

## **Announcement and first Call for Proposals**

# **Policies and Practice of Quality Assurance and Control in Higher Education:**

**12th International Workshop on Higher Education Reform**

**Oct 21-23, 2015, Tianjin Normal University, Tianjin, China**

Because of the rapid growth and differentiation of Higher Education institutions and programs over the last decades, the challenges of assessing, comparing and enhancing academic quality are increasingly complex – yet the need has never been greater. In all countries but especially in China where the growth of student numbers, of academic teachers and institutions, and graduate programs has been exponential, quality and its control and assurance have become increasingly a policy concern.

Also, the fast growing international dimension of Higher Education requires comparability of quality standards of the academic qualifications earned. As a result, quality control systems, both discipline-based and general, regional and national, have mushroomed over the last decade or two, yet internationally comparable standards of quality are still elusive.

Some ‘input’ and ‘output’ indicators of academic research seem more easily observable and quantifiable - the reason why international university rankings rely almost exclusively on research in the natural sciences, medicine, and applied sciences - standards and ‘outcomes’ of academic teaching and learning are to a great extent not observable and quantifiable. On the one hand, focusing on input indicators such as outlays per student, teacher-student ratios, or number of books in university libraries does not take into account changes in the learning environment such as for online and student-directed learning. On the other hand, ‘outcome-based indicators’ such as ‘employability’ or finding a job after graduation as a (sometimes only) proxy for quality neglect other outcomes of Higher Education that are similarly important both from the perspective of society and individuals. The neglected outcomes include such things as familiarity with a disciplinary field and basic methodologies of research and problem solving, as well as a basic and general understanding of scientific knowledge and its application in practice.

As part of an ongoing discussion about changes in Higher Education and Higher Education reform, the 12<sup>th</sup> International Workshop will focus on policy issues related to quality assurance and control: What are the criteria, what are the procedures, and what are the policies defining and controlling academic quality promotion; and who are the controllers, and by what processes can be it ensured that Higher Education institutions and systems deliver quality?

### **Themes and Issues**

Presentations are invited, and discussions will primarily focus, on aspects of the overall workshop theme of academic quality, quality assurance and control.

It is suggested that sub-themes address questions relating to

- (1) Policies (public, disciplinary, and institutional) on quality assurance and control;
- (2) Definitions and standards of academic 'quality' ('what makes Higher Education higher than other tertiary programs and qualifications?');
- (3) What is evaluated and for what purposes?
- (4) Methodologies of quality control and its relevance for the content of academic programs; and
- (5) the relevance and usefulness of quality assurance and control for various stake-holders, for example, students, employers, and funders of Higher Education.

The following are some examples for themes to be addressed by individual presenters and organized panel presentations:

- Policies and practice of defining and evaluating quality in Higher Education;
- Methods of quality control systems and outcomes: From compliance with procedural rules to creative approaches to quality enhancement;
- Quality in Higher Education and university rankings;
- National quality frameworks and their role in quality assurance in Higher Education;
- Quality and equity;
- Institutional differentiation, privatization, and quality;
- Quality assurance and its relevance for the graduate labor market;
- National and international perspectives on quality.

### **Invitation of Proposals and Deadlines**

As did the previous workshops, the 2015 workshop will provide an opportunity for comparative analysis and discussion of these and related issues. Proceedings and a selection of papers and panel presentations will be published.

Papers and panels that address the above-mentioned and related sub-themes are invited. Proposals of up to 400 words (for papers) and 800 words (for panels) should be received by electronic mail (file transfer) **on or before April 20, 2015 at HER2015@163.com.**

Presenters will be notified by May 6, 2015.

## **Deadline for Registration**

Early bird registration will be available from May 18 to August 30.

Details concerning communication, registration, accommodation, and the program will be found at the workshop website: <http://www.tjnu.edu.cn/her2015/>.

## **The Organization of the Workshop**

The Workshop will be hosted by Tianjin Normal University, Tianjin, China.

The Workshop will be co-sponsored by the Higher Education Special Interest Group of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES); the Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education (CSSHE); the Chinese Council for the Study of Higher Education (CCSHE), and the Centre for Policy Studies in Higher Education and Training of the University of British Columbia at Vancouver, Canada.

As in previous<sup>1</sup> workshops, this 12<sup>th</sup> International Workshop on Higher Education Reform will bring together researchers, policy analysts, policy makers, and Higher Education administrators. The workshop format is chosen to allow for an active exchange and in-depth discussions among participants.

## **Local Organizing Committee**

Li, Sumin Professor, Dean,  
Yang, Xiuyu, Associate professor,  
Wang, Dongfang, Assistant professor,  
Wang, Ziyue, Assistant professor,  
Gao, Wei, Assistant professor.  
all of the School of Education, Tianjin Normal University

## **International Workshop Advisory Committee**

- Alvarez, Germán M., Centre of Educational Research and Advanced Studies, Mexico City, Mexico
- Archer, Walter, Past President of the Canadian Society of the Study of Higher Education, University of Alberta, Canada
- Jacob, W. James, Institute for International Studies in Education (IISE), University of Pittsburgh, USA
- LI, Mei, Institute of Higher Education, East China Normal University, Shanghai, China
- Schuetze, Hans G., Centre for Policy Studies in Higher Education and Training, University of British Columbia at Vancouver, Canada
- Shea, Robert, Professor of HE and Director, Fisheries and Marine Institute, Memorial University, Canada.

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<sup>1</sup> Previous workshops have taken place in Vancouver (University of British Columbia), Vienna (University of Klagenfurt), Tokyo (University of Tsukuba), Dublin (Dublin City University), Shanghai (East China Normal University), Mexico City (Center for Research and Advanced Studies - Department of Educational Research), Berlin (Humboldt University), Pittsburgh (University of Pittsburgh), Ljubljana, Slovenia (University of Ljubljana), and St. John's, Canada (Memorial University).

- Slowey, Maria, Higher Education Research Centre, Dublin City University, Ireland
- Wolter, Andrä, Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany
- Yamamoto, Shinichi, Graduate School of Higher Education Management, Oberlin University, Tokyo, Japan
- Zgaga, Pavel, Director, Centre for Education Policy Studies, University of Ljubljana