

**NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE, FOUNDATION
ARMENIA**

**SYSTEM-WIDE ANALYSIS
2009-2011**



YEREVAN, 2012

Acknowledgements

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ANQA extends its special gratitude to the international experts that have contributed to the process of pilot academic programme and institutional accreditation within the frames of the World Bank and Tempus projects and for their continuous support in the establishment of quality assurance system at Armenian tertiary level education.

FOREWORD

Armenia joined the Bologna Process in 2005 in Bergen (Bergen Communiqué). Following its ratification by the Republic of Armenia (RA) National Assembly in 2005 steps have been undertaken to actively implement the Bologna lines to integrate into European Higher Education Area. One of the major achievements with this regard was establishment of the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance, Foundation (ANQA) in November 2009. This is the first report on system-wide analysis published by ANQA and it responds to the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education Area* (ESG) standard 2.8, which states

Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc. (p.22)

Thus, following the guidelines to the standard, throughout its four-year functioning ANQA has been collecting a wealth of information about individual programmes and tertiary level institutions in Armenia in order to be able to produce a structured analysis across Armenian tertiary education system. The analysis produced significant information on tertiary education developments, trends, emerging good practice and areas of persistent difficulty and weaknesses throughout the tertiary education quality assurance system, from which recommendations could be made for education policy development and quality enhancement.

The findings in this report point to one major conclusion: there is human resource capacity in the system and there are professionals who are renowned both nationally and internationally. What is primarily lacking is a coherent and systemic approach to reform implementation at tertiary level, which actually leads to a fragmentation of the system. Thus, there is a need to build on the capacity of the system to overcome the fragmentation and promote the development of more optimal approaches to its management and governance.

ANQA hopes the tertiary level institutions, policymakers, students and society at large welcome this report and take its proposed recommendations to further enhance the tertiary education system in the Republic of Armenia.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Tertiary level education is a fundamental sphere of a country's well-being that responds to a variety of crucial educational, economic, and societal needs. Considering its crucial role in the development and future visibility of a country at the international level, as well as the public and private support it receives, calls for increased accountability become more and more tangible. Accordingly, different stakeholders increasingly look at the system's performance with different aims. International counterparts, organizations and employers look for reliable information on the qualifications and the overall system performance for recognition purposes. On the other hand, the RA Government and educational policy makers increasingly insist upon measures of tertiary education quality, effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity to ensure informative decision-making, planning and efficient resource allocation. Similarly, students, parents, and labor markets are also seeking more and better information to help them judge the quality of available tertiary education opportunities.

Thus, the first system-wide analysis of the tertiary education performance in the sphere of quality assurance serves several important functions:

- to reveal the state of arts in quality assurance in Armenian tertiary education system;
- to respond to the interest of the RA Government on the state of arts on tertiary education quality and quality assurance as part of system-wide reforms in tertiary education;
- to responds to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education Area (ESG 2.8); and
- to provide recommendations for educational planning and management.

The initiative to conduct this first system-wide analysis was launched in September 2011 and comprises three major aspects of quality assurance in Armenia:

- internal quality assurance of tertiary level institutions;
- external quality assurance;
- quality assurance of teaching and learning.

Accordingly, the report covers only the challenges and recommendations for these three quality areas.

The background data for the analysis stem from multiple sources, including:

- the ANQA database on tertiary level institutions and respective desk-reviews of the documentation in the database;
- fifteen pilot accreditations, both institutional and programme, conducted throughout the last two years and the follow-up steps undertaken by the TLIs;
- a survey on the state of arts on quality assurance in general and that of teaching and learning in particular addressed to tertiary level institutions;
- focus group discussions with tertiary level institutions' teaching staff to validate the survey data, as well as to solicit insights on the state of arts in quality assurance of teaching and learning;

- feedback of international experts involved in the development and pilot of the system within the frames of the World Bank and Tempus projects;
- a survey of students conducted in 2011-2012 through the endeavor of the *Students' Voice* which reflects on the students' perceptions of the teaching and learning process in general as well as student assessments, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) system and teaching and learning methods in particular.

The recommendations offered in this report are drawn from the major findings and are aimed at enhancing sustainable development of the system's capacity, improving policymaking at tertiary level institutions, in the long-run, promoting cohesion of the system, and eventually stimulating social cohesion.

1. Background Data on Tertiary Level Education

The tertiary education system in Armenia consists of public, private, and intergovernmental education institutions. Tertiary education includes all the institutions that educate students for employment and research, which involves both higher education (HE) and vocational education and training (VET). Thus, higher education is provided by two major types of institutions: universities and other institutions such as institutes, academies, foundations and a conservatorium, whereas, vocational education is provided by colleges and technical schools.

Table 1: Higher Education Institutions and Students

	Public		Private		Intergovernmental ¹	
	University	Other institution	University	Other institution	University	Other institutions
HE sector	12	10	26	14	3	1
Number of students	about 95000		about 20000		about 8700	

Table 2: Vocational Education and Training Institutions and Students

	Public		Private		Intergovernmental	
	Colleges	Technical Schools	Colleges	Technical Schools	Colleges	Technical Schools
VET sector	73	25	18	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of students	about 29207	about 5614	about 1826	N/A	N/A	N/A

¹ Intergovernmental universities are the ones established on the basis of agreement between two countries. Intergovernmental universities belong to both the Armenian education system and that of the partner country and the awarded qualifications are recognized in both countries.

In 2011 the RA Government adopted the *National Education Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Armenia (ANQF)*² consisting of 8 levels. The responsibilities for the operation and maintenance of the ANQF are within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES).

According to the ANQF, the higher education system in Armenia has a unified character, which implies integration of professionally- and research-oriented programmes in terms of degrees awarded, horizontal or vertical mobility and in types of institutions. The private universities and other private HEIs, with the exception of some of the leading private providers, offer primarily bachelor programmes, whereas the public ones offer bachelor, master and research programmes (ANQF levels 6,7 and 8). The VET sector mainly offers programmes that are in line with level 4 and 5 of the ANQF.

2. First Experiences with Accreditation (1999-2007)

The evolution of the accreditation system in the Republic of Armenia can be divided into two major phases: prior to and after adoption of the Bologna Declaration in 2005. The first phase was launched in 1999 by establishing a unit within the Ministry of Education and Science that started the process of accreditation. While the accreditation process was mandatory for state universities private ones could apply for accreditation on a voluntary basis. Because of the nature of the accreditation process and its expected outcomes, including issuing state diploma, none of the state universities actually applied for accreditation since they had already been granted that authority. On the other hand, what happened to private universities in their search for students and establishing their own niche in the labor market and education realm, almost all of them applied for accreditation and 45 universities were accredited by 2007. The criteria for accreditation were similar to those of licensing and if 65% of academic programmes passed the accreditation process the university was considered accredited. The accreditation granted had a life-time nature and did not consider a cyclical approach to it. Further, in some of the cases the accreditation was granted through university appeals to court.

The consequences of the first experiences with accreditation could be considered partially successful since it failed to attract the state HEIs that were supposed to undergo accreditation according to the Law on Education (1999). Even more, because of its non-cyclical nature the private universities that had undergone accreditation ceased to follow-up on the development and enhancement of a university quality management system that would provide impartial and objective data for further decision-making and effective management of institutions. Thus, the first attempt yielded lessons for developing and implementing a more viable and effective system.

² <http://studyinarmenia.org/www/uploads/2011/08/QualificationFramework.pdf>

II. STATE OF ARTS: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

1. Background

After signing the Bologna Declaration in 2005, Armenian tertiary education in general and higher education in particular entered a new phase of reforms and endeavors. One of the first endeavors was establishment of a national center for tertiary education quality assurance, which would meet the ESGs, thus promoting recognition of the qualifications awarded in the Armenian tertiary education system.

ANQA, was thus established in November 2008 and started its functioning in March 2009 after the official election of the Director by the ANQA Board of Trustees. An intensive process of external quality assurance development drawing on ESGs, and its installation has marked the last four years of the ANQA functioning. ANQA's activities evolved around the following major aspects:

- Establishing an external quality assurance framework and its operationalization;
 - Development of regulatory documents, including:
 - a quality assurance framework that includes mandatory institutional accreditation and voluntary academic programme accreditation;
 - criteria and standards for institutional and academic programme accreditations;
 - procedures for institutional and programme accreditation.
 - Eleven institutional pilot accreditations and four academic programme pilot accreditations.
- Guidance on the set-up of internal quality assurance systems at tertiary level institutions;
 - Delivery of trainings and consultations;
 - Organization of workshops and round table discussions.
- Establishment of internal quality assurance system of ANQA;
- Internationalization of ANQA
 - Active participation in ENQA and INQAAHE activities;
 - Running World Bank projects;
 - Participation in Tempus projects: DIUS and PICQA aimed at establishment of both external quality assurance and internal quality assurance systems for higher education institutions.

2. Establishment of the external quality assurance framework and its operationalization

ANQA, since its inception, has embarked on a comprehensive needs analysis phase exploring the state of arts of institutional and academic programme management at national universities, both public and private, and has tried to identify the factors that inhibit and/or facilitate reforms in general and quality education provisions in particular. Based on the findings, an attempt was made to refine ESGs to meet educational needs at national level. The newly developed quality assurance criteria and standards were integrated as an approach to self-assessment to cover both national needs and international requirements. To ensure the criteria, standards, evaluation methods, tools and mechanisms underpinning the approaches to self-assessment was legitimate and stemmed from the needs of the system 15 universities, both public and private, were approached to participate in the pilot testing of the procedures, criteria and standards that targeted capacities of both institutions and academic programmes. The pilot involved the following phases: submission of an application by the universities, self-assessment of the universities and programmes, desk-reviews, site-visits and production of the reports.

The approaches to self-assessment integrated the seven ESG standards and the mechanisms revealing in detail the philosophy of and mechanisms for meeting each accreditation criterion and standard adopted by the RA Government. Through questions, assignments and workshops the pilot participants were guided through the *why* and *how* of the self-assessment for the purpose of trying to delve deeper into their management, teaching and learning levels. By involving the main stakeholders in the refinement of the developed policies and procedures two main issues were tackled: legitimacy of the developments and establishment of an active change dialogue between the stakeholders.

3. Guidance on the set-up of internal quality assurance systems at tertiary level institutions

The analysis of the 15 pilot accreditations revealed the following major findings with regards to ANQA effectiveness: ANQA quality assurance approaches positively

Finding: ANQA quality assurance approaches positively impacted the performance of the TLIs in the sphere of quality assurance

Recommendation: Support the TLIs in their endeavors to establish quality assurance systems and change approaches to institutional management, thus, underpinning a movement from quality control to quality enhancement and establishment of a quality culture.

impacted the performance of the TLIs in the sphere of quality assurance.

Overall, the respondents consider ANQA's approaches to cause changes in the organization, changes that lead to development and enhancement. The open-ended questions revealed that 80.37% (127 responses out of 158) of the respondents considered that with the introduction of ANQA's quality assurance approaches the universities were actually re-thinking their management approaches and were inclined to embark on a process of developing the requisite documentation, processes, mechanisms and tools that were lacking in their previous practices.

Administrator: *It has been a very productive process... we have come to understand the mechanisms underlying HEI management... Throughout the process we developed almost 50% of our documents workable in real life.*

QA Officer: *This is a challenging process, but it does make you learn a lot.*

Such results manifest that the ANQA's approaches did meet the needs of the system and the next years of transition should aim at improvements that will lead to gradual revival, development, and, in the long run, transformation.

Finding: Universities need a supported transition period

Recommendation: Define a time span throughout which the universities would be enabled to enhance their capacities, revise the approaches to quality management and enhancement and thus be ready for accreditation scrutiny.

As for the best approach to quality assurance in a post-Soviet context as Armenia, the major findings reveal that strategies aimed at supporting universities and promoting development are a priority. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the respondents stated their readiness and need to undergo a transitional period aimed at preparing the universities and programmes for the audit and accreditation processes. With the current state of affairs, most of the institutions are ready to undergo a preparatory phase to enable successful implementation of the actual process the criteria and standards of which stem from the national goals, ESGs and the internationalization aims the country is pursuing.

Finding: starting with mere inspections pursuing control may deprive the universities in fulfilling their development potentials and, could therefore, halt contribution to the knowledge society establishment.

Recommendation: Dispose of the control legacy of the former experience and move onto the enhancement approach to quality assurance.

Another finding was that starting with mere inspections pursuing control may deprive the universities in fulfilling their development potentials and, could therefore, halt contribution to the knowledge society establishment. Thus, 61% of the respondents found enhancement mechanisms that not only follow the checking procedures but also provide for necessary guidance and training aimed at the development of an internal quality assurance system and establishment of innovative approaches to management as a necessary element, at least for the transitional period. With regards to recognition of qualifications, 87% of respondents found voluntary programme accreditation leading to qualifications and credit recognition, state funding and internationalization to be appropriate only after some preparatory work at the institutional level has been done. Only 23% of respondents considered their institutions to be ready to undergo accreditation without any preparatory phase.

Thus drawing on the results a decision was made to adopt a quality assurance framework that would evolve around two major tools:

- Institutional accreditation (mandatory) – to promote innovative approaches to and enhancement of institutional management, rather than control;
- Programme accreditation (voluntary) – to promote recognition of qualifications and credits issued by the Armenian providers.

Another major element in the development of a quality assurance system was consideration of cultural peculiarities - a crucial element when opting for a quality assurance model since such aspects as national goals, purposes of tertiary education, and the modes of provisions are to be accounted for. On the other hand, in a post-Soviet context, where differences stem from various beliefs, the extent of change knowledge of actual implementers, the current state of quality assurance, and the purposes of tertiary education, quality assurance should promote transformation and behavioral changes as a primary goal if recognition and internationalization of provisions are at stake.

Recommendation: quality assurance should promote transformation and behavioral changes as a primary goal if recognition and internationalization of provisions are at stake.

As the data shows, the ANQA approach to quality assurance has resulted in the change of attitude of the actual implementers towards quality assurance in general and accreditation in particular. The universities involved in the pilot test not only witnessed a holistic approach to change management but also saw the tangible results of the approaches, which in turn, changed their attitude about being able to bring about changes, thereby causing them to feel empowered as change agents. Sensing this empowerment they started with first-order changes that involve restructuring and reconsidering the role of the developed tools and mechanisms of quality assurance (a move from formal documentation to developing working documents

that yield positive outcomes). The institutions in the pilot have actually moved towards the second-order changes targeting behavioral changes.

However, at the system-wide level, the TLIs still face the acute need to develop on their capacities for managing education processes. What actually need to be reconsidered is the management approaches that would lead to re-culturing of the system. This needs to be done through developing change knowledge (what should be done and how) of all the actors involved in the change process, and then building on the capacity of the latter. With regards to the quality assurance approaches they should target development and enhancement over control and provide for substantial preparatory phase for the universities to authentically engage in the process. The major implications of the study are: the role of ANQA is that of a catalyst and

Finding: the TLIs still face the acute need to develop on their capacities for managing education processes.

Recommendation: This needs to be done through developing change knowledge (what should be done and how) of all the actors involved in the change process, and then building on the capacity of the latter.

facilitator of reforms, thus, promoting gradual harmonious development and transformation. This is particularly important, considering the impact that tertiary education may have on the society development, since through embedding a quality culture at tertiary level the process will ultimately reflect on and be transmitted to the society at large.

4. Internationalization of ANQA

Since its inception, ANQA has taken aggressive steps to internationalize its activities and to succeed in ANQA's desire to achieve recognition by international agencies. The activities aimed at ANQA internationalization evolve around the following major processes:

- Active collaboration with other agencies from EU and former Soviet Union;
- Development of the external quality assurance drawing on the ESGs;
- Active participation in and contribution to quality dialogue through involvement in ENQA and INQAAHE activities;
- Pro-active participation in World Bank and Tempus projects.

With regards to ANQA's participation in the quality dialogue an active participation in the QA events at European was expressed through contributions in the form of articles submitted to the EQAF and INQAAHE conferences as well as participation in the ENQA work groups. ANQA is currently an affiliate member of ENQA and is a full member of INQAAHE and is represented on the INQAAHE Board of Directors.

ANQA has also been active in the implementation of different projects. At project implementation level, the impact is tangible at the level of ANQA staff professionalization, refinement of the developed mechanisms, the development of

tools for external quality assurance, as well as professionalization of TLIs quality assurance staff. Further, regarding World Bank projects such lines as support to the development of internal quality assurance systems at tertiary level institutions, pilot accreditations, training of internal quality assurance staff of TLIs and development of external quality assurance system have been undertaken. As for the Tempus projects, ANQA currently has six Tempus projects running in which ANQA takes the role of a leading partner and coordinator at national level. The Tempus projects evolve around the current challenges the Armenian tertiary system faces: internal and external quality assurance, learning outcome-based curricula development, establishment of university and market cooperation ties, development of sectorial qualifications frameworks to name but a few.

5. ANQA internal quality assurance

To promote its effective and efficient functioning ANQA has made several attempts to establish its internal quality assurance system. A bottom-up approach to ANQA internal quality assurance has been opted for to enable establishment of a system that works and yields positive outcomes. Thus, the internal quality assurance of ANQA is in the process of development and ANQA is in its first phase of self-assessment under the auspices of the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organization (NVAO) planning to apply for international recognition against the ESGs in 2014-2015.

III. STATE OF ARTS: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AT TLIs

To better understand the state of arts in internal quality assurance at TLIs an investigation into the following areas of TLIs' management was made:

- The state of arts in internal quality assurance at TLIs;
 - Mission- and evidence-based approach to QA
- Strategic planning;
- Quality management capacity.

As the survey data illustrates the TLIs, although in a fragmented manner, started the process of establishing quality assurance systems long before the adoption of the Bologna Declaration by the RA Government in 2005. However, a new and aggressive wave of QA systems establishment was registered after 2005 and with the establishment of the ANQA in 2008 and the trend keeps on up to present. According to the 15 pilot accreditation results, all the universities in the target, started revision of their approaches to quality assurance after ANQA establishment.

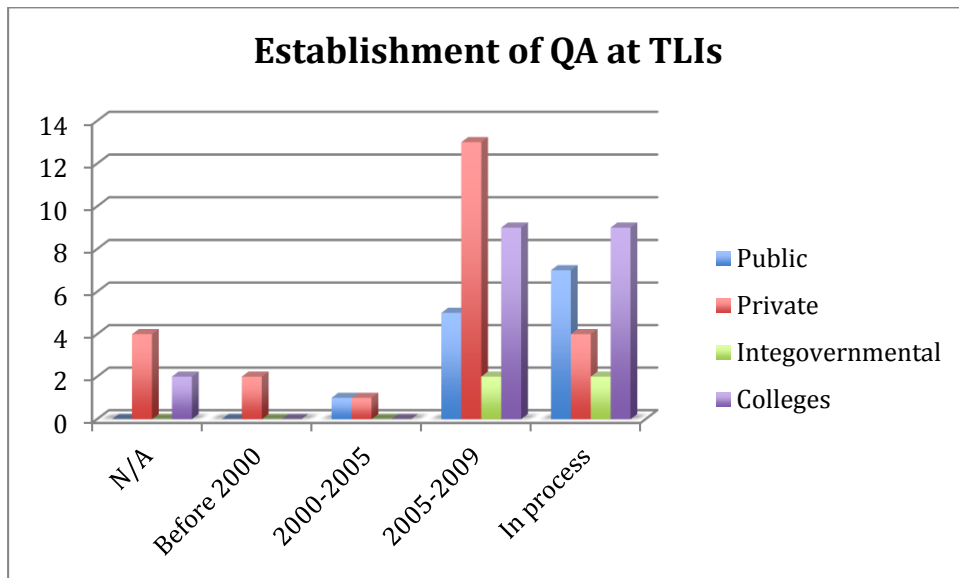


Chart 1: Establishment of QA at TLIs

The establishment of quality assurance systems, as the data illustrates, takes different forms at different TLIs ranging from a responsible person to an elaborate quality assurance network. However, the effectiveness of the approaches to the QA systems establishment is yet to be explored considering the newness of the phenomenon.

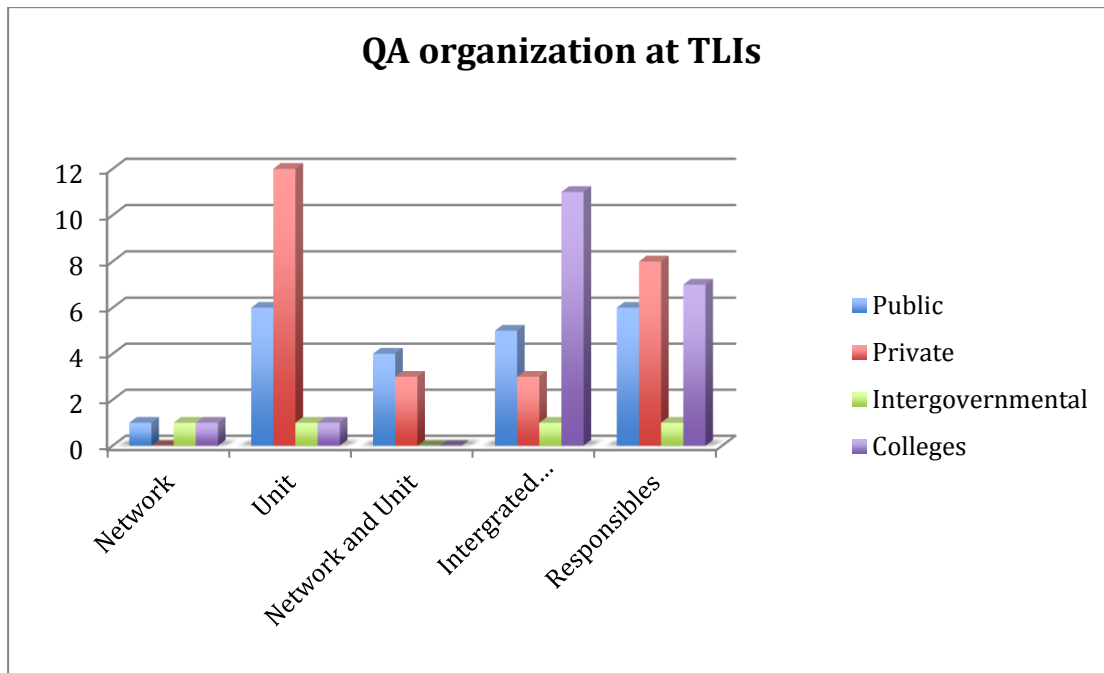


Chart 2: QA organization at TLIs

Another major finding regarded the mission- and evidence-based approach to quality assurance as promulgated by ANQA. Drawing on the results of the 15 pilot accreditation processes, it became clear that hardly any TLI had any experience in working with their adopted mission statements. Most of the times, the mission statements were over-ambitious and non-measurable preventing the TLIs from engaging in mission-based accreditation. Moreover, because of the lack of a clear vision on the evidence-based management none of the TLIs in the target group was able to produce either the necessary policy documents or the necessary data (Chart 3) to support their management activities throughout the last five years. This actually revealed the dire need to revise approaches to TLI management. As the following figure illustrates, mostly the sources of data evolve around student success rate and their satisfaction rate to some extent.

Finding: hardly any TLI had any experience in working with their adopted mission statements and strategic plans.

Recommendation: Deliver trainings on optimal approaches to TLIs' management for TLIs' administrative staff.

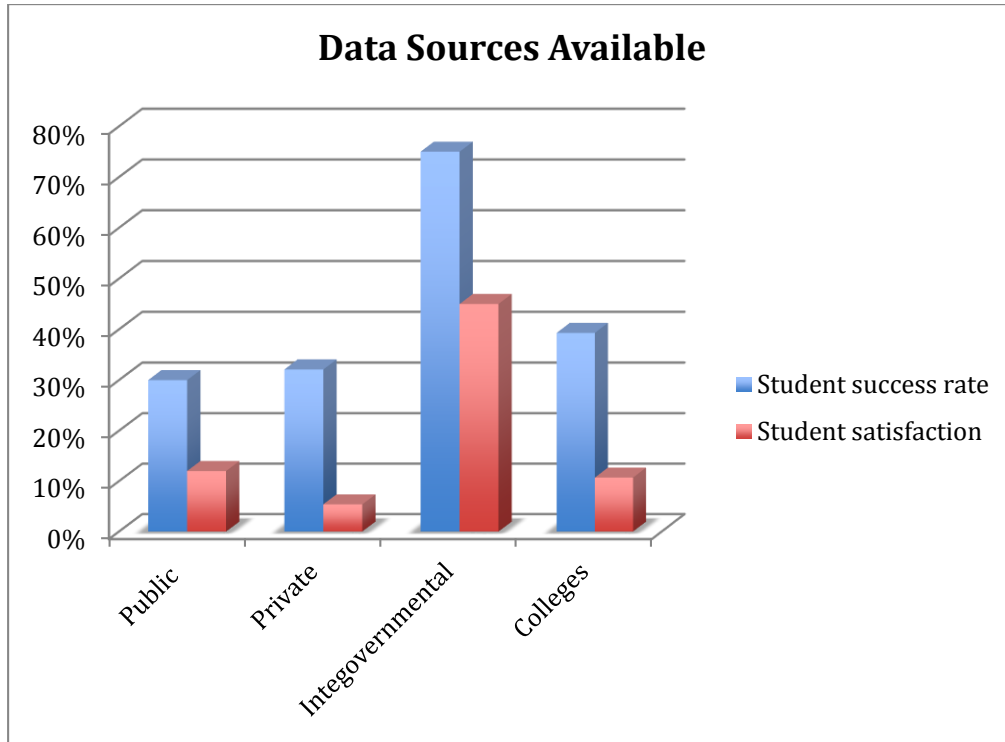


Chart 3: Data sources available

Finding: none of the TLIs in the target group was able to produce either the necessary policy documents or the necessary data to support their management activities throughout the last five years.

Recommendation: Consider establishment and implementation of institutional information management system to promote informative decision-making.

The next target point was identifying the TLIs' capacity to develop and implement strategic plans. The tradition of strategic planning was initiated by leading Armenian universities after the fall of the Soviet system. Thus, some of the universities have a history of about four cycles of strategic planning, and as the data shows most of the TLIs have a strategic plan or an equivalent planning document.

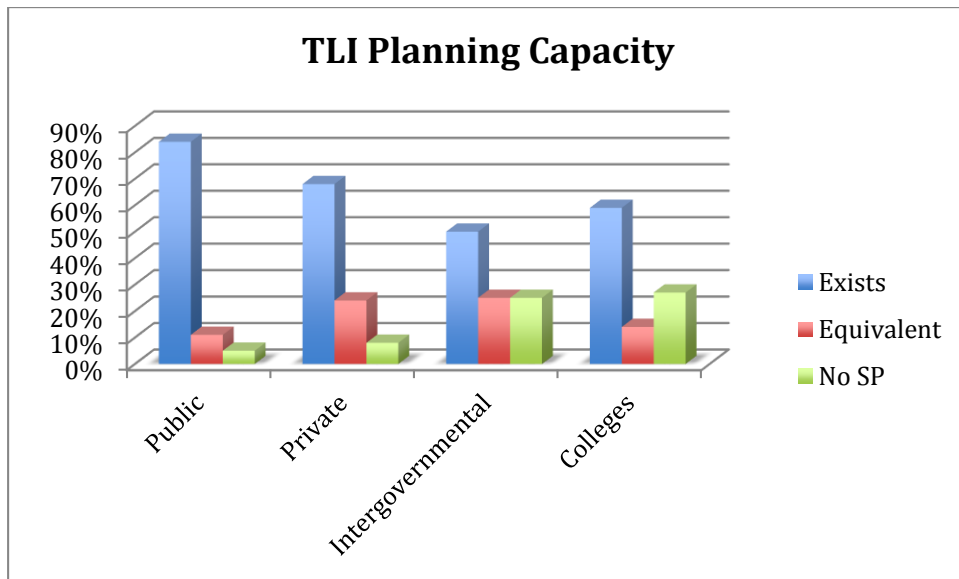


Chart 4: TLI Planning capacity

Yet, as the results of the survey indicate and those of 15 pilot accreditations reveal, the TLIs still had difficulties in working with strategic plans. If the data are examined from the point of view of state accreditation criteria and the quality management principle (Deming's cycle of Plan, Do, Check, Act), an interesting picture of TLIs' management (or may be the lack of it) surfaces. As the figure illustrates, most of the TLIs (83%) engage in strategic planning but only a small portion (20%) of the planned activities are actually implemented when measured against the state accreditation criteria. Next, with regards to implementation (Do) most of the TLIs (94%) engage in implementation activities, which are mostly not expressed in the strategic plan; yet, hardly any TLI (30%) was able to produce enough evidence of the implemented activities across the accreditation criteria. A finding that, actually, supports the same findings presented above.

As for the evaluation of the undertaken activities (Check), the data available show some measurement tools in the form observations and questionnaires (45%), however, very few of the tools were actually revealing the state of arts with regards to a specific management domain and even fewer (15%) could present evaluation evidences. Last, but not least, when endeavoring improvement in different fields of TLI management (Act) occurred, the TLIs were only able to demonstrate very little capacity in evidence-based improvement (30%) and, therefore, informative decision-making. As the figure demonstrates, poor evidence is available on the improvements that are actually linked to the previous strategic planning; moreover, very little evidence is available on the actual improvements made (15%). Mainly the TLIs attributed such kind of outcome to their limited state of resources. Very few linked the problems with the management approaches. Nonetheless, the following chart explicating Deming's quality management cycle seems to be not in place in Armenian TLIs. Such results also demonstrates that the top management is still keeping to traditional practices, rather than having anything to do with planning and evaluation, let alone improvement. To change this attitude seems to be a fundamental organizational change. It also serves as a warning against misuse and misallocation of financial

resources, all which could lead to misbalance and impairment in the system management.

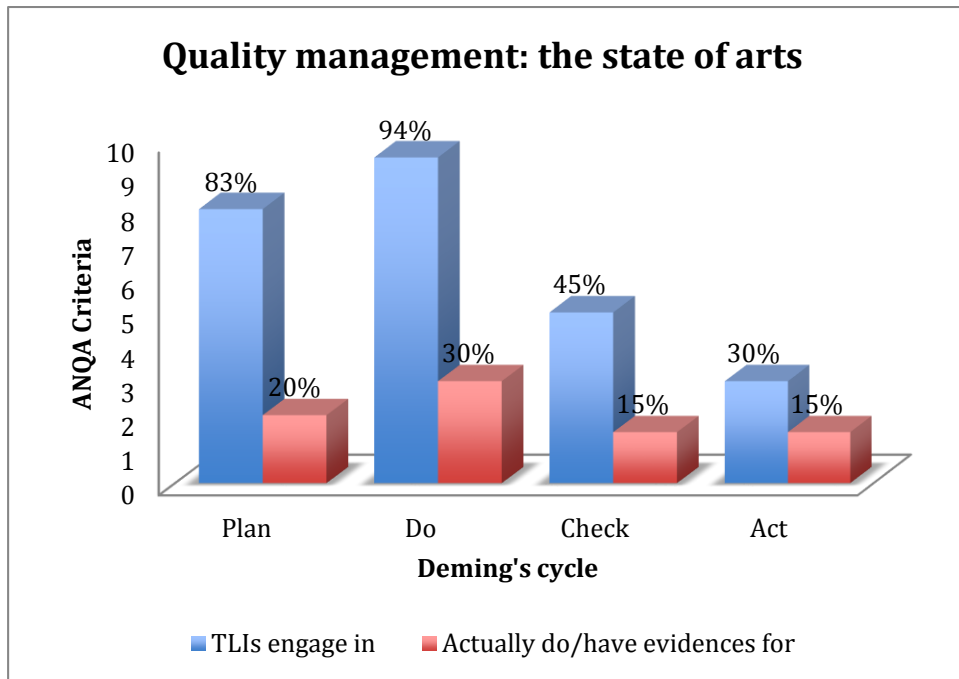


Chart 5: Quality management: the state of arts

One of the major success factors in the quality assurance management is the involvement of different stakeholders in the quality assurance processes. Thus, the next point of investigation was the extent to which the TLIs' different stakeholders were involved in the quality assurance processes.

Finding: TLIs still have a lot of challenges to overcome to ensure a pro-active involvement of such important stakeholders in quality assurance as employers and alumni.

Recommendation: Build on the capacity of the TLIs to build quality assurance mechanisms and tools promoting active involvement of stakeholders.

At the initial point, as the first 4 pilot accreditations revealed (2009-2010), the TLIs tended to delegate the responsibilities for quality assurance to one person to conduct the self-assessment. Such an approach resulted in the whole of the institution as well as its different stakeholders' ignorance to the internal quality assurance in general and its role in the university management in particular. After a series of workshops and trainings conducted by ANQA the following results on stakeholder involvement were registered for 2011 (Chart 6). As the chart illustrates TLIs still have a lot of challenges to overcome to ensure a pro-active involvement of such important actors in quality assurance as employers and alumni. Serious steps should also be

undertaken to more actively involve the academic staff as well as other units of the TLIs.

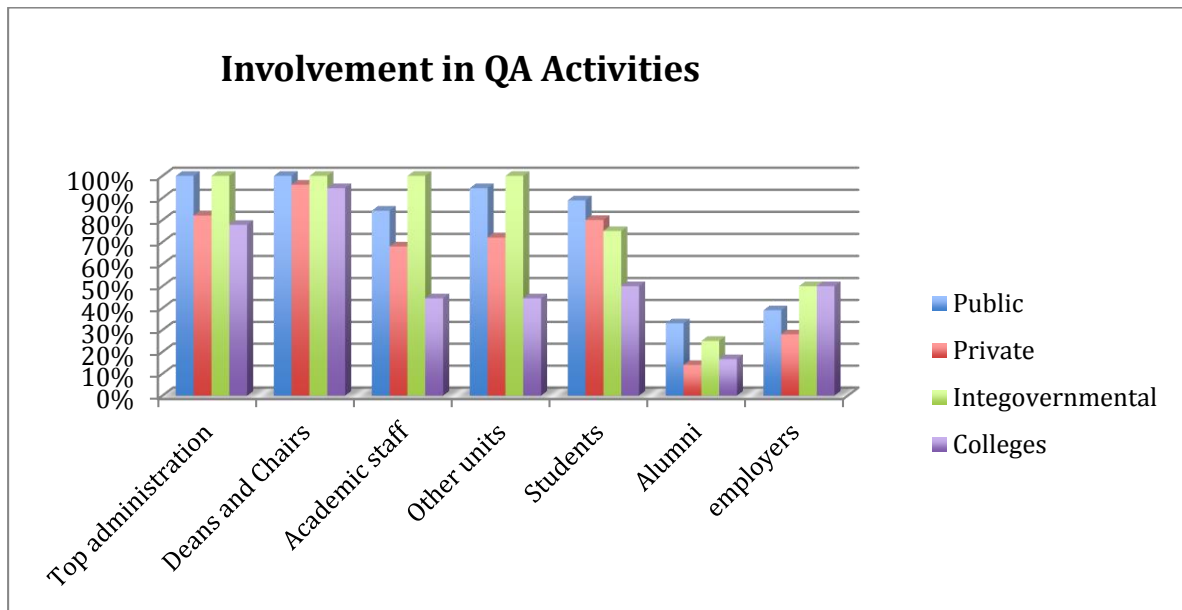


Chart 6: Involvement in QA activities

Another major factor for a TLI quality management is the capacity of its different staff to engage in quality assurance activities. This primarily depends on the extent of the actual implementers' change knowledge (what and how of change). Thus, the data obtained show a dire need to have new methods and styles of higher education management in general and that of quality assurance in particular. About 53% of the respondents emphasized the need for better understanding the philosophy of quality assurance, the knowledge of the tools and mechanisms that would best fit their specific contexts and their needs.

Finding: There is an acute need to develop new methods and styles of higher education management in general and that of quality assurance in particular.

Recommendation: Consider quality assurance as one of the driving forces for the TLIs' management.

As for the needs to re-culture the system to meet the demands, the results show (Chart 7) that the universities are in dire need of building on the capacity of applying the underlying mechanisms that drive quality education, which requires behavioral changes if quality is to be achieved.

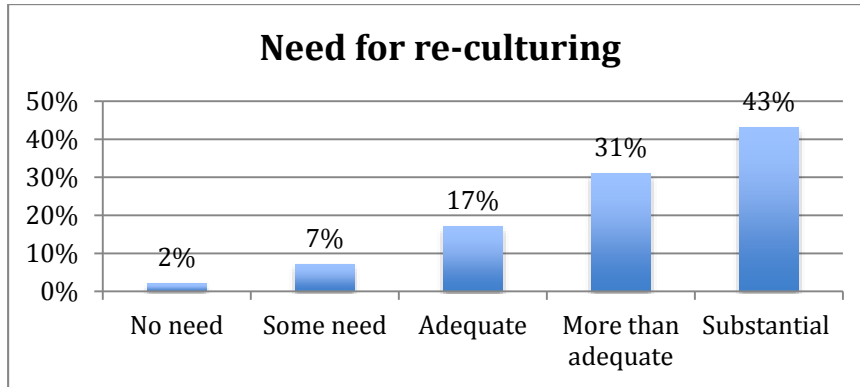


Chart 7: Need for behavioral change and re-culturing

Yet another major finding (Chart 8) evolved around the extent to which ANQA quality assurance approaches impact the performance of the universities in the sphere of quality assurance. Forty-five percent 45 % of the respondents stated that ANQA's approaches guide the universities in establishing quality assurance processes whereas 32% stated that the approaches provided for a learning framework that lead to development and enhancement.

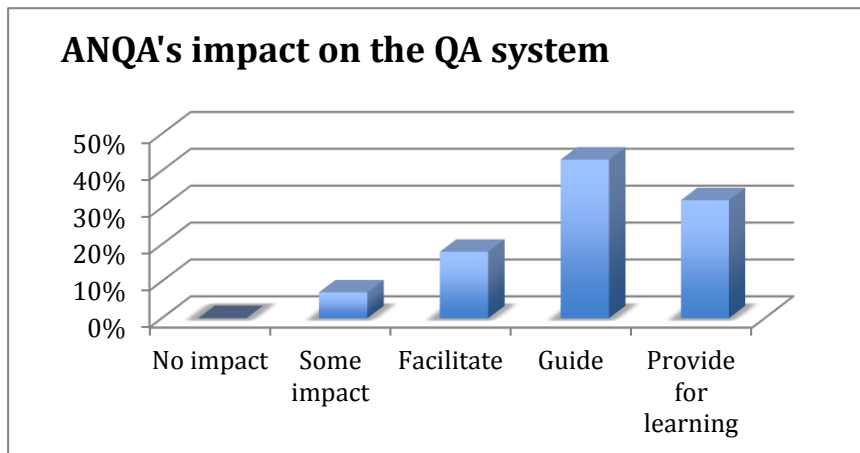


Chart 8: ANQA's impact on the QA system

IV. STATE OF ARTS: QUALITY ASSURANCE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The data for quality assurance of teaching and learning mostly stem from the 15 pilot accreditations, the focus groups among the academic staff and a student survey. The major investigations evolved around the following aspects:

- State academic standards
- Teaching and learning approaches
- Student assessment
- ECTS operationalization.

Finding: TLIs involved in the pilots unanimously stated being straightjacketed because of the imposition of the state academic standards by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Recommendation: A move to a learning outcome approach to teaching and learning would stimulate better performance at TLIs' level and thus would promote autonomy of TLIs.

A major finding regarded the role of the state academic standards in the future development of the TL system in Armenia. All the TLIs involved in the pilots unanimously stated being straightjacketed because of the imposition of the state academic standards by the Ministry of Education and Science. Major complaints evolved around the TLIs' not being able to flexibly manage their curricula and/or developing the required qualifications/learning outcomes to meet the labor market needs. Instead, the notion of promoting a learning outcome approach to teaching and learning was underpinned by majority of TLIs. As the focus group results and the pilot accreditations have revealed, the TLIs, especially the 12 pilot colleges, have made some strides to move onto a learning outcome approach, however, major obstacles in the form of incapacity to develop, drawing on the National Qualifications Framework, measurable and feasible learning outcomes for an academic programme are still prevalent.

Finding: teachers are still mainly keeping to traditional lecturing, which actually alienates students from real learning process.

Recommendation: Revise approaches to teaching and learning to bring in a learning outcome approach, thus linking the latter with specific teaching and learning methods.

Another major problem refers to the development of relevant teaching and learning methods linked to each learning outcome. As the observations during the pilot accreditations demonstrate, the few attempts to develop and implement student-centered teaching and learning methods resulted in their distortion since the teachers went on teaching the way they used to do for years. The finding is supported by the survey results conducted by Students' Voice, which states that actually teachers are still mainly keeping to traditional lecturing, which actually alienates students from real learning process. This actually states a major need to invest in the professional development and thus, capacity building of the teaching staff to enable the latter to proactively engage in learning outcome development as well as development and implementation of respective teaching and learning methods.

Finding: Student assessment is yet another major plague that the TLIs suffer from currently. Few TLIs have a complete and accurate description of their student assessment systems and even less have specified the logic on which the assessment system was developed.

Recommendation: Revise the approaches to student assessment system-wide application of a diversity of methods to student assessment linked to particular learning outcomes.

Student assessment is yet another major plague that the TLIs suffer from currently. As the results of pilot accreditations and students' survey have revealed, few TLIs have a complete and accurate description of their student assessment systems and even less have specified the logic on which the assessment system was developed. Usually, assessment systems serve the following aims: assessment of learning and assessment for learning, whereas the methods evolve around summative, diagnostic and formative assessments. None of the TLIs in the sample provided any data on the application of the diagnostic approach. To some extent application of the formative assessment system was claimed to be applied. However, deeper investigation into the implementation of the formative assessment system has revealed that the TLIs actually go on with the traditional summative assessment practices though claiming to have moved onto a formative one. Thus, instead of promoting assessment for promoting student learning the assessment system works, as the students' survey shows, for "labeling" students rather than for promoting learning. What happens in reality, is application of the same summative approach to student assessment with some elements of formative assessment, which does not go beyond division of the student assessment into several phases and components for assessment throughout a semester. The final grade is culminated in a final summative exam and calculation of the grade point average of different assessment components (student attendance, theory, practice, term papers and the like).

Yet another problem is the implementation of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), which opens up a lot of issues for debates among different stakeholders. In the academic year 2006-2007, through a special decree of the Government “On the implementation of a Credit System” (2005), ECTS was introduced in all HEIs. However, the ECTS has been destined to be misinterpreted and misperceived by students and teachers alike. As the students’ survey show, mostly students (36.8%) take it as an expression of student assessment system. Twenty-one per cent (21 %) of students responded that they have no idea of what it serves and only 9.9% of students endeavoured to come up with an approximate definition of ECTS aims. When asked about the positive aspects of the ECTS 27.6% of students responded that it assists them in getting grades. 24% stated that it promotes objective assessment of students. 16% stated that it promotes student learning and only 5.8 % came closer to the aim of ECTS stating that it promoted independence of students.

Finding: the ECTS has been destined to be misinterpreted and misperceived by students and teachers alike.

Recommendation: To revise approaches to the credit system development to consider its two major functions of transfer and accumulation, thus developing a legal framework to promote its implementation.

Further, because of the legal framework constraints, the ECTS currently fails to serve its two main purposes: accumulation and transfer of credits. The transfer of credits is still problematic even between the faculties in a given university. Thus, further developments are needed in order to fully operationalize the ECTS so that it can serve its two main purposes.

ANQA First System-Wide Analysis 2009-2011

Types of TLIs	Number of TLIs in Target	Number of questionnaires sent	Response rate (numbers)	Response rate (%)
Public	28	28	19	67%
Private	75	75	25	33%
Intergovernmental	4	4	4	100%
Colleges	88	88	20	22%
Total				

In 2010-2011 all the tertiary level institutions in Armenia were approached to fill in a questionnaire on the state of arts in quality assurance. The table below represents the target population and the response rate:

