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USFQ - BIBLIOTECA
MASTER'S PROJECT

DEVELOPING A SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS

IN ECUADORIAN HIGHER EDUCATION:

A comparative perspective

USFQ - BIBLIOTECA

by

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April 25, 1997
DEVELOPING A SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS
IN ECUADORIAN HIGHER EDUCATION:

A comparative perspective

Submitted to the Department of Educational Policy and Leadership and the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education.

Project Committee:

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Chairperson

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Project defended: April 25, 1997
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When the moment to achieve a new goal comes, it is also the moment to acknowledge that accomplishments are not possible when done alone. Coming to an American university to pursue my graduate studies was one of the most important goals in my personal and professional life. The trust and support of good people are the key factors in making our dreams become realities. Therefore, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people and their institutions: to the Fulbright Commission of Quito, Ecuador, and its executive director, Dr. Gonzalo Cartagenova; to Fulbright - LASPAU in Boston, Massachusetts, and its authorities and advisors; to my home institution, Universidad Tecnológica Equinoccial, and its rector chancellor, Dr. Alvaro Trueba, and other authorities; to the University of Kansas, in particular to the School of Educational Policy and Leadership, and in a very special way to its director, Dr. Susan Twombly, as well as to my professors. Everyone has helped, trusted, and given me the necessary strength and support to succeed on the path of education. In particular from Dr. Susan Twombly and from all of my professors I have received the necessary wisdom that has provoked my personal and professional development.

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Appendix I:

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MASTER'S PROJECT
DEVELOPING A SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS
IN ECUADORIAN
HIGHER EDUCATION:
A comparative perspective

INTRODUCTION:

In the analysis of the largest problems that Ecuador has to resolve urgently . . . I start by examining the crisis that the Ecuadorian higher education system is facing. Unless the Ecuadorian higher education system does not overcome the problem, the financial, social, cultural, and political challenges will not be overcome either.¹

The Ecuadorian higher education system, like other education systems in Latin America, is experiencing a process of transformation and reform to improve its quality. Quality and finance are two of the major challenges that higher education in Ecuador is facing. To address one challenge,

¹ Hurtado, O. (1992, p. 9)
early in 1996 the Ecuadorian Congress officially created the National System of University Accreditation and Evaluation (SEAU). By means of that system, the Ecuadorian universities hope to improve their quality. Clearly, the future of Ecuadorian higher education depends upon qualified and competitive education system. Therefore, through holistic efforts, Ecuador hopes to improve the quality of its system.

During my visit to my country last May, 1996, I found most of the authorities of higher education institutions very concerned about institutional quality. For that reason, they had already started working on institutional evaluation (self-evaluation).

The purpose of my master's project entitled, *Developing a Self-evaluation Process in Ecuadorian Higher Education: A Comparative Perspective*, is to provide Ecuadorian universities and SEAU with complementary information related to the accreditation and evaluation system that SEAU has already started, information that takes into account our idiosyncratic culture and values and that can provide contemporary techniques to assess quality. The wisdom brought in this document is based on the experience of the U.S. higher education system, in particular in the area of self-study patterns.
This project is divided into five chapters:

Chapter I  A historic review of Ecuadorian universities

Chapter II  (a) Trends and biases in evaluation systems and accreditation in the U.S
            (b) A comparison of U.S. developments with those of Ecuador

Chapter III Methodology: a qualitative study with features of anonymity

Chapter IV  Ecuadorian universities' authorities' perceptions about effective evaluation systems

Chapter V  The Ecuadorian higher education system and its self-evaluation: a critique
CHAPTER I

1.1 HISTORY OF ECUADORIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

...Ecuador shall go where its University goes. ²

By summoning up the history of Ecuadorian universities, I am trying to find out and understand the reasons for the challenges that higher education in Ecuador is currently facing. In fact, by addressing the roots of the problems affecting the development of Ecuadorian universities, some solutions can be suggested based on the cause-effect relationship.

The Ecuadorian higher education system is one of the most timeworn in Latin America, but not the most prestigious due to several reasons addressed below. The Ecuadorian higher education system is patterned after Spanish frameworks and with Christian doctrines. “Spain patterned these institutions, like all universities, after the University of Salamanca. Salamanca was inspired on the University of Bolonia established in the Eleventh Century.”³ In addition, “Ecuadorian universities’s academic organization and function took its model from the Napoleonic University.”⁴ The first Ecuadorian universities offered philosophy, theology, canonical law, medicine, literatures, poetry, and

² Hurtado, O. (1992, p. 68)
³ Hurtado, Oswaldo (1992, p. 10)
⁴ Arellano, E. (1990, p. 94)
exact sciences.

1.2 THE FIRST UNIVERSITIES IN ECUADOR

By the year 1586, los Agustinos founded the University of San Fulgencio in Quito. Later, in 1622 the Jesuits established the University of San Gregorio. In 1686, the Dominicos established the University of Santo Tomás de Aquino. "According to the Royal Decree Cédula Real of July 9, 1769 the existing universities were closed and a commission Junta de Temporalidades was responsible for organizing the official university. Later, according to the Royal Decree of April 8, 1788, the Secularized University of Santo Tomás de Aquino was reopened." In the book Pensamiento Universitario Ecuatoriano of the Central Bank of Ecuador, the author states that in 1788, Ecuadorian universities were closed and the Secularized University of Santo Tomás de Aquino was reopened. The reason for closing the Ecuadorian universities was based on the fact that only white males who were direct descendents from Spaniards and who had wealth could receive higher education.

Former president Dr. Oswaldo Hurtado relates that those who wanted to attend universities had to be legitimate (children born from a married couple) and to have proven blood purity (those

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6 Hurtado, O. (1992, p. 19)
7 Hurtado, O. (1992, p. 11)
of Spanish ancestors. The education system excluded mestizos and native people from any form of education; nonetheless, Saint Andres School founded by the Franciscans provided them education in the so-called “mechanical arts.”

1.3 THE CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF ECUADOR

Beginning in the Republican era, in 1826, Simón Bolívar founded the Central University of Ecuador, which was a continuation of the University of Santo Tomás de Aquino. The Catholic Church kept its leadership over the academic programs; for that reason, the Ecuadorian universities maintained their status quo, described as “conservative.” The State shared the educational system of government with the Catholic Church; therefore, it was no longer governed by the Spanish royal king. In 1867, new universities were established in Guayaquil, Cuenca and later in Loja. Curricula were mostly about social sciences; research was uncommon. Although García Moreno, Ecuadorian president (1826) and first rector of the Central University of Ecuador, sought modernization of the university, curricula did not focus on exact sciences. Teaching exact sciences since early times would have helped to enlarge the number of critical thinkers, problem solvers, or administrators that could have contributed to the development of the country. Thus, some current challenges that Ecuadorian universities are facing have their origin in their first conservative curricula.
1.4 POLITICAL INFLUENCES IN THE UNIVERSITIES

By 1883, curricula were updated to include more exact sciences and technology. That time was known as the progressive era. In 1895, universities faced a transitional era during the Liberal revolution headed by the President of the State, Eloy Alfaro, who separated education from the control of the church. The central government alone controlled universities. This was one of the most significant transitional eras in Ecuadorian university history because liberal ideas brought democratization to higher education institutions, and the first student associations were founded. A few years later, in 1918, the reform of Córdoba, Argentina, spread throughout the whole American Continent. The major result of Córdoba was co-government of universities. Because of that, "the First Student Association (FEUE) was founded at the beginning of the twentieth century." In 1925, the "Revolución Juliana" took place. During that time, a new law for universities was promulgated. That law promoted the "University autonomy," followed by reforms that favored the middle and lower social classes. Autonomy was understood as freedom from ecumenical influences.

Several challenges characterized the beginning of the twentieth century, e.g., political instabilities, economic crises, little international business, "and lack of political-economical integration, which was visualized in the constant fights between land owners from the Sierra high lands, and the agricultural exporters form the Costa low lands." By that time, only two political

---

5 Malo, H. (1984, p. 32)
6 Arellano, E. (1988, p. 18)
parties existed in Ecuador: Liberal and Conservative.

1.5 THE CREATION OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

“On July 2, 1946, President Jose Maria Velasco Ibarra promulgated the creation of private universities; because of that, the **Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador** was founded.”\(^\text{10}\) The Catholic University was inaugurated during the confrontations of conservatives and liberals. By reestablishing religious education, the church reassured its control over higher education again. In 1962, the Catholic University of Guayaquil was founded; unlike the Catholic University of Quito, it had limited influence of the church, and its student body belonged mainly to the wealthy class. Later, in 1970 without the participation of the church, the Catholic University of Cuenca was founded. Its student body belonged to the middle and lower classes. Those students who wanted a Christian education and a safe environment free from liberal and communistic influences chose private and Catholic universities.

1.6 INFLUENCES OF STUDENTS

Beginning in the early 1900s student bodies organized movements, clubs, and associations. The Liberal era was the most influential one for higher education institutions. The Federation of

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\(^{10}\) Hurtado, O. (1992, p. 28)
Students of the Central University, "FEUE," was first fostered by liberal and independent students with Marxist principles. However, in the late 50s communist-orthodox movements controlled FEUE; they were known as la conciencia social de la nación,\textsuperscript{11} the social conscience of the nation. According to Hurtado, those student movements and organizations were seen as anárquicos, anarchic movements with communist influence. Although they fought against oligarchies, their ideologies were far from the objective reality of the country. Since the 60s some political leaders have used all the universities' resources to advance their cause at the national level. "Some mechanisms applied by those political leaders were free admission (1969), co-governance (1971), the conception of a university's governance equally integrated by faculty, students, and administrators; and the inviolability of the university's precincts. In fact, those political leaders established political power inside universities. That power confronted the university status-quo and that of the State, which was considered a permanent enemy. Therefore, universities became divorced from the society." \textsuperscript{12} Currently those groups are losing their power; however, their legacy remains.

1.7 FAST PROPAGATION OF THE ECUADORIAN UNIVERSITIES

During the last fifty years almost 80 percent of the current universities have been established. To illustrate this, Table No.1 shows the current approved universities and polytechnic schools.

\textsuperscript{11} Hurtado, O. (1992, p. 35)

\textsuperscript{12} Arellano, E. (1990, pp. 99-100)
TABLE 1

ECUADORIAN UNIVERSITIES
AND
POLYTECHNIC SCHOOLS CURRENTLY APPROVED BY CONUEP

Sources: CONUEP, Arellano (1990, p. 21), and EL HOY, February 3, 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Founding date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Universidad Central del Ecuador</td>
<td>March 18, 1826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Universidad de Guayaquil</td>
<td>December 1, 1867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Universidad de Cuenca</td>
<td>January 1, 1868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Escuela Politécnica Nacional</td>
<td>August 30, 1869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Universidad Nacional de Loja</td>
<td>October 9, 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Universidad Católica (PUCE)</td>
<td>November 4, 1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Universidad Técnica de Manabi</td>
<td>October 29, 1952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral</td>
<td>October 29, 1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Universidad Latina Vicente Rocafuerte</td>
<td>April 30, 1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Universidad Técnica de Guayaquil</td>
<td>April 14, 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Universidad Técnica de Machala</td>
<td>April 14, 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Universidad Técnica de Esmeraldas</td>
<td>May 4, 1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Universidad Católica de Cuenca</td>
<td>September 7, 1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja</td>
<td>May 3, 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo</td>
<td>October 5, 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Escuela Superior Politécnica del Chimborazo</td>
<td>2, 1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Escuela Superior Politécnica del Ejercito</td>
<td>December 8, 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Universidad Técnica de Quito</td>
<td>February 1, 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Universidad Latina Eloy Alfaro de Manabi</td>
<td>November 13, 1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Universidad Tecnológica Equinoccial</td>
<td>February 18, 1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Universidad Técnica del Norte</td>
<td>July 18, 1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Universidad Estatal del Bolívar</td>
<td>July 4, 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Universidad de la Amazonía</td>
<td>August 23, 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Universidad Autónoma del Ecuador</td>
<td>July 16, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Universidad de la Amazonía</td>
<td>June 30, 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Universidad Autónoma de la Amazonía</td>
<td>November 18, 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Universidad Politécnica Salesiana</td>
<td>August 5, 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar</td>
<td>August 7, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Universidad de las Américas</td>
<td>November 21, 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Universidad San Francisco de Quito</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**TABLE 2**

ECUADORIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS
IN THE PROCESS OF CONUEP APPROVAL

Source: Diario El HOY, February 3, 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Universidad Internacional del Pacífico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Seminario teológico superior a distancia Alfa y Omega</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Universidad Tecnológica Particular Franklin Verduga Loor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Universidad Autónoma America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Intercontinental University (UNINT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Universidad Brokdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Universidad Particular Panamericana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Universidad Internacional del Ecuador</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 3**

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS
WORKING WITHOUT LEGAL APPROVAL

Source: El HOY, February 3, 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Universidad Internacional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Universidad Autónoma de Guadalupe-Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Instituto Latinoamericano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Escuela de Negocios del Pacífico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tecnológico de Monterrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Universidad de Chile (extension programs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Instituto Tecnológico (Instur)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Instituto Tecnológico Sudamericano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rhode's International University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tecnológico Esca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Instituto Superior Suizo Internacional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Escuela de Comunicaciones Argos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Instituto Técnico Superior Urdesa (Itisu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To whom are these institutions accountable? Former President Hurtado stresses that: “The proliferation of universities is another element that increases the higher education crisis.”\textsuperscript{13} Clearly, an evaluation and accreditation system is essential and urgent. Otherwise, it may be good business to establish universities in Ecuador, a country with no program quality controls.

1.8 THE UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY LAW

The University Autonomy Law of 1925 has ruled the Ecuadorian higher education system, and few changes have been made since its establishment. The basic principles of autonomy are the inviolability of the precincts of the universities; student co-government; political and administrative autonomy; election of the university’s authorities with the participation of faculty members, students, alumni, and administrators that meet in assembly.”\textsuperscript{14} The May 14, 1982, the Ecuadorian Universities and Polytechnic Schools Law confirms that “universities and polytechnic schools are communities of professors, students, and administrators” (Art. 1). This law also emphasizes that the Ecuadorian state recognizes and guarantees the inviolability of universities and college campuses. Education is free and the state is responsible for providing funds to all public universities. In addition, the Ecuadorian Congress approves the creation of every new higher education center. New

\textsuperscript{13} Hurtado, O. (1992, p. 53)

\textsuperscript{14} Muñoz, C. (1982, p. 184)
universities must fulfill certain prerequisites related to academic programs, teaching, number of students, budgeting, technology, library, and lab facilities. Approval of new universities is made through information provided by “The National Higher Education’s Advisor of Ecuador” (CONUEP).

The current law does not specify different missions for higher education establishments; on the contrary, it says that all universities fulfill the same mission. The higher education mission focuses on the search for truth and the development of science and culture through teaching and research activities. The lack of mission definition and differentiation is a serious problem; for these reasons, universities do not define their specific purpose to guide programs, which results in much duplication.

1.9 CURRENT CHALLENGES FACING HIGHER EDUCATION IN ECUADOR

The following factors affecting the quality of Ecuadorian higher education have been taken mainly from a publication called: Ecuadorian University: Mission for the 21st Century Universidad Ecuatoriana para el Siglo XXI, CONUEP, 1994.

- **Shortage of funds.** Ecuador spent around US$36 per university student in 1993, compared with the Latin American average of $648 in 1989 (and that average is only 20% of the world average of $3,078). In 1995 Ecuador provided 1% of its gross national product (GNP) for higher education. Reimers (1995, p. 38)
education while other Latin American countries provided between 1.5 percent and 6 percent.\textsuperscript{16} The resulting shortage of funds affects several aspects, such as faculty and administrators’ salary. Salaries are not only extremely low but also “frequently paid late.”\textsuperscript{17}

- **Decrease of academic quality.** Shortage of funds hinders the development of academic programs. Decrease of academic quality is also affected by the fact that academic programs have not been evaluated and updated periodically, some faculty members are not very well prepared to teach, and there is a lack of full-time faculty members and up-to-date facilities, including laboratories and technology.

- **Lack of communication between higher education institutions and between universities and the business and productive sectors.** Historically speaking, Ecuadorian universities have been working divorced from each other and as isolated islands not only in Ecuador but from the rest of the world. This circumstance has caused the next problem.

- **Lack of accountability.** The Ecuadorian higher education system has not been accountable to society. Part of the problem is because of the tradition of autonomy. Albornoz (1991) states that “the concepts of autonomy and accountability are closely linked... In the contemporary...

\textsuperscript{16} Diario El Comercio (February, 3, 1996)

\textsuperscript{17} CONUEP (1994, Vol. 6, p. 19)
world, autonomy therefore seems to involve striking a delicate balance between the need to respond to the requirements of society, while at the same time satisfying the needs specific to the institution itself, such as academic freedom. University autonomy may of course be considered relative, while academic freedom is an absolute.”

Accountability involves self-study and external evaluation made by an external agency that evaluates and accredits universities to be responsive to the university itself and to society. In Ecuador, the most disastrous consequence of autonomy has been the divorce of universities from the State; therefore, universities have not been accountable. R. Vallejo, a former Minister of Education, writes in his book *Una Utopía para el Siglo XXI*: “the Ministry under my responsibility does not have any relationship with Ecuadorian universities . . . . The coordination between high schools and higher education does not exist.”

Ecuadorian universities need to think about the following: university autonomy, co-government, and free admission. University autonomy has been blamed for isolating universities from other higher education institutions and from the State; moreover, the State has been considered an enemy; hence, competence has been ignored. Now, CONUEP suggests that the “Ecuadorian higher education system should be decentralized by adapting flexible regulation and letting the State have distant control over them.” In fact, the central problem of autonomy causes the lack of accountability. Dr. Susan Twombly, a Fulbright scholar to Ecuador, said in

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19 Vallejo, R. (1994, p. 21)

20 Ecuadorian University, Mission for the 21st Century, (1994, p. 31)
an interview, “People in Ecuador cannot use the same ideas of autonomy that arose in 1918 in Cordoba.” Ecuadorian universities cannot allow old ideas to lead them. On the contrary, the systemic structure of universities must be responsive to changes; therefore, universities should be the first places where innovations and changed arise. “Accountability as a principle thus involves innovation, while autonomy is an inherent feature of the traditional concept of the university. Determining how these two issues can be reconciled for the greater benefit of the universities and of the vital process of national and international development is an interesting challenge to the contemporary academic world.”

Political influence. Throughout history Liberals, communists, and revolutionary socialists have dominated the higher education system. Political parties established universities as refuges in which to hide from dictatorships and persecutors of that time, as places in which to enlarge their political power. Later, in the 1970s and until the mid 1980s, the crisis of public universities worsened because of the influence of Marxist-Leninists and Communist (MLC) revolutionary groups that were inside all public universities. Their purpose was to expand their power and “influence throughout the campuses that lacked a social basis.” These politicized groups grew quickly and became so powerful inside the institutions that they imposed their leftist ideas in the University governing council, faculty, and curricula. For example, “One of the most important


goals was the abolition of admission tests, an idea which the MLC conceived and promoted."23 Although these groups are still part of public universities, they have lost their power since the Soviet Union collapsed. However, the legacy remains. These conflicts have led to the creation of private universities considered as a safe haven for academic freedom. Providing intellectual freedom is an inalienable right supported by the Ecuadorian Higher Education Law in Art. 1. It says, "Higher education institutions can impart knowledge and develop research with total academic, scientific, and administrative freedom."24

Low level in the quality of students. This is another factor that is affecting the quality of higher education in Ecuador. The Ecuadorian Higher Education Law guarantees admission to all students and education is free. The Ecuadorian Higher Education Law in Article 2 says: "Education in official universities and polytechnic schools is not religious and is free." Therefore, because of the absence of public university admission tests, many unprepared students enter universities only to fail or drop out. After May 29, 1969, when some of the students who had been fighting for the abolition of admission tests were killed, the abolition of admission tests was approved. Nonetheless, twenty-seven years later free admission has caused a huge increase in the number of students, commonly known in Ecuador as la masificación estudiantil; in addition, universities were not prepared to provide the necessary services to satisfy the demand. To

23 Hurtado O. (1992, p. 41)
illustrate this, the Central University of Ecuador increased from 11,000 students in 1969-1970 to 43,000 students in 1972. A similar situation occurred all around the country. “In 1982 around 134,000 students were admitted,”\textsuperscript{25} and “by 1994 public universities and polytechnic schools had more than 220,000 students.”\textsuperscript{26}

To solve some of these problems, the Escuela Politécnica Nacional has been offering pre-university courses. That means extra cost for the already low university budgets. The Central University of Ecuador finally reestablished an admission test in 1996. However, that new policy created discontent in the form of strikes among students because they were accustomed to open admissions. Because of that, the Central University was forced to close down some colleges and schools until students could be convinced of the value of admission tests as part of assuring better quality in education.

\textbf{Limited research culture.} According to the book, entitled \textit{Misión de la Universidad Ecuatoriana para el Siglo XXI}, Vol. 6, p. 17, scientific and technologic research in the Ecuadorian universities are very weak de extrema debilidad. For example, “in 1990 only 6 percent of the directors of research projects held doctoral degrees, and 25 percent master’s degrees. Only 81 international publications were made from 1973 to 1984; this number represents four times less than Cuba and Costa Rica, eight times less than Colombia, 50 times less

\textsuperscript{25} Grijalva, A. (1994, p. 126)

\textsuperscript{26} CONUEP (1994, Vol. 6, p. 17)
than Chile and 100 times less than Argentina.”

- Lack of a tradition of evaluation. This is one of the main problems in the Ecuadorian higher education system and the central subject of my master’s project. The Ecuadorian universities have been stuck in their development because almost nobody has been concerned about how well they are doing. Effective use of self-evaluation depends on an adequate location of the power. In Ecuadorian universities, as in the universities of other Latin American countries, the real locus of power has not been found at the top level as it should be due to the co-government that promotes the current Autonomy Law. The use of evaluation should be developed immediately. In my personal opinion, a misconception about university autonomy has contributed to the lack of a tradition of evaluation in Ecuador. “Autonomy cannot continue being the autarchic forces that continually confront the State.” Autonomy should unambiguously reflect academic freedom and the search for truth and be a tool that permits the development of a culture of self-evaluation. The Congress officially created the National System of University Accreditation and Evaluation (Sistema de Evaluación y Acreditación Universitaria or SEAU) with the purpose of assessing education for quality. The creation of SEAU is a result of one recommendation emerging from the project, Ecuadorian University: Mission for the 21st Century.

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27 BID (1988)

28 Vallejo, R. (1994, p. 107)
The Ecuadorian university crisis has called international attention. The Fulbright Commission is concerned about the lack of a tradition of evaluation and through Fulbright scholars is providing advice to Ecuador. Hence, Kenneth P. Jameson visited Ecuador in 1995 and wrote: *Higher Education in Ecuador: What Reform Strategy?* He clearly underlines that “the final source of stress is a sense that the universities of the country, particularly the traditional universities, are not contributing to the country as they should.” Later, Jameson points out three sources of the current contradictions affecting Ecuadorian universities: internal educational contradictions, historical and systemic contradictions, and contradictions inherent in the politics and society of Ecuador. In addition, Dr. Twombly, in the 21st Annual Conference organized by the Association for the Study of Higher Education, said:

...Ecuadorian higher education system sees itself in a state of crisis. Although there are exceptions, the Annual Leading suggests that they have highly politicized the system. Under-prepared students have inundated it, the funding has decreased, the faculties are part-time, they do a little research, and so on. The response to this perceived crisis has been to create a system of evaluation and accreditation that they view as a means for increasing quality. (Memphis, October 31, 1996)

So far, several challenges that the Ecuadorian university is facing have been defined. Moreover, it is clearly understood that the Ecuadorian university should create a system of evaluation and accreditation to improve its quality, but now the most important concern is to define the most appropriate evaluation system for my country, a system that genuinely improves quality and considers the Ecuadorian history, culture and values.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Part I

EVALUATION SYSTEMS IN U.S.

2.1 What does quality mean in U.S. higher education?

Quality... you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is... [I]f you can’t say what Quality is, how do you know what it is, or how do you know that it even exists? If no one knows what it is, then for all practical purposes it doesn’t exist at all. But for all practical purposes it does exist... What the hell is Quality? What is it?29

Quality is such an important issue that American colleges and universities have always been striving for it and, of course, improving it. “For more than a century, scholars have worked to think about, improve, and evaluate program quality.”30

“The evolving view of quality takes it to mean the degree to which students and other

29 Pirezng (1974, 184)
30 Grant & Conrad (1997, p. 1)
stakeholders’ needs and expectations are consistently satisfied.” My purpose at this point is to investigate several methods and techniques that higher education programs are applying to assess and improve their performance.

By understanding quality to be the continuous improvement of higher education institutions, colleges and universities are compelled to provide accountable and competitive service to the stakeholders (trustees, boards of regents, faculty, students, parents, employees, and the public). The U.S. higher education system is conscientiously answering the stakeholders’ concerns and expectations by creating a vision, recognizing the needs of students, faculty members and administrators, assessing and improving the educational process continuously with the application of systematic analysis, and promoting collaboration by empowering those who participate in the decision-making process. “Teaching and learning surely should be placed at the center of any definition of program quality.” In short, by recognizing the university as a system of continuous changes, demands, and enlightenment, the U.S. higher education system is improving its quality.

Academic program quality assessment in higher education must consider the institutions’ traditions and culture because those factors significantly determine receptiveness to the evaluation process. Therefore, to see changes in higher education, American institutions have developed a holistic system of self-evaluation and accreditation.

Several ideas have been given to define quality in higher education. The following are some

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31 Sims & Sims (1995, p. 8)

32 Grant & Conrad (1997, p. 15)
conceptions about quality taken from the study “Desperately Seeking Quality In Ecuadorian Higher Education: What Is It and How Should It Be Measured?” Frazer in 1992, labeled the 1990s as the “decade of quality.” However, quality is difficult to define, although many have tried. Most agree that quality in higher education is multifaceted and thus cannot be determined by any single measure alone (de Weert, 1990). In this “decade of quality” the term often comes with the negative attachments “control,” “assurance” and “audit.” A standard is a norm or acknowledged measure of the status or condition of quality. Sometimes used interchangeably with standards, criterions can also mean tests or rules for assessing whether the standard has been achieved. An index or indicator is just that, a sign that some condition exists.

The first approach argues that quality is undefinable. However, educational quality is intuitively recognizable. This definition of quality is captured by “I’ll know it when I see it” and is not helpful when it comes to creating a system for evaluating universities systematically.

The second approach to defining quality says that quality is what some groups of knowledgeable people say it is. This approach is problematic when two or more groups of knowledgeable people have conflicting ideas about quality.

The third approach is more specific and defines quality according to a single model or paradigm. That is, an educational institution is of high quality if it meets specific standards.

Millard (1994) uses the term “achievement in kind” to describe a fourth definition of quality. This definition recognizes that quality is contextual and is related to the identified objective of the institution (or system). De Weert also provides a definition of quality (1990) and it is essentially the
model followed by US accrediting agencies. This model operates from a loosely-defined consensus or paradigm about quality but judges that quality within a particular context.

In the US, institutional reputation, resources, and processes, what Daniel Levy (1994) calls conventional academic quality or c.a.q., are ways in which quality has been judged in the past. Only recently have outcomes become part of the institutional evaluation processes. Likewise, prescribed fixed standards to measure quality have outgrown their usefulness. In other words, establishing some absolute number of the necessary volumes cannot determine the adequacy of library facilities. The number of books in the library must be considered in relation to the mission of the institution. However, as Frazer (1992) notes, it is equally problematic to say that an institution is of high quality only if it meets low goals, but meets them well.

The most common approach to “defining” quality in higher education is usually to break it into its component parts by identifying areas central to the functioning of a university and then to attempt to identify indicators of performance in those areas. To illustrate this, the North Central Association uses this approach. They identify five criteria covering essential components of a university and provide examples of indicators that institutions can use to show adequate performance of the criteria. Those essential components of a university considered in the criteria are: (1) clear, appropriate, and publicly stated purposes consistent with an institution’s mission, (2) effectively organized human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish the institution’s purposes, (3) accomplishment of educational programs, (4) continuous accomplishment of the institution’s purposes to strengthen its educational effectiveness, and (5) institutional integrity in its practices and
relationships.

2.2 SELF-STUDY PROCESS:

...A continuous improvement process is oriented to satisfy and if possible to exceed the needs of the students, who are seen as the central component of each higher education institution.

Sims and Sims, 1995

"American education is largely controlled at the institutional level." Self-evaluation is a relatively new process, and its main purpose is to assure quality by means of improvement. In the last 20 years, self-study processes have largely concentrated on academic performance. "Three themes stand out: (1) the use of student opinion about teaching; (2) the need to make the appraisal system developmental and supportive in nature; and (3) the use of the principle of Total Quality Management to enhance the performance of academic professionals." The 1980s was the decade of important growth of self-evaluation within higher education institutions, mostly oriented to "Academic Program Reviews." If public accountability is involved, external peer review or validation is the complement of self-evaluation. The self-evaluation process takes into account

34 Kells, H (1995, p. 100)
institutional planning and goals, quality control processes, peer opinions, institution-wide issues, and services. Kells stresses that the primary purpose of self-evaluation is to cause some level of improvement in the unit being evaluated. To see how effective a university is, the self-evaluation process is compared with the results of an external peer review processes. Self-study is successful in North America because it involves rewards and “potential sanctions, and the loss of access to government funds for and to students.”\textsuperscript{36} Kells adds that at least eight variables are taken into account to start self-evaluation: the locus of power, style of leadership, decision-making process, level of political influence, availability of institutional research and information, extent of system of evaluation, and the availability of funds.

2.3 WHAT DOES SELF-EVALUATION PROMOTE?

The following are some tasks that self-evaluation promotes:

- Periodic examination of the university mission, programs, plans, goals, level of consensus, interactions, and achievements.
- Development of an information system.
- Feedback (clients’ opinions).
- Review of services and management through self-evaluation and peer review.
- Motivation through incentives and sanctions.
- Continuous quality improvement.

\textsuperscript{36} Kells, H. (1995, p. 10)
2.4 SELF-EVALUATION PREREQUISITES

An institution conducting self-evaluation needs to develop a system of evaluation by giving leadership clear vision, accurate information about the process, trust, and motivation. The following are prerequisites for self-evaluation:

- Support of top leaders, including the provision of money.
- Trust and autonomy, a system that provides reliability, clarity of procedures, honesty, and freedom from politics; therefore, a reliable system assesses institutional planning, curricular programs, provision of services, faculty preparation and competence, teaching-learning processes, and quality of outputs and outcomes.
- Technical experts, people who have knowledge and experience in the designing and functioning of self-evaluation models.
- Information system, the provision of a database that combine clients' opinion, surveys and interview techniques.
- Resources, both human and fiscal, which help to "conduct workshops, to bring in consultants, or to travel when necessary."

Internal motivation. Improvement is the continuous stimulus that everybody at any

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institution must share.

- Diagnosis of local affairs. Regular meetings will help to identify problems and to address solutions based on cause-effect principles.

2.5 SELF-EVALUATION PATTERNS

Kells suggests two models, the “linear open-system model, and the general flow model.” The first model is based on cause and effect relationships; results are attributable to the kind of inputs, the processes conducted, and the environmental impact. One advantage of this model is that it relies on its “cyclical nature” because the systemic repetition gives opportunities of improvement. The second model, to which Kells refers as even more practical and useful for the self-evaluation process, is the general flow model; it follows basic sequential steps:

1. Diagnosis and design, planning of the process by establishing prerequisites, goals, leadership, technical expertise, resources, internal motivation, agenda of local needs, activities, and the nature of participation.

2. Organization of the study process on the basis of data collection, facts, and opinions, by defining tasks and roles, selecting, orienting, and training the staff, establishing work groups, and establishing coordination and communication mechanisms.
3. *Conducting of the process*, by collecting facts and opinions and conducting surveys. The process is conducted sequentially in light of internal or external standards or norms.

4. *Discuss results and prepare reports*, presentation of results contains recommendations, commitments, improvements in programs and services.

The results obtained from a self-evaluation process are reviewed by a team that conducts evaluation visits. That team “summarizes its findings and outlines its perceptions of institutional strengths and concerns,” when the institution addresses the general institutional requirements and the criteria, the team presents a formal recommendation for accreditation action and the rationale for that recommendation.

### 2.6 TECHNIQUES FOR GATHERING DATA ABOUT PROGRAM QUALITY IN THE SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS

We broadly define high quality programs as those which, from the perspective of diverse stakeholders, contribute to enriching learning experiences for students that positively affect their growth and development.

*Grant & Conrad, 1997*

The purpose for assessing quality is to measure and develop the efficiency, competitiveness and effectiveness of colleges and universities so that they can be internally and externally accredited.

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38 NCA Handbook of Accreditation (1994-96, p. 113)
When starting a self-evaluation program, such scholars as L. Wood and B. Gross (1978) say that “designing and evaluating higher education curricula is a good starting point.” The techniques for gathering program quality within the self-evaluation process vary according to the institutional’s mission, size, and complexity. The application of several techniques is recommended due to the multiple issues that form any college or university. Those methods for assessing program quality that I will describe briefly include the student-learning evaluation, student evaluation of teaching, student self-evaluation, out-of-class evaluation, assessing the departmental major, institutional commitment evaluation, and the application of TQM for assessing quality.

A. Student-learning Evaluation

The first and most common method of assessing quality is the student-learning evaluation. The application of different tests and evaluation methods to assess what is being taught and learned gives faculty members a better view of whether or not students are developing their full potential. For example, the student-learning evaluation can show at what level students are reaching wisdom and at what level they are developing the abilities of critical thinking, problem solving, communication, analysis, interaction, and global perspectives. The results of this assessment method can help to improve or modify the program and proposed goal of the curricula. Also, the results of the tests can motivate students to persist with their interest in continuous learning improvement. When using grades as indicators of what students have learned, remembering that grades may be acceptable as a general indicator of relative academic success is important. Nonetheless, for
evaluating the specific success of a particular educational program, more informative indicators are required. Moreover, grades might say little about the quality of learning of either content or cognitive skills. In fact, grades can be applied as an auxiliary method for measuring student learning.

B. The Student Evaluation of Teaching

M. Broder & Jeffrey H. Dorfman in the Journal of Research in Higher Education, say that the process can be divided into three parts: an end-of-term survey or questionnaire, where students are asked to rate the quality of the teacher and course; a set of summary statistics directed to faculties and administrators; and summaries of both personal and personnel decisions. Administrators use summaries for salary adjustments, promotions, and tenure. Faculty uses summaries for salary adjustments, performance and development of strategies for improvement.

...Faculty efforts to improve teaching performance should be directed toward those factors that students feel are the most important. Teaching strategies that target specific skills and attributes are likely to be more successful than more general approaches.39

Personally, I believe that student evaluation of teaching can contribute to review programs and the improvement of teaching. However, analysis and results of teaching assessment should be linked to the degree of student maturity because sometimes they do not take assessment seriously.

...If the social responsibilities of the university require evaluation of the faculty, then evaluation efforts must be so supported by administration and the students that the faculty cannot ignore them.\textsuperscript{40}

Furthermore, faculty evaluation is a complex problem and an effective evaluation can be made by applying and combining several approaches. For example, during an evaluation process several sources must be considered, such as administrative evaluation, colleague evaluation, evaluation of teaching, dean evaluation, and student evaluation. Besides the reason given by Broder and Dorfman, another purpose for evaluating faculty performance includes improvement of teaching, improvement in student learning, stipulation of bases for selection, recognition and reward of effective teachers, and research contribution to teaching and learning. Evaluation results can assure that higher education institutions are accountable to society.

C. Student Self-evaluation

\textit{Student self-evaluation} is another method of assessing quality. Judgement of learning is very valuable when the purpose of an evaluation seeks to enhance the process of higher education. Therefore, when applying student self-evaluation, not only faculty but also students benefit from outcomes because “students should eventually create a synthesis about their own learning, including plans for its future use.”\textsuperscript{41} The aftermath of student self-evaluation helps to make curricula changes

\textsuperscript{40} Terry (1983, p. 187)

\textsuperscript{41} Waluconis (1994, p. 244)
and improvements. Though standardized evaluation shows results of the teaching-learning process, student self-evaluation essays give more individualized information about student scholarship and their expectations. A result of this assessment is student retention because they feel that they have a voice in a college's academic activities.

D. Out-of-class Evaluation

No one method is enough for assessing quality. Consequently, out-of-class evaluation pursues and tries to measure the impact of out-of-class experiences on professional and personal development and link those experiences with the institutional environment to make curricular changes and innovations. By assessing out-of-class experiences, the expectations of students and the needed academic skills to succeed in challenges of daily life can be determined before graduating. Another feature of this kind of evaluation's results is that teachers can restructure class assignments that help students with their critical thinking and problem solving skills. In short, institutional quality and prestige can also be determined with out-of-class evaluation.

E. Assessing the Departmental Major

The method that measures graduate performance and cumulative learning is called assessing the departmental major. An opinion regarding student performance is necessary for assessing the quality and competitiveness of any college or university. Gathering information related to graduate performance demands a closer relation between a higher education institution and its graduates.
Professional associations.

F. Institutional Commitment Evaluation

Institutional quality, practical value of an education, and utility of an education are considered in evaluations. These items show a similarity of values. Also these items are the multiple quality indicators that Amaury Nora and Alberto Cabrera present in their article about the construct validity of institutional commitment for revealing how well an institution is doing. Consequently, institutional commitment evaluation is another quality assessing method that tries to determine reasons for student retention or the lack of it. Institutional commitment evaluation also measures the direct relation between student loyalty and the prestige of an institution.

...Commitment is defined in terms of (a) congruency between an individual's value and goals and those of the institution (affinity of values) or the normative component, (b) certainty in the choice of institution, (c) loyalty to the institution, and (d) sense of belonging or maintaining membership in the institution.\textsuperscript{42}

So far, several methods for assessing quality have been analyzed and all of them are necessary and complementary to each other. Nevertheless, I consider the institutional commitment evaluation one of the most interesting assessing quality methods because of its broad features that give any institution the opportunity to see its outside image and acceptance. Nora & Cabrera suggest the use of surveys containing questions related to institutional quality, certainty of choice, belonging sense,

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Nora & Cabrera (1993, p. 245)
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value of the education toward job performance, loyalty, and congruency between students values and attitudes.

G. The application of TQM

In 1930, the application of “Total Quality Management” (TQM) was launched by many American educational institutions. TQM assesses the institution as a whole; thus, not only the product, but also the inputs and processes of educational programs are measured. Total Quality Management systemic evaluation is a technique that assesses quality systematically. TQM focuses on the institution’s mission, vision, objectives and goals. Darrell Krueger in his article about TQM says, “The fact remains: maintaining—perhaps even returning to—the U.S. position of global preeminence is an incredibly complex, demanding challenge, one that we as educators must accept and meet.” TQM focuses on continuous quality improvement that refers to inputs, transforming (process), and outputs. Lewis and Smith (1994) define the system of TQM as the “House of Total Quality” involving three subsystems and four pillars. The subsystems are managerial, social, and technical, and the four pillars are customer service, continuous improvement, processes and facts, and respect for people. The advantage of TQM is that evaluation is applied during the educational process rather than at the end of the process, when it is usually too late to correct mistakes. For example, typical program evaluation sometimes becomes a mere inspection when the evaluation is applied only at the end of the program. According to some institutional experiences, TQM works...
better in small institutions rather than large ones because colleges or universities have inherent and complex characteristics; then, TQM probably would operate more efficiently in some areas and less in others.

Higher education institutions have their own systemic organization due to their autonomy; for that reason, applying a unique model is difficult.

...The structure of the assessment strategies must be similar to the structure of learning experiences—continuous and individually designed while growing in complexity as the students learn more about the discipline, but also incorporating elements common to all students.44

Several methods for quality assessment have been cited. These are complementary, and a combined application of them is recommended; then, it will be easier to identify how the system works, where the problems are, in what areas improvement is required, how to raise the quality level, and so on. Triangulation techniques are recommended to obtain more confident results of how well the program is working. Triangulation is a technique for assessing program quality that involves authorities, faculty, administrators, students, and customers (employers and parents). All of them will collaborate in the program quality assessment by attending meetings, providing suggestions, filling out evaluation forms, and so on. Grant & Conrad in their book Emblems of Quality in Higher Education state: “Engaging diverse stakeholders in quality assessment and improvement efforts is

Fetterman, (1991, p. 37)
important for two primary reasons. First generating diversification of perspectives. . . Second, when students, alumni, and employers are regularly invited to comment on their program experiences and to suggest improvements, their collective sense of ownership in the program rises dramatically. In fact, stakeholder involvement “makes quality happen.”

2.7 PEER REVIEW

According to the deans, peer review is an important part of the assessment process, because it increases the societal status of the assessment process. On the one hand, it is a message to society signifying the seriousness of the assessment process. On the other hand, inside the university it gives more prestige to the self-evaluation processes. It is a ‘useful threat’ both to basic units and the institution to do their self-evaluations in a serious and committed way.

Peer review is a long-standing tradition in academic life; it was introduced in the United States about 50 years ago, when the notion of periodic visits was added to the existing “prescriptive accreditation procedures.” Later, self-evaluation was added as a thoughtful complement to peer review. Peer review authenticates self-study judgements because it provides external validation to the institutional assessment. Peer review used to give advice rather than make judgements about

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45 Grant & Conrad (1997, pp. 169-170)
46 Grant & Conrad (1997, p. 170)
47 Valimaa, J. (1994, p.398)
practice or effectiveness; later, it focused on standards. When applying peer review, it must be sensitive to the institutional culture. Peer review can be institutionally organized or a multi-institution or other agency-related system with a preestablished plan containing a set of standards made by mutual consent. The team is made up of experts with professional experience in doing accreditation and generally consists of academic leaders or professors; the number of members varies from three to seven or more, depending on the size of the institution.

2.8 PEER REVIEWS' TASKS

A peer review checks how well the institution is doing compared with other institutions. Therefore, institutional assessments and peer review follow well-structured plans and the results of both are applied to accreditation, quality improvements, institutional access to governmental funds, and prestige, among others. With the emerging interest in quality assessment, peer review is becoming a prevailing method of quality assessment processes.

Kells in “Self-study Processes” (1995) states that the external peer reviews are usually expected to do the following (see Table # 4):
TABLE # 4

EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW VISIT

Note: Adapted from Self-Study Processes (1995, p. 139-140):

1. Review the self-study report.
   It is the major basis for the visit.

2. Meet with those accountable for the program:
   Leaders of the institution, the committee responsible for self-evaluation, faculty, selected students, graduates, and employers of graduates.

3. Visit institutional facilities
   Facilities such as libraries, laboratories, and other source of service that assure the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process.

4. Sample the intellectual environment and teaching process
   Attending classes or any other academic event can give an idea of the intellectual environment, but not for assessing the general effectiveness of instruction, which is more effectively accomplished in other ways.

5. Analyze major issues facing the institution
   Issues related to curriculum, planning, facilities, resource allocation, and so on.

6. Present an oral report
   It is presented to the institutional leaders and to the committee responsible for self-evaluation concerning fixed standards and self-study

7. Present a written report
   It broadly contains general observations and recommendations for institutional improvement.
The Handbook of Accreditation of the North Central Association (NCA) stresses that peer review in the evaluation process in higher education "depends heavily on the qualities of those who participate in it." According to the NCA, those experts that form part of the peer review group are called the "Consultant-Evaluator Corps." Through evaluation teams they examine institutional effectiveness, provide advice and counsel for institutional improvement, and recommend accrediting actions to the commission. As members of the Accreditation Review Council, they participate in the review processes of the commission as members of the review committee and as readers in the reading process. As commissioners serving on the 15-person commission, they have responsibility for making decisions on the affiliation of institutions, for the formulation of commission policies, and for the oversight of commission operations.

Table #5 summarizes what the NCA requires of peer review team members.

_NCA Handbook of Accreditation (1994-96, p. 81)_
### TABLE # 5

**QUALITIES OF THE NCA PEER REVIEW TEAM**

1. **Professionalism**
   - a) Prepare for the visit, (two or three days, typically). Getting as much information as possible about the institutions is essential before the visit begins.
   - b) Make decisions based on their best judgement in assessing an institution using the Commission’s General Institutional Requirements and Criteria for Accreditation.
   - c) Protect confidentiality related to all information obtained from the evaluation visit, from discussion with other team members or with Commission staff, and from Commission file materials (previous team reports, correspondence, complaints, etc.).
   - d) Value collegiality by striking a balance between individual views and judgements and those held by colleagues. They are expected to strive for a consensus in reaching decisions about an institution’s accreditation and the reasons for it.

2. **Competence**
   - a) Interviewing and listening during the evaluation visit.
   - b) Effective writing, because the report is the ultimate vehicle by which a team informs the Commission of its evaluation and recommendations.

3. **Objectivity**
   - a) Fairness in exercising judgement, looking for and documenting the overall “pattern of evidence,” satisfying each of the Commission’s Criteria, balancing an institution’s strengths and weaknesses in reaching a judgement.
   - b) Appreciation of good practice by understanding the traditions and values of American higher education and the ability to identify what is appropriate for a particular institution in terms of the institution’s mission and purposes, how well the institution has progressed since its last evaluation, and what is generally recognized as good practice at similar or “peer” institutions.
   - c) Ability to balance the roles of consultant and evaluator. To avoid confusing the institution or the Commission, the peer review team needs to balance and keep distinct its roles as evaluator and consultant.

*Note: Adapted from the NCA Handbook on Accreditation (1994-96, pp. 82-83)*
2.9 THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Accreditation is a voluntary process conducted by peers via nongovernmental agencies to accomplish at least two things—to hold one another accountable, on a periodic basis, to achieve stated, appropriate institutional or program goals and to assess the extent to which the institution or program meets established standards. The major purposes of the process are to foster improvement and to identify, for public assurance, institutions and programs that seem to be achieving stated goals and meeting agreed-upon standards.50

Quality improvement, peer pressure, public recognition of competence, access to government funds, accountability, potential sanction, and so on, are some reasons why American higher education institutions freely seek accreditation.

Currently, North America has six regional—Middle States, New England, North Central, Northwest, Southern, and Western—and six national accrediting associations. National accrediting associations also offer accreditation for institutions with specific plans, e.g., religious purposes, private technical schools, private business colleges, or health related fields.

The North Central Association was first established in 1895, and began accrediting universities in 1913. At the beginning, institutions were measured against standards, e.g., number of

students per class, number the books in the library, or laboratories. Nonetheless, twenty years later standards were eliminated due to their inflexible features, and institutions were judged on their mission or "self-declared purposes—since these were appropriate to a higher education institution."51 This approach evaluated institutional strengths against weaknesses to get a clear pattern. In fact, criteria replaced standards. Institutional data was compared against a set of "norms" derived from data accumulated from many institutions. Then the "pattern" of data from the institution being evaluated was compared with a "pattern map" based on these norms. The institution was accredited if the two patterns seemed to match. Hence, evaluation of institutions became more qualitative than quantitative. This approach was applied until the early seventies. The commission also adopted a set of conditions for eligibility based on institutional self-study and differences of institutional mission. Since 1981, the NCA has adopted the Criteria for Accreditation and Criteria for Candidacy; they currently apply both methods. Higher education institutions may apply either for candidacy or for accreditation. Normally, new institutions choose to seek candidacy and more experienced ones choose accreditation. For accreditation, an institution has to meet the Commission's General Institutional Requirements and Criteria for Accreditation, whereas candidacy "gives an institution the opportunity to establish a formal, publicly-recognized relationship with the Association."52 Candidacy does not perfunctorily lead to accreditation, but by accomplishing the general requirements and criteria, an institution may later become accredited.

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"NCA Handbook of Accreditation (1994-96, p. 2)
"NCA Handbook of Accreditation (1994-96, p. 7)"
The NCA regularly reexamines policies, procedures, requirements, criteria, and mission to promote fairness in the establishment of requirements and criteria for the accreditation of institutions of higher education, to encourage educational and institutional quality through its assistance of its affiliated institutions, to support self-regulation in higher education by means of peer review, and to be accountable to the society.

The NCA has a full-time staff that is responsible for the review of an institution’s self-study plan, for the provision of counseling about the self-study process, for evaluative visits to institutions, and for the review of the institutions’ self-study reports; however, they are not responsible for candidacy or accreditation decisions or recommendations. Each state decides on candidacy or accreditation according to the reports provided by the accrediting agencies.

The commission maintains a close relationship with governmental agencies to decide which institutions are eligible for United States government funds. For that purpose, the U.S. Department of Education yearly reviews a list of the accredited higher education institutions.

When any university or college does not get accredited, its prestige decreases, and most probably fewer students will matriculate there. Institutional accreditation and specialized accreditation are the two procedures of accreditation. Both types of accreditation establish criteria, encourage quality of the programs and institution, support effective peer review, and give customers exact information about the accredited institutions.
2.9.1 Institutional Accreditation

Institutional accreditation applies to the entire institution and is conducted by “elected commissions, small professional staffs, and volunteer consultants and evaluation team members.”\textsuperscript{53} The six regional accrediting agencies mentioned earlier and six national accrediting associations are responsible for accreditation. Every year a list is published of all accredited institutions and programs that have accomplished standards, criteria, policies, and procedures preestablished by both types of accreditation commissions.

2.9.2 Specialized Accreditation

Specialized accreditation in association with professional schools evaluates specific programs such as engineering, law, medicine, psychology, etc. Both types of accreditation take the following steps in the accreditation process:

1. Conducting a self-evaluation process of an institution in the process of accreditation. An institutional visit is made to evaluate programs according to the institutional mission, and the team of peers reports to the institution and to the agency. The institution or program responds to the report.

\textsuperscript{53}Kells, H. (1995, p. 11)
4. The accreditation commission of the agency grants, denies, or reaffirms accreditation based on the self-evaluation document, the team report, and the institution's answer.

5. The institution or program is assessed periodically, commonly every five to ten years.

6. Continuous institutional self-study according to institutional planning and standards is encouraged.

2.10 WHAT ARE PATTERNS AND INDICATORS?

Indicators are the starting point in a self-evaluation process; therefore, an institution must first define the range of indicators. The indicators contain issues related to an institution's own "history and experience; its articulated purposes; and the challenges it has faced, it now faces, or will face in the future." The list of indicators is contained in the report prepared by the institution after completing its self-evaluation.

11 CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION

In 1992, the NCA approved new criteria for accreditation. "Criteria for Accreditation are the structure built on the foundation of the General Institutional Requirements (GIRs)." General Institutional Requirements are the parameters or basic expectations that all higher education

NCA Handbook of Accreditation (1994-96, p. 30)
institutions seeking affiliation with the Commission need to accomplish. Therefore, defining GIRs, is the beginning stage of an accreditation process. "Each criterion is related to one or more GIRs but each goes beyond the basic expectation of the GIRs." 55 Criteria for accreditation are divided into five criteria; table # 6 describes each criterion and its general institutional requirements.

NCA Handbook of Accreditation (1994-96, p. 27)
TABLE #6

GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Note: Adapted from the NCA Handbook of Accreditation (1994-96, pp. 20-27)

Mission
1. It has a mission statement, formally adopted by the governing board and made public, declaring that it is an institution of higher education.
2. It is a degree-granting institution.

Authorization
3. It has legal authorization to grant its degrees, and it meets all the legal requirements to operate as an institution of higher education wherever it conducts its activities.
4. It has legal documents to confirm its status: not-for-profit, for-profit or public.

Governance
5. It has a governing board that possesses and exercises necessary legal power to establish and review basic policies that govern the institution.
6. Its governing board includes public members and is sufficiently autonomous from the administration and ownership to assure the integrity of the institution.
7. It has an executive officer designated by the governing board to provide administrative leadership for the institution.
8. Its governing board authorizes the institution’s affiliation with the Commission.

Faculty
9. It employs a faculty that has earned from accredited institutions the degrees appropriate to the instruction offered by the institution.
10. Most faculty members are full-time employees of the institution.
11. Its faculty has a significant role in developing and evaluating all of the institution’s educational programs.

Educational Programs
12. It confers degrees.
13. It has degree programs in operation, with students enrolled in them.
14. Its degree programs are compatible with the institution’s mission and are based on recognized fields of study at the higher education level.
15. Its degrees are appropriately named, following practices common to institutions of higher education about both length and content of the program.
16. Its undergraduate degree programs include a coherent general education requirement consistent with the institution’s mission and designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and to promote intellectual inquiry.
17. It has admission policies and practices that are consistent with the institution’s mission and appropriate to its educational programs.
18. It provides its students access to those learning resources and support services requisite for its degree programs.

Finances
19. It has an external financial audit by a certified public accountant or a public audit agency at least every two years.
20. Its financial documents show the appropriate allocation and use of resources to support its educational programs.
21. Its financial practices, records, and reports prove fiscal viability.
22. Its catalog or other official document includes its mission statement along with an accurate description of its educational programs and degree requirements, its learning resources, its admission’s policies and practices, its charges and refund policies, and the academic credentials of its faculty and administrators.
23. It accurately shows its standing with accrediting bodies with which it is affiliated.
24. It makes available upon request information that accurately describes its financial condition.
An institution that is in the process of accreditation must fulfill both the GIRs and the criteria. The next tables show the relationship between the GIRs and the Criteria.

### TABLE # 7

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CRITERIA AND GIRs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria &amp; GIRs</th>
<th>General Institutional Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criterion One</td>
<td>GIRs # 1, 2, 3, 4, 12, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion Two</td>
<td>GIRs # 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 17,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18, 19, 20, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion Three</td>
<td>GIRs # 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion Four</td>
<td>most GIRs relate to this Criterion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion Five</td>
<td>GIRs # 3, 6, 8, 17, 22, 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: NCA Handbook of Accreditation (1994-96, p. 28)*
TABLE #8

CRITERIA, PATTERNS AND INDICATORS

Note: Adapted from the NCA, Handbook of Accreditation (1994-96, pp. 29-35)

CRITERION ONE

The institution has clear and public stated purposes consistent with its mission.

PATTERNS OF EVIDENCE

In determining appropriate patterns of evidence for the criterion, the Commission considers a list of indicators related to each or the criteria.

INDICATORS RELATED TO CRITERION ONE:

a. Institutional goals,
b. Evaluation of processes,
c. Decision-making processes according to an institutional mission,
d. Information to public of institutional and educational goals,
e. Support for freedom of inquiry for faculty and students,
f. Institutional commitment to excellence of teaching-learning processes.

CRITERION TWO

The institution has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes.

INDICATORS RELATED TO CRITERION TWO:

a. Governance by a board who understands their responsibilities and has decision-making power,
b. Effective administration and qualified and experienced personnel,
c. Faculty with educational credential that assure educational purposes,
d. A sufficient number of students enrolled to meet the institution’s stated purposes,
e. Physical plant, academic resources, safe environment, and services that guarantee an effective teaching-learning process.

CRITERION THREE

The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.

INDICATORS RELATED TO CRITERION THREE:

a. Educational programs appropriate to an institution of higher education,
b. Assessment of appropriate student academic achievement in all its programs,
c. Transcripts that accurately reflect student learning

criterion four

The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.

Criterior five

The institution shows integrity in its practices and relationship with academic programs.

administrators, achievements,

d. Effective teaching that guarantees academic level,
e. Professional development for faculty, staff, and
f. Student services that effectively support the institution's purposes,
g. Staff and faculty services that contribute to the institution's effectiveness.

indications related to criterion four:
a. A current resource-base financial, physical, and human— that positions the institution for the future,
b. Decision-making processes with capability to face challenges,
c. Structure assessment processes that provide meaningful and useful information to the planning processes and to students, faculty, and administrators,
d. Effective institutional planning necessary to the institution's continuance,
e. Allocation of resources that strengthen both the institution and its programs.

indications related to criterion five:

a. Student, faculty, and staff handbooks that describe various institutional relationships with those constituencies, including appropriate grievance procedures,
b. Policies and practices for the resolution of internal disputes,
c. Policies and practices consistent with its mission related to equity of treatment, nondiscrimination, and affirmative action,
d. Publication of institutional operations,
e. Relationship with other institutions of higher education conducted ethically and responsibly,
f. Appropriate support for resources shared with other institutions,
g. Policies and procedures related to intercollegiate athletics, student associations, and subsidiary business enterprises, and
h. Supervision of contractual arrangements with government, industry, and other organizations.
Currently, the different regional and national accrediting associations have accredited 3,688 higher education institutions. Table #9 contains relevant information about those accredited colleges and universities.

**TABLE #9**

CURRENT ACCREDITED

AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF INSTITUTION</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>STUDENT BODY</th>
<th>TUITION (Mean)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public 4-year inst.</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>5.9 million</td>
<td>$2,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private 4-year</td>
<td>1,610</td>
<td>2.9 million</td>
<td>11,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public 2-year</td>
<td>1,036</td>
<td>5.3 million</td>
<td>1,194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private 2-year</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>238,539</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL Institutions</td>
<td>3,088</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = Not available
2.12 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Ewell and Jones (1994) define performance indicators as “a concrete piece of information about a condition or result of public action that is regularly produced, publicly reported, and systematically used for planning, monitoring, or resource allocation at the state or system level.” Taylor, Meyerson and Massy (1993) define them as “ratios, percentages, or other quantitative values that allow an institution to compare its position in key strategic areas to peers, to past performance, or to previously set goals.” Some authors suggest that performance indicators are quantitative measures that use accurate data; however, Sizer, Spee, and Bormans (1992) stress that performance indicators “as the label suggests, are indicators of performance, ‘signals or guides’ rather than absolute measures.” The use of various indicators will provide a better idea of how well any higher education institution is doing and what the challenges are.

Gaither, Nedwek, and Neal (1994) say that performance indicators have five primary uses: monitoring (with the use of accurate data); evaluation, which focuses on goals and objectives in a quantitative way; exchange (the use of indicators allows judgements, comparisons, and communication about the educational objectives of an institution, a state, a country, or a continent); rationalization, the action of a coherent policymaking process; and allocation of resources. Besides assuring program quality, performance indicators assure allocation of state funds.
Bottril & Borden (1996, pp. 107-117), identify the following list of performance indicators adopted by ten states:

1. Admissions, related to number of application by available position, number of requests for information or pre-enrollment as opposed to number of actual enrollments, acceptance as a percentage of applicants, matriculation as percentage of students accepted.

2. Advising, average faculty in advising duty, average number of hours per week spent advising students.

3. Collaboration, research project collaboration (undergraduate and graduate), organizations of coordinating programs among institutions, exchange of tuition facilities.

4. Community needs, community members' judgements of college career preparation programs, number of outside groups using college facilities, educational and cultural facilities for adults from the region.

5. Completers, preparation for job or career, satisfaction levels of graduate, placement in work force, employer satisfaction, placement rates of graduates in the work force, the destination of graduates.

6. Continuing education, amount of contract education, quantity, quality, duration, participation of continuing education activities, sponsoring agency perceptions of adequacy of customized training programs, influences of continuing education courses, programs, and service to community.

7. Curriculums, effectiveness of procedures for revision of exiting programs, number and percent of eligible programs accredited or reaffirmed, inclusion of cultural and ethic perspectives in curricula, inclusion of knowledge about counties other than the United States, scopes of the curriculum, percentage of courses requiring students to engage in independent research papers, projects, presentations, or similar exercises, range of choice of major subjects, innovation orientation, peer review of interdisciplinary programs.

Entering students, entry qualification of students, average SAT/ACT scores of entering students, motives for enrollment in higher education.
9. Facilities, use of facilities by departments, amount of research and study space per student, quality of teaching space used, libraries, computer centers, laboratories, resources for research activities and quality of research output.

10. Faculty, use of new technology for institution, teaching awards and recognition, FTE faculty, percentage minority faculty, faculty salaries, percent of full-time faculty who are tenured, number of faculty research or development grants awarded yearly, international activities of faculty, books produced by staff each year, consulting or advice to government, consultancies to industry and private organizations, etc.

11. Finances, library support compared with that at peer institutions, tuition costs compared with other costs, percentage cost for housing, equipment, library, audio/visual centers, expenditure or innovation projects, continuing training, and so on.

12. Financial aid, number of scholarship, number and amount of merit-base scholarships, number and amount of non-service fellowships, stipend levels and work load for GTAs and GRAs.

13. Graduate education, number of fellowships and assistantships, number of graduate programs, student populations per program, graduate student/faculty ratios, supported graduate students, work loads of teaching graduate students, merit fellowships per graduate FTE, graduate sections per faculty FTE, average graduate student compensation from all sources.

14. Research, number of summer grants awarded yearly, number of staff available for research, number of research assistantships, usefulness of research results for trade and industry, collaborations with institutes and research stations, circulation of scientific results for the population, amount of contract research.

15. Service, student level of public service, public service opportunities, relation with external organizations, articulation of continuing education.

16. Special population, programs and services for reentry and nontraditional students, structure of student population by age, enrollment level of special population, success level of special population.

17. Staff, FTE administrators, structure of the staff by age, academic staff/support, etc.
18. Student progress, time to degree completion, student progress rates, percentage of students changing major, attendance per section, number of degrees conferred, program completion rate, dropout motives, and so on.

19. Student support, number, duration, degree of participation in recreational activities for students and members of staff, scope of service provided (compared with peers).

20. Student transfer, percentage of students who transfer out of the university, percent who transfer in, transfer rates within university system.

21. Teaching/learning, percentage of students reporting that they were encouraged to ask questions in class when they did not understand something, percentage of students reporting that the grading and evaluation process used by the instructor allowed them to show what they knew, average number of graded assignments or exercises given per course, percent of classes taught by full-time faculty, average class size by level, number of internships, average grades per exam, number of items checked out of the library by undergraduate and graduates, percent of faculty reporting efforts to create group projects or learning communities in their classes, and so on.
According to Nedwick & Neal, (1994) performance indicators and assessment initiatives are compared in terms of nine basic dimensions: (1) locus of control; (2) degree of governmental involvement; (3) focus of performance indicators; (4) sources of quality variations; (5) data selection; (6) intended audiences; (7) emphasis of use; (8) affect of student learning; and (9) relationship to an institution’s mission.

The University of Wisconsin presents a good example of performance indicators that are introduced in the next table. (See next page.)
TABLE # 10

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

*Note: Adapted from Measuring Up: The Promises and Pitfalls of Performance in Higher Education (1994, pp.35-36)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Diversity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Student satisfaction</td>
<td>(1) Progress toward EEO/AA (Equal Employment Opportunity / Affirmative Action) goals in hiring promotion;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Alumni satisfaction</td>
<td>(2) Number of minority students by race and ethnicity, graduation rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Percentage of all undergraduate course enrollment and instructor per hour taught by instructor</td>
<td>(3) Incidents of sexual harassment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
<th>Stewardship of Assets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Results of system-wide sophomore competency tests (ACT-CAAP)</td>
<td>(1) Recruitment and retention rates of the faculty, members and expenditures on faculty and staff development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Graduation rates of undergraduates (full and part-time)</td>
<td>(2) Progress in addressing preventive maintenance needs of the university facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) GRE, SAT, and test scores of students, job placement rates, professional and graduate school acceptance rates</td>
<td>(3) Number and severity of accidents, injuries, and identified losses or safety risks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efficiency</th>
<th>Contribution to Compelling State Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Average credits to degree for student</td>
<td>(1) Research of employers regarding career preparation and satisfaction of graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Proportion of pay-rolled FTE positions and expenditures</td>
<td>(2) Enrollments in continuing education programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Percentage of qualified undergraduate resident students accepted for admission.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.13 DESIGNING AND CONDUCTING A SELF-STUDY PROCESS

The NCA says that the design of a self-study should addresses institutional goals for the process, determine how the Criteria for Accreditation will be addressed in the self-study process and in the self-study report, and develop a self-study calendar and timetable that take into account the conduct plus the purpose of the self-study process. It usually takes four or five full semesters for an institution to plan, execute, and report a comprehensive self-study process.

When conducting self-evaluation, the NCA recommends using appropriate committee structures with people familiar with the subjects of scrutiny, using the existing evaluation and planning processes and materials before structuring new ones, establishing means for regular communications between the self-study guiding committee and institutional constituencies, and conducting self-study appropriate to the institution.

My overview of American higher education evaluation and accreditation is that quality assurance is the central point of the prestige of American universities. Nowadays, American education is largely controlled at the institutional level; therefore, self-evaluation is commonly used at almost every university. Although evaluation of higher education institutions has become more qualitative than quantitative, fixed sets of standards are applied by several universities to give evidence of their performance and to be accredited.
CHAPTER TWO:
LITERATURE REVIEW

Part II

EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION IN ECUADOR

To create an evaluation and accreditation system is one major goal proposed by Ecuadorian universities. Therefore, SEAU was established to achieve this goal. The publication “Misión de la Universidad Ecuatoriana para el Siglo XXI,” “promotes institutional self-regulation and strengthens the university autonomy.”\(^5\) Guillermo Falconí, the director of SEAU, among other experts in university administration, has presented to Ecuador a project for structuring and developing the Evaluation and Accreditation System for the Ecuadorian University. The project is divided into five parts: (1) introduction, (2) justification with a brief history of the Ecuadorian University, (2) brief description of evaluation and accreditation systems in the U.S., Canada, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Chile, and Brazil, (4) some notions and definitions related to evaluation and accreditation, and (5) some directions for structuring the evaluation and accreditation system in Ecuador.

The proposal for establishing an evaluation and accreditation system in Ecuadorian universities says that “SEAU will be comprised of the Ecuadorian universities and polytechnic schools that freely decide to integrate it, to be publicly accountable according to every institutional mission.

\(^5\) Falconí, (1996, p. 39)
In addition, universities and polytechnic schools can freely accept SEAU or freely separate from it.\textsuperscript{57}

One conceptual base of accreditation and evaluation sustained by Falconi (1996, p. 38) is that “Accreditation is an expression of public faith of recognition that an institution has the quality and integrity required to reach the proposed institutional mission plus to be accountable to the society.” Evaluation and accreditation processes are “for the whole institution and by programs.”\textsuperscript{58} Later, Falconi (1996. p. 38-39) adds that “An important aspect of accreditation, as it is proposed in Ecuador, is that it is not intended to classify universities by categories, nor to audit them; in fact, accreditation does not try to impose any kind of sanction. On the contrary, the main purpose of the system is to be the motivational mean to address changes, goals, and quality.” The planned evaluation and accreditation system is based on self-evaluation and on peer review that seeks quality improvement. Later, Falconi (1996, p. 42) says that “Evaluation, as it is presented in the current proposal, does not try to compare different institutions; it tries to confront institutions with their missions and with their preestablished features of quality or benchmarks by taking into account institutional particularities.

Falconi (1996, p. 41) comes out with a notion of evaluation that considers it as a process of reflection that helps us to understand and explain the different university issues; thus, we can make judgements and decisions regarding how to face challenges, encourage changes, and improve university quality.

The pattern of evaluation presented by Falconi has systemic characteristics that consider

\textsuperscript{57} Falconi, G. (1996, p. 37)

\textsuperscript{58} Falconi, G. (1996, p. 38 and 53)
inputs (pretests and resources), processes, and outcomes (post-tests and public opinions). Institutional accreditation is the next step. In short, the model of accreditation has the following stages:

Self-evaluation > Peer reviews > Accreditation > Accountability to the society

To address university quality through an evaluation and accreditation system, SEAU suggests communication and advice among the universities, Ministry of Education, National Council of Education (CONADE), National Congress, professional schools, productive sectors, and international agencies. SEAU’s funds will come from several sources, such as National Universities and Polytechnics Schools Council (CONUEP), state, and other internal and external sources.

2.14 GUIDE LINES FOR SELF-EVALUATION PROCESSES

Within the accreditation process, self-evaluation is the principal tool that any university can apply to establish excellence. Therefore, the following are some guidelines and purposes for the self-evaluation processes suggested by SEAU:

To define quality is the first stage of the self-evaluation process to figure out criteria, quality indicators, and standards.

During the evaluation and accreditation process, university autonomy will be taken into
account.

- Improve the institutional quality by improving the institutional planning and programs.
- Have the support of the main authorities, for developing the evaluation process.
- Every higher education institution must design a self-evaluation plan.
- Every institution needs to decide and select the necessary human, physical, and financial resources for the self-evaluation process. The employees must be professionals with experience in self-evaluation processes.

All the above guidelines and purposes are possible to address by developing an evaluation system among faculty members, administrators, and students.

So far, SEAU has worked in selection and definition of areas of analysis, indicators and standards; they will evaluate the areas of analysis according to each institutional mission. To illustrate this, research, teaching, service, and relationship with the social-economic environment are some areas of analysis. As indicators, the following have been defined: institutional mission, institutional organization and procedures (regulation, and human, physical and economic resources), faculty members (their preparation and experience), students (admission, graduation rates, etc.), academic organization and curricula (teaching and learning methods), services to students and professors library, laboratories, computer labs, etc.), research (facilities), and relationship with the social-economic environment.59

2.15 THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION

Falconi (1996, p. 63) mentions that the external evaluation will be made when the self-evaluation report is ready. Then the higher education institution will ask for accreditation to the National Advisor for Evaluation and Accreditation (NAEA). The NAEA, through its Technical Commission, will review whether or not the institution fulfills all the preestablished requirements. To continue with the accrediting process, the most prestigious faculty members that meet certain prerequisites form the Technical Commission. The institutional accreditation process and the publication of the report will not take more than sixty days; the National Council must corroborate the report. They will publish the guidelines for accrediting an institution in the External Evaluation and Accreditation Procedures Manual.

2.16 THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS IN ECUADOR

In summary, the evaluation and accreditation plan presented by CONUEP (1996, pp. 65-75) says that the Evaluation and Accreditation National Council is responsible for studying the self-evaluation and external evaluation reports. If the institution in the process of accreditation has accomplished the preestablished requirements, it will be either (1) totally accredited, (2) re-accredited,
(3) conditionally accredited (here, the institution will keep this conditional accreditation until it has fulfilled all the accrediting requirements), (4) or the accreditation could be postponed because the institution in process of accreditation does not fulfill the accrediting conditions. The accrediting process will be repeated every five or ten years. Finally, a list of all the accredited universities and polytechnic schools will be published.

The advantages that can result from accreditation are social prestige, allocation of funds depending on the institutional quality, access to specific funds established for a specific project of institutional quality improvement, and approval for international funds. To these advantages, I would add improvement of inter-institutional relationships, that is, among universities, between universities and the state, between universities and the public and private sectors, and between Ecuadorian universities and international universities.

2.17 CONCLUSIONS TO CHAPTER TWO

The current trends in evaluation and accreditation systems in the U.S. show that qualitative methods to assess quality are becoming more popular lately; on the other hand, quantitative methods are becoming popular too. Quantitative methods are faster and a good way to appraise how well institutions are doing. Moreover, diversity of the institutional mission is taken into account in accreditation. In fact, American universities not only want to meet
goals but also to meet them well. Therefore, a combination of both methods can result in more efficient and effective quality assessment.

One of the most interesting ways to evaluate higher education institutions is by looking at the mission and surveying institutional strengths against weaknesses and get a pattern. This qualitative method can be perfectly adapted to the Ecuadorian university evaluation system.

Commenting about self-evaluation patterns, the general flow model (Kells, 1995) is adaptable to assess institutional quality due to its cyclical nature that uses reasons/consequences analysis.

Whenever any U.S. institution does not get accredited, institutional prestige declines and students will not likely matriculate there.

SEAU is promoting a self-evaluation model based on the Middle States Association model. The Ecuadorian model involves eight areas of analysis (mission, teaching, research, connection with the environment, administration and procedures, financial planning, social welfare, and public acceptance); each area has indicators of performance; five analytic criteria will be used to interpret results (relevance, efficiency, availability of resources,
congruence of objectives, and results and effectiveness). “Compared with the North Central Association’s five criteria, the Ecuadorian draft seems cumbersome and overly detailed.”

Ecuadorian universities are engaging in an important step by attempting to create a system of evaluation that will result in higher education institutions being more accountable and competitive. Nonetheless, it remains unclear what the whole range of benefits for accrediting institutions will be. If it is not for state fund allocation or for diverse purposes that could motivate institutions to improve their quality, there will be an adverse aftermath.

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Twombly & Uriüen (1996, p. 26)
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Declining program quality, deteriorating communication with the society, between higher education institutions and with the state, a rising number of under-prepared students, and lack of national and international credibility are among the reasons that have contributed to the urgent necessity for the increase of quality and accountability as principal policy issues in Ecuadorian higher education. Ecuadorian universities, heretofore exceedingly autonomous, has recently become increasingly concerned about its social responsibility for providing education in terms of quality. Though Ecuador has not developed a system of evaluation, the university authorities almost unanimously agree in the importance of introducing internal and external evaluation as the means to improve academic quality and to become accountable. To identify what the preferred evaluation system is and what the challenges in introducing an evaluation system are, I interviewed eleven university authorities such as chancellors or rectors, vice-chancellors or vice-rectors, academic directors, and institutional research directors of nine institutions.
3.1 PARTICIPANTS

To obtain multiple perspectives, the sample of university administrators was selected using the purposive sampling method (Judd, Smith, and Kidder, 1991). The reason “behind purposive sampling is that with good judgement and an appropriate strategy, we can handpick the cases to be included and thus develop samples that are satisfactory in relation to our needs.” For this study, last May 1996, I visited nine Ecuadorian universities and interviewed a total of fourteen university administrators, one of whom was chancellor, two of whom were rectors, five of whom were vice-rectors, two of whom were academic affairs directors, one of whom was a research director, one of whom was a director of graduate studies, and two of whom were SEAU members. Participants for this study were selected for their knowledge and experience in university administration. Participants’ willingness to share their experiences, expectations, and knowledge were relevant factors for the success of this research.

The universities chosen are among the most important universities in the country. La Universidad Central is the largest, oldest, potentially the most important, and the one with the most problems in the country. La Católica is one of the best. Ambato is a representative technical university whereas the relatively new, private Universidad Tecnológica Equinoccial is recognized as one of the up-and-coming private universities because it seeks to prepare students for very specific

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61 Judd, Smith, & Kidder (1991, p. 136)
careers for which there is a demand. The Escuela Politécnica Nacional is one of the most prestigious institutions in the country and is a leader in research. The new universities represent a recent trend in Ecuadorian higher education. *San Francisco de Quito* is modeled after a U.S. liberal arts college and has only recently received accreditation by the Ecuadorian Congress. Including San Francisco in this sample is important because it is widely hailed as a high quality university, has support from private sources, charges high tuition, and has wonderful facilities, relatively speaking. Additionally, *La Católica de Guayaquil*, a medium sized university known for its high quality programs and effective administration, *La Universidad de Las Américas* (UDLA), a new university whose parent campus is in Chile, and *La Escuela Politécnica del Litoral* (ESPOL), another prestigious research institution, are part of the sample. For a better analysis of the results, the nine chosen universities were categorized according to a scheme based on major differences in scope and function because an official classification system does not exist. The next table shows how the universities were grouped.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>Universidad Central del Ecuador</td>
<td>Universidad Católica, Quito (PUCE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Universidad Católica, Guayaquil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>Universidad Técnica de Ambato</td>
<td>Universidad Tecnológica</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Escuela Etnicccial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polytechnics</td>
<td>Escuela Politécnica Nacional</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Escuela Politécnica del Litoral (ESPOL)</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Universities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Universidad San Francisco de Quito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Universidad de las Américas (UDLA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 GATHERING DATA

The qualitative method of focused interviews was employed to obtain in-depth information.

"The main function of the interviewer is to focus attention on a given experience and its effects."  

Therefore, the participants knew the topic to be covered in advance and while being interviewed. The interview protocol consisted of twelve preplanned open-ended questions. I provided information when the requested question was unclear to the participants. For example, those questions related to criteria, performance indicators, and standards caused confusion among people interviewed due to the lack of a higher education evaluation and accreditation system in Ecuador. Therefore, participants were prompted using various criteria in use in other countries."  

The interviews could best be described as conducted conversation where participants felt themselves in a receptive environment to share their thoughts and experiences. The selected administrators from each participating university were asked a series of questions about what they thought about starting a national accreditation system, what the challenges for carrying out an accreditation system would be, what kind of assessment or evaluation system would be the most effective for improving quality, how the standards of quality would be applied, what criteria to detect quality in Ecuadorian higher education should be used, whether the same criteria could be useful to other universities or not, how the excellence of a

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63 Twombly & Urijaén (1996, p. 7)
university should be measured, and so on. Also, another purpose of this set of questions was to establish if there was a commonly agreed upon definition of excellence at the general level. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Besides interviews, surveys sent to university officials by Dr. Ivan Carvajal, part of the SEAU development team, were implemented in this study.

Two important features of this research are confidentiality and anonymity; therefore, the participation of the university administrators was strictly voluntary. In fact, their names will not be associated in any way with the research findings. The information will be identified only by a code number. Following is the questionnaire used during the interviews.

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

Institution codes ___________________________ Date: ______________

1. Please describe the mission of your university.

2. What are the characteristics of an excellent university?

3. What criteria should be applied to decide quality of your university?

4. Should the same criteria be applied for other universities?

5. How would you measure excellence in a university?

6. What indicators should be exercised to measure quality?

7. What quality indicators are being used by this institution? List them and describe them.

8. What kind of assessment or evaluation system would be most effective for improving the quality of Ecuadorian universities?

9. Do you agree with the idea of starting a national accrediting system in the country?

10. What are the challenges that you see to start a system of evaluation?
11. How should the standards of quality be used?

12. What characteristics makes this university unique?

### 3.3 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

For a qualitative analysis of the data, I began the scrutiny of transcripts and narratives by using the method of data reduction; therefore, the data was analyzed for commonalities and differences. From the first question on institutional mission, it was possible to group universities by categories that simplified the scanning process.

Chapter IV broadly describes the findings. The university authorities' names do not appear in this study due to the anonymity feature.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The first question was related to the institutional mission because it was the key for categorizing the Ecuadorian higher education institutions. Then according to the purpose of this study, I started writing the university authorities’ perceptions related to institutional evaluation and its components, and their preference for a system of evaluation.

1.1 MISSION

The Ecuadorian Law of Universities and Polytechnics does not differentiate universities by mission. In fact, it creates all universities equally—on paper at least. The stated mission for all is teaching, research and service. Experience with these universities suggests that there are operational differences in mission. These differences should be reflected in the definition of an excellent university, choice of criteria, and indicators by which university quality should be judged. Consequently, to select the sample, I selected universities according to a categorization scheme that had face validity. In fact, most all of the universities in this study included teaching, research, and service in their description of mission. However, important differences emerged.
The mission of the three comprehensive universities reflects the overriding concern of the university with professional preparation and collaborating in the development of the country. The Central University engages in teaching, research and service. Within this broad mission the University defines professional preparation needed by society, relation with industry and research activity. The director of research at the Central University, Ecuador's largest university, described the mission of his university as “to prepare the scientific and technical base that permits development of the necessary personnel to contribute to development of the country.” He added that a state university has a major responsibility as a guardian of state values, such as democracy. That is, the university must be democratic, free, pluralistic, and autonomous. In this sense, the university creates a space for the rational analysis of national problems.

The Pontifical Catholic University of Quito, the other major university with graduate programs, included teaching, research and service in its description but added professional preparation.

The Catholic University of Guayaquil has an official mission statement that emphasizes “formation of ethically and socially responsible professionals who search for the truth in a rational and critical manner, who have the capacity to analyze and understand contemporary problems, who develop an investigative spirit that will lead to social action within a Christian framework.” This university also values research and social service but prefers to describe these roles within the context of a more humanistic professional preparation.

As expected, the mission of the National Polytechnic University and the Escuela Politecnica
del Litoral encompassed “scientific research in the areas of technology and basic sciences; teaching at three levels: undergraduate instruction and engineering, physics and mathematics; intermediate careers leading to lower level technical professions; and graduate degrees. In addition, the university collaborates in the development of the country through technology transfer.

I did not obtain a description of mission from the public technical university included in the study (Universidad Técnica de Ambato); however, I did obtain information from the private one, Universidad Tecnológica Equinoccial. According to the interviewed authorities, its mission is “to prepare professionals in technological areas, provide preparation in new careers that respond to the needs of society, and to provide education in an environment free from politics.” A review of the actual programs offered by this university reveals the vocational orientation offered here. There was no mention of research in this mission description, and many majors offered are of the “intermediate” category also offered by the National Polytechnic University.

Within new universities, the University of San Francisco promotes the idea that it is patterned after a U.S. liberal arts college. In three respects it is: it charges relatively high tuition, promotes a solid foundation in the liberal arts, and is small. The chancellor of San Francisco says that his university offers a complete humanistic education. The mission is described as research, teaching and service. Increasingly, this university is adding more technically-oriented majors.

Finally, I interviewed one director of the University of the Americas, another “new university” whose parent campus is in Chile. She described the mission of this university: “As all universities, we
have a three-pronged mission that includes teaching, research and service. The specific mission of UDLA is educating leaders for the 21st century. This university is characterized by its permanent contact with industry to the point that the leaders produced by UDLA will be leaders of the economic and financial sector of Quito.”

In summary, most participating universities paid lip service to the traditional triad, teaching, research and service, most identified some specific goal or mission. Often that goal had something to do with preparing professionals needed by society. Responses to later questions helped to clarify that when some institutions talk about research, they really mean keeping up with scientific and technological advances, not doing basic or applied research. Although the information provided in our interviews is insufficient to definitively categorize all Ecuadorian universities, it does suggest there are categorizable differences.

1.2 TYPE OF ASSESSMENT OR EVALUATION: Ecuadorian university administrators’ perceptions about an effective evaluation system

Self-evaluation and external evaluation or peer review were the preferred evaluation system given by all university administrators. In the comprehensive group, the Central University suggested, “Evaluation should be a positive action rather than a sanctioning one.” The Catholic University of Quito added, “There is a lack of confidence in CONUEP due to its bureaucratic process that causes
delays.” Also, PUCE stressed, “Self-evaluation is the basis for the development of institutional planning; in addition, leadership is required as the key factor to succeed in this process.” PUCE added, “There should not be comparison among universities because each institution has inherent characteristics and the results of evaluation can have a negative impact that could cause a lack of credibility in evaluation.” The Catholic University of Guayaquil said, “Evaluation ought to be integral, involving institutional activities and programs.” UTE mentioned, “Evaluation must be integral, directed to the whole university, followed by peer review.” The National Polytechnic School stressed, “Setting up a national system of evaluation is difficult due to political influences.” The University of San Francisco stressed that “A private advisor, similar to the U.S. system, should conduct evaluation. Evaluation should be independent from the university system; it is without the participation of the university authorities; however, it should be with the participation of representatives of the different social sectors.”

4.3 SETTING UP A SYSTEM OF EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION

After having obtained university administrators’ perceptions and expectations about an effective evaluation system, their opinions are matched within the self-evaluation model that SEAU is currently developing to analyze its strengths and weaknesses to provide opinions and suggestions for its improvement.
4.4 CHALLENGES OF STARTING A SYSTEM OF EVALUATION

The whole group of universities agreed on the challenges of establishing an evaluation system, such as: “Lack of credibility in the system due to political influences, (CONUEP, government, etc.), lack of self-discipline to follow preestablished requirements, lack of a system of evaluation, and delays due to bureaucratic procedures.” The Catholic University of Guayaquil added “The need of professionals who can lead the evaluation system, and the resistance to changes.” Truthful leadership is a fundamental prerequisite in the evaluation process; otherwise, it could fail because evaluation means a risk of confronting reality. In fact, Ecuador needs more leaders with clear vision and the ability to inspire the whole university community to promote changes. The Polytechnic Schools also mentioned “lack of confidence in the evaluation processes due to political influences.” Certainly in a small country such as Ecuador, credibility of the system is probably the biggest challenge. Add to this the potential of politicizing the evaluation and accreditation process. Creating a university system of evaluation and accreditation that is truly independent of CONUEP and institutional influence is a key to this. The first issue, lack of an evaluation system, did not seem to me to be an insurmountable problem because people seemed interested in and willing to engage in self-study. The challenge—and resistance—will come when SEAU or another governmental organization decides how to use results of institutional self-studies. If they are not used for decision making, whether it is for funding or otherwise, there is little incentive for self-study. On the other hand, if institutions see negative
consequences from evaluation, will they cooperate? These are just some of the important challenges.

4.5 USE OF QUALITY STANDARDS

When asked this question, some university authorities were not familiar with what quality standards meant; therefore, I provided information taken from the U.S. literature. Then, almost every university authority agreed to the use of quality standards as guides for internal use or audit first; then, some of them suggested them as external guides. The Catholic University of Quito and the Catholic University of Guayaquil said, “Standards are used as feedback to make institutional planning.” UTE stressed, “The use of standards must be mandatory to see whether the institution is accomplishing its goals.”

4.6 CRITERIA/STANDARDS

In the interviews, informants frequently confused criteria/standards with indicators of quality and with descriptions about what made their university a good university. Part of the confusion may have stemmed from the way in which the question was phrased, but more likely the confusion arose because there is no tradition for assessing university quality in the country. Responses to this and subsequent questions revealed some problems doing qualitative research on this potentially political
topic in Ecuador. Respondents frequently said what they wanted to say despite what the question was.

In the comprehensive group, “quality of faculty” was listed as an important criterion by which quality should be determined. The Pontifical Catholic University added “quality of students” to this. In fact, this university listed other indicators such as services and facilities and the organization of the curriculum to respond to real needs of the country. The Central University tended to favor ratios: professors to students, professors to employees and labs to students. To assess quality of faculty, this university would employ such indicators as number of publications, research studies, and subscriptions to international publications. The Pontifical Catholic University also favored use of ratios to assess quality: ratios of the number of students who enter to the number who graduate. As a private university with more selective entrance requirements and relatively high tuition (compared with virtually no tuition for the Central University), they would favor this measure of quality, while the public universities would not. The Catholic University also identified the number of “convenios,” agreements with the productive sector, as one indicator of quality. The Catholic University of Guayaquil argued that outcomes as determined by the quality of graduates are the best way to decide the quality of universities. Besides quality of graduates, the number and preparation of faculty, the percent of full and part-time faculty, adequacy of facilities, and the ability to set priorities and expenses according to the mission were given as important criteria for assessing institutional quality. This institution also completed the SEAU survey and listed the following: relevance (agreement between objectives and results), impact (degree of influence), efficiency (degree of achievement of objectives),
efficacy (satisfaction with results), rationalization of resources, flexibility, response to demands of society and ability to be critical.

The National Polytechnic University listed indicators of performance such as performance of faculty, students and employees, and production of research related to national needs; and evidence of research productivity, such as number of publications, theses, and graduate students. This university also included efficiency and effectiveness in relation to time of graduation for students.

When prompted by the SEAU survey, the Polytechnic University of the Coast listed the following criteria: relevance to needs of society, efficiency, and environment (leadership, influence and relations with national and international organizations). There might be little agreement between these two institutions; however, caution must be used in drawing this conclusion because information came from two different data-gathering mechanisms.

The Ecuadorian Technological University was very specific in its listing of criteria. The list provided reads like a list of characteristics of a quality university: optimization of resources, remedial courses, entrance exams, good professional education and good services, scholarships for 10 percent of the student body, high minimum qualifications for faculty, a good library, development of all personnel, international agreements, and well-equipped laboratories. The second piece of information from this university added raising the percentage of students who enter to that which graduates to 70 percent. When specifically prompted in the SEAU survey, the Technical University of Ambato listed relevance (ability to accurately predict the number of graduates per year per major), impact (ability
to predict the number of students in the short, middle and long range), efficiency (determination of labor force needs), and efficacy, which was defined as validity and trustworthiness of the curriculum.

In the category of "new universities," San Francisco was even more specific about standards: a 90 percent graduation rate was listed as the first standard for measuring quality. Beyond this, they listed well-prepared, full-time faculty, provision of financial aid, study abroad agreements, faculty evaluation, and opportunities for student internships. It should be added that San Francisco has the highest tuition in Ecuador and thus, financial aid is essential. The other private university in this category, the University of the Americas, also listed very specific standards, such as research comprising 10 percent of faculty time, one computer per student, number of graduates equal to 10 percent (5 percent at the graduate level), and a majority of full-time professors.

In summary, most institutions based their criteria on their own university. Some also applied Millard's notion of fixed standards, such as 80 percent of students will graduate. Usually, although indicators were actually listed, and not criteria or standards by which performance should be judged, there was an implicit evaluative component assumed—that one understood what "quality of faculty," for example, meant. Although no one specified what quality of faculty meant, it was assumed either that one would know whether one saw it or that a standard could be developed. The newer, private universities were more likely to specify set standards as criteria, such as the number of graduates equal 10 percent.

There were actually few differences in criteria among institution types, even among those
which expressed different missions. Interestingly, the respondents were split on whether the same criteria should be applied to all universities or not. Those that said yes often added that institutional mission must be taken into account. This is interesting because few real differences emerged between institutional types on criteria. One university that argued in favor of applying the same criteria to all say so because the resulting competition would lead to overall improvement.

Table #12 summarizes the findings of this research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE #12</th>
<th>INSTITUTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GROUP 1</td>
<td>GROUP 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehensive Public Universities:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Polytechnic Schools</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad Central</td>
<td>Escuela Politécnica Nacional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Escuela Politécnica del Litoral (ESPOL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private Universities:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad Católica (PUCE)</td>
<td>Universidad Tecnológica Equinoccial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FINDINGS

Mission

Groups 1, 2, 3, & 4
teaching, research, and service

Groups 3 & 4
teaching, research, service, technological/technical education and extension

Criteria / Standards

Groups 1, 2, 3, & 4
quality of faculty, quality of students, quality of graduates

Groups 1, 2, 3, & 4
quality of services, quality and number of research

Group 4
all the above plus 80% of graduate rate, quality of full-time faculty, research time = 10% of faculty time, and 5% at graduate level.

Indicators of Quality

Groups 1, 2, 3, & 4
quality of faculty and quality of graduates

Should the same criteria be applied by other universities?

Groups 1
No, only admission tests.

Groups 2, 3, & 4
Yes, but there should be a differentiation of missions.

Group 4
added universities have to be of international recognition

Preferred type of evaluation system

Groups 1, 2, 3, & 4
self-evaluation peer review and external evaluation
Do you agree with the idea of setting up a system of evaluation and accreditation?

Yes

Yes, but according to the institutional mission and criteria

Yes, self-evaluation only

Challenges when setting up a system of evaluation and accreditation

Lack of a tradition of evaluation

Change resistance

Lack of credibility in the National Counsel
CONCLUSIONS

Although the Ecuadorian University Law states that all universities must accomplish the same mission (teaching, research, and service), there were clear differences in mission among universities.

This research has made it possible to identify the Ecuadorian university administrators' perception about effective evaluation systems; therefore, participants agreed with self-evaluation supported by external evaluation or peer review. "In a culture in which all tradition of evaluation is absent, universities have a high degree of autonomy, and the state seems relatively uninterested, this approach (self-evaluation) seems reasonable."64

Responses reflected confusion about the differences among criteria, standards, and indicators; nonetheless, all participants agreed on the condition for grounding sets of indicators according to every institution’s mission.

Although all university authorities seem to be willing to set up a system of evaluation, and accreditation, they agreed on the fact that the challenges in setting up it are lack of a tradition of evaluation, resistance to change, and lack of credibility in the political influence of CONUEP.

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64 Twombly & Uribe (1996, pp. 27-28)
CHAPTER FIVE

ECUADORIAN HIGHER EDUCATION
AND ITS SELF-EVALUATION MODEL:
A CRITIQUE

My aim in this section is to make a historical review of the major problems that have been affecting the development of Ecuadorian higher education regarding quality and accountability, followed by a critique that addresses the benefits and drawbacks of the self-evaluation model proposed by SEAU, and finally, I furnish some potential solutions related to self-evaluation that take into account the Ecuadorian higher education culture and values.

5.1 HISTORICAL PROBLEMS

The University Autonomy Law that Ecuador has since 1925 is the root of most of the problems affecting quality of education in Ecuador. Why? Because Ecuadorian universities have never revised those autonomy principles. Thus, autonomy has limited and even divorced universities from each other, from the productive sectors, from the state, and from international universities; therefore, a reinstatement and evolution of the autonomy principles
must be directed. The University Autonomy Law should be the means for improving university quality and accountability. Albornoz (1991) has pointed out, "The concepts of autonomy and accountability are closely linked." Later, Albornoz comments that economic and social development, academic freedom and the specific political role of the university are complements of autonomy and accountability. To reach those objectives, autonomy must stop being the umbrella under which political intrigues, authoritarian influences, personal or group interests, and so on have distorted the real university mission. In short, with well-conceived autonomy, any form of corruption will be ruled out.

Ecuadorian universities should be the place for innovation and modernization. Albornoz (1977, p. 355) stresses, "The university in the region (Latin America) follows a colonial model and is mainly a teaching institution. As such, it has not become an instrument to nourish the process of modernization; rather, it is still an institution that reproduces and perpetuates a given social order... it should be kept in mind that the higher education system we have now (in Latin America) is the result of a historical process that has lasted almost five centuries." In addition, university co-government, a principle that promotes autonomy, has highly politicized the system. Therefore, essential changes in the university governmental system must be addressed. These are changes that reinforce the decision-making process at the top level, that invigorate academic and research programs, that expand a system of evaluation, and that promote the creation of external regulations and controls.
Autonomy is an essential characteristic of a university; moreover, academic freedom is the specific result of autonomy. However, autonomy “must equally assume a profound moral responsibility and apply the notion of liberty within the limits that may be imposed by this moral responsibility. Autonomy, in other words, is not an abstract right, but a concrete rationale.” 65 In fact, autonomy, as it has been conceived in Ecuador, has politicized the higher education system.

Ecuador does not have the necessary economic conditions to continue providing free tuition in public higher education institutions; therefore, state funds should be given only if universities have proved quality through self-evaluation and accreditation processes.

Improving higher education quality is not only a matter concerning higher education institutions. It also must be a concern of the whole educational system; therefore, high schools and elementary schools should participate in an educational quality improvement plan. At this point, what calls my attention most is the fact that the Ecuadorian government and the Congress do not show interest in educational matters. “The legislature seems to have little interest in controlling higher education or making it accountable or even in a new law

65 Albornoz, O. (1991, P. 205)
governing higher education."66

During the last fifty years many new higher education institutions have been established in Ecuador, but not all of them have CONUEP recognition; therefore, no one knows how well those new universities are doing. To whom are those universities accountable? Does Ecuador, a country with no more than eleven million inhabitants and with a student body of "203,497 attending public and private higher education institutions that receive state funds"67 need so many universities to succeed? Is it becoming a very easy business to establish higher education institutions in Ecuador? Shouldn’t Ecuadorian higher education institutions first seek quality? These are only part of a whole group of questions that come to my mind and are still unanswered. As former President Hurtado (1992) said, "Ecuador shall go where its university goes," so where is Ecuador going?

Almost every higher education institution has written in its mission that a university is a place where students are educated to contribute toward the solution of national problems, but how are students going to contribute to solutions if they are not educated with the use of research or evaluation, or as critical thinkers or problem solvers? "Our idiosyncracy and traditions are guilty of having made universities empty, que la universidad sea vacía. During these few

67 El Comercio, February 3, 1996
centuries, we have been characterized as people unable to make a decision. Overall, we are a country of high-flying intellectuals flying by the empty or our existence."^68

Research in Ecuador is conceived as something abstract because we learn how to do research by listening to our teachers about the different ways to conduct research, but hardly ever by experimenting, researching, and discovering new things by ourselves. "Research implies progress, something out of the surrealistic world. Research implies improvement of the future... Research provokes change... Research requires critical thinkers. A critical mind must also be the mind of the society. Otherwise, researchers will not find the necessary support to reach their goals."^69 Thus, it is time to inspire others toward the development of a culture of research. It is our responsibility to educate students to move from traditional methods to innovative styles by incorporating the integral and harmonic growth of cognitive, psychosocial, and moral development of our students. "We were educated; let us educate others with new technologies."^70

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^70 Trueba, A. (1993)
5.2 THE ECUADORIAN SELF-EVALUATION MODEL: A critique that addresses benefits and drawbacks of the SEAU model and a recommendation for its improvement

Through evaluation and self-evaluation, Ecuadorian universities can see how well they are doing. They become accountable because society has to be informed about the quality of the programs offered by the Ecuadorian higher education institutions. Albornoz (1991) has stated, “Accountability thus becomes a concept involving evaluation and measurement of performance and monitoring of all the functions of a university. In the strictly technical sense, accountability means rendering accounts not only in the book-keeping sense of the term, but also with reference to the relationship between the objectives and the means, in conformity with the needs of society and of the university itself.”

By starting a national system of evaluation and accreditation, SEAU is facing one of the challenges that affects the Ecuadorian University system. Rather more significant is the fact that the U.S. Embassy and the Fulbright Commission are providing advice to Ecuador in the matter of higher education assessment. Dr. Twombly (1996) said, “SEAU and the Ecuadorian university have made great progress developing the system under the leadership of Engineer Guillermo Falconi.” Dr. George Woodyard, another American scholar and visitor to Ecuador, (1996) said, “My impression was that the people that we were working with were picking up very rapidly on this issue and were genuinely interested in figuring out ways
that can be implemented within the university structures.” To illustrate this, the Universidad Tecnológica Equinoccial has already organized its department of institutional self-evaluation. See appendix 1.

SEAU is proposing an accreditation system patterned after what the U.S. North Central Association (1994-96) calls “The Criteria for Accreditation and Indicators”; however, if SEAU’s model does not introduce sanction as one purpose of evaluation, the Ecuadorian university will not develop a sense of competence and accountability. Moreover, because there is no sanction, there is no penalty for not participating in the system. Shouldn’t fund allocation be a reward to institutional quality resulting from internal and external evaluation? In one interview, Dr. Twombly raised the question: “What are the incentives for engaging in self-study? If everybody does self-study and everybody gets approved, what are the advantages or improvements?” On the other hand, Dr. Woodyard said, “If the system gets imposed and some universities do not get accredited, there will be almost a death for some of them because students will be looking for quality.” Surely, there will be different consequences as a result of accreditation, but Ecuadorian universities have to address these challenges with absolute responsibility, no matter their painful consequences. If some universities do not pass the accreditation process and do not make improvement to equal preestablished standards and criteria indicators, they should close down. Moreover, state funds cannot simply continue being provided to those institutions that do not accomplish
minimum standards of quality.

Given the results of this study, self-evaluation, external evaluation and peer review have been the evaluation methods mentioned by all university authorities. However, SEAU says that there will not be differentiation of universities by mission. Therefore, how can a peer review be conducted if Ecuadorian universities do not emphasize differences in mission? When asked about the mission, participants' answers show a clear distinction in missions. Thus, their answers gave me enough evidence to divide universities by categories. The idea for dividing universities by categories was not to compare all of them but to find their uniqueness and their peer institutions that will ease the peer review process. For instance, the mission of the Catholic University of Quito (one comprehensive institution) cannot be compared with the mission of the Ecuadorian Technological Universities (a technological/vocational institution); both are good, but different.

SEAU in its criteria for accreditation and standards is paying little attention to institutional integrity; e.g., the first criterion that relates to "mission" includes only two points related to institutional integrity, while the North Central Association has earmarked the criterion for that purpose with exhaustive information. Corruption is one of the most serious problems facing the Ecuadorian universities. More attention should be paid to this issue. Likewise, continuous evaluation and feedback should play a more relevant role within the Ecuadorian
Evaluation and Accreditation System. To illustrate this, criteria three and four presented by the North Central Association relate to assessment processes and feedback. NCA states in criterion three, "The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes," and criterion four stresses, "The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness."

Among the eight criteria for accreditation, SEAU mentions "research." To develop and improve a tradition of research, faculty members, students, and administrators should be more actively involved in research issues. For instance, academic programs should include research activities besides the regular courses of study; therefore, professors and students will be expected to plan and conduct periodical research, develop new theories, present conferences, and get their studies published. Allocations of research funds, honor awards, and publications will be some good motivational methods for developing a tradition of research. Also, administrators could become more research-oriented; e.g., during regular meetings, presentations could be based on research results. Therefore, the research department must provide permanent and accurate information.

Motivation is an important factor for quality improvement; therefore, rewards for teaching should be considered in developing more effective institutional policies. Cross (1992) writes that rewards for teaching can grouped in three categories: "first, external rewards (salary,
promotion, and tenure), second, satisfaction, and the third type of reward is intrinsic (intellectual stimulation).” Intrinsic reward seems to be more important for teachers; Cross (1992) points out, “When faculty are asked about the major sources of work satisfaction, intrinsic satisfactions are almost always reported to be much more important than extrinsic rewards.” Because faculty give energy and time to teaching, the intellectual stimulation is seeing students learn and develop their critical thinking. To illustrate this, the intrinsic rewards involve research of the teaching/learning process; therefore, faculty members should be directly involved in the assessment of the learning of the students in their classrooms. The classroom research should be conducted frequently as a complement to the pre-planned institutional self-evaluation. The purpose of the teaching/learning research is to assess in order to improve and to be more accountable.

The Ecuadorian higher education system needs to develop and improve communication among higher education institutions. Some ways could be by developing a transferable credit system and basic courses of studies with the same curricula for all, by promoting inter-institutional visits, internships, and so on for faculty members, administrators, and students; and developing interlibrary services. Transfer of knowledge and technology are the main advantages of developing communication among universities.

To assess and improve institutional quality, the whole university system should incorporate
standardized admission tests because quality of students is a good predictor of quality of outcomes and therefore institutional success. Nonetheless, the elementary and secondary education system must improve their quality first, provide an equal educational level, and connect their educational goals with Ecuadorian universities. Only then will education in Ecuador be of high quality and equitable for all. Therefore, the Central Government, the Ministry of Education, Ecuadorian Universities, the school system, and the productive sector ought to engage in an agreement process for improving the quality of education as a shared responsibility.

To assess student development, Ecuadorian universities should promote more student involvement in the academic environment rather than in the institutional government because student participation in co-government has politicized universities.

Finally, it is time to do a circumspect analysis of the historical process of the Ecuadorian universities that has been characterized by training professionals rather than by developing critical thinkers, problem solvers, and leaders with innovative ideas able to create new ideas instead of only doing things in the traditional way. Therefore, attempts to improve the quality of Ecuadorian universities should take these issues into account.
Glossary
GLOSSARY

Accreditation be approved officially. “Accreditation shows both to other institutions and to the public that an institution meets the Commission’s General Institutional Requirement and Criteria for Accreditation.” 71

Accountable (adjective) responsible, answerable for acts or decisions, able to fulfill obligations, having important duties.

Candidacy (noun) one who seeks an office or membership. “Candidacy shows that an institution fulfills the expectations of the Commission’s Candidacy Program, which include meeting the General Institutional Requirements (GIRs).” 72

Criteria (noun) standards, methods of determining what a thing should be. Synonyms: standards, measures, benchmarks, gauges, touchstones, yardsticks. According to the NCA, the criteria for accreditation are the frames and structure built on the foundation of “general institutional requirements” (GIRs). Each criterion is related to one or more GIRs, but each goes beyond the basic expectations of the GIRs.

Consistent. The NCA defines is as directly related to the institution’s mission. For example, part of an institution’s mission might be “to meet the educational needs of the community”; a related purpose might be “to assure that working adults have access to effective vocational and

NCA Handbook of Accreditation (1994-96, p. 7)
NCA Handbook of Accreditation (1994-96, p. 7)
technical programs."

- **EEO/AA (Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action)** "Two most critical governmental acts enforcing the value of social equity, through the achievement of proportional representation, are Executive Order 11246 and the 1972 Equal Employment Opportunity Act (which really concerns AA rather than EEO). *Equal employment opportunity* is designed to protect individual rights and promote employment opportunities and fairness in employment processes and decisions. Affirmative Action is oriented more toward the value of social equity. It is more results-oriented and is designed to promote a more diverse and demographically representative workforce. It is mistakenly associated with quotas." 73

- **Evaluation (noun)** the act of appraising or valuing the nature, character, quality, status, or worth of something (institutions, programs, etc.)

- **Indices (index)** a number that serves as a measure or indicator of something. *Synonyms*: indications, evidences, marks, signs.

- **Self-study (noun)** examination of the process of learning about something, branches of learning, careful examination by oneself or itself.

- **Peer review (noun)** formal inspection, general survey, critical evaluation, second or repeated study or examination with one's equal.

- **Purpose** "refers to the multiple and specific ends the institution intends to achieve to carry out its more general 'mission.' Most institutions have broad, general statements of mission that are

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Klingner & Nalbandian (1993, p. 121-122)
relatively brief. Some statements of purposes—of long and short-range institutional goals—are more specific and detailed. Usually qualitative or quantitative measures can speak to their accomplishment.”  

- **Quality (noun)** peculiar and essential character, nature, or feature; excellence or distinction; something inherent and distinctive.

- **Performance indicators (noun)** efficiency, effectiveness, and efficacy stated and carried out publicly.

- **Standards (noun)** model, rule, or guide. Relevant. “Generally are expressions of a consensus among the top professionals in the field.”

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NCA Handbook of Accreditation (1994-96, p. 36)

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Appendix I
ANEX # 1

PROYECTO DE CREACION DE LA
UNIDAD DE EVALUACION Y AREDITACION INSTITUCIONAL DE
LA UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLOGICA EQUINOCCIAL

ANTECEDENTES:

La tendencia general en la educación superior actual es la de poseer los instrumentos más adecuados que permitan lograr un sostenido mejoramiento de las instituciones de educación superior. Entre esos instrumentos está el de Evaluación Institucional que consiste en una serie de procesos que pretenden, a más de diagnosticar la situación de una institución, valorarla de acuerdo a los objetivos específicos de cada universidad.

Este instrumento ya lo consideró el Consejo Nacional de Universidades y Escuelas Politécnicas, en su deseo de impulsar el desarrollo del sistema educativo ecuatoriano, a través de la creación del Sistema Nacional de Evaluación y Acreditación Universitaria, con el propósito de que la Universidad Ecuatoriana inicie procesos de cambio, orientados a su mejoramiento.

Este planteamiento se hizo evidente del estudio realizado por el CONUEP, a través de un
Convenio con el Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, en el proyecto “Misión de la Universidad Ecuatoriana para el Siglo XXI”, respecto de la carencia de un sistema universitario de rendición de cuentas, y cuya implementación sería un mecanismo de decisiva importancia para el mejoramiento integral de las instituciones universitarias del país.

Las razones expuestas, explican el por qué la introducción de la evaluación y acreditación universitaria es, hoy por hoy, un propósito prioritario del ámbito universitario nacional y específicamente para la Universidad Tecnológica Equinoccial que consciente de su responsabilidad frente al desafío de su continuo perfeccionamiento, considera oportuno, conformar una unidad dentro de la institución, a fin de que emprenda un autoestudio institucional que apunte a generar mecanismos que conduzcan al mejoramiento y fortalecimiento del quehacer universitario, como factor esencial en la construcción de los valores requeridos por nuestra sociedad hoy, y como eje de la transformación productiva del país con equidad.

MISIÓN

La Unidad de Evaluación se propone llevar adelante un proceso de evaluación y de reflexión sistemática que permita comprender y explicar las distintas situaciones del hacer universitario y desde ese conocimiento, realizar propuestas que deriven de aquellas situaciones, y orienten a corregir errores, fortalecer aciertos, y retroalimentar procesos institucionales hacia el cambio y mejoramiento de la Universidad.
OBJETIVOS:

General

Desarrollar procesos de evaluación institucional de los cuales se deriven políticas, planes, programas y acciones de mejoramiento de la calidad universitaria.

Especificos:

- Promover una cultura de evaluación, enmarcada en una actitud de superación y de mejoramiento institucional.

- Desarrollar un sistema de información pertinente, clara y directa de la realidad institucional que sirva de base a sus procesos de autoevaluación.

- Proponer acciones que se deriven de la evaluación y que permitan mejorar la labor institucional.

- Facilitar la identificación de problemas y soluciones para su análisis y aplicación a través de la planeación.
AREAS DE ANALISIS

Las áreas de análisis para el proceso de evaluación se han establecido sobre la base de las funciones básicas que ejerce la Universidad.

- **Misión y plan institucional**: Orientación y compromiso académico de la institución, proyección en el medio social, líneas directrices de su organización.

- **Docencia**: Proceso de la formación profesional y sistematización del conocimiento en función del desarrollo social.

- **Alumnos**: Características del alumno, integración y participación en las políticas y acciones institucionales.

- **Investigación**: Generación, progreso y difusión del conocimiento para el desarrollo de las ciencias, las tecnologías, las artes y el mejoramiento de la calidad de la vida.

Vinculación con el medio social: Interacción entre la universidad y su medio social para mutuo beneficio en el desarrollo del conocimiento, la formación de recursos humanos, la solución de problemas específicos en función del desarrollo.
• **Administración y Gestión:** Concepción, orientación y realización de las actividades vinculadas a la organización institucional, y a los actores y medios que intervienen en el logro de los propósitos de la Universidad.

• **Presupuesto y Financiamiento:** Recursos económicos con los cuales cuenta la institución; composición y obtención del financiamiento; y, manejo presupuestario.

• **Infraestructura Física:** Recursos materiales que sirvan de apoyo a la acción académica para un óptimo desempeño.

• **Bienestar universitario:** Acciones y mecanismos de apoyo para docentes, estudiantes y personal administrativo de la institución.

**Apreciación social de la institución:** Imagen de la institución en el medio; apreciación sobre egresados.
DE SU ESTRUCTURA

El proceso de Evaluación y Acreditación institucional se llevará a través del siguiente mecanismo:

COMISIÓN INSTITUCIONAL DE AUTOEVALUACIÓN

Es la instancia administrativa encargada de promover, organizar y dirigir el proceso de evaluación interna de la Institución y de presentar a las autoridades correspondientes los resultados obtenidos en el proceso.

La comisión estará conformada por el rector o su delegado, quien la presidirá, los directores académico y de planificación, el director del Centro de Excelencia, el presidente de la Asociación de Docentes. Actuará como secretario del comité el responsable de la Unidad de Evaluación; y para el cumplimiento de sus objetivos, la comisión contará con una unidad de evaluación, la misma que estará adscrita a la Dirección de Planificación.

DENOMINACIÓN DE LA UNIDAD: Se propone que esta unidad se la denomine Centro de Evaluación y Acreditación.
UBICACIÓN JERARQUICA: La principal actividad a desarrollar el Centro de Evaluación y Acreditación lo constituye el proceso de autoevaluación institucional en una primera etapa y luego la evaluación externa y de acreditación.

Para el logro de sus metas se propone que orgánicamente esta unidad funcione adscrita al Rectorado, considerando la autonomía con la cual debe operar, desde el punto de vista de la accesibilidad a la información de las distintas instancias y unidades de la Universidad.

El Centro de Evaluación, para su funcionamiento, dispondrá de una estructura para la atención específica de los siguientes asuntos:

Area Técnica. Que tenga relación con la gestión del proceso evaluativo y sus instrumentos técnicos.

Nivel de Asesoría. Se considera según el caso, la designación de un asesor para trabajos específicos que tengan relación con los procesos de evaluación y acreditación.

FUNCIONES DE LA UNIDAD DE EVALUACION

Planificar y diseñar el proceso de evaluación de la Institución y de cada una de las unidades académicas y someter a aprobación de la Comisión.
- Determinar las acciones de diagnóstico, descripción y análisis que deberán llevarse a cabo para el proceso de autoevaluación en cada una de las unidades académicas y en la Institución.

- Promover y motivar en cada unidad académica y en toda la Institución la activa participación de sus miembros en este proceso.

- Preparar los criterios estándares para la autoevaluación y proponerlos para la aprobación de la comisión.

- Recopilar en las diversas instancias de la institución la información necesaria para el proceso, procesarla y mantenerla actualizada.

- Organizar y analizar la información obtenida y elaborar los informes respectivos.

- Someter a discusión y comentarios de la unidades respectivas el borrador del informe, previo a formular la redacción final.

- Sugerir a las instancias pertinentes un plan de acción que se derive de los resultados obtenidos en el proceso.

- Entregar a las unidades que requieran la información que necesiten para elaborar sus planes de mejoramiento académico e institucional.

Proponer a la Comisión de Autoevaluación los candidatos a pares para realizar la evaluación externa de la Institución o de las unidades académicas y preparar el material que necesiten para su trabajo.

Coordinar las acciones y colaborar con el organismo de acreditación universitaria nacional con el fin de obtener la respectiva acreditación de la Universidad.