Quality models in online and open education around the globe: State of the art and recommendations

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Appendix 1

Short Biography of the Authors

Ebba Ossiannilsson, PhD, Lund University Sweden, earned her PhD from Oulu University, Finland, with a dissertation on international benchmarking, and quality enhancement on e-learning in Higher Education. Her research interests are in e-learning, innovative learning spaces as OERs, MOOC special with quality related issues. Ossiannilsson is a senior e-learning consultant and e-learning expert. She is a board member in several affiliations and serves on editorial boards for Journals in the area. She serves as the evaluator for the SEQUENT project on quality in e-learning. She serves as a quality reviewer in e-learning national and international. She serves as a reviewer in E-xcellence and Openup Ed, and also for LANETO, the Epprobate, and for UNIQUe and ECB Check (EFQUEL). In addition she was in the Board for EFQUEL. Her publication list is comprehensive (ca 150). In 2014, she was awarded the EDEN Fellow. Ossiannilsson is a Project Manager at Lund University, Sweden.

Keith Williams, PhD, has had a long career at the UK Open University in variety of roles, including Dean of Technology Faculty and Director of Academic Development in the University’s International division. On leave of absence, he served for three years as Director of Distance Learning with the British Council. He has been a core member of the EADTU’s E-xcellence project gaining experience of e-learning developments across Europe. His interests in e-learning span from experimental work with interactive video disc in the early 80s to recent activities in the development of online CPD modules for various professions.

Anthony F. Camilleri, is a senior consultant with the Knowledge Innovation Centre, working in areas linked to Quality Assurance, Open Learning and Education Management. He is also Secretary of the International Standard Organisation PC288/WG1, which is drafting a standard for Quality Management of Educational Organisations. He was previously engaged with EFQUEL in the position of Quality Services Manager. There he managed a set of quality certifications for e-learning including UNIQUe for HEIs and ECBCheck for programmes. In his research, he has been investigating the linkages between higher education, innovation, quality and open education for the last three years, and in particular has been involved with the Open Education Quality Initiative – OPAL and the OERTest Initiative, where he proposed a learning passport model for recognition of credit gained through open learning. Mr. Camilleri has also been active as a QA Reviewer and trainer of QA reviewers around Europe, for a number of different QA institutions in Higher Education.

Mark Brown, PhD, is the Director of the National Institute for Digital Learning (NIDL) located at Dublin City University, Ireland. Mark was previously Director of both the National Centre for Teaching and Learning and Distance Education and Learning Futures Alliances (DELFA) at Massey University in New Zealand. He has played key leadership roles in the implementation of several major university-wide online learning and teaching initiatives, and has been President of the New Zealand Association for Open, Flexible and Distance Education (DEANZ), Treasurer and Executive Committee member of the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (Ascilite), and currently Chairs the Teaching and Learning Steering Committee for the European Consortium of Innovative Universities.
(ECIU). Mark is a recipient of a National Award for Sustained Excellence in Tertiary Teaching and remains a member of the New Zealand Academy of Tertiary Teaching Excellence.
ICDE Strategic Plan 2013-2016

In the ICDE Strategic Plan for 2013-2016, one of the objectives have been identified as to encourage quality in open, distance, flexible and online education including e-learning (ICDE 2013 p 5). These strategic objectives are explicit articulated as:

**Expected outcomes:**
1. To achieve a global understanding of quality within open, distance, flexible, and online education, including e-learning.
2. To articulate a set of standards that defines quality in open, distance, flexible, and online education, including e-learning.

**Strategies:**
- Foster the quality of management and leadership in open, distance, flexible, and online education, including e-learning.
- Knowledge exchange and sharing of good practices to achieve excellence in open, distance, flexible, and online education, including e-learning.
- Address key stakeholders, e.g. accreditation agencies with criteria and benchmarks for quality, and institutions with methodologies and concepts for quality development.

**Specific objectives:**
2.1. To establish an overview of the global situation with regards to existing relevant standards and guidelines for open, distance, flexible, and online education, including e-learning by the beginning of 2013.
2.2. To establish quality reviews as a member service by end of 2013.
2.3. To launch a best practice database for quality assurance in open, distance, flexible, and online education, including e-learning before the end of 2014.
2.4. To obtain international recognition for best practices in open, distance, flexible, and online education, including e-learning by 2016.

During the ICDE SCOP (Standing Conferences of Presidents) conference in 2014, as decided by ICDE’s Higher Education leaders to endorse UNESCO’s post-2015 Global Education Agenda, which highlights goals to ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030. The preliminary findings of this research study and this were presented and discussed during this SCOP meeting and presented during the UNESCO Policy Forum. Overall it was held that:

Access to, and success in, open, online and flexible learning are key solutions to the pressing development challenges and needs of 21st century societies.

….To tackle inequality, unemployment, in particular among youth, and progress towards the development goals of nations, a new commitment is needed to opening up education, technology-enhanced learning.

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the use of open educational resources, online, flexible and blended learning, research and innovation in the design, development, deployment and delivery of education at all levels.

The Presidents at the SCOP Conference agreed to call on ICDE and UNESCO to continue their efforts to support and encourage governments to:

- Create favourable frameworks for opening up education – making education at all levels available to all through open, online, flexible, blended and distance education.
- Stimulate the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) – publicly-funded educational resources licensed to make materials needed for learners freely available to all.
- Enable learners’ mobility through the development of transnational qualification frameworks, which make the recognition and transfer of qualifications, course credits and learning within and between jurisdictions part of the fabric of an open, global education system.
- Encourage the adoption of quality standards, guidelines and benchmarks for open, online and distance learning to be mainstreamed into quality frameworks and protocols.
- Foster innovation in the form of new approaches to the assessment of learning outcomes, prior learning and work-based learning; new approaches to instruction, which both increase learner engagement and learning outcomes; and new ways of collaborating and connecting to learners and higher rates of student success.
- Invest in research focused on best practices in the design, development, deployment and delivery of open, online, distance and flexible education; the use of open educational resources; the mobility of learners; new business models for the operation of educational institutions; and new models of public assurance and accountability.

Several of those agreed statements call on quality in open and online Higher Education, at present time and for the years to come in the 21st century.
Appendix 3

Call for proposals - Quality Standards Study

ICDE invites bids to undertake a study providing overview, analysis and recommendations to ICDE’s future work on quality guidelines, benchmarks and standards.

**Objective:** to establish an overview of the global situation with regards to existing relevant standards and guidelines for open, distance, flexible, and online education, including e-learning and most importantly to write a report providing overview, analysis and recommendations to ICDE future work on quality guidelines, benchmarks and standards.

**Timeframe:**

Deadline for proposals: Monday, June 30

Candidate selected by July 4

Contract agreed, project description agreed by August 18, 2014

Draft report delivered for discussion by end October 2014

Final report delivered: December 12

The draft report is foreseen to be discussed during the ICDE Presidents’ Summit, the SCOP meeting, Bali, Indonesia November 19 – 21, 2014

**Background**

Standards, guidelines, guides and benchmarks – a snapshot

The lack of interest in ODE and e-Learning from national agencies has resulted in initiatives from other bodies. Regional ODE organisations (e.g. EADTU, EFQUEL, SLOAN-C and AAOU), private firms and e.g. the European Union have identified the problem and invested efforts in developing programmes for Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement.

Examples of programmes merely focusing on developing quality are Excellence (E-xellence), AAOU Quality Assurance Framework, UNIQUe and ECBCheck. ICDE developed in 2013 a service for Quality Reviews. Ref: http://icde.org/en/b7C_wRfY5w.ips.

Recently Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić and Sir John Daniel have edited two guides to quality in online learning, published by Academic Partnerships, the first focusing on Quality in Online Learning, the second on Quality in Post-traditional Online Higher Education.

In the first guide, the editors states that “individuals, institutions and professional bodies in many countries are addressing the challenge of how to make online learning a quality experience for students,” – a statement which goes well together with the purpose of the study to be launched by ICDE.
ICDE strategy

The ICDE Activity Plan 2014 states:

“High quality open and distance learning is a core priority for ICDE members, in particular in the current situation with rapid growth in open and distance learning, rapid development in methodologies and technologies and disruptive, innovative initiatives with the potential for significant impact on Higher Education. The global trend is an increasing focus on accountability, quality, and performance, and there is a demand for standards and accreditation. ICDE has an important role in facilitating knowledge exchange and sharing of good practices to achieve excellence in open and distance learning, and ICDE should facilitate members and regional associations building upon one another’s achievements. Key stakeholders, e.g. accreditation agencies, should be addressed with criteria and benchmarks for quality, and institutions should be addressed with methodologies and concepts for quality development.” (Ref: Strategic objective 2: To encourage quality in open, distance, flexible and online education, including e-learning).

With reference to the ICDE Activity Plan 2014, other ICDE activities that are related to this study are:

Strategic objective 2: To encourage quality in open, distance, flexible and online education, including e-learning

2.2. Offer quality reviews as a member service.

2.2.1. ICDE Quality Review service: The main focus for this service is to enhance quality related to student support.

2.4.1. BERTA: Bringing Educational Resources for Teachers in Africa. Developing courseware to train teacher trainers in quality open, distance and online provision.

2.4.2. Working group for Student Success. To establish for ICDE members a framework of understanding for establishing goals for student success, and the means to monitor and improve it.

The study and the use of its results are also foreseen to deliver input to:

Strategic objective 1: To promote the importance of open, distance, flexible and online education, including e-learning in educational policy.

1.2. ICDE together with key partners and stakeholders to facilitate policy discussions among a selection of representatives from governments, universities and private and public sector, on the topic of the current and future development of open, distance, flexible and online education, including e-learning by the end of 2015.

1.2.1 Policy process for declaration on open and distance learning. Develop, in partnership with UNESCO, a process for setting the global future direction for open, distance, flexible and online education, including UNESCO on quality online and distance learning.
ICDE has consultative partner status with UNESCO and shares UNESCO’s key value – the universal right to learning. UNESCO has underlined the need for quality assurance systems for online and distance learning in its note “UNESCO EDUCATION BEYOND 2015”, a position paper for consultations with Member States to develop global targets, indicators and a framework for action for education beyond 2015, dated 28 February 2014.

“The attainment of higher levels of education by the world population is key to ensuring a more equitable access to better living conditions, to increasingly specialised and better-paid jobs, and a more sustainable environment, as well as sustainable economic and social development. The use of technology for online and distance learning will become a main component in the provision of quality education. National policies and tertiary education systems should seek to put in place appropriate quality assurance systems.”

The study

The focus should be on open, distance, flexible, and online education, including e-learning in formal Higher Education, but also ‘post-traditional online Higher Education’ should be included in the study. ICDE requests proposals for the delivery of a written report to provide overview, analysis, and recommendations to ICDE for the organisation’s future work on quality guidelines, benchmarks and standards.

The report should, within the defined focus, cover the following areas:

1) An overview of standards, guidelines and benchmarks for quality open, distance, flexible, and online education, including e-learning. The most relevant should be described in a systematic and easy understandable way.

2) An analysis of and recommendation for which standards and guidelines that are most relevant for the ICDE membership, taking into account the main differences among the ICDE membership throughout the world, (e.g. geographical area, state versus private institutions, political support for open and distance education, and existing quality structures).

3) An analysis of opportunities for ICDE to align its work with that of key national and international stakeholders, included quality agencies.

4) Recommendations for ICDE’s future work on quality guidelines, benchmarks, standards and quality.

5) A presentation of a series of proposals, which ICDE may realistically pursue including an analysis of resources required:

   a. within the period of ICDE’s current Strategic Plan 2013 – 2016
   b. in preparation of ICDE’s next Strategic Plan 2017 and onwards

No requirements for travel are foreseen in the preparation of this report. The report should be delivered at the latest December 12.

Budget

The budget for the proposal is 20,000 USD.
Application process

Interested candidate organisations/ institutions or individuals should send their application to:

icde@icde.org by June, 30. The application should include:

1) A document of no more than four pages outlining a plan for how the above report requirements may be fulfilled.
2) A document of no more than two pages describing recent experience of providing similar services within the field of education.
3) Three references from activities of a similar nature including contact details for referees.
4) A declaration confirming available capacity to perform the service within the given timeframe.
5) A profile and brief CV of each individual to be involved in providing the service, and a description of the extent of their proposed role (one page per person).

Please note that no costs will be met by ICDE for the preparation of a proposal and that all documentation should be supplied in PDF format and submitted by email.

The ICDE Secretariat will support the provider during the period of preparation of the report, and at least two contact meetings (by Skype or similar) are foreseen before the report is delivered.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Monique Udnaes, Senior Adviser, ICDE, udnaes@icde.org.

Call for proposals – Quality Standards Study version 1.0
Appendix 4

Project Management and Governance

The European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU),\(^2\) is the contractor for this project. EADTU is Europe’s leading institutional association for open and distance Higher Education, and is at the heart of the modernisation agenda of European universities. Growing from its 11 founding members in 10 European nations, EADTU now has a membership of 15 institutions and 14 national associations across 25 nations. Its membership covers over 200 universities and around 3 million students. EADTU has an extended and respected global outreach and repertoire with international confidence. Some of the international quality standard models already outlined in the ICDE call are provided by EADTU, like E-Excellence and OpenupEd. EADTU define themselves through three critical features of European open and distance Higher Education

The project management approach adopted by the project team is broadly based on Prince 2\(^3\) methodology and terminology, and with the key roles in the project as below:

Senior Responsible Owner: \(\text{Gard Titlestad, (ICDE)}\)

Project Directors: \(\text{Dr. George Ubachs (EADTU), Dr. Ralf Drachenberg (on behalf of EADTU)}\)

Project Manager: \(\text{Dr. Ebba Ossiannilsson (on behalf of EADTU)}\)

Research Leader: \(\text{Dr. Ebba Ossiannilsson, (on behalf of EADTU)}\)

Researchers: \(\text{Mr. Anthony F Camilleri, Dr Keith Williams (on behalf of EADTU)}\)

Research Advisory Group (RAG): \(\text{Chair Professor Mark Brown, Dublin City University, Ireland}\)

Administrative Project Support: provided via \(\text{Dr. George Ubachs (EADTU), and Dr. Ralf Drachenberg (on behalf of EADTU)}\)

Project Quality Assurance: \(\text{Dr. George Ubachs (EADTU), and Professor Ulf Ehlers (EADTU)}\)

Below, a chart is given of the project governance and its structure.

\(^2\) http://www.eadtu.eu/about-eadtu/about-eadtu
Quality models in online and open education around the globe: State of the art and recommendations

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

Appendices, May 2015

Project organisational chart
Appendix 5

Glossary

Accreditation
Accreditation is a process in which certification of competency, authority, or credibility is presented. Organisations that issue credentials or certify third parties against official standards are themselves formally accredited by accreditation bodies; hence they are sometimes known as “accredited certification bodies”. The accreditation process ensures that their certification practices are acceptable, typically meaning that they are competent to test and certify third parties, behave ethically and employ suitable quality assurance.4

Benchmarking
The concept benchmarking refers to the process of comparing one’s business processes and performance metrics to industry bests or best practices from other companies. Dimensions typically measured are quality, time and cost. In the process of best practice benchmarking, management identifies the best firms in the domain of concern where similar processes exist, and compares the results and processes of those studied (the “targets”) to one’s own results and processes. In this way, they learn how well the targets perform and, more importantly, the business processes that explain why these firms are successful. Benchmarking is used to measure performance using a specific indicator resulting in a metric of performance that is then compared to others.5

Blended learning
A pedagogical model combining face-to-face classroom teaching with the redesign of the educational environment and learning experience, thus contributing to the creation of a “community of inquiry” (EUA 2014).

Certification
The concept of certification refers to the confirmation of certain characteristics of an object, person, or organisation. This confirmation is often, but not always, provided by some form of external review, education, assessment, or audit. There are two general types of professional certification: some are valid for a lifetime, once the exam is passed. Others have to be recertified again after a certain period of time.6

Distance education
Distance education – the delivery of learning or training to those who are separated mostly by time and space from those who are teaching or training. The teaching is done with a variety of mediating processes used to transmit content, to provide tuition and to conduct assessment or measure outcomes.7

E-learning
E-learning is about using information and communication technologies (ICT) to expand access to learning and to enhance and transform teaching and learning practice. E-learning is the use of information and

4 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accreditation
5 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benchmarking
6 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Certification
7 http://www.col.org/resources/Pages/default.aspx
communication technologies to support the delivery of education, training and learning opportunities. It provides a variety of ICT-supported possibilities ranging from the enhancement of classroom-based instruction with technology to fully online instruction in which all teaching and learning is technology mediated. In the COL context, e-learning is also part of the open and distance learning (ODL) agenda and plays a key role in expanding access (COL May 2014).

**Flexible learning**

Flexible learning – the provision of learning opportunities that can be accessed at any place and time. Flexible learning relates more to the scheduling of activities than to any particular delivery mode.\(^8\)

**Flipped classroom**

Flipped classroom is a form of blended learning in which students learn content online by watching video lectures, usually at home, and homework is done in class, like in seminars and workshops with teachers and students discussing and solving questions. Teacher interaction with students is more personalized – guidance instead of lecturing.

**Hybrid learning**

A deliberate attempt to combine the best of both face-to face and online learning (Bates 8\(^{th}\) May 2013).\(^9\)

**Label**

A label is usually a formal proof or evidence that the quality of a product or service is achieved. For example the case of the E-xcellence Associates label is not a label for proven excellence, but rather a label for institutions/faculties using the E-xcellence instrument for self-assessment and take measures of improvement accordingly.

**Learning analytics**

Learning analytics is the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of data about learners and their contexts, for purposes of understanding and optimising learning and the environments in which it occurs. A related field is educational data mining.\(^10\)

**Massive open online courses (MOOC)**

MOOCs are online courses aimed at large scale participation and open access via Internet, provided free of charge. MOOCs differ from traditional university studies, firstly by their open access. Basically, the only prerequisite for participation is access to the Internet. Secondly, MOOCs are characterised by scalability; the courses are organised in such a way that they can easily be scaled in line with the number of participants.

In addition to traditional course materials, such as filmed lectures, readings, and problem sets, many MOOCs provide interactive user forums to support community interactions between students, professors, and teaching assistants. MOOCs are a recent development in distance education, which was first introduced in 2008 and emerged as a popular mode of learning in 2012. Early MOOCs often emphasised

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8 http://www.col.org/resources/Pages/default.aspx
9 http://www.tonybates.ca/2013/05/
10 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learning-analytics
open access features, such as open licensing of content, structure and learning goals, to promote the reuse and remixing of resources. Some later MOOCs use closed licenses for their course materials while maintaining free access for students.

**Mobile learning**
Mobile learning involves the use of mobile technology, either alone or in combination with other information and communication technology (ICT), to enable learning anytime and anywhere. Learning can unfold in a variety of ways: people can use mobile devices to access educational resources, connect with others, or create content, both inside and outside classrooms. Mobile learning also encompasses efforts to support broad educational goals, such as the effective administration of school systems and improved communication between schools and families.11

**Online learning**
Online learning and e-learning – terms that have emerged to describe the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enhance distance education, implement open learning policies, make learning activities more flexible and enable those learning activities to be distributed among many learning venues (footnote 7).

**Open Educational Resources (OER)**
Open Educational Resources are teaching, learning or research materials that are in the public domain or released with an intellectual property license that allows for free use, adaptation, and distribution. UNESCO believes that universal access to high-quality education is key to the building of peace, sustainable social and economic development, and intercultural dialogue. OERs provide a strategic opportunity to improve the quality of education, as well as facilitate policy dialogue, knowledge sharing and capacity building.

**Open Education Practice (OEP)**
Open Educational Practices (OEP) are defined as practices, which support the production, use and reuse of high-quality open educational resources (OER) through institutional policies, which promote innovative pedagogical models, and respect and empower learners as co-producers on their lifelong learning path. OEP address the whole OER governance community: policymakers, managers and administrators of organisations, educational professionals and learners.12

**Open and distance learning (ODL)**
One approach defining open and distance learning is the one suggested by ICDE…"open" indicates ease of access, with a minimum of barriers, to (higher) education. “Distance learning” in today’s practice includes online learning, e-learning, flexible learning and blended learning. The latter is normally mediated by information and communication technologies, and where such are not accessible, by traditional means (e.g.) correspondence, radio and television).

**Open learning**
Open learning – policies and practices that permit entry to learning with no or minimum barriers with

respect to age, gender, or time constraints and with recognition of prior learning. These policies need not be part of a distance education system but are complementary to it. Similarly could include Open University/College/School all of which may display a selection of the different strands of “openness” resources, practice, access but not necessarily all.

**Post-traditional online Higher Education**

Students are now facing an abundance of choices and the idea of studying at one place and for one period are dated. Many students (usually still called non-traditional students) are attending Higher Education institutions later in life and/or part-time, or they attend several institutions (sometimes simultaneously), extend the time to graduation by taking time off between semesters, mix learning experiences like cooperative programmes or internships with traditional courses, and sign up for alternative experiences such as (MOOCs) and OERs. Most forms of post-traditional education are based on the premise that learning can occur anywhere at any time. Students already spend much of their time on the Internet, learning and exchanging new information – often via social networks. Learners can also get recognition and credentials for their achievements via alternative assessment strategies, such as competency-based assessments, portfolios, and badges. We refer to these alternatives as ‘post-traditional Higher Education’ (Uvalić-Trumbić & Daniel, Academic Partnership 2014).

**Quality in e-learning**

There is probably no topic in education which is so discussed and controversy as quality. The concept quality e-learning system refers to ...one in which the learner has a reasonable opportunity for success in reaching their learning goals”.

Ossiannilsson (2012), Uvalić-Trumbić and Daniel (2013 2014), and recently Bates (2015), argues that quality is defined as ...as methods that successfully help learners develop the knowledge and skills they will require in a digital age.14

**Quality e-learning system**

Quality e-learning system is one in which the learner has a reasonable opportunity for success in reaching their learning goals. The processes adopted by the institution.

**Quality scheme**

Quality Scheme is seen as a set of standards and an approval mechanism

**Technology-enhanced learning (TEL)**

Technology-enhanced learning or technology-enabled learning (TEL) or technology-enhanced education (TEE) does not have a commonly accepted precise definition, but is used to refer to the use of technology as part of a learning process (HEA 2015).

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13 [http://www.col.org/resources/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.col.org/resources/Pages/default.aspx)
Appendix 6

Research methodology

The addressed issues for this project were to provide an overview of standards, guidelines and benchmarks for quality in open, distance, flexible, and online education, including e-learning to be described in a systematic and easy understandable way. The analysis of and the recommendation for which standards and guidelines that are most relevant for the ICDE membership, should take into account the main differences among the ICDE membership throughout the world, e.g. geographical area, state versus private institutions, political support for open and distance education, and existing quality structures. Furthermore, an analysis of opportunities for ICDE should be addressed to align ICDE’s work with that of key national and international stakeholders, including quality agencies. Recommendations for ICDE’s future work and strategies on quality guidelines, benchmarks, standards and quality should be given together with a presentation of a series of proposals, which ICDE may realistically pursue, including an analysis of resources required.

The main milestones were to deliver a set of recommendations (scope, paragraph 4), as well as a series of proposals (scope, paragraph 5) to be presented first at the President’s Summit in November 2014, and second to provide the final report for ICDE to be used for their further work and communication on quality with their stakeholders.

The project lasted between August 2014 and March 2015. The main activities of the identification and data collection of quality standard models, the analyses of them, as well as the stakeholders analyse were conducted during August – November 2014. During the ICDE SCOP meeting in Bali November 19-21, the study was presented and feedback and suggestions were given and received for further work by the research team. The writing phase for the report started immediately in August and with continuous work by the team members in shared documents (e.g. Google, Word doc, Excel, PowerPoint) during the entire project period. In December 2014 – January 2015, the finalizing of the report writing was intense. During the entire project period, there were regularly Skype meetings with the project team, with the leader of the RAG and with the quality assurance monitoring team by EADTU and EFQUEL, as well as with responsible staff at ICDE. Additionally, some of the involved people in the project met for other events during autumn 2014. Furthermore, during the project period, there were email contacts with the extended RAG and with the Presidents according to the email list for ICDE SCOP.

Data gathering strategy
The data gathering strategy aimed to cover all continents to demonstrate similarities and distinctions due to culture, languages and maturity of developing quality systems in open, distance, flexible and online education, including e-learning. However, there were constraints that we could only cover in depth information in languages understandable for us, e.g. English and Scandinavian documents in other languages were, in some instances translated, using online translation tools.

The strategy aimed likewise to identify quality spectrum, e.g. certification, accreditation, benchmarking, labelling as a frame of reference. The purpose of this strategy was to cover quality spectrum at macro,
meso level, and micro levels. However, those described deeper here in the report are mainly at macro and meso level as the literature on impact on quality of individuals’ practice is diffuse. The purpose was also to present the variety of available international quality systems, according to maturity and purpose for measuring and/or enhancing quality in e-learning for institutions and quality assurance bodies.

The data gathering strategy also aimed to include some coverage of the emerging movement of opening up education like post-traditional online Higher Education as OER and MOOCs and likewise to inform discussion and reflection on their impact.

Research design

Primarily the secondary sources mentioned in the Bid were used for the mapping and classification. Hence, the ICDE Quality Standard Sstudy 2014 was mainly based on desk analysis and previous research work by the project team and other international researchers, and through earlier conducted projects in the area of quality. Although, an update review of currently assembled resources was undertaken. The project team initially established a research advisory group (RAG) with global outreach and with organisations and persons who had impact in the areas of quality standards study models. A stakeholder analyses was also carried out for the study. The project was quality assured through EADTU and ICDE.

Data Collection

Primarily the secondary sources mentioned in the Joint Bid were used for the mapping and classification. Although, an update review of currently assembled resources was undertaken. The project team initially established a research advisory group (RAG) with global outreach and with organisations and persons who had impact in the areas of quality standards study models. A stakeholder identification and analysis was also carried out for the study.

The reviewed quality standards models were selected from those identified in the Application for this study, and identified in the Action Plan for this research study. The online documentation available for the quality schemes, which have been studied, represents a true picture of their operation, since we did not conduct interviews with people certified, etc. The examples were drawn from a wide range of organisations, Quality Assurance Agencies, representational groups, consultancy organisations, etc., and geographic locations. The examples were also based on earlier research within the area.

The first step was identification and methodology for researching the quality standard models and creation of a database of quality schemes according to the ones given in the project proposal and in the action plan for the project. The first task was also an updating of the quality standards models through information provided from web pages and desk analysis and considering if the quality standard models still were active and in use. In addition, a more comprehensive research on quality schemes was carried out. An “ID Card” containing basic information about each of the quality schemes was compiled, and stored together with a) the list of criteria for the quality schemes, and b) the methodological /operational manual(s) for the quality scheme.
The second task was to review, analyse and map the first set of quality standards, around 40, to a typology, related to a variety of dimensions and purposes, also mentioned in the Application and Action Plan for the Study. Each of them got an ID number and each were recorded in a database (Excel file). The context and headline features of each of the Quality systems mentioned are presented in Annex 6. A multi-factor typology of quality schemes were employed taking into account the following characteristics:

- Purpose
- Target group
- Object of assessment
- Method of administration
- Criteria for self-assessment
- Underlying values
- Underlying principles
- Governance structure

The third step with the quality standard system was to identify and cluster the quality standard models related to purpose, e.g. certification, benchmarking, frame of reference etc. (Table 1). Additionally, the quality standard models were clustering according to quality spectrum and to macro, meso and micro levels, and to go in deeper analyse with the most used ones globally.

The stakeholder analysis was conducted through contacts, interview, and by desk study.

**Glossary**

A glossary is given in Appendix 4. In this report, often the term open online education is used, however, the concept refer as well to e-learning, flexible learning, online learning, distance education and distance learning etc.

There is probably no topic in education, which is so discussed and controversy as quality. One discourse on quality in the domain of open learning in the 21st century is as Ossiannilsson (2012) discusses from her research in the area on quality in e-learning. This is also emphasised by Uvalić-Trumbić and Daniel (2013 2014), and recently, Bates (2015) argues that quality is defined as:

...as methods that successfully help learners develop the knowledge and skills they will require in a digital age.15

The concept quality e-learning systems refer to “one in which the learner has a reasonable opportunity for success in reaching their learning goals”.

References are not given for every statement in the report, although all references listed in the end of the report, have deeply been used for our statements and findings for the study.

Constraints
The main constraints in this study have been time, resources, and dependence on other people for information, which even was described in the Action Plan under the heading Risk Management Strategy (RMS). In addition, the Risk Management Strategy integrates multicultural dimensions and components, which for natural reasons have been constraints. Quality may mean different things to different people from different cultures, and languages in different settings. The identified quality standard models, and even the most common ones are mainly from English speaking countries, and above that, they are mainly from the United States or from Europe, although an investigation to the RAG and to ICDE SCOP members were conducted to find other ones used at other continents. However, it seems that there are reports from other continents, but they are more like frame of references.

One way to reduce the risk of not reaching the main stakeholders was to work on a pre-selected sample groups. The study as such is difficult as the area of e-learning and online learning in Higher Education is rapidly changing, thus also quality of e-learning and online learning. It is like shooting on moving target groups.

A constraint which is very obvious in this study is that we have just reviewed quality models and systems which are available in the language we know, e.g. English and Scandinavian. This means that we probably have missed what is done for example in countries with languages as for example Russian, Spanish, Asian and African languages.
Appendix 7

First Set of reviewed Quality Standards Models and Quality Providers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full name/Responsible Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACODE</td>
<td>Australasian Council on Open, Distance and e-Learning benchmarking scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BENVIC</td>
<td>Benchmarking of Virtual Campuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHEA</td>
<td>Council for Higher Education Accreditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHIRON</td>
<td>LdV Program refer to “u-learning” rather than “e-learning”, where “u” denotes “ubiquity”,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLIPS</td>
<td>Not active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECB Check</td>
<td>GIZ, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eduQua</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eLg</td>
<td>The e-Learning Guidelines, New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELTI</td>
<td>Benchmarking e-learning: Embedding Learning Technologies Institutionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELQ</td>
<td>E-Learning Quality Model, Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eMM</td>
<td>E-Learning Maturity Model, New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>Not active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPPROBATE</td>
<td>LANETO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUIS</td>
<td>European Quality Improvement System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESMU</td>
<td>ESMU’s benchmarking exercise in e-learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-xcellence</td>
<td>EADTU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Models</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IQAT</td>
<td>Benchmarking and quality enhancement methodology, US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASSIVE</td>
<td>EU-funded project coordinated by the University of Granada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIT90s</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBHE</td>
<td>Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Learning Consortium (OLC), the Quality Scorecard (formerly Sloan-C)</td>
<td>Online Learning Consortium, US (previous SLOAN-C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OpenupEd</td>
<td>EADTU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pick&amp;Mix</td>
<td>UK Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Matters</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIQUe</td>
<td>former EFQUEL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3E Framework</td>
<td>The Enhance, Extend, Empower Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OER TIPS</td>
<td>CEMCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISO</td>
<td>ISO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TQM</td>
<td>Total Quality Management (not specifically e-learning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACDE</td>
<td>African Council for Distance Education quality assurance methodology and guidelines for programme and institutional review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Association of Open Universities Quality Assurance Framework</td>
<td>Asian Association of Open Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Quality in Distance Education (CALED)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth of learning (COL)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The reviewed quality models and quality providers are briefly listed and described in this appendix. As they are of different typology, they are categorised under benchmarking, certification schemes, quality providers, and quality toolkits (below the presentation is in alphabetic order). The context and the head features of each of the Quality systems are presented below:

### Benchmarking Schemes

#### The Australasian Council on Open, Distance and eLearning (ACODE)\(^{16}\)

ACODE is the eponymously named benchmarking scheme under development by the Australasian Council on Open, Distance and e-Learning, developed as a project in 2004. It is a criterion-based system where criteria (divided into eight main benchmark areas) are scored on a 1-5 scale with the help of scoring statements. It takes a relatively wide view of e-learning, ensuring linkage with general learning and teaching, with IT and with staff development processes. The use of the word “alignment” in several criterion scoring statements suggests that it has been affected by the MIT90s approach.

ACODE’s mission is to enhance policy and practice in Australasian Higher Education around technology-enhanced learning and teaching at institutional, national and international levels. The Benchmarks cover the following eight topic areas:

- Institution-wide policy and governance for technology-enhanced learning
- Planning for institution-wide quality improvement of technology-enhanced learning
- Information technology systems, services and support for technology-enhanced learning
- The application of services
- Staff professional development for the effective use of technology-enhanced learning
- Staff support for the use of technology-enhanced learning
- Student training for the effective use of technology-enhanced learning
- Student support for the use of technology-enhanced learning

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\(^{16}\) [http://www.acode.edu.au/](http://www.acode.edu.au/)

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khan 8 dimension model</th>
<th>Malaysian Qualifications Agency</th>
<th>Guidelines for distance and online learning for accredited institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National University Commission Nigeria</td>
<td></td>
<td>National Quality Assurance Systems in Distance Education in Asia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Appendices, May 2015
Each of the above benchmarks includes a Scoping Statement, a Good Practice Statement, a set of Performance Indicators (PIs) and an area to make initial recommendations on that may need improvement having emerged from undertaking the assessment. Institutions may also customise the benchmarks by replacing or adding their own Local Performance Indicators (LPIs).

**The European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) E-xcellence**

The E-xcellence tools were developed by EADTU from 2005 onwards supported by funding from European Commission. The tools were designed to provide a flexible framework for institutional and programme review and built on the experience of its member organisations in addressing quality assurance of non-conventional HE provision. The E-xcellence covers exactly the areas presented in Fig 1, namely:

- Management (strategy and visions)
- Products (curriculum design, course design, course delivery)
- Support (student and staff support)

The E-xcellence Associates label guarantees quality controlled e-learning, which is up-to-date with the latest developments. The E-xcellence Associates label focuses on the improvement of four priority elements of progressive Higher Education: accessibility, flexibility, interactiveness and personalisation. Through operation of the E-xcellence Associates scheme, EADTU aim to develop a self-sustaining community of institutions committed to improvement of their flexible provision.

**The European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) OpenupEd**

OpenupEd aims to be a distinct quality brand embracing a wide diversity of (institutional) approaches to open up education via the use of MOOCs. As a consequence, OpenupEd partners agreed to develop a quality label for MOOCs tailored to both e-learning and open education. This label was published in January 2014. The associated institutional benchmarking with this label is primarily meant to be applied as an improvement tool, comparing institutional performances with current best practices and leading to measures to raise the quality of its MOOCs and their operation. This process is designed to complement both an institutional course approval process, and ongoing evaluation and monitoring of courses in presentation.

The OpenupEd is developed as a framework of common features for MOOCs that puts the learner, at the centre. The features are as below:

- Learner-centred
- Openness to learners
- Digital openness

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17 e-xcellencelabel.eadtu.eu/
18 www.openuped.eu/
• Independent learning
• Media-supported interaction
• Recognition options
• Quality focus
• Spectrum of diversity

E-Learning Maturity Model – eMM\(^{19}\)

The eMM is developed by Stephen Marshall at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. The model provides a means by which institutions can assess and compare their capability to sustainably develop, deploy and support e-learning. The eMM is based on the ideas of the Capability Maturity Model and SPICE (Software Process Improvement and Capability determination) methodologies.

The underlying idea that guides the development of the eMM is that the ability of an institution to be effective in any particular area of work is dependent on their capability to engage in high-quality processes that are reproducible and able to be extended and sustained as demand grows. Capability, in the context of this model, refers to the ability of an institution to ensure that e-learning design, development and deployment is meeting the needs of the students, staff and institution. Capability includes the ability of an institution to sustain e-learning support of teaching as demand grows and staff change. The eMM divides the capability of institutions to sustain and deliver e-learning up into five major major categories or process areas:

• Learning – Processes that directly impact on pedagogical aspects of e-learning
• Development – Processes surrounding the creation and maintenance of e-learning resources
• Support – Processes surrounding the oversight and management of e-learning 9
• Evaluation – Processes surrounding the evaluation and quality control of e-learning through its entire lifecycle
• Organisation – Processes associated with institutional planning and management

Processes define an aspect of the overall ability of institutions to perform well in the given process area, and thus, in e-learning overall. The advantage of this approach is that it breaks down a complex area of institutional work into related sections that can be assessed independently and presented in a comparatively simple overview without losing the underlying detail. Capability in each process is described by a set of practices organised by dimension.

Pick&Mix\(^{20}\)

Pick&Mix (the Beta version) is a benchmarking methodology developed in 2005 and used in all three phases of the Higher Education Academy/JISC Benchmarking Exercise 2005–08 and by all four Welsh universities in the Gwella benchmarking programme in 2008–09, UK. It was in 2010–2012) used by four universities in UK, Sweden and Canada for benchmarking and re-benchmarking e-learning in the First Dual-mode Distance Learning benchmarking Club. Pick & Mix will be developed to suit benchmarking on

\(^{19}\) [http://www.utdc.vuw.ac.nz/research/emm/](http://www.utdc.vuw.ac.nz/research/emm/)

OER. Pick&Mix was used as a foundation for critical success factors for Virtual Schools (the VISCED project).

**Quality Matters**\(^1\)

Quality Matters (QM) is a nationally (USA) recognised, faculty-centred, peer review process designed to certify the quality of online courses and online components. Developed initially for use in the Community College sector its influence has grown. Colleges and universities across and beyond the U.S. use the tools in developing, maintaining and reviewing their online courses and in training their faculty. The Quality Matters Rubric has become the most widely used set of standards for the design of online and blended courses at the college level. Today, more than 850 colleges and universities subscribe to Quality Matters. The eight general Standards in the Rubrics are:

- Course Overview and Introduction
- Learning Objectives (Competencies)
- Assessment and Measurement
- Instructional Materials
- Course Activities and Learner Interaction
- Course Technology
- Learner Support
- Accessibility and Usability

**Certification Schemes**

**Deutche Gessellshaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH ECB Check**\(^2\)

Open ECBCheck by GIZ, is a certification and quality improvement scheme for e-learning courses and programmes in international Capacity Building. It supports capacity building organisations to measure how successful their e-learning programmes are and allows for continuous improvement through peer collaboration and benchlearning. Download the ECBCheck presentation (PDF) for more information. Without going through the entire review process, the ECBCheck tool can also be used for internal quality check of your courses and programmes.\(^3\)

The ECBCheck Criteria analyse a wide variety of indicators about a programme requiring:

- Information about the programme
- Target group orientation
- Quality of the content
- Programme/course design
- Media design

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\(^1\) [https://www.qualitymatters.org/](https://www.qualitymatters.org/)


\(^3\) [http://efquel.org/certificates/ecbcheck/](http://efquel.org/certificates/ecbcheck/)
• Technology
• Evaluation & review

**LANETO-e V Epprobeate**

Epprobeate by the LANETO-e V focus group concentrate on Quality in e-learning, specially they review and approve parts of e-learning courses, known as courseware, which can be identified as stand-alone or interrelated components, built for use individually or interacting together as a complete course. The role of the Epprobeate Consortium is to help producers and providers to: understand quality in e-learning, to ensure quality in e-learning, and to maintain quality in e-learning. The Epprobeate Quality Grid is not a tick-list, pass or fail, but is a guide to reviewers and others how they may judge the degree of compliance of courseware against the required standards. The grid has four areas:

- Course design (provision of course information, learning objectives and instructional guidance and Constructive alignment)
- Learning design (learner needs, personalisation, instructional strategies)
- Media design (media integration, interface, interoperability and technological standards)
- Content (accuracy and values of content, intellectual property rights, and legal compliance)

**The European Foundation for Quality in e-Learning (EFQUEL) UNIQUe**

UNIQUe is a high-quality institutional certification for outstanding use of ICT in learning and teaching. It is awarded to universities or institutes, after a process of self-assessment and external peer review, for renewable periods of three years. UNIQUe serves as a tool even for self-assessment.

UNIQUe is aimed at the institutional certification of universities for outstanding work in the use of ICT-based learning. Its quality label can be articulated in three areas, and each of them has under headings:

- **Learning /institutional context** (strategy and e-learning, Commitment to innovation, openness to the community)
- **Learning resource** (resources for learning, students, university staff, technology and equipment)
- **Learning processes** (quality of the offer, assessment of learning, human resources development)

**Examples of Quality Providers**

**The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO)**

NVAO is an accreditation organisation. However, NVAO’s scope of work is not limited to accreditation. Based on the tasks laid down in its founding treaty and in national legal frameworks, NVAO has quite an

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24 [www.epprobeate.com/](http://www.epprobeate.com/)
25 [unique.efquel.org/](http://unique.efquel.org/)
27 [http://nvao.com/home.html](http://nvao.com/home.html)
extensive scope of work which cover all levels of Higher Education: at programme, institutional, system and international level. NVAO are partner with EADTU and co-developer of E-xcellence.

The Asian Association of Open Universities Quality Assurance Framework (AAOU)\(^{28}\)
The purpose of the AAOU framework is to serve as an advisory framework for distance teaching institutions, to support to institutions in formulating their approach to quality assurance. It does not serve as an accreditation or review service. The framework covers ten broad areas covering all aspects of institutional activities with a total of 54 subcomponents each accompanied by a statement of best practice. The ten areas are: policy and planning, internal management, learners and learner’s profiles, infrastructure, media and learning resources, learner assessment and evaluation, research and community services, human resources, learner support, program design and curriculum development and finally course design and development. There is no proposed marking system.

The African Council for Distance Education (ACDE)\(^{29}\)
The African Council for Distance Education (ACDE) is a continental educational organisation comprising African universities and other Higher Education institutions, which are committed to expanding access to quality education and training through open and distance learning. The mandate of the ACDE, as a unifying body of open and distance learning providers in Africa, is primarily to promote research, policy and quality in open and distance learning to increase access to education and training in Africa. We do this by building capacity, fostering collaboration and partnership, and advocacy

ACDE quality assurance comprises 11 broad areas of assessment yielding 132 sub-headings. each scored on a 0 – 4 basis. It has its origins in the Commonwealth of Learning Distance Education Modernisation Project (DEMP) project with adaptation of the criteria having been completed in 2014. The methodology has been used for internal quality assurance review at several of Africa’s largest Open Universities.

The Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Quality in Distance Education (CALED)\(^{30}\)
CALED is a Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Quality in Distance Higher Education, founded at the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja during the First CREAD Andes Conference and the First Ibero-American Virtual Educa Meeting, in October 2005. Its mission is to improve the quality of higher distance education learning in Latin America and the Caribbean, through a culture of evaluation and quality to the development of guidelines and tools for evaluation, accreditation and certification of distance education programs.

CALED works in quality recognition mechanisms based on criteria, indicators and standards for distance education and training human resources of high-quality assessment and management, and coordinating efforts with national and international governmental and non-governmental projects promote quality, relevance and coverage in Higher Education systems remotely.

\(^{28}\) [http://aaou.ouhk.edu.hk/](http://aaou.ouhk.edu.hk/)
\(^{29}\) [http://www.acdeafrica.org/](http://www.acdeafrica.org/)
\(^{30}\) [http://www.utpl.edu.ec/ingles/?q=linking/interinstitutional/international-project](http://www.utpl.edu.ec/ingles/?q=linking/interinstitutional/international-project)
The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)\(^{31}\)

CHEA is the organisation that coordinates the activities of the Regional Accreditation organisations that oversee the accreditation of the majority of public and private Higher Education institutions in the USA and also of a number of international institutions that work to US standards. CHEA identifies seven key areas which are routinely reviewed in distance education and are essentially the same broad areas addressed in their core criteria for all Higher Education provision.

- Institutional mission
- Institutional organisation structure
- Institutional resources
- Curriculum and instruction
- Faculty support
- Student support
- Student learning outcomes

For Higher Education, CHEA states that the essential core features of the review would be attention to student achievement – what students learn and can do. The standards would also include attention to the capacity and resources of the providers, especially their levels of technology (Academic Partnership 2014).

Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA)\(^{32}\)

MQA provides an advisory framework for distance teaching provision offered by institutions already accredited by MQA. In total there are nine areas of institutional activity covered with adaptations at subheading level addressing open and distance learning specific matters where necessary. The nine areas are: vision, mission and learning outcomes; curriculum design and delivery; student selection and support services; assessment of students; academic staff; educational resources; programme monitoring and review; leadership, governance and administration; and continual quality improvement. The tool supports institutions in integrating quality assurance of distance education with the quality assurance of mainstream campus-based teaching.

National University Commission Nigeria (NUCN)\(^{33}\)

NUCN provides guidance and an evaluation scheme for Accreditation of Distance Education Programmes at distance learning and mixed mode institutions. Assessments are scored against 12 major aspects with accreditation requiring a minimum of 70% in core aspects of:

- Pedagogy/ learning resources
- Academic learner support and Information and guidance
- Evaluation and assessment
- Staffing

\(^{33}\) [http://www.nuc.edu.ng/nucsite/File/ODL%20REVISED%20GUIDELINES%20FOR%20NIGERIAN%20UNIVERSITIES.pdf](http://www.nuc.edu.ng/nucsite/File/ODL%20REVISED%20GUIDELINES%20FOR%20NIGERIAN%20UNIVERSITIES.pdf)
It forms an important element of policies and plans to enhance the role of distance education in meeting the demand for rapid expansion of Higher Education provision in Nigeria. Effective quality assurance is seen as essential to raise public perceptions of distance education.

**Quality Assurance Toolkits/Framework**

**The African Council for Distance Education (ACDE)**

The African Council for Distance Education (ACDE) quality assurance framework was developed from the COL DEMP project outputs and finalised in late 2012. The framework provides performance indicators and proposes a five-point scoring scheme for each. The framework is supported by a secretariat based at the National Open University Nigeria and there are reports of its use by ACDE members, such as National Open University Nigeria and Open University Tanzania for internal review purposes (even described above).

**The African Virtual University (AVU)**

The African Virtual University Quality Assurance Framework is based on Commonwealth of Learning documents structured around seven major activity areas. Performance indicators and potential sources of evidence are provided. A five-point scoring scheme is applied to each of the performance indicators. The framework was approved in late 2014 and there are currently no published exemplars of its application.

**Commonwealth of Learning Quality assurance toolkit**

This quality assurance toolkit was developed as an initiative from the Asian development bank-funded Distance Education Modernisation Project (DEMP) in collaboration with COL and UNESCO. DEMP sought to devise quality assurance protocols, which span the full range of distance delivery methods, from print-based and face-to-face tutor mediated to online learning that would be sufficiently flexible to accommodate both institutional quality solutions as to be adapted to national quality documents. The framework consists of 10 key areas or criteria reflecting the features of distance Higher Education, and six key areas or criteria identifying essential elements for Higher Education programmes. Thus the tool provides resources relevant to both institutional and programme based review. The structure of the 10 performance indicators for institutions is:

- Vision, mission and planning
- Management, leadership and organisational culture
- The learners
- Human resource development
- Program design development
- Course design and development
- Learner support
- Learner assessment

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34 [http://nou.edu.ng/acde-qaaa/index.htm](http://nou.edu.ng/acde-qaaa/index.htm)
• Infrastructure and learning resources
• Research consultancy and extension services

The structure of the performance indicators for educational programmes is:

• Institutional planning and management
• Program design and development
• Course design and development
• Infrastructure and learning resources
• Learning support and progression
• Learner assessment and evaluation

Each of the topics is further divided into sub-areas with suggested performance indicators allowing for scoring at a level of fine granularity.

By developing this self-assessment tool and the suggested process using performance indicators institutions can get support to identify strengths and weaknesses of their key processes against international benchmarks and standards and to initiate improvements that are appropriate to their context. The tool has been used in COL affiliated institutions, perhaps most extensively at OU Sri Lanka.

**The e-Learning guidelines (eLg)**

The e-Learning guidelines (eLg) have been developed to assist the tertiary sector in its engagement with e-learning. The guidelines offer prompts for reflection from five perspectives – the learner, teacher, manager, organisational leader and quality assurance body. When considering one of these perspectives in the e-learning and e-teaching process, the guidelines assist the designing, implementing and enhancing of your practice to ensure thoughtful and intentional e-learning provision. Furthermore, each perspective is related to maturity level, e.g. designing, implementing and enhancing.

**The e-learning quality model (ELQ MODEL) (The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, NAHE)**

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (NAHE) did an international investigation in 2008 on quality models around the globe. They analysed all of them and concluded that 10 dimensions used to be covered related to quality in e-learning. Those 10 dimensions were:

• Material and content
• Structure and virtual environment
• Communication, collaboration and interactivity
• Assessments of student performance
• Flexibility and adaptability
• Support (students and staff)
• Expertise and experience
• Leadership and vision

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37 [http://elg.ac.nz/](http://elg.ac.nz/)
38 [http://www.hsv.se/download/18.8f0e4c9119e2b4a60c80028057/0811R.pdf]
• Resource allocation and
• Process and holistic (NAHE, 2008, p. 7)
They emphasised that quality in e-learning need to be reviewed in a holistic conceptualized view. They also argued that e-learning need to be integrated into ordinary quality assurance and enhancement at institutional and national level. In their report, they stated that incorporating e-learning specific aspects and criteria into the general basis for assessment requires intelligence and competence within the organisation. Furthermore, they argued that methodological development shows substantial overlap with the previous policy issues. However, the NAHE reports’ discussion of this issue contains at least one important element that has not been touched upon earlier:

While the assessment of digital applications implies difficulties for the assessors, they also offer novel opportunities for them to reach the heart of teaching and learning, as many of the educational environments are more easily accessible.

The report gained some interest from ENQA and a conference in Sigtuna was held to discuss how quality in e-learning could be integrated into ordinary quality assurance from national quality assurance agencies.

The Eight dimensional model by Khan

Another common used, although a more theoretical or practical framework is B Khan’s eight dimensional quality model, which consist of eight dimensions for quality.

The Online Learning Consortium (OLC) formerly the Sloan Consortium (Sloan – C)

The OLC states that they through a collaborative effort of several dozen seasoned online educators, the 2014 OLC Scorecard continues to advance the field, simplifying the steps needed to identify, measure and quantify elements of quality within an online education programme. OLC members will learn how to apply Quality Scorecard metrics, uncover and evaluate quality indicators in key categories, and consider thoughtful recommendations for implementation. In the very recently updated Online learning Consortium (OLC) Quality Scorecard 2014 Criteria for excellence in the administration of online programmes, the following categories include:

• Institutional Support
• Technology Support
• Course Development/Instructional Design
• Course Structure
• Teaching & Learning
• Social and Student Engagement
• Student Support
• Evaluations & Assessment

By using the OLC Scorecard, an administrator – regardless of size or type of institution – can determine strengths and weaknesses of their programme, and initiate planning efforts towards areas of

40 http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/consult/quality-scorecard/
improvement. It can also be used to demonstrate elements of quality within the programme, as well as an overall level of quality, to Higher Education accrediting bodies.

**Pandora**

The National Quality Assurance Systems in Distance Education in Asia are reported in the Asian Networking Distance and Open Resources Access (Pandora). Where there is a quality assurance system for distance education quality assurance criteria, guidelines or performance indicators both for self-assessment and external review are often specified covering input, process and output variables. The Quality Assurance Toolkit for Distance Higher Education Institutions is used as guidelines. These performance indicators are designed to enable institutions to: 1) conduct a self-assessment of the performance of their processes in order to make necessary adjustments and changes for quality improvement; and 2) monitor the processes for continuous learning and ongoing improvement. The common key quality assurance criteria in Asian countries are: vision, mission and/or goals; assessment & evaluation, educational resources, leadership, governance & administration, finance, IT infrastructure, teaching and learning, course development, student support, faculty & staff, internal quality assurance system and research.

**TIPS for OER**

TIPS for OER was developed by the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) – regional centre of the Commonwealth of Learning through review of existing models, stakeholder engagement, and Delphi study of experts. It used the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) to identify 38 criteria under the broad headings: Teaching and learning process (T), Information and material content (I), Presentation product and format (P), and System technical and technology (T). The version 2 is based on the version 1 that looked at quality of OER from the perspective of five domains, e.g. 1. the Cognitive Domain: the content knowledge, content skills, and reflective critical thinking skills to be learned; 2. the Affective Domain: the motivations, attitude and decision to initiate performance, learner independence and autonomy; 3. the Metacognitive Domain: understanding how the task is performed, and the ability to self-monitor, evaluate and plan own future learning; 4. the Environment Domain: the localisation, artistic presentation, language, multimedia, interactivity, and embedded links to other content; and finally 5. Management Domain: discoverability, tagging, including for time management, transmissibility, business models.

This five-domain quality framework is the foundation of how the final Framework TIPS was created. TIPS consists of four dimensions under the headings; (T) Teaching and Learning, (I) Information and Content, (P) Presentation, and (S) System, and involves in total 19 categories as sub-dimensions and overall 65 criteria.

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Appendix 8

Proposals to ICDE: What They Can Do Related to the Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Mainstream e-learning quality into traditional institutional quality assurance

We believe that ICDE is uniquely placed to promote such mainstreaming by engaging with stakeholders, such as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), ENQA, as well as regional/national quality assurance associations, and by promoting dialogue between specialist e-learning quality actors, such as EADTU, AAOU, etc., and the above mentioned organisations.

Recommendation 2: Support the contextualisation of quality systems

We believe that ICDE is uniquely placed to promote and to support contextualisation of quality systems. This would suggest a need to:

- Translate existing quality systems to allow for wider access (along with providing for multilingual reviewers with knowledge of the cultures, etc.).
- Work with quality assurance model providers to widen the interpretation of specific criteria within existing systems, to allow for more international applicability, and regional sensitivity.
- Support the development of regional quality labels, derived from existing tools and adapted for context.
- Explore possibilities of ICDE and COL working together with the mobile telecom sector and educational experts to create a set of quality criteria specifically related to mobile learning systems delivered by feature-phone/low-end smart phones. This is an area in which there is little current experience and could yield major benefits.

Recommendation 3: Support professional development, in particular through documentation of best practice and exchange of information

In particular, we believe that the need for better documentation and reference materials could be achieved through two initiatives, which ICDE can support, aimed at sharing best practice:

- Creation of an e-learning quality resource hub – an online collection of research papers, quality tools, training materials, etc., which could be useful to both institutions seeking to improve their quality systems, and to quality assurance reviewers. We would recommend that such a hub would be carefully curated to ensure that it focuses exclusively on the best research and tools, without creating unnecessary ‘noise’. Examples of more general hubs in related areas include the OER...
Research Portal,43 and the Open Education Europa Portal.44 Also, the EADTU’s EMPOWERING Universities initiative guides universities in considering all aspects related to online and open education.45

● Create a best practice database, containing curated examples of best practices in institutions around the world, contributed by quality reviewers from examples in real reviews. The database would not necessarily be mapped to any particular quality label/scheme, but rather contain best-in-class examples under a number of categories, such as “institutional policies, HR development, media design, learning design, learning environment”, etc. The database would be of particular use to reviewers in writing recommendations for improvement (since it would provide examples of what those recommendations could achieve), and for institutions trying to benchmark themselves against others, in preparation for a review, or in the process of implementing recommendations. It could be complemented by social functionality in the form of forums, wiki or other similar tools.

● Compile and maintain a register of professional development programmes and training materials appropriate for use by institutions and Quality Assurance Agencies.

Recommendation 4: Communicate and promote general principles

We believe that ICDE should take a primary role in communicating and promoting these general quality principles, through a combination of actions:

● Train ICDE reviewers on the quality principles, and providing information about the principles to ICDE member institutions.
● Promote the quality principles to distance education institutions, as a foundation on which to build their quality policies, and write their quality manuals.
● Maintaining a list of operating quality schemes which subscribe to the principles – in this manner, ICDE would help reduce the confusion among the plethora of products currently available in the market.
● Work towards international adoption and mainstreaming of the principles. In particular, we recommend that ICDE engage with ISO, and propose these principles for incorporation in the upcoming ISO 21001 standard on Quality Management Systems for Educational Organisations.

Recommendation 5: Assist institutions in designing a personalised quality management system

This study shows that a wide variety of quality tools are available for e-learning – including tools for evaluation, quality assurance, quality enhancement, self-evaluation, benchmarking, certification, assessment, standardisation and more. All the tools stress that they should be used in the context of creating a quality culture within their institutions.

43 http://www.oerresearchhub.org
44 http://openeducationeuropa.eu/
45 http://empower.eadtu.eu/
On the other hand, in particular with regards to e-learning policy and practice, institutions show a wide level of maturity levels, with some needing consultancy on how to develop a quality system for an initial foray into the field, and others seek incremental improvements to a well-developed and widely-deployed system.

To this end, several of the quality systems reviewed provide eligibility checks (e.g. UNIQUe), quick checks with self-evaluation (e.g. E-xcellence) or other similar tools to allow institutions to determine their eligibility to use the tool in question. However, quality-service managers from several of the schemes still mention that queries from institutions that are not appropriate or not ready for the schemes remains a recurring problem.

For this reason, we recommend that ICDE creates a library of quality methods, mapped against a maturity matrix, which would allow institutions to develop, maintain or improve their quality culture depending on their particular circumstances. Thus, institutions who are thinking of introducing e-learning, those who have introduced it, and those at an advanced stage of implementation would be able to select from a toolbox of appropriate quality methods for their institution. In particular, we believe this could be operationalised as a series of short handbooks for each of the target groups, explaining the appropriate methods, and providers of quality services that supply those methods for the particular target group. The research done for this study provides an excellent basis to author such a set of handbooks.

**Recommendation 6: Address unbundling and the emergence of non-traditional educational providers**

While the disruption of education is not exclusive to open and distance education, it is being driven by developments in the latter sector. Through its global membership, ICDE is in a unique position to stimulate a global dialogue (either alone or with other global stakeholders, such as UNESCO) as to how to incorporate quality assurance of non-traditional providers into existing legislative/regulatory frameworks for the accreditation and/or certification of educational institutions.

Specifically, we suggest that ICDE set up a global expert panel/forum, composed of experts, stakeholder representatives, and representatives of global policy and/or regulatory bodies with the mandate of issuing recommendations to deal with this emerging issue.

**Recommendation 7: Address quality issues around credentialisation through qualifications frameworks**

Global coordination of recognition needs to allow for a variety of qualification-types while at the same time keeping systems harmonised enough to allow for some level of standardisation. Actions can be taken by ICDE to improve the recognition of open learning credentials might include:
Recommendation 8: Support knowledge transfer from open and distance learning to traditional quality systems

Large scale online distance learning programmes have reached significant maturity in a number of countries, having already been active for over four decades. During this time, the institutions in question have gained significant experience in utilising technology to improve process management, course content and student outcomes. In particular, the burgeoning field of learning analytics is providing insights into processes of teaching and learning which were never before available for purposes of quality improvement.

The experiences of open and distance learning institutions in implementing and using learning analytics, as well as other technically backed solutions for the enhancement of quality, has clear learning value for the rest of the education and quality assurance community. We therefore recommend that ICDE should support a programme of best practice sharing between actors in the field, possibly through instruments such as master classes, knowledge sharing workshops and the like.

Recommendation 9: Support quality assurance audits and benchmarking exercises in the field of online, open, flexible, e-learning and distance education

There is a rapid development within the area, open, flexible, e-learning and distance education. ICDE’s international membership and reach render it well placed to coordinate international reviews and ensure regular updating. Undertaking a regular cycle of audits can be a task for ICDE.

Leadership of quality assurance audits would position ICDE as the meta-level resource keeping tabs on improvements in the field.

This recommendation can be a natural input to the suggested quality Hub, in recommendation 3.

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Recommendation 10: Encourage, facilitate and support research and scholarship in the field of quality

This study has highlighted the urgent needs for research in the field of open and online learning, including e-learning to match the speed in technological development. In addition there are also urgent needs for rapid dissemination and valorisation of research within the area, not at least to mainstream quality in e-learning. Implementation should address not just best practice, but also next practice and the needs for innovation and sustainability for the 21st century.

ICDE can be a facilitator for members and stakeholders within the area of research.

Enhance opportunities for conference and journal publications related to quality.

Seek funding opportunities for funding of research projects and knowledge sharing exchange.

Recommendation 11: Encourage, facilitate and support implementing quality assurance related to new modes of teaching

We propose that ICDE come forward with recommendations on implementing quality assurance related to new modes of teaching at the governmental, institutional and quality assurance agencies level.