

**Quality Assurance in Higher Education Across the World**  
(Foreword to 'Festschrift in honour of Judith Eaton' by Sir John Daniel)

The scope and scale of this Festschrift is a fitting tribute to the breadth and depth of Dr. Judith Eaton's work on quality assurance in higher education over many years. The book reflects her extraordinary career and its steadily increasing international focus. After serving as chancellor of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and president of community colleges in Pennsylvania and Nevada, she became vice-president of the American Council of Education in Washington D.C. These diverse roles were an ideal preparation for her appointment as founding president of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) in 1996.

Under her focussed leadership CHEA became the largest association of degree-granting colleges and universities in the United States and a respected national advocate and institutional voice for nurturing academic quality through accreditation. At CHEA's annual conferences she herself wove together discussions from the diverse sessions into a coherent whole, creating events that people tasked with quality assurance in higher education could not afford to miss. Over the years CHEA's conferences attracted increasing numbers of participants from outside the US, leading her to establish the CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG) in 2012. The two editors of this Festschrift were both key figures in CIQG's growth and development.

Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić became CHEA's advisor on international affairs, bringing from her long career at UNESCO extensive experience of degree recognition and quality assurance that dated back to the development of the Lisbon Convention. Peter Okebukola joined the CIQG International Advisory Council, which met annually alongside the CHEA conference, and was its chair from 2016-19. He brought to its deliberations decades of experience of university governance, with a particular focus on quality assurance and combatting corruption in Nigeria and Africa generally.

Dr. Eaton herself became more active internationally as overseas participation in CHEA's conferences grew. She already had a long association with accreditation in Hong Kong and was a respected figure in the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). I remember well her address to the 2010 INQAAHE conference in Windhoek, Namibia, on the past, present and future of quality assurance. After noting how the focus of quality assurance had shifted from inputs to processes and then from processes to outcomes, she coined the phrase 'the spread of the familiar' to describe the convergence of methods around the world. But while she encouraged quality assurance bodies to learn from good practice elsewhere, she reminded us that countries were at different stages and that one size did not fit all. This attitude ensured that CHEA's international activities were free of the imperialist undercurrents that can hamper US associations spreading their wings abroad.

She fully understood that higher education accreditation in the US, which is largely a voluntary process run by the higher education institutions themselves under the guidance of CHEA, was an outlier in world terms. In other countries governments usually play a greater role in quality

assurance processes. Given the highly partisan politics of the USA, she inspired CHEA to fight against government encroachment on the institutionally-based processes of her own country, while accepting that government involvement in accreditation and quality assurance elsewhere was not necessarily malign. She brought the different traditions together by encouraging the debate on quality to focus on the essentials, of which the development of CHEA's Quality Platform in 2013 was an example. It was an outcomes-based external review of performance and quality, targeted for national or international use by the alternative providers that were emerging at that time.

The variety of the contributions to this Festschrift, which emanate from 16 countries, reflects the impressive international networks and reputations of its editors. The book's seven parts furnish us with a comprehensive picture of the increasingly complex challenges facing quality assurance and accreditation in the contemporary world. One of the final chapters quotes Dr. Eaton's use of the term 'the new normal' to describe a situation in which no one is happy: 'institutions feel burdened, policy makers are frustrated, consumers are unprotected, employer needs are unmet and accreditors are under fire'.

Earlier contributions describe how quality assurance journeyed to this crossroads and suggest future directions of travel. A first section recalls the history, noting the increasingly intrusive role of governments with their growing demands for accountability. This leads onto a series of case studies, with a particular focus on Africa, and a section detailing the impact of successful initiatives to introduce internal and external mechanisms for quality assurance. In part four, an important contribution addresses the vexed question of the relationship between quality assurance and rankings because 'the current debate asks not just what universities are good at but what they are good for'. The following section sets higher education in the context of wider global developments, zeroing in on the fight against corruption.

Dr. Eaton took advantage of the combined convening powers of CHEA and UNESCO to constitute international groups that could advise on combatting bad practices in higher education. I took part myself in the articulation of a 2009 CHEA/UNESCO statement on effective practices for discouraging degree mills and of a 2016 statement on combatting corruption. Both documents have helped quality assurance agencies around the world to fight these harmful developments.

Fittingly, the final section of the book looks to the future with contributions that grapple with the renewal of quality assurance and accreditation systems as they attempt to serve many masters. Existing difficulties have been compounded by the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education and the wider world economy. Students planning to study internationally are not the only ones re-assessing their options. Domestic students have pressing questions too. What programmes should they study to give them good chances of employment as economies recover? Does full-time study on campus become less attractive if more of it has to be done online? Judith Eaton's exemplary career and this book written in her honour can be an inspiration to those charged with the quality assurance of higher education in these challenging times.