



## Revisit to the role of Professional Bodies to enhance Life-Long Learning universities

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# Aim

- The main aim of this paper is to extend the role of professional bodies to contribute to higher education
- It aims at generating discussion on the strategies which professional bodies can contribute to the teaching and education performance for better skilled graduates at universities.
- The paper also aims to produce universities that are learning organizations in their programs and current in targeting market needs.

# Universities: Who are the stakeholders?

- Popular stakeholders in higher education are students, alumni, employers and faculty members.
- When referring to key stakeholders, the professional bodies frequently are missed out.

# Who has his eye on the market and the profession ...

- High quality graduates
  - an appropriate balance between practical experience and knowledge, and the assessment of these particulars;
  - as well as the importance of ethics, and the relationship between professional bodies' requirements and university curricula
  - the risk of having low or high entry to a certain profession related to areas to the profession or to the quality of the students
  - internships or apprenticeships;
  - identifying the additional skills required by the qualification such as soft skills including communication, IT or so-called transferrable skills



# Literature: What could be the role of professional bodies

- Providing input towards up to date programs
- Professional Bodies act a pro-active stakeholder engagement to the market and its needs. New trends in the profession, new market.
- Knowledge, practical knowledge, required skills are observed by the professions and the professional bodies.
- Challenges in the market, ethical practices, codes of conduct
- Transparency can be maintained through the involvement of professional bodies.

# Analysis of International Practices

- Professional bodies had been included in one or more stage in the
  - review or accreditation process in various countries, including US, Australia, UK, India, Pakistan, Malaysia, etc.
  - involvement in and with the providers or the regulators.
  - In the Bologna Process implementation report by (European-Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018), the stakeholders mainly focus on students, alumni and employers
  - ENQA, ABET, AACSB, NAAB do mention professions as part of the employers or alumni, however do not consider the contribution of the professional bodies.
  - In the context of Bahrain, this issue will be discussed.

## Scanning the quality assurance review reports ...

- On scanning the quality assurance review reports in Bahrain since 2009 to 2018, including 12 universities both public and private sectors, and covering more than 30 programs, professional bodies were not considered as part of the stakeholders.
- In some universities, professions were approached for improvements in the curricula or in developing new programs, but the continuous and systematic contribution to the professional bodies to the programs was not considered.



# NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

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الوطني  
للمؤهلات





## Demographic Data

<b>Actor to be interviewed</b>	<b>Type of interview</b>	<b>No.</b>
<b>President, Univeristy</b>	Individual interview	3
<b>Member of the National Vocational Committee in Bahrain</b>	Individual interview	1
<b>Member of a committee in the Bahrain Chambers of Commerce (BCCI)</b>	Individual interview	2
<b>Member of the Board of Directors of BCCI</b>	Individual interview	1
<b>Director or Higher, BQA</b>	Individual interview	2
<b>Owner of Private Training and Consultancy Business Enterprise</b>	Individual interview	2
<b>Director or Higher, Ministry of Labor</b>	Individual interview	2
<b>Quality Director, University</b>	Individual interview	1
<b>Board Member of INQAAHE</b>	Individual interview	1
<b>Members of INQAAHE with positions of Director or Higher</b>	Focus group	2
<b>Member of Bahrain Society of Engineers</b>	Individual interview	2
<b>Member of a Management and Business Professional Society</b>	Individual interview	1
<b>Director or Higher</b>	Economic Development Board (EDB)	1
<b>Key Staff member</b>	Higher Education Council (HEC)	1
<b>Total</b>		21

# Interviews: Areas of contribution/discussion ...

- The areas of contribution by professional bodies to the providers (universities) can be summarized in the following:
  - **Learning programs:** development, delivery and evaluation (Need for the program, outcomes based education/assessment, nature of teaching and learning, syllabi, course materials, professional councils, Skills Development /NQF Descriptors for the sectors ...)
  - **Policies and practices for managing off-site practical or work-site components** (Placement or practical opportunities)
  - **Financial, administrative and physical resources**
  - **Management of assessment** (moderation, different approaches, assessment tools)

## Key observations and preliminary conclusions ...

- The professional bodies should engage in **proactive**, medium-term strategy development encompassing internal organization, member base, products and relationships with other market actors and public authorities.
- Professional bodies can position themselves as a more efficient and effective mechanism for quality assurance than the direct involvement of oversight bodies or government authorities.
- In some cases, there is an excessive fragmentation of the profession and separation along functional lines is difficult to sustain given the limited market size

## Key observations and preliminary conclusions ...

- There is potential for professional bodies to cooperate more internationally to mutual benefit in a range of different domains, from **sharing regulatory experience, education and training expertise** to the development of technical services, as well as in the positioning of professional bodies towards market stakeholders, oversight bodies and governments.
- Securing and retaining **high quality entrants into the profession** requires investment in syllabuses, new technology, facilities, flexibility, interaction with universities and an appreciation of student expectations and the skills required by the market.

## Key observations and preliminary conclusions ...

- In many cases, the qualification requirements of the professional bodies **overlook key skills** required in the workplace, including so-called softer skills, such as presentation or IT skills.
- Strategic collaboration between professional bodies and universities can help provide a more efficient and **effective transition for entrants to the profession**, for instance in the accreditation of university courses, the development of joint degree programmes and greater interaction with academia.
- **Balancing technical knowledge and broader skills** within a syllabus, for example through the use of case studies to assess the capacity to implement technical knowledge, can enhance the perceived relevance of the professional qualification.

## Key observations and preliminary conclusions ...

- **Widening the pool of appropriate entrants to the profession** while maintaining quality can be achieved by attracting students who have completed a so-called non-relevant degree or who have not attended university, where the qualification procedures of the professional bodies are sufficiently extensive and robust.
- **E-learning for the entry qualification to professional bodies and for CPD courses** could constitute a key development in the future, allowing for cooperation and economies of scale across professional bodies in different countries, in turn enhancing the international mobility of potential members.

# Challenges to the Professional Bodies ...

- As an overall theme, it was noted that while cross-border interaction between professional bodies can be enhanced in a number of areas to achieve economies of scale, the development of national capacity remains important because of the jurisdiction-specific nature of many of the activities of the profession.
- There needs to be an investment in infrastructure for carrying out regulatory responsibilities to maintain the confidence of oversight authorities in their ability to delegate to professional bodies.
- Where national legislation currently restricts the remit of professional bodies, broader international practice can be used to encourage discussion with governments and oversight authorities on reviewing such legislation with potential benefits to markets and the broader public interest.



# Challenges to the Professional Bodies ...

- Professional bodies need to invest in promoting and maintaining high quality of service by the membership in both statutory and non-statutory areas.
- High quality monitoring by professional bodies and appropriate reporting and communication can enhance relationships with oversight bodies and build confidence in the continuing delegation of tasks to professional bodies.
- Sharing of broad expertise on monitoring and regulation across borders could provide significant benefits to the development of regulation in some countries, particularly those where resources are limited. However, regulation does need to reflect national circumstances: capacity development ultimately has to take place at a national level.
- In many cases, the relationship between university courses and the qualification requirements of professional bodies are not as efficient as they could be, with excessive divergences in approach in tuition style, notably concerning the balance between theoretical and practical training

# Contribution of Professional Bodies ...

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Strategic  
direction



Regulatory role



Education and  
training



Technical and  
other services