

SUB-THEME: The QA of cross-border education: from quality providers to quality assured provision

TITLE: Quality Assurance in Continuing Education and Training: The experience of the Management Center in globalizing its recognition across border

By Amr Hamdy

Director

The Management Center, The American University in Cairo

ABSTRACT

The Management Center (MC) at the American University in Cairo (AUC) aims to become the partner of choice for professional education and training in Egypt and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region. The issue of quality provision in cross-border education is of paramount importance to the MC as it is a key factor to the realization of its vision and mission. For this purpose, the MC has undergone a challenging accreditation journey to globalize the recognition of its programs and to enhance its efficiency. In this paper, we aim to highlight (1) the effectiveness of the relatively neglected quality standards in training and continuing education; (2) the need to enhance its quality provision of training across borders; (3) the Management Center quality enhancement journey, quality assurance efforts and challenges faced in its accreditation process.

PAPER OUTLINE

The first part of the paper will address the first objective listed above. Despite the positive effect of continuing education and training on employee performance and productivity, this field is receiving less attention than undergraduate/graduate education in terms of quality assurance. In MENA, there are numerous providers of professional training; however, there are no clear quality standards for the programs offered by different institutions. This has resulted in a disparity of employers' and employees' perceptions of the effectiveness of such investments in continuing education and training. The experience of the MC in this respect has been positive

especially after its accreditation from the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training (ACCET) - USA. We hence argue that the establishment of quality standards in continuing and professional education and training is important in boosting employers' and employees' confidence of its effectiveness and hence encourage them to invest their time, effort and money with quality providers of professional education and training which is a win-win situation for all stakeholders.

This argument leads us to the next objective; the need to enhance quality provision across border. The standardization of quality levels across different countries offers participants more mobility hence enhancing the cost-effectiveness of their investments in continuing education. This is not currently the case on both the national and regional levels but it can be argued, from the MC experience, that standardization of quality standards and gaining global recognition of programs is beneficial for both training providers and participants. This gap in the Egyptian and MENA markets thus needs to be filled to enhance the effectiveness and attractiveness of continuing and professional education and training in the market.

The second part of the paper highlights the MC accreditation experience from ACCET. This is going to be presented in the form of a case-study discussing how the need for establishing global quality standards arose; the decision to choose ACCET as an accrediting body; the 2-year process of accreditation and the high levels of work and dedication put in by the MC team; the challenges faced throughout the process due to internal and external environments and the means by which these have been tackled. The quality improvement journey did not end with accreditation; rather the MC is currently implementing the EFQM excellence model to ensure quality delivery.

The paper concludes that the benefits of quality assurance of continuing education and training necessitates the establishment of such standards across borders in the same method of implementing higher education standards and accreditation in order to enhance the effectiveness of professional training, enhance the attractiveness of such investments and increase the mobility of participants across markets.