ANQA Stakeholder Workshop

Yerevan, 23 September 2010

“A Focus on Institutional Procedures“
The Swiss Experience with external QA
ANQA Workshop, Yerevan, 23 September 2010

Presentation Rolf Heusser, Switzerland:
1. The Swiss Quality Assurance Agency (OAQ)
2. External QA in Europe – positioning of Switzerland
3. Institutional Audits at Swiss HEI’s, experiences
4. Towards a new Swiss Law in HE
Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities (OAQ)

- Established in October 2001, based on a legal act
- Mission: to assure and promote the quality of education and research of the Swiss Universities
- Independency in working process
- External peer review passed in 2006 (ESG fulfilled)
OAQ – Philosophy

- Aiming at quality control and quality improvement
- Respecting autonomy of HEI’s
- Involve well renowned experts in Q-procedures
- Internationalisation
External QA in Swiss Higher Education Area

- Focus on institutional procedures
- Institutional audits of universities are mandatory
- Programme accreditation is voluntary for universities
- Private Institutions can ask for institutional accreditation
Institutional Assessments – Strengths

- Resource saving method; less bureaucratic
- Respect primary role of HEI’s in quality assurance
- Produce results that can be used for institutional steering and development
- Enhance institutional quality mechanisms and facilitate the establishment of a quality culture
### Institutional Assessments in Europe - Some Recent Initiatives

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Institutional Audits in Switzerland – Methods

- Three steps procedure: self evaluation; on site visit by independent experts (4+1 student); publication of results
- Focus on internal QA-systems of universities; additionally sample of study programmes examined
- First audit cycle 2003/4: Basic expectations for QA-systems formulated by OAQ
- Second audit cycle 2007/8: Standards for internal QA issued by political authorities, ESG compatible
Institutional Audits 2007/8 in Switzerland – Examination areas

- QA-Strategy
- QA measures (education, research, services)
- Processes and responsibilities
- Evaluation of subunits / study programmes
- Human resources management
- Management Information Systems
- Communication (internal/external)
Institutional Audits 2007/8 in Switzerland – Results

- High quality of education, research and services at Swiss universities
- Audit process was very well accepted by universities
- Contribution to institutional quality enhancement
- Changes at universities introduced following the first audit cycle
Effects of Institutional Audits in Switzerland

- Structural changes
- Introduction of systematic internal evaluations
- Coordinated and coherent QA-mechanisms
- Establishment of Management Information Systems; use of data for steering
- Etc.
Effects of Quality Audits 2003/04 – Examples

University of Lausanne:
- Introduction of a Vice-rector for quality
- Committee for valorisation of teaching and research
- Systematic evaluation of all faculties --> action plans

University of Bern:
- Quality year 2006/07
- Development of a quality concept ---> preparation for audit 08
- Events throughout the university
Institutional Audits in Switzerland – Methodological lessons learned

- Participatory approach (HEI’s + QAA) and clear guidelines increased acceptance of audits
- Preparation time must be sufficiently long
- Training of experts needed in order to assure consistency
- International composition of panels was perceived as advantage, but knowledge of national HE-system must be present in expert panel
- It is possible to combine control and developmental elements in the quality procedures
Institutional Audits – Open questions

- How well can institutional audits assure good quality of study programmes?
- What is the optimal balance between “control” and “enhancement”?
- Same rules for all types of HEI’s?
- How to use results of institutional audits for purposes of international recognition of qualifications?
Future perspectives for external QA in Switzerland

New federal law on HE in Switzerland (2012) foresees:

- Same requirements for all types of HEI’s in Switzerland
- Mandatory institutional accreditation, centered around the assessment of internal QA-systems of HEI’s
- Voluntary programme accreditation maintained
Summary and Conclusions

- Many European countries have introduced external assessments at institutional level
- Institutional assessments are in the best interest of the HEI’s: they respect autonomy and contribute to institutional development
- Switzerland has made positive experiences with institutional audits: impact could be demonstrated (changes occurred)
- Forthcoming institutional accreditations in CH should be based upon these experiences and should serve two purposes: Q-control and Q-enhancement
- Coherence of internal and external QA has to be assured
THANK YOU!

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