a need to form an independent executive body for the regional agency reviews.

4. Prepare an implementation strategy taking into account heterogeneity and different speeds:

Many countries in the region are introducing changes in their EQA systems or are in transition toward another stage of development. The interviews showed that countries are prioritising the national context and are not yet considering the draft regional framework. As evident in the interviews, this is mainly the case for Cambodia, Lao PDR, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Vietnam. However, changes in the systems are still happening and should do so constantly. Provided there will be a regional framework, and many countries will set up or reorganising their systems, it would be worthwhile including the AQAF principles into the respective reform processes. SHARE could help these countries with reviewing, consulting, and with specifically tailored capacity-building activities. The SHARE project could further discuss the speeds of implementation of the AQAF and deduct a common AQAF implementation regulation for all ASEAN countries (e.g. one speed or different speeds?). More advanced university systems like the ones from Malaysia and primarily from Singapore could play an active role in this process, which would help secure regional ownership.

Alignment to the AQAF principles will be at different speeds not only by country but also within the countries. In some cases, it might be due to resistance, in others, due to a huge disparity of HEIs' experience with QA or the large number of HEIs, etc. SHARE could use the European experience and draw lessons learned from the topic for ASEAN. These could then be a part of national consultancies in the region. It should also be discussed how to handle HEIs who are not up to par with regional standards. With the support of SHARE, the AQAF implementation needs to take into account, and decide how to handle, the varying speeds and the heterogeneity both at system and HEI levels.

5. Promote stakeholder involvement: The interviews suggest that there is a lack of trust between the different actors of HE when it comes to QA frameworks, procedures, and conduction. This underlines the need for stakeholder involvement. In the case of the regional framework, the SHARE project could explore the extent to which there could be further stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in the AQAF and its future processes. A stakeholder analysis could be done that considers the traditions of HE of ASEAN member states. Further dialogue activities will support a successful implementation of the regional framework.

6. Explain purposes and functions: The interviews in different countries and from different actor groups showed that the purpose and function of EQA is not always clearly understood or clearly communicated. A better communication of purposes and goals was also a lesson learned in the Bologna Process. For future AQAF implementation, we recommend facilitating understanding of the AQAF and any connected documents and writing them in the recipients' language (e.g. different actors on EQA and IQA side). Furthermore, a clear communication strategy should be considered with a website that explains the AQAF and its purpose (including frequently asked questions, etc.) and benefits for the different stakeholders. Faculty staff should be well included as a target group. Often, the main challenges are on the ground and the interviewees have reported resistance from within faculties, which is a usual QA implementation challenge. Explaining AQAF should be part of any capacity-building activities with EQA and IQA actors.

7. Building trust: The countries that have younger EQA systems in particular seem to have a trust issue with their EQA systems regarding the acceptance of standards, the conducting of assessments, including the results, and the professionalisation of the assessors. The interviews also showed that HEI staff members are much more receptive to international approaches and experts than to their own national ones. There seems to be a discrepancy in talk, decision and action between the different management levels in the ministries (where standards and procedures are being commissioned) and the universities (where these standards need to be applied). Actors at the local level of universities are trying to interpret the different sets of standards (which are still subject to many changes) according to their individual needs and interests, sometimes counteracting the management decisions, taken at the level of ministries.

Trust issues can be solved by the principles of AQAF, when it comes to the question who should be an assessor, how to secure transparency, etc. Capacity-building activities for EQA officers and assessors, preferably with international expertise involved, will help to build more trust. Some countries

are considering involving international experts in their assessment teams. This is surely an interesting approach, if certain prerequisites are met (e.g. the language barrier, field knowledge about the given system/context). However, more transparency and communication can help develop trust, and there may be specific national challenges, which can be better addressed by local and/or regional experts. In short, it seems that a well-balanced mix of international and domestic expertise will be beneficial for the ultimate goal of uplifting quality and visibility of the regional university system. SHARE could offer case-by-case consultancies for EQA systems that inter alia address this specific topic of building trust and its importance.

8. Create regional exchange platforms: What has been pursued by AQAN, AUN, SEAMEO RIHED, and ASEAN-QA, for example, with various regional dialogues and conference activities is highlighted to be the need within the region. The focus group showed that HEIs are not aware of each other's systems. They express the need 'to know each other' as a prerequisite for regional integration and mobility. This extends also to EQA and policy levels. SHARE and actors in the region should consider supporting this dialogue with activities and networks.

9. Capacity development for different actors: Last but not least, the interviews show that there is a general need for capacity building for QA, both for internal quality assurance (IQA) and EQA in the region. Regarding EQA, a need is seen for the policy/ministerial level, the QA agency staff, and in some cases, especially the assessors. Regarding IQA, the countries that are developing EQA expressed especially a lack of resources for QA staff. The needs are not only described to be on the QA officers' level but also in the faculties. In the context of a regional framework, the focus groups have also shown that an important topic would be to have HEIs apply and work with regional QA policies. This expressed need should be widened to other stakeholders in the region too, with workshops, conferences, and online material available, such as videos, documents, and webinars, for example. Experiences from Europe could enrich the activities and materials. SHARE has already planned different activities and should consider adapting these to the outcomes of the present study, especially those at the national level.

10. Good practice examples: The HEIs interviewed for this study are more advanced in order to better compare the countries. However, the interviewees still made statements for the entire HE system as well. The results outlined need to be interpreted in this light, that many universities are less developed, without IQA units, for example. To introduce QA in HEIs on a larger and broader scale, the interviewees have often discussed that their strategy is to have good practice examples or even flagship universities as models for the remaining HEIs in the country. SHARE could support setting up an online archive of good practices for the region that includes EQA and IQA.

8.2 Recommendations to Policy Makers in the Region

1. Commitment and policies for a common HE-space and a regional QA framework: The current initiatives and expertise for a common HE-space and a regional QA framework provide the opportunity and momentum for the policy level to set the vision, goals, and scope for a HE integration in ASEAN. Determining suitable mechanisms and instruments as well as the stakeholders/organisations and their roles, are important steps to be decided on a regional level. Accompanying this, there should be political monitoring and follow up of the processes and implementation.

The bottom-up initiatives already happening provide a crucial fertile soil; however, they need political will and decisions to aid their further implementation in the ten member states of ASEAN. The implementation on the ground needs the political support as much as the political processes need the experience gained through 'grass root' initiatives.

Without clear political statements and goals for integration in HE, such as the European Bologna Declaration, and without mandating or endorsing the mechanisms and instruments, such as the AQAF, a common HE-space in ASEAN will be difficult to put into place.

On the one hand, there is a lack of clarity about the roles of the stakeholders involved in the regional process and the cooperation seems only loose, although they cooperate in the AQAF task force. It should be further considered which stakeholders should be involved in the drafting of a regional QA framework as representative for an ASEAN approach.¹⁷ A political mandate should then be made with clear responsibilities and roles for the implementation, follow up, and further development of the framework.

The lack of common regional goals and policy decisions are mirrored by the uncertainty that many interviewees of HE institutions have voiced: e.g. AUN-QA is being confused with regional accreditation and it is not clear which standards to follow; what role regional organisations play, such as AUN and AQAN; or what function or purpose the AQAF has. This feeling of confusion is worsened by the many other different international initiatives, standards, and accreditation schemes.

There is a need to define where the decisions for regional integration of HE and a QA framework are being made. The relationship of SEAMEO and ASEAN is unclear in this regard, although there is manifold cooperation. SEAMEO with its longer lasting history and more developed supporting structures can currently be seen as the main driver; however, there is a need to cooperate and synergise with ASEAN and clarify the relationship.

2. Meaning of QA: QA practices move forward and develop from a rather formalistic and sometimes bureaucratic activity to a content-related and context-sensitive management approach within which individual study programmes are at the core. This means that QA procedures need to focus more on the actual development needs of study programmes (or institutions), which need to be seen in the context of the respective strategic goals. Thus, the question, which is at the centre of the future development of QA procedures, is what contribution can QA procedures make to support universities in achieving their goals (e.g. raising the graduates' competitiveness for regional labour markets; promoting equal access to education for ethnic minorities; changing teaching practices to a more student-centred approach, etc.)? National policy making should set such fundamental questions at the core of their strategy making in the field of QA. Instruments like the AQAF can be an effective tool to support the respective development, provided they are developed to support universities and other actors (namely QA agencies) in their strategic planning.

3. More autonomy for agencies and universities: One main challenge for the implementation of the AQAF is the independence of agencies conducting EQA. In order to have full use of the external evaluation and its recognition, the bodies need to be independent. AQAF has set this as one of its principles and is thus addressing how agencies should be set up and operated. The trend is clearly toward more independence in the different countries, but many are still on their way. There is also a need for a clear definition about what independence means in this context, as there might be different interpretations and views.

The ministries in charge of higher education should further consider granting more institutional and financial autonomy to the broad range of universities, not only the bigger national universities. Institutional autonomy releases the creativity and innovativeness of scholars and administrators in HEIs. Being granted more autonomy, the universities will easily adopt strategic management practices in which they will strive for the best possible quality of their provision in order to compete in a globalising education market.

4. Consolidation phases: HE and EQA are in constant development. The case studies have shown that the systems are either in a developmental or in an enhancement stage. HEIs do feel the burden to adapt to changes and regulations and systems are sometimes changed too often. It is imperative that systems develop constantly; however, there should always be time for the HEIs and/or the resources needed to adapt and to reflect on the previous adjustments (e.g. with the help of evaluation research). There should be consolidation phases. Before changing to a new practice, the previous

¹⁷ For instance, representatives of employers and industry or the students are currently not involved in the AQAF task force, which was the case for the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area. On the other hand, the European example does not include a higher education organisation like SEAMEO RIHED.

ones should have been researched with regard to their contributions and reasons for failure. On a regional level, there is also a need to learn about other countries' systems and development paths. AQAN as a hub for EQA could periodically and systematically support the exchange, especially about any changes, good practices, etc.

5. Join responsibilities for EQA and IQA and decrease multiple standards: It seems that some of the countries have two bodies/departments which are responsible for EQA and IQA (like in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines or Thailand). In our point of view, this contributes to confusion about responsibilities and the handling of QA in the HEIs: It is not clear what the difference actually is or which standards the universities are supposed to follow. Furthermore, it seems that sometimes the burden for HEIs is being duplicated with assessments and standards. We recommend that both EQA and IQA responsibility be in the hand of one body in the country, as EQA will also look to the IQA and both will benefit from one another. In this way, there is no duplication of work for the HEIs as well as clearer regulations, requirements, and purposes.

6. Consider national uniqueness and voluntary nature: The adoption of the AQAF in single countries should consider the national contexts and different developmental stages. The countries need to have a substantial degree of freedom to implement the AQAF, as they are often still challenged with their own internal matters and do want to prioritise these (e.g. Indonesia). Some countries may require more time than others to adjust their EQA systems and to have their IQA ready. The more important thing is to have the EQA systems and mechanisms in place, as these will then guide the HEIs in their process to elaborate IQA processes. There should be clear commitments and deadlines for implementing the EQA according to the AQAF.

7. Balance between diversity and harmonisation of EQA systems: The systems in ASEAN are very different, although all of them make use of the three classical accreditation steps: self-evaluation, site visit, and reporting (sometimes also called four steps, including the follow-up). The levels of implementation are very diverse, especially when comparing the CLMV with countries like Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines, for example. Additionally, there are countries currently in transition with new developments within their EQA systems, such as Indonesia. However, when discussing only the currently more stable systems, such as the Philippines and Malaysia, there are also crucial differences, like voluntary accreditation, which only exists in the Philippines. For a regional approach, we think that diversity must be a principle, but there should be certain standards that have to be clear for every country (as they are already part of the AQAF). Finding the right balance to start with is a crucial task.

8.3 Recommendations for the Development of the AQAF

HEIs are often confused about which standards to follow and see the range of instruments that are currently being discussed as a burden. Things are changing rapidly from one direction to another and different departments and institutions are setting their own standards. In this regard, the national frameworks should clearly state the IQA and EQA standards and align with the AQAF in the future. The AQAF, however, can support national HE systems with elaborating clear responsibilities and standards, by setting clear responsibilities as a principle in the EQA quadrant, and showing examples in the accompanying manual that are planned.

The AQAF in its current form clarifies the requirements that institutions (universities, QA agencies) should meet in order to meet standards with regard to effective and efficient QA mechanisms and procedures. Due to the diversity of HE and university cultures and traditions that can be found in the region, it is the AQAF's basic principle to be generic in nature and to not be prescriptive with any standard that must be met by all universities in the region. The Southeast Asian and European HE areas are very much comparable in this regard. Both share a rich diversity of education cultures and HE management strategies.

However, it is the main objective to make degrees and learning outcomes comparable across regions. Thus, some form of adjustments of individual routines and approaches to a shared vision and goal is needed. The European Higher Education Area has released the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG 2015) in order to support universities and other addressees with processing the change that is required. These European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) are equally generic in nature as compared to the AQAF in its current form in order to appreciate the diversity of European national HE systems.

In their 2015 Ministerial Conference, the European Ministers of Education stated that in order to unfold the full potential of a shared HE policy, it is necessary to go beyond the formal agreement of QA standards and guidelines, and to focus more on content-related issues. Student-centred learning should be at the core of the universities' quality development activities. The main purpose of respective policy papers (such as the ESG and the AQAF) should thus be to guide universities and other stakeholders through management and content-related development tasks, in line with supra-national policies and requirements. Meeting these standards should, however, not be an end in itself. More emphasis needs to be placed on what quality of academic training programmes actually is. Thus, standards and guidelines like the AQAF should pay as much attention as possible to being a practical tool for HEIs to support them and elaborate a well-functioning QA policy and its application to actual quality development purposes, the same as the didactical principle of student-centred learning.

Guidelines should exemplify what paths are applicable in order to establish practices that help to meet standards: What could a quality culture look like? What could be expected from a university management in order to promulgate and support QA policies? How can concrete principles like student-centred learning be put into practice in the classroom?

In the case of the AQAF, the establishment of a handbook or manual is currently underway which aims to answer such questions. This does not have to interfere with the valid goal of keeping the guidelines as generic as possible in order to maintain education cultures' diversity. Within different cultures, it should be possible to make use of a range of examples of good practice. It is thus recommended to release a manual for the actual implementation of the AQAF as soon as possible for both EQA and IQA actors. The successful implementation of the AQAF at the level of given institutions depends on these institutions' commitment and cooperation. Thus, clarifications of what the standards and/or guidelines mean in practice, and of what benefit they can be with regard to quality development, are decisive.

9. Annexes:

9.1 Annex I: Principle Statements of ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework

1. Principles of External Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA)

The EQAA is a key player in maintaining and sustaining the quality of education in every nation and puts at centre stage the interests of students and various stakeholders. The following statements are important first steps towards the establishment of a shared set of values and good practices for EQAA across the region to ensure that professionalism, accountability and integrity of the agencies are visible and transparent to their stakeholders.

- 1.1. The EQAA of ASEAN countries have mission and common goals statements.
- 1.2. The EQAA has an established legal basis and is formally recognized and trusted by competent public authorities in its home country.
- 1.3. The EQAA has autonomous responsibility for its operations and its decision-making processes and judgments made are free from undue influences.
- 1.4. The EQAA has a standard and transparent system of appointing members of the Board.
- 1.5. The EQAA's policies and management practices are based on good governance, transparency and accountability.
- 1.6. The EQAA keeps abreast with new developments and innovations in quality assurance as part of its internal continuous improvement system.
- 1.7. The EQAA has sufficient and sustainable resources.
- 1.8. The EQAA collaborates with key stakeholders, both nationally and internationally.
- 1.9. The EQAA has a reliable system for controlling, auditing and assessing all processes of its operations.
- 1.10. The EQAA keeps the public informed of its current policies, procedures, criteria, standards and assessment results.

Examples of Supporting Evidence:

1. Statement of mission and goals
2. Legislation or legal frameworks covering the EQAA
3. Manual of Operations indicating processes and procedures
4. Policy Statements, e.g., conflict of interest issues
5. Audited Financial Statements
6. Address of website and types of information provided here
7. Development or Strategic Plan of EQAA

2. Principles of External Quality Assurance - Standards and Processes

External quality assurance processes serve as the core activity of the quality assurance agency. In these processes and activities, the interests of students, employers and the society at large take centre stage. The following statements further demonstrate the systematic approach embarked by quality assurance agencies towards the development of agency standards and criteria, thereby achieving their goals and objectives.

- 2.1. Interest of students and the society should be at the forefront of external quality assurance processes.

- 2.2. Standards must be comparable to international good practices and related to internal quality assurance of higher education institutions.
- 2.3. Development of standards must involve participation of relevant stakeholders to meeting current needs and demands.
- 2.4. Standards must be made publicly available and applied consistently and with due regard for cultural diversity.
- 2.5. The process normally includes a self-assessment report (SAR) of the programme or institution, site visits, feedback, formal decisions and follow up procedures.
- 2.6. Assessment must be objective, fair, transparent and conducted within an appropriate time frame.
- 2.7. The EQA provides appropriate training at regular interval for the development of assessors.
- 2.8. The EQA ensures professionalism and ethical conduct of assessors.
- 2.9. Quality assurance activities and processes are assessed on a cyclical basis to promote continuous improvement.
- 2.10. An appeal mechanism is established and accessible to all.

Examples of Supporting Evidence:

1. Policy statements and practices on student protection and social interests. Document or record indicating protection of student and social interests.
2. Quality assurance codes/manual and standards, guidelines, or instrument for evaluation.
3. Evidence of benchmarking and referencing with international standards and good practices.
4. Evidence of dialogues and communication with stakeholders.
5. Availability of social media for effective communication and dissemination of information.
6. Evaluation and review of self-assessment report of institutions by the agency.
7. Evidence of selection policies, responsibilities and development of staff and assessors i.e. training requirements.
8. Code of conduct and ethics for reviewers
9. Description of cyclical validity and follow up measures.
10. Policy and procedure for appeals.

3. Principles of Internal Quality Assurance

A fundamental principle in quality assurance of higher education is that quality primarily rests with the higher education institutions themselves. The statements which follow define the role of the higher education institutions in developing, sustaining, enhancing and assuring quality of higher education to their stakeholders. The statements provide guidelines on the quality assurance processes systems through which higher education institutions demonstrate their accountability and safeguard the interests of their stakeholders including students and society.

- 3.1. The institution has a primary responsibility for quality.
- 3.2. Quality assurance promotes the balance between institutional autonomy and public accountability.
- 3.3. Quality assurance is a participatory and cooperative process across all levels incorporating involvement of academic staff, students, and other stakeholders.
- 3.4. A quality culture underpins all institutional activities including teaching, learning, research, services and management.

- 3.5. A structured and functional internal quality assurance system with clearly defined responsibilities is established.
- 3.6. The quality system is promulgated and supported by the top management to ensure effective implementation and sustainability.
- 3.7. Sufficient resources for establishing and maintaining an effective quality system within the institution should be provided.
- 3.8. The institution should have formal mechanisms for approval, periodic review and monitoring of programmes and awards.
- 3.9. Quality is regularly monitored and reviewed for purposes of continuous improvement at all levels.
- 3.10. Relevant and current information about the institution, its programmes, achievements, and quality processes is accessible to public.

Examples of Supporting Evidence:

1. Statement of vision and mission of the university;
2. Documented policies and strategic action plans;
3. Organisational and management structure;
4. Resources for teaching, research and services;
5. Adequacy of facilities and infrastructure to support teaching, research and services;
6. Establishment of quality assurance unit and resources;
7. Internal quality assurance systems [e.g. curriculum development / improvement procedures, evidence of program specifications];
8. Documented information of responsibilities of faculties, schools, departments and other organisational units and individuals in quality assurance;
9. Feedback from stakeholders;
10. Report of internal quality assurance activities including reviews and improvement of internal quality assurance system of the institutions.

4. Principles of National Qualifications Framework

NQFs have turned into key instruments for the reform of education and training and qualification systems in many ASEAN countries and beyond. The Framework may be unified and comprehensive or linked or sectoral based. The emphasis on learning outcomes is to ensure that the learning takes place effectively through variety of strategies amongst others, teaching and learning, research, and other activities.

Increasingly, lifelong learning policies have been embedded into the NQF-primarily by addressing the flexibility in the educational pathways, recognizing informal and non-formal learning within the national systems. It also addresses the barriers to access and progression in learning.

NQF is expected to facilitate the mobility of students, workers and professionals across the region and beyond. AMS are encouraged to align their NQF to regional frameworks as well as international good practices.

- 4.1. NQF facilitates the progressive nature of learning and training with the inclusion of recognition of prior learning.
- 4.2. NQF supports student and workforce mobility through recognition of qualifications, including lifelong learning.
- 4.3. NQF is based on learning outcomes that emphasize student-centered learning and student competencies.

- 4.4. NQF is generally defined by levels, descriptors and can be based on a credit system.
- 4.5. NQF supports consistency, transparency and flexibility of learning pathways and progression.
- 4.6. NQF must be supported by relevant national policies
- 4.7. Stakeholders must be consulted and actively involved in the development and implementation of the NQF.
- 4.8. The implementation of the NQF is to be carried out by an authorized body and supported by a set of agreed quality assurance principles and standards.
- 4.9. NQF is dynamic and should be reviewed to meet the changing needs and developments.
- 4.10 NQF should be complemented by an authorized information center.

Examples of Supporting Evidence:

1. NQF Planning reports
2. Document on the Qualifications Framework
3. Supporting laws and regulations
4. Information on the responsible authorities
5. Policies relating to the Framework
6. Guidelines associated with the implementation
7. The quality assurance system
8. Notices for implementation
9. Information centres such as a registry of accredited programmes
10. Use of Diploma Supplement or other similar formal statements
11. Consultation reports, reports on effectiveness of NQF

9.2 Annex II: EQA Country Fact Sheets

EQA Country Fact Sheet Brunei Darussalam

General Information

Inhabitants: 417,400 (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015a)

Population growth 2010-15: 1.465% (source: United Nations 2015)

GDP: 41,344.04 US\$ per capita (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015b)

General Higher Education Overview

Number of HEIs:	4 universities, 1 Polytechnic (reference year: 2012; source: Brunei Darussalam Ministry of Education 2013)
Responsible Ministries for HE: (Total: 2 Ministries)	Ministry of Education (http://www.moe.gov.bn/Theme/Home.aspx) Ministry of Religious Affairs (http://www.religious-affairs.gov.bn)
Number of enrolled students in given year:	8,000 (reference year: 2012, source: UNESCO 2014)
Incoming students:	354 (reference year: 2012; source: UNESCO 2014)
Outgoing students:	3,305 (reference year: 2011; source: UNESCO 2014)

EQA Body and Framework Information for Higher Education:

Responsible Body for EQA:	Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council (BDNAC)
Year of establishment:	1990
Type of body:	Governmental
Degree of independence:	Independent Agency under the Ministry of Education/Higher Education
Educational areas covered by body:	Higher Education Technical and Vocational Education Pre-University Education Secondary Education Primary Education Informal/Non-formal education Post-Secondary Education
EQA Instruments:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Compulsory Institutional Accreditation (for private and public education providers)2. Compulsory Programme Accreditation (for private education providers)3. Voluntary Programme Accreditation (for public higher education institutions)
EQA Procedure:	Procedure within BDNAC: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Receiving and acknowledging queries or applications

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Gathering relevant information 3. Preparing working papers or case studies for the relevant ad hoc & sub-committees 4. Submitting the papers to the ad hoc & sub-committees for recommendations 5. Submitting the recommendations to the Council of assessment and final decisions 6. Conveying the Council's decisions to the appropriate applicants
EQA Policy and Documents	Standards and guidelines for programmes Standards and guidelines for institutions Standards and guidelines for the process of accreditation/audit BDNAC Order 2011 & BDQF
Application of Framework:	Public HEIs Private HEIs Technical and Vocational Institutions Industries / Training Centres
Current state of framework	Complete/established (but dynamic) In transition to a new setup Incomplete/under development
Number of standards/criteria:	12 main criteria (vision, mission and learning outcomes, curriculum design and delivery, student selection and support services, assessment of students, academic staff, educational resources, programme monitoring and review, leadership, governance and administration and continual quality improvement)
Standard setting by:	Through joint technical committees and aligned with global best practices
Result of EQA:	Pass Pass with requirements Fail
Consequences of EQA:	Stop student enrolment Close study programme Penalties (BDNAC Order 2011)
EQA Cycle:	Every year for study programmes Every year for institutions Continuous monitoring done by a monitoring committee via site visits to the institutions and compulsory submission of a bi-annual report by the institutions.
Number of evaluated programmes:	15 accredited programmes (mostly franchised programmes from overseas)
Number of evaluated institutions	6 accredited institutions

EQA Country Fact Sheet

Cambodia

General Information

Inhabitants: 15.33 Mio. (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015a)

Population growth 2010-15: 1.623% (source: United Nations 2015)

GDP: 1,090.11 US\$ per capita (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015b)

General Higher Education Overview

Number of HEIs:	110 HEIs (reference year: 2015; source: MOEYS of Cambodia 2015)
Responsible ministries for HE: (Total: 9 ministries)	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (http://www.moeys.gov.kh/en/) Ministry of National Defense Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts Ministry of Health Ministry of Cults and Religious Affairs Ministry of Labor and Technical Vocational Education and Training Ministry of Economy and Finance Ministry of Interior Office of the Council of Ministers Ministry of Public Works and Transportation National Bank of Cambodia Ministry of Social Affairs, Veteran and Youth Rehabilitation Ministry of Industry, Mining and Energy
Student number:	231,787 (2013-14)
Incoming students:	67,905 (source: Educational Congress of MOEYS 2014)
Outgoing students:	42,783 (reference year: 2013-14; source: Educational Congress of MOEYS 2014)

EQA Body and Framework Information for Higher Education:

Responsible body for EQA:	Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) (http://www.acc.gov.kh/)
Year of establishment:	2003
Type of body:	governmental (Royal Decree 2013: ACC has to be integrated with the MOEYS)
Degree of independence:	Independent Agency under the Ministry of Education State Connection (Deputy Minister of Education, Youth and Sports is the Chairman)
Educational areas covered by body:	Higher Education

EQA instruments:	Compulsory Institutional Accreditation (full or provisional)
EQA procedure:	<p>Procedure for accreditation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Application of HEI 2. HEI submits Self Study Report (SSR) and other required documents 3. Pre-visit meetings 4. Site visits (team of 5-8 assessors formed by ACC) 5. Post visits and copies of accreditation materials; report writing, submitting of report to ACC 6. Conclusion and comments from Department of Standards and Accreditation as well as Secretary General 7. Final decision of ACC board
EQA policy and documents:	Standards and guidelines for institutions
Application of framework:	Public HEIs Private HEIs
Current state of framework:	Incomplete/under development
Number of standards/criteria:	9 criteria and 75 indicators
Standard setting by:	ACC board (Minister of MoEYS is a Chair person, State Secretariat of MoEYS is vice Chair, Secretariat General of ACC is executive member, other members are: 1 representative of Council of Ministers, 1 representative from Public University, 1 representative from Private University, 1 representative from Ministry of Economics and Finance, 1 representative from Ministry of Labour and Vocational Educational Training, 1 representative from Ministry of Health, 1 representative of Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery and 1 representative from Cambodian Development Council)
Result of EQA:	Pass Pass with requirements Fail
Consequences of EQA:	<p>Recommendations to Ministry in charge and Parent Ministry. (the parent ministry or ministry in charge closes the HEI if it fails 3 times consecutively)</p> <p><i>HEI has met key standards and has a credible plan to reach all prescribed standards: Provisional Accreditation (3 years, annual reports)</i></p> <p><i>HEI meets the minimum standards required by ACC: Accreditation with the mandate for five years</i></p>
EQA cycle:	Every 5 years for institutions In between there are midterm reviews
Number of evaluated programmes:	-
Number of evaluated institutions:	5 accredited institutions (the other 3 audited institutions did not receive accreditation) 8 audited institutions.

EQA Country Fact Sheet

Indonesia

General Information

Inhabitants: 254.5 Mio. (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015a)

Population growth 2010-15: 1.279% (source: United Nations 2015)

GDP: 3,491.93 US\$ per capita (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015b)

General Higher Education Overview

Number of HEIs:	3813 HEIs (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2014)
Responsible ministries for HE: (Total: 10 ministries)	Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia (http://www.dikti.go.id/) Ministry of Religious Affairs (https://kemenag.go.id/) Ministry of Home Affairs (www.kemendagri.go.id) Ministry of Health Ministry of Transportation Ministry of Defence Ministry of Industry Ministry of Agriculture Ministry of Tourism Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Republic of Indonesia
Number of enrolled students in given year:	5,364,000 (reference year: 2011; source: UNESCO 2014)
Incoming students:	6,437 (reference year: 2010; source: UNESCO 2014)
Outgoing students:	33,905 (reference year: 2011; source: UNESCO 2014)

EQA Body and Framework Information for Higher Education:

Responsible body for EQA:	National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (NAAHE)/ Badan Akreditasi Nasional Perguruan Tinggi (BAN-PT) (https://banpt.or.id/)
Year of establishment:	1994
Type of body:	Governmental
Degree of independence:	Agency under the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia (independent decision-making process, entire budget from government)
Educational areas covered by body:	Higher Education Technical and Vocational Education
EQA instruments:	Mandatory institutional accreditation

	Mandatory programme accreditation (for public and private HEIs)
EQA procedure:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HEI hands in self-assessment report and accreditation documents 2. Desk evaluation (adequacy assessment) 3. Visit (field assessment) of experts and report 4. Certificate of accreditation with rank and grade
EQA policy and documents:	Standards and guidelines for programmes Standards and guidelines for institutions Standards and guidelines for the process of accreditation/audit
Application of framework:	Public HEIs Private HEIs Technical and Vocational Institutions
Current state of framework:	Complete/established In transition to a new setup
Number of standards/criteria:	7 standards, and being reviewed to comply with Act 12/2012 on Higher Education
Standard setting by:	Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan (BSNP)/Agency for National Standards in Education (http://bsnp-indonesia.org/)
Result of EQA:	Pass with grade Fail
Consequences of EQA:	Close study programme (Ministerial decree being reviewed)
EQA cycle:	Minimum every 5 years for study programmes Every 5 years for institutions
Number of evaluated programmes:	18712 accredited programmes (end of September 2015)
Number of evaluated institutions:	761 accredited institutions (end of September 2015)

EQA Country Fact Sheet

Lao PDR

General Information

Inhabitants: 6.689 Mio. (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015a)

Population growth 2010-15: 1.659% (source: United Nations 2015)

GDP: 1,759.78 US\$ per capita (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015b)

EQA Body and Framework Information for Higher Education:

Number of HEIs:	5 universities; 127 HEIs (reference year: 2014)
Responsible ministries for HE: (Total: 2 ministries)	Ministry of Education and Sports (Department of Higher Education) (http://www.moe.gov.la/) Ministry of Health HEIs managed mostly by MOES but some have parent ministries who support on resourcing and policy etc.
Number of enrolled students in given year:	125,000 (reference year: 2011; source: UNESCO 2014)
Incoming students:	317.0 (reference year: 2013; source: UNESCO UIS 2015a)
Outgoing students:	4,146 (reference year: 2011; source: UNESCO UIS 2015b)

EQA Framework Information:

Responsible body for EQA:	Education Quality Assurance Centre (EQAC)
Year of establishment:	2008
Type of body:	Governmental
Degree of independence:	Agency under the Ministry of Education/Higher Education
Educational areas covered by body:	Higher Education Technical and Vocational Education Secondary Education Primary Education
EQA instruments:	Mandatory Accreditation through self-assessment and external peer review
EQA procedure:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. HEI sends self-assessment report, school's catalogue, prospectus, brochure, various handbooks published, etc. to EQAC2. Compose the assessor team3. Assessors analyse Self-assessment report4. Conduct 2 days of field visit incl. interviews with students and academic staff, observations, feedback5. Assessor team finishes the Evaluation report and send it to EQAC

	6. EQAC sends report to HEI for the feedback 7. Final decision done by EQAC and report to Minister and HEI
EQA policy and documents:	Standards and guidelines for institutions Standards and guidelines for the process of accreditation/ audit
Application of framework:	Public HEIs Private HEIs Technical and Vocational Institutions
Current state of framework:	Incomplete/Under development
Number of standards/criteria:	10 standards and 50 indicators
Standard setting by:	Standard set by Ministerial agreement (Ministry of Education and Sports). EQAC presented the regional model, the model summarized by UNESCO and discussed with stakeholders such as Rectors of Universities, Deans, concerned line departments under Ministry of Education and other Ministries provide educational service. During whole process of development supported by the QA international expert.
Result of EQA:	Very good, Good, Fair, Poor, Very poor
Consequences of EQA:	Under discussion
EQA cycle:	Every 1-5 years depending on the level of evaluation result.
Number of evaluated programmes:	-
Number of evaluated institutions:	0 accredited institutions. 24 audited institutions

EQA Country Fact Sheet

Malaysia

General Information

Inhabitants: 29.9 Mio. (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015a)

Population growth 2010-15: 1.514% (source: United Nations 2015)

GDP: 10,933.48 US\$ per capita (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015b)

General Higher Education Overview

Number of HEIs:	20 public and 510 private HEIs (incl. branch campuses) (reference year: 2015; source: Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia 2015)
Responsible ministries for HE: (Total: 1 ministry)	Ministry of Higher Education (http://www.mohe.gov.my/portal/)
Number of enrolled students in given year:	1,036,000 (reference year: 2011, source: UNESCO 2014)
Incoming students:	106,353 (reference year: 2015; source: Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia & Education Malaysia Global Services 2015)
Outgoing students:	79,302 (reference year: 2014; source: Education Malaysia & Malaysian Embassy in Foreign Countries)

EQA Body and Framework Information for Higher Education:

Responsible body for EQA:	Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) (http://www.mqa.gov.my/)
Year of establishment:	1997
Type of body:	Governmental
Degree of independence:	Agency under the Ministry of Education/Higher Education
Educational areas covered by body:	Higher Education Technical and Vocational Education Pre-University Education Informal/Non-formal education
EQA instruments:	Provisional Programme Accreditation Full Programme Accreditation Institutional Audit Maintenance Audit (Monitoring)
EQA procedure:	For provisional accreditation: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. HEI submits application2. Approval of programmes (Inter-Agency Committee)3. Review for completeness of documents (MQA officer)4. Selection and appointment of assessors5. Coordination meeting of assessors and HEI6. Evaluation report

7. Presentation to Accreditation Committee and final decision
8. Register in the list of provisionally accredited programmes

For full accreditation:

1. HEI submits application
2. Review for completeness of documents (MQA officer)
3. Selection and appointment of assessors
4. Initial report
5. Site visit (2 days)
6. Final evaluation report
7. Presentation to Accreditation Committee and final decision
8. Register in the MQR

For Institutional Audit:

1. Audit management meeting
2. Submission of self-review portfolio
3. Registration and verification of Higher Education Provider (HEP) Documentations
4. Notification of names and biodata of panel of auditors to HEP
5. Appointment of auditors, setting of dates for preparatory meeting, planning visit & audit visit
6. Submission of HEP documentations to auditors
7. Receipt and distribution of report to auditors
8. Preparatory meeting of panel of auditors
9. Audit planning visit
10. Audit visit, draft report & exit meeting (oral exit report)
11. Chairman of auditors sends final report to MQA
12. Final report amendment and verification of HEP's feedback
13. Review of the report by the institutional audit division
14. Institutional Audit Committee meeting

EQA policy and documents:

Standards and guidelines for programmes
Standards and guidelines for institutions
Standards and guidelines for the process of accreditation/audit
Malaysian Qualifications Framework

Application of framework:

Public HEIs
Private HEIs
Technical and Vocational Institutions
Higher education providers other than listed above applying for MQA's accreditation

Current state of framework:

Complete/established

Number of standards/criteria:

32 (Programme Standards - 20; Standards - 4; Guidelines to Good Practices - 8)

Standard setting by:

Panel of assessors / industry / specialists / other related individuals

Result of EQA:

Pass
Pass with requirements

	Fail
Consequences of EQA:	Stop student enrolment Close study programme
EQA cycle:	Programmes accredited under the MQA Act 2007 will not have an expiry date (perpetual). The date the accreditation was granted is stated in the Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR). If the accreditation is revoked, the date of the revocation is entered in the MQR. Nonetheless, the programme is subjected to a maintenance audit which is normally conducted at least once in every 5 years.
Number of evaluated programmes:	9443 accredited programmes 10508 audited programmes
Number of evaluated institutions:	n/a

EQA Country Fact Sheet

Myanmar

General Information

Inhabitants: 53.44 Mio. (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015a)

Population growth 2010-15: 0.82% (source: United Nations 2015)

GDP: 1,203.84 US\$ per capita (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015b)

General Higher Education Overview

Number of HEIs:	163 HEIs (reference year: 2012; source: Ministry of Education 2013)
Responsible ministries for HE: (Total: 13 ministries)	Ministry of Education (www.moe.gov.mm) Ministry of Science and Technology Ministry of Health Ministry of Defence Ministry of Co-Operatives Ministry of Culture Ministry of Border Affairs Ministry of Transport Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation Ministry of Livestock Breeding and Fisheries Ministry of Union Civil Service Board Ministry of Religious Affairs
Student number:	660,000 (reference year: 2011, source: UNESCO 2014)
Incoming students:	100 (reference year: 2012, source: UNESCO 2014)
Outgoing students:	6,815 (reference year: 2011, source: UNESCO 2014)

EQA Body and Framework Information for Higher Education:

No responsible body at the time of the research in 2015
(see case study)

EQA Country Fact Sheet

Philippines

General Information

Inhabitants: 99.14 Mio. (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015a)

Population growth 2010-15: 1.582% (source: United Nations 2015)

GDP: 2,870.54 US\$ per capita (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015b)

General Higher Education Overview

Number of HEIs:	220 public and 1,636 private HEIs (reference year: 2012; source: UNESCO 2014)
Responsible ministries for HE: (Total: 1 ministry)	Commission on Higher Education (http://www.ched.gov.ph/)
Number of enrolled students in given year:	2,625,000 (reference year: 2009; source: UNESCO 2014)
Incoming students:	2,665 (reference year: 2008; source: UNESCO 2014)
Outgoing students:	11,457 (reference year: 2011; source: UNESCO 2014)

EQA Body and Framework Information for Higher Education:

Responsible bodies for EQA	Commission on Higher Education (CHED) (http://www.ched.gov.ph/) CHED is a governmental regulatory body. There are 5 accrediting agencies that are private and independent from CHED and organised in one public and one private federation Private: Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP) Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU) (http://www.paascu.org.ph/) Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities' Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA) (http://pacucoa.ph/) Association of Christian Schools, Colleges and Universities Accrediting Association Inc (ACSCU-AAI) (http://www.acscu.com/) Public: National Network for Quality Assurance Agencies (NNQAA) Accrediting Association of Chartered Colleges and Universities of the Philippines (AACCUP) (http://www.aaccupqa.org.ph/)
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Association of Local Colleges and Universities - Commission on Accreditation (ALCU-COA)
<http://www.plm.edu.ph/alcu.html>

Year of establishment:	CHED 1994 PAASCU 1957 PACUCOA 1973 ACSCU-AAI 1978 AACUP 1987 FAAP 1977 NNQAA 2005 ALCUCOA 2003
Type of body:	CHED: governmental regulatory body - under the Office of the President of the Philippines PAASCU: independent agency PACUCOA: independent agency ACSCU-AAI: independent agency AACUP: independent agency ALCUCOA: independent agency FAAP: independent agency association NNQAA: independent agency association
Degree of independence:	Independent
Educational areas covered by bodies:	Higher Education Pre-University Education Secondary Education Primary Education
EQA instruments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policies standards & guidelines formulation & enforcement - Programme monitoring; closure of non-compliant programs - Institutional quality assurance monitoring and evaluation - Programme accreditation - Institutional accreditation
EQA procedure:	<p>Level I</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-study report 2. Meeting of Accreditation Association and HEI 3. Site visit incl. interviews and observation of ongoing classes 4. Evaluation report 5. Decision of Association and recommendation for certification sent to FAAP/ NNQAA <p>Level II - accredited status:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-study report for level II status 2. Same procedure as level I - steps 2- 5 <p>Level III - (re-)accredited status:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-study report for re-accreditation 2. Same procedure as level II - steps 2-5 3. Level II status with 5-year validity 4. Meet additional criteria for level III <p>Level IV - (re-)accredited status:</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At least 75% of the programmes must have attained level III status for a minimum of 10 years 2. Excellent outcomes in research (number, scope, impact of publications in important (inter-)national journals) 3. Excellent performance of graduates and alumni, and continuing assessment of student achievement 4. Excellent community service and social responsibility 5. Well-developed planning processes which support quality-assurance mechanisms
EQA policy and documents:	Standards and guidelines for programmes Standards and guidelines for institutions Standards and guidelines for the process of accreditation/audit
Application of framework:	Public HEIs Private HEIs
Current state of framework:	Under development
Number of standards/criteria:	9 standards
Standard setting by:	By CHED and each accrediting agency set standards, which should go beyond the CHED's minimum standards
Result of EQA:	Pass Pass with requirements Fail
Consequences of EQA:	Not applicable Accreditation in the Philippines is private and voluntary. Therefore, there are no consequences if the results of the site visit are not good. The accrediting agency has no power to close down the programs.
EQA cycle:	Every 3-5 years for study programmes Every 5 years for institutions
Number of evaluated programmes:	7831 accredited programmes
Number of evaluated institutions:	474 accredited institutions

EQA Country Fact Sheet

Singapore

General Information

Inhabitants: 5.470 Mio. (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015a)

Population growth 2010-15: 1,967% (source: United Nations 2015)

GDP: 56,286.80 US\$ per capita (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015b)

General Higher Education Overview

Number of HEIs:	5 public and 31 private HEIs (reference year: 2012; source: UNESCO 2014)
Responsible ministries for HE: (Total: 1 ministry)	Ministry of Education (http://www.moe.gov.sg/)
Student number:	244,000 (reference year: 2011, source: UNESCO 2014)
Incoming students:	52,959 (reference year: 2011, source: UNESCO 2014)
Outgoing students:	21,072 (reference year: 2011, source: UNESCO 2014)

EQA Body and Framework Information for Higher Education:

Responsible body for EQA:	Ministry of Education, Higher Education Division (HED) (http://www.moe.gov.sg/about/org-structure/hed/) Council for Private Education (CPE) (https://www.cpe.gov.sg/)
Year of establishment:	Higher Education Quality Assurance Section (HEQA) within HED 2001 CPE 2009
Type of body:	HED: governmental CPE: independent public / statutory board
Degree of independence:	Department of Ministry of Education/Higher Education (HED) Independent (CPE)
Educational areas covered by body:	Higher Education Technical and Vocational Education
EQA instruments:	Public HEIs: - Compulsory institutional self-assessment against institutional goals and self-selected performance indicators and external validation by an External Review Panel (ERP) under the Quality Assurance Framework for Universities (QAFU) Private HEIs: - compulsory registration under the Enhanced Registration Framework (ERF)

	- voluntary EduTrust Certification Scheme
EQA procedure:	<p>Public HEIs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Institutional self-assessment against institutional goals and self-selected performance indicators 2. External validation by an External Review Panel (ERP) appointed by the Ministry of Education 3. Feedback and future development <p>Private HEIs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To register private HEIs must comply with certain requirements under the Enhanced Registration Framework (ERF). Registration is received for a specified period, after which a renewal is needed. - EduTrust Scheme: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submission of documents by HEI 2. On site assessment by CPE 3. Assessment report and certification if passed
EQA policy and documents:	<p>Private Education Act (regulating registration and QA of private HEIs)</p> <p>Standards and guidelines for institutions (ERF and EduTrust, private)</p> <p>Quality Assurance Framework for Universities (QAFU, public)</p>
Application of framework:	Separate frameworks for public and private HEIs
Current state of framework:	Complete/established
Number of standards/criteria:	<p>Public:</p> <p>QAFU: institutional goals and self-selected performance indicators</p> <p>Private:</p> <p>ERF: 4 main requirements</p> <p>EduTrust: 6 criteria</p>
Standard setting by:	n/a
Result of EQA:	<p>Public HEIs:</p> <p>Recommendations to be followed up with action plan (QAFU)</p> <p>Private HEIs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Registered/not registered (ERF) - EduTrust certification
Consequences of EQA:	<p>Public HEIs:</p> <p>Not applicable</p> <p>Private HEIs:</p> <p>Deny/revoke permission to run (ERF)</p> <p>Not applicable (EduTrust Certification Scheme)</p>
EQA cycle:	<p>Public HEIs:</p> <p>Every 5 years for autonomous universities</p> <p>Private HEIs:</p>

- ERF: 1-6 years
- EduTrust 4 years (provisional 1 year)

Number of evaluated programmes: n/a

Number of evaluated institutions: n/a

EQA Country Fact Sheet

Thailand

General Information

Inhabitants: 67.73 Mio. (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015a)

Population growth 2010-15: 0,376% (source: United Nations 2015)

GDP: 5,519.36 US\$ per capita (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015b)

General Higher Education Overview

Number of HEIs:	98 public and 71 private HEIs (reference year: 2012; source: UNESCO 2014)
Responsible ministries for HE: (Total: 1 ministry)	Ministry of Education (http://www.en.moe.go.th/) Office of the Higher Education Commission (resp. for private/public HEIs and community colleges and internal quality assurance) http://www.mua.go.th/
Student number:	2,430,000 (reference year: 2011, source: UNESCO 2014)
Incoming students:	20,155 (reference year: 2011, source: UNESCO 2014)
Outgoing students:	25,195 (reference year: 2011, source: UNESCO 2014)

EQA Body and Framework Information for Higher Education:

Responsible body for EQA:	Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) (http://www.onesqa.or.th/en/index.php)
Year of establishment:	2000
Type of body:	Public organisation
Degree of independence:	Independent
Educational areas covered by body:	Higher Education Technical and Vocational Education Informal/Non-formal education Other: Basic Education, Specialized Education
EQA instruments:	Mandatory institutional accreditation
EQA procedure:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Document examination: self-assessment report of HEI (+ annual report), minutes of meetings, research findings and publications, learners' achievements, statistics, etc.2. Site visit incl. observations and interviews with educational staff, administrative staff, faculty members, students, parents, employers, etc.

3. ONESQA controls quality of external assessors to examine whether they behaved and assessed suitably according to objectives
4. ONESQA also examines quality of assessment report
5. HEI has to review and approve the draft of the report
6. Review of the draft by meta-assessors appointed by ONESQA
7. Revision of report by assessors and submission of full assessment report to ONESQA
8. ONESQA deliberates on quality accreditation and sends the result to HEI
9. ONESQA submits results to the Cabinet, the Minister of Education, the relevant offices and the public
10. In case results do not meet ONESQA standards, recommendations are provided for the institution's improvement to take due actions within the designated time period
11. Follow-up activities to improve quality

EQA policy and documents:	Standards and guidelines for institutions
Application of framework:	Public HEIs Private HEIs Technical and Vocational Institutions
Current state of framework:	Established (under revision)
Number of standards/criteria:	4 standards / 18 indicators (3 rd round)
Standard setting by:	4 standards by ministerial regulation with additions by ONESQA
Result of EQA:	Pass Pass with conditions Fail
Consequences of EQA:	Not applicable
EQA cycle:	Every 5 years for institutions
Number of evaluated programmes:	n/a
Number of evaluated institutions:	162 accredited (3 rd round)

EQA Country Fact Sheet

Vietnam

General Information

Inhabitants: 90.73 Mio. (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015a)

Population growth 2010-15: 1.12% (source: United Nations 2015)

GDP: 2,052.29 US\$ per capita (reference year: 2014; source: World Bank 2015b)

General Higher Education Overview

Number of HEIs:	219 universities, 217 colleges (source: Ministry of Education and Training 2015), 55 research institutes (reference year: 2013)
Responsible ministries for HE: (Total: 1 ministries)	Ministry of Education and Training (http://moet.gov.vn/?page=9.6)
Student number:	2,363,492 (source: Ministry of Education and Training 2015)
Incoming students:	3,996 (reference year: 2012, source: UNESCO 2014)
Outgoing students:	52,577 (reference year: 2011, source: UNESCO 2014)

EQA Body and Framework Information for Higher Education:

Responsible body for EQA:	General Department of Education Testing and Accreditation (GDETA) (http://www.moet.gov.vn/?page=8.2&script=tochuc&ma_bo-phan=18) Centre for Education Accreditation Hanoi (VNU-HN CEA), Vietnam National University Hanoi (http://cea.vnu.edu.vn/) Centre for Educational Accreditation (CEA-UD) - The University of Danang (http://cea.udn.vn) Centre for Education Accreditation (VNU-HCM CEA), Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City (http://cea.vnuhcm.edu.vn/)
Year of establishment:	GDETA 2003 VNU-HN CEA 2013 CEA-UD 2015 VNU-HCM CEA 2013
Type of body:	GDETA: governmental VNU-HN CEA: independent CEA-UD: independent VNU-HCM CEA: independent

Degree of independence:	Department of Ministry of Education/Higher Education <i>VNU-HN CEA, CEA-UD and VNU-HCM CEA are authorised to make decisions to recognize institutions and programs that meet accreditation standards without intervention of a third party (including the government).</i>
Educational areas covered by body:	Higher Education Technical and Vocational Education (not fully decided yet) Professional Education (3-year college and 2- or 3-year gymnasias/Lycée)
EQA instruments:	Mandatory Institutional Accreditation Mandatory Programme Accreditation (to be implemented)
EQA procedure:	Accreditation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-evaluation by HEIs 2. External evaluation (conducted by external evaluation teams of experts which are formed by the accreditation bodies) and re-evaluation (if the HEI has appeal on the results) 3. Appraisal of the external evaluation results by Accreditation Council of the accreditation bodies 4. Recognising and issuing certificate by the Director of accreditation bodies
EQA policy and documents:	Standards and guidelines for programmes (draft) Standards and guidelines for institutions Standards and guidelines for the process of accreditation/audit
Application of framework:	Public HEIs Private HEIs Technical and Vocational Institutions Professional Education
Current state of framework:	In transition to a new setup
Number of standards/criteria:	10 standards & 61 criteria for 4-year university 10 standards & 55 criteria for 3-year college 10 standards & 57 criteria for 2- or 3-year gymnasias/Lycée
Standard setting by:	MOET of Vietnam (besides international standards that can be used: e.g. AUN, ABET, CTI)
Result of EQA:	Pass Fail
Consequences of EQA:	Potential stop of student enrolment (Decision by MOET)
EQA cycle:	Every 5 years for study programmes (to be implemented) Every 5 years for institutions
Number of evaluated programmes:	n/a
Number of evaluated institutions:	New system: 1 HEI is under the process of External Evaluation. 5 Self-Evaluation Reports of 5 HEIs have been audited to prepare for External Evaluation Under the old centralised system there have been institutional evaluations but without granting accreditation (see case study)

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