

24 February 2019

From morning up to lunchtime there were two very captivating plenary sessions on **Quality Education**. The first one was on International Accreditation and the second on Leveraging ICT tools to create a high-quality research and teaching environment

Towards improved learning environments and international accreditation

The first session was chaired by Prof Remane Kabore the PSC member for Burkina Faso. Dr Chux Daniels who is one of the ACE Impact Experts presented on curriculum development/strengthening, self-assessments, gap assessments, national/international accreditation and how to improve the overall research and learning environment. The additional presentations from ACEGID, 2iE and WACCBIP provided insights on their experiences towards international accreditation for their programs.

Experiences from 2iE - presented by Prof Karambiri

- 2iE (in Burkina Faso) worked with CTI (Commission des Titres d'Ingénieurs / Engineering Degree Commission) based in France to internationally accredit their program.
- ACEs must begin by defining the motivation for the international accreditation. It is important that there are clear reasons why the institution wants to accredit its programs. International Accreditation must be part of the strategy of the institution and the vision must be very clear.
- In the past 2iE was training for the Burkina Faso market. The motivation for 2iE to prioritize international accreditation stemmed from the need for 2iE to be attractive at a global and regional level. The issues of student and staff mobility were also important – 2iE saw the importance of enabling the mobility of their students through an internationally accredited program.
- Training the students for the global needs of diverse markets can only be achieved by having world class programs so that the graduates are marketable
- Multi-stakeholder engagement is important.
- You must also appoint an excellent team to lead the international accreditation processes
- Documentation is very important – consider setting up a department for information management, monitoring and evaluation. Develop a culture of documenting everything -e.g. procedures for developing a curriculum, assessment procedures, student hand books, etc
- There is also a need for a quality management unit and related information management systems
- The university needs to be rigorous and professional.
- Preparing for, going through and concluding the international accreditation process is lengthy and difficult – but satisfying at the end. The university must be prepared for it.
- Accreditation is not permanent – it requires renewal every 4-5 years.

Experiences from WACCBIP - presented by Prof Awandare

- This ACE project is capital intensive. Unlike typical research grants it offers big opportunities to invest in your teaching environment. International Accreditation focusses on the teaching and research environment
- WACCBIP (at University of Ghana) used the ACE funds to refurbish laboratories and purchase strategic equipment in order to raise the standard of and the quality of the environment. They agreed on the equipment that would give them competitive advantage – and bought

equipment that was needed by several programs. They did not prioritize equipment which would be used by one laboratory/department

- WACCBIP put up a building – and this was a very targeted building to complement the facilities that they already had
- WACCBIP worked with the Royal Society of Biology – a UK Accreditation Agency to accredit their program. WACCBIP are the first ACEI center to embrace accreditation because they understood the value of international accreditation.
- The international accreditation has given the university of Ghana a globally respected degree. WACCBIP is now part of a family of programs that are internationally accredited. This also opened opportunities for students – the program is listed on several platforms and this markets the program, our students and our staff. Its quality is comparable to other global programs.
- Remember that Best Students are attracted to internationally accredited programs
- WACCBIP got \$600k for achieving the Disbursement Linked Result.
- When designing your curriculum – think of your teaching philosophy, the interactive design of content, opportunities for harnessing ICT and incorporate multi-disciplinary aspects
- International Accreditors will assess at your faculty strength. They will review the staff CVs, review staff research, etc. At least 10 solid faculty staff are required for each program.
- Prioritize designing and constructing world class teaching spaces
- Strong leadership from the ACE centre leader is very important and buy-in from your faculty is vital
- Electronic Record keeping is strongly recommended important – to simplify tracking students, examination reports, students' transcripts

Experiences from ACEGID - presented by Dr. Onikepe Folarin

- ACEGID (at Redeemers University, Nigeria) used AQAS based in Germany to internationally accredit their program. AQAS accredits both programs and institutions. AQAS is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).
- ACEGID were planning to use a Brazilian accrediting agency but were advised that the selected agency was limited to Brazil in terms of the recognition of their certifications.
- It is important for African Universities to prove the quality of their programs through seeking international accreditation. International Accreditation brings other benefits such as opportunities to compete for more grants, visibility and recognition
- The AQAS process starts from contacting them. They send the contract. Then the responsibilities are shared. The contract is between the university and AQAS - 70% is paid upon contract signing and 30% after the accreditation process ends.
- ACEGID conducted self-assessment - then experts came and verified the information submitted.
- The information required as part of the accreditation process includes - procedures for quality assurance are key. How the university is financed? Student support and counselling? Quality and content of curriculum? How the course is monitored. Teaching staff and their qualifications? Learning resources? How you teach? How you assess? Student admissions? Research activities and grants? Laboratory environments? Students involvement in research? Tracking of students? List of publications? Informal training for students – proposal writing, critical thinking, etc. How you incorporate the regional students – and accommodate language issues?

- After the site visit by experts, the AQAS Accrediting Commission then makes a recommendation. Centre must review and confirm acceptance. The Centre is given room to provide additional supporting information.
- The biggest problem faced by ACEGID was that they did not document several processes and procedures which were needed as part of accreditation. E.g. who is the program coordinator?

Dr Samson – RWESCK – Regional Water and Environmental Sanitation Centre, Kumasi

- RWESCK, based at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology used AQAS based in Germany to accredit their programs
- RWESCK offers 3PhDs and 2 Masters
- AQAS was used based on the World Bank Recommendations
- AQAS was chosen because the RWESCK program is Engineering
- It took one year to complete the whole process of international accreditation – so ACEs are advised to start early
- Some of the information required during the international accreditation process is the student handbook, university regulations on assessments and exams, etc. This information accompanies the self-assessment report.
- You need to be honest – the experts will come and verify everything submitted.

Summary by Prof Ramane Kabore

1. ACE are advised to start the international accreditation processes early. Some required information needs the Senate approval.
2. Do the necessary research and then work backwards to fully prepare
3. Accreditation is about continuous improvements

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS	ANSWERS
Don't wait for the external accreditors. Have a Quality Assurance Unit in the university. Embed institutional Quality Assurance processes in the university	
Is then an ACEI that got a denial from external accreditors? Are there any ACEs that had conditional accreditations?	ACEGID given conditional accreditation – and given time to resubmit. Lessons - Revise and update handbooks. Different levels of quality management were not documented All 6 ACEs were fully accredited Match your curriculum to a suitable accrediting agency
Are the results published on the accrediting agency's websites? Are you obliged to go through national accreditation?	Yes, they are published. ACEs can use their logo. Yes, National Accreditation must be done first 2iE submitted their CAMES accreditation to international accreditors
Who drafted the report of self-assessment?	It is a form that is completed by the ACE
How much did it cost you on average – from beginning to the end?	45k Euro paid out by ACEGID

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS	ANSWERS
	<p>2iE – not sure of the total cost. Agency cost is on the website. But there are other costs to the institution as well</p> <p>50k euro paid by KNUST</p>
<p>Do we have recommended Accrediting Agencies to use?</p> <p>Is it only the post-grad components that we should accredit? Because our post-graduate programs have under-graduate components.</p>	<p>World Bank does not prescribe. There is no specific list. But the use of an accrediting agency must be approved by the World Bank. YES, a list can be developed for ACE Impact to use.</p> <p>Yes, only post graduate programs – except engineering programs and Emerging centres can also accredit under-graduate programs</p>
<p>What is the best strategy for documenting information in universities?</p>	<p>Appoint someone responsible for accreditation - Center Leader must keep an eye on the process</p> <p>ACE must have a unit that will document, do quality control and monitor</p>
<p>Some accrediting agencies use third parties? Have you experienced this?</p>	<p>Royal Society of Biology use experts from their vast network of RSB</p> <p>AQAS sent the details of their recommended experts</p>
<p>English as a foreign language? Is it compulsory?</p> <p>Does the CAMES accreditation count?</p>	<p>e.g. TOEFL. This is very important for francophone ACEs. Obligatory.</p> <p>Yes, CAMES is acknowledged and you earn funds for having it</p>
<p>Now that ACE1 is winding up – how have the ACEs been documenting their procedures, activities and lessons? So that new centers can learn from the ACEI experiences</p>	<p>True that we need to compile international accreditation lessons and best practices to support the new centers – and to strengthen the ACE Impact Project.</p>
<p>What is the role of industry in curriculum enhancement? This did not come through well.</p>	<p>2iE has a strong link with companies</p> <p>2iE have a Human Resources framework – they meet to review our curricula. We revise to adapt our curricula to industry needs.</p>
<p>Should we not focus on university accreditation and not ACE accreditation?</p>	<p>The ACE and University environment is seamless International Accreditation is an external eye for improving quality. It is therefore important to uplift the whole environment.</p>
<p>Documentation? Is everyone’s responsibility. Not one person and not one office.</p>	<p>Its everyone’s responsibility of course. But someone must have it in their job description – and be accountable for it.</p>
<p>What is the rationale for asking for language certification before graduating? It must be part of enrolment.</p>	<p>There are foreign students who are recruited when they lack the language proficiency. Therefore, it is required as part of meeting the graduation requirements</p>

In her remarks Dr Ekua Bentil emphasized that it was possible to achieve accreditation. Accrediting agencies that accredit at institutional level are useful because we need to improve the overall

teaching and learning environment. AAU was asked to draft the list showing centers and accrediting agencies used.