



**UWI**



## **Benchmarking and Collaboration: Some Insights from the UWI Quality Assurance Experience**

Anna Kasafi Perkins  
University of the West Indies, Mona

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### **Introduction**

- CONAHEC has chosen an important theme - collaboration
- Collaboration essential to the nature & survival of the university
- Working together improves the lives and potential of human beings
- Collaboration increasingly important for empowerment in this era of transformation (reduced borders, increased access, financial constraints, possibility)

## Aims of presentation

- Bring together 3 important areas – c, b & q
- Explore the experience of collaboration & benchmarking in quality assurance at UWI.
- Highlight barriers to collaboration & benchmarking btwn UWI & LAm
- Chart a way forward for UWI & partners

## Collaborations at UWI

- MOUs –
  - Affiliated institutions, franchises – theological colleges, community colleges (B.Ed, etc)
  - international collegial institutions (Co-operative Institutions: A Policy Statement; Study Abroad) – China, USA, Canada, Europe – main partners
  - Limited LAm - Cuba, Costa Rica, Mexico, Venezuela (LACC)
  - Visits – student services, international progs
- Exchange of expertise & info – conferences, joint research, e.g., climate change, examiners, QA
- Memberships – UNICA (presidency, etc)
- Myriad informal collaborations – local, (Utech – JHTD; UTT), international
- Two-way Benchmarking at play in all these

## Benchmarking in UWI

- Standard of excellence or achievement against which performance is measured; best practices identified
- Live issue – at various levels
  - Strategic Plan 2007-12 – “develop more programmes of research of international repute, and benchmark performance against international norms”
  - QAU training manual features benchmarking as one of the tools of QA – “Benchmark is a standard against which present performance can be measured. The best of the competition is identified with a view to understanding the way they produce quality”
  - Internal benchmarks – assessment of teaching – 3/5
  - QAU reports – “no one to benchmark against which to measure their own performance...” “excellent benchmarking strategy..”

## Benchmark or Not?

- Temptation to say we are unique –regional, 4 campuses, 16 national governments
- difficult to find partner to benchmark against/with
- University of S. Pacific (similar admin structure, joint ownership, distance); former UCs of London (Ibadan, etc)
- Ivy League; mature universities in developing countries/region
- UWI as the benchmark institution in the Anglophone region (esp. research(tropical medicine, reggae studies), quality assurance – Min of Ed Suriname, U of G; accreditation of our professional programmes)
- We do benchmark against all these
- No one institution necessary
- Need to continue to formalize & systematize practice

## Current Benchmarking Approaches

- Either operational or strategic
- Strategic – high-level look & examines what is done, including university's business strategy, structure & operational costs; key business strategy to keep on the competitive edge
- Operational benchmarking – shifts focus to how what is done is done; functional; tool
- Operational level main focus
- Need to better articulate strategic approach

## QA at UWI

- Since 2001, formal process of internal QA – reviews & evaluations; QAU; policy; culture
- QA model of fitness for purpose – measures the extent to which stated purpose is achieved; academics; formative
- Benchmarking is compatible (monitor performance and enhancement)
- Compatible with collegial contact, exchange of ideas, improvement of systems

- Internal: similar processes, different part, better & best practices – throughput rates, curricula review, assessment scores, intra- & intercampus, less difficult, maintain regionality
- External: peer, specific measurable terms, outcomes, throughput, retention, graduate employability, research performance, costs;
- National & international
- Best done in a spirit of partnership & collaboration

## QA Reviews & Benchmarking

- External academics as key members
- Externals bring practices & experiences, collegial sharing
- Geog – subject benchmarks from UK
- Biotech Centre – faculty load against U of Puerto Rico
- Health Centre systems - FSU
- Faculty Publication & Research Funding
- Local Universities - Utech, UTT, USC
- Two-way benchmarking

## Benchmarking with Latin America

- QA process does not directly engage LA universities (indirectly through INQAAHE membership)
- Barriers – language, limited knowledge of LAm university system & issues, “natural” orientation to US/UK, different role of QA
- Key to rethink – affinities (history, issues), links (LACC), benefits
- Address barriers – creativity, will, champion

## Final Thoughts

- Benchmarking a beneficial process (identify & close gaps, fresh approaches, innovation, new thinking, world-class, deepen collaboration)
- Commitment to collaboration & transformation necessary
- Tie benchmarking, QA and Strategic Planning together more carefully
- Build networks with Latin America for benchmarking in QA
- Systematic study of benchmarking in QA



**Thank You**