
Chapter 3

Characteristics of the Institutional Evaluation/Accreditation Model and of Undergraduate Programmes

3.1 General observations

In the 1980s and 1990s the various university and non-university higher education institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean expanded and diversified, and this was mostly accomplished without previous criteria for levels of quality or of institutional pertinence. Subsequently, when education came to be seen as a public good and a crucial factor in making countries more competitive, these institutions also started pursuing quality and excellence as basic aims. In this context various mechanisms were developed including evaluation/accreditation, which applies not only to programmes but also to institutions.

Accreditation can be defined as the act whereby the State adopts and makes public the recognition that peers have accorded to the validation an institution has made of the quality of its own academic programmes, organization and operating procedures, and how it discharges its social function.¹ Some of the outstanding aims of the accreditation process are as follows: (a) to serve as an instrument whereby the State can publicly recognize that accredited institutions are of high quality, do their job properly and attain their objectives, (b) to serve as a means whereby these institutions are accountable to society and to the State for the education services they render, and (c) to foster good quality education in these institutions.²

In a CINDA study of accreditation at universities in Latin America, Osorio and Cardoso say that “*In the past decade the evaluation of quality and the accreditation of academic institutions and programmes have become key subjects in public policies in the higher education sector in the region and*

¹ Colombian Ministry of National Education (MEN), National Accreditation Board (CNA): “Lineamientos para la Acreditación Institucional”, *CNA documents series* No. 2, Bogotá, Colombia, June 2001.

² MEN Colombia, CNAP, op. cit.

in the academic field. And rightly so, since the dynamics of change in these educational systems have led them to incorporate accountability as an element that gives them greater legitimacy, enhances their quality and makes for greater transparency."³

3.2 Methodological aspects

Nearly all the educational systems in the region began implementing the evaluation and accreditation of training programmes at universities, and gradually they have been moving on to the accreditation of institutions, adopting this as a supplementary input in quality assurance. While the accreditation of programmes focuses on how they measure up to a declared ideal of higher education and the declared aims of the training programme in question (the knowledge and skills that correspond to paradigms in the discipline or profession), the accreditation of institutions focuses on optimum quality with respect to the mission, objectives, organization and functions of the institution as a whole.

According to the Colombian National Accreditation Board (CNA - Consejo Nacional de Acreditación) guidelines, *"...in external evaluations of an institution the main focus is on examining clarity, pertinence, and the extent to which the institution attains the objectives expressed in its mission statement and projects, the social relevance of these missions and projects, and the institution's overall global achievements ... The evaluation of an institution presupposes a holistic examination of the entire organization."*⁴

The Chilean National Undergraduate Accreditation Committee (CNAP - Comisión Nacional de Acreditación de Pregrado) gives priority to the evaluation of self regulation mechanisms as regards an institution's quality, such as (a) whether there are explicit goals that (b) satisfy the basic requirements or standards that an institution of higher education should have, and (c) whether it is organized to reach these required levels and to periodically verify its progress. *"Therefore, the main aims of accreditation are to evaluate, promote and give a public guarantee of the self-regulation in higher education institutions in certain areas, which means evaluating the formal presence and*

³ Orozco, Luis Enrique, and Cardoso, Rodrigo: "La evaluación como estrategia de autorregulación y cambio institucional", in *Los procesos de Acreditación en el desarrollo de las universidades*, published by CINDA, UNESCO-IESAL and the Universidad de los Andes, Santiago de Chile, 2005.

⁴ MEN Colombia, CNAP, op. cit.

*systematic application of policies and mechanisms that are geared to an institution attaining its objectives, and thus guaranteeing the instruction's quality.*⁵

WHY SEEK ACCREDITATION?

According to the Mercosur Accreditation Mechanism, “As to the purpose of accreditation, we can divide the reasons into those external to the institution on the one hand, to gain credibility with the public or to provide potential users of the services offered with accurate information, and internal reasons on the other, such as to obtain a diagnosis of the quality of the institution’s services, to foster continual improvement, or to create a consciousness of evaluation and improvement within the institution.

There is no doubt that the main effect of accreditation is to obtain public certification that the program or educational centre in question meets certain minimum requirements as regards quality. However, this is not the only effect since the accreditation process yields a diagnosis and can be used to provide the staff of the educational program with advice or guidelines as to how they should go about attaining these minimum requirements. Besides this, the accreditation process fosters a culture of continual evaluation and quality improvement among the personnel of the institution.

Accreditation is the most important mechanism that educational institutions have for accountability to society in general, and this applies not only to those with State finance but also those that are maintained with private funding.”

Source: Martín, Julio M., *El Mecanismo Experimental de Acreditación Universitaria del Mercosur*, www.iesalc.unesco.org.ve/.../documentos

According to the Mercosur Experimental University Accreditation Mechanism, “*accreditation in higher education is a systematic, organized and public process that is voluntary ... based on self-evaluation, and subsequent confirmation by peers external to the organization that the conclu-*

⁵ The Chilean Ministry of Education, National Undergraduate Accreditation Committee (CNAP), “Guía para la Evaluación Externa, Proyecto Piloto de Acreditación Institucional”, Santiago de Chile, 2004.

*sions of the self-evaluation are correct. The accrediting body is ultimately responsible for supervising the process and making the final ruling.”*⁶

The accreditation of an institution is recognition that the institution is carrying out its educational task in line with its declared objectives, and satisfying minimum quality parameters as regards certain basic variables. The accreditation of programmes, on the other hand, is focused on specific professional or occupational areas or specific disciplines.⁷

Different countries in the region have been developing their accreditation systems in higher education at different rhythms and progress is uneven, but nearly all these countries have legislation governing the conceptual foundations, objectives, scope, processes, organization and guidelines for self evaluation, external evaluation, the final report, and decision-making alternatives and procedures. Most of these methodological frameworks contain criteria, factors or development areas, characteristics and aspects to be taken account of within each characteristic, and these are the basis upon which each institution determines the variables and indicators to include in its self-evaluation report.

In Colombia, the National Accreditation Council (CNA) Guidelines for the Accreditation of Institutions has 10 criteria, 10 factors (or areas of development), 33 characteristics and about 150 “aspects that can be taken into consideration.”⁸

The basic steps of the processes in different parts of the region are so similar to each other that there is already talk of a “general model” which has the following features:

- a. self-evaluation by the institution,
- b. external evaluation by peer committees,
- c. final evaluation, and
- d. public recognition by the government, through a national accreditation council or board, or a duly authorized private body.

⁶ Martín, Julio M., *El Mecanismo Experimental de Acreditación Universitaria del Mercosur*, www.iesalc.unesco.org.ve/.../documentos. A summary of this study is available at: www.usc.es/iberoam/comun/jmartin_mexa.doc

⁷ Martín, Julio M., *op. cit.*

⁸ The full Spanish text of the Colombian CNA document entitled “Lineamientos para la Acreditación Institucional” can be downloaded from: www.cna.gov.co/publicaciones.

Orozco and Cardoso identify a number of features that are common to the accreditation processes being developed in different countries in the region:

- “– *The process is based on the self-evaluation by the institution, unit or programme in question.*
- *Both self-evaluation and the peer visit are based on standards or characteristics that are known beforehand and are oriented by expectations that are more or less universal.*
 - *The text of evaluation rulings invariably refer to inputs, products and processes, although they emphasize different aspects depending on which model is used.*
 - *The whole process finishes with a ‘final report’, written by the accreditation committee or council of the country in question.*
 - *Accreditation leads to recommendations or judgements which give guidance to the institution or programme as to the route it should take to improve or consolidate as an institution.*
 - *The evaluation is underwritten by an agency that is usually autonomous or private, or by the government through an administrative procedure.*
 - *Accreditation is temporary.”*⁹

According to the CNA in Colombia, the following criteria and factors are of key importance in the evaluation of institutions:¹⁰

CRITERIA	FACTORS
1) Suitability	1) Institutional mission and project
2) Pertinence	2) Teachers and students
3) Responsibility	3) Academic processes
4) Integrity	4) Research
5) Equity	5) Pertinence and social impact
6) Coherence	6) Self-evaluation and self-regulation processes
7) Universality	7) Institutional well-being
8) Transparency	8) Organization, management and administration
9) Effectiveness	9) Physical plant and academic support resources
10) Efficiency	10) Financial resources

⁹ Orozco, Luis Enrique and Cardoso, Rodrigo, op. cit.

¹⁰ MEN Colombia, CNA, op. cit.

Each **factor** corresponds to a group of **characteristics** that must be taken into consideration, and “**aspects that may be taken into consideration**” are defined for each characteristic. For example, the following characteristics are assigned to factor 6 (self-evaluation and self-regulation), (1) self-evaluation systems, (2) information systems, and (3) evaluation of managers, teachers and administrative personnel.

The following “aspects that may be taken into consideration” are given for the “self-evaluation systems” characteristic, (a) policies and strategies to plan self-evaluation and self-regulation for the different areas of operation and academic and administrative units in the institution, (b) the existence of plans and activities, based on self-evaluation and external evaluation, to make improvements, and (c) systems to evaluate and follow up the achievements of the institutional project.

The institution has to construct indicators that will yield variables for each of the “aspects” included and, at the same time, before going into the corresponding assessment, establish a ranking based on the relative values assigned to the factors and their characteristics. This will make for a weighting and judgement system that is more objective.¹¹

What are called “factors” in the Colombian system are called “quality standards” in the Chilean system. They are as follows:

- Mission, goals and objectives
- Government and administration
- Functions of the institution
- Human resources
- Students
- Infrastructure, technical support and academic resources
- Financial resources
- Development of the institution

In the Chilean CNAP system, in order to make evaluation rulings for each area, the peer committees rate the institution’s performance on a qualitative scale that offers the following options: “completely satisfactory”, “satisfactory”, “adequate”, “barely adequate”, “inadequate”, and “no information” or “not applicable”.¹²

¹¹ Idem.

¹² MEN Chile, CNAP, op. cit.

3.3 Functional aspects

If we overlook individual characteristics that vary from one country to another and are only to be expected, we can sum up the general procedure for an institution's obtaining accreditation as follows:¹³

1. The institution approaches the body responsible for accreditation.
2. The institution carries out a self-evaluation, following accreditation body guidelines.
3. The institution's self-evaluation report is submitted to the accreditation body (the CNAP in Chile calls this "internal evaluation" to avoid confusion with the self-evaluations involved in the accreditation of programmes). This report must conform to a specific format defined by the accrediting body in guidelines specifically for this purpose.
4. The accrediting body designates and prepares the teams or committees of peers and experts who will make the external evaluation.
5. The team of academic peers and experts draws up its external evaluation report based on a study of the documentation submitted by the institution and on the visit to the educational centre being evaluated.
6. The accreditation body sends a copy of the external evaluation report to the institution, which can make a response.
7. The accreditation body makes its final evaluation.
8. If this is positive, official accreditation is awarded by the corresponding authority.

When an institution voluntarily seeks formal institutional accreditation it must state which of its processes accreditation is being sought for. The Undergraduate Accreditation System in Chile, for example, specifies two areas that are compulsory and four additional areas. The compulsory areas are (1) the management of the institution and (2) the undergraduate teaching staff. The four optional areas are (1) postgraduate teaching, (2) research, (3) linkages in the field in question, and (4) infrastructure and resources.

¹³ The procedure in Colombia, as defined by the National Accreditation Council, is given in Annex 3.1.

For the Mercosur experimental university accreditation mechanism:

A genuine accreditation process must be made up of the following stages:

- **Internal evaluation** (self-evaluation), with effective participation by all those involved in the programme or educational centre seeking accreditation.

- **External evaluation**, made by “peers” who are not involved in the programme or educational centre being evaluated. This stage must include an actual visit to the centre or to the physical space where the programme is run.

- **Final ruling**, which must be public. Those involved must receive prior notification, and have the right to publish comments made in this context.¹⁴

For the CNA in Colombia:

“...institutional evaluation presupposes a thorough examination of the whole organization including its mission statement and institutional project, academic community (students, teachers and research personnel), academic processes (teaching, research, scope or social projection), well-being in the institution, pertinence and social impact, self-evaluation and self-regulation processes, organization, administration, management, physical installations, academic support facilities, and financial resources. For each element the analysis must be structural so as to evaluate relationships with the other elements and with the institution as a whole.”¹⁵

For the CNAP in Chile:

Evaluation of processes or evaluation of results?

One subject to do with the accreditation of institutions that has repeatedly come up is the relative weight should be assigned to the evaluation of processes on the one hand and the evaluation of results on the other. The main focus in the evaluation is on processes, which means particular attention is paid to identifying and analyzing the mechanisms around which the institution is organized so as to progress steadily towards reaching its goals and objectives.

¹⁴ Martín, Julio M., op. cit.

¹⁵ MEN Colombia, CNAP, op. cit.

However, it makes no sense to limit evaluation just to processes and ignore the results these processes yield. Therefore it is necessary to evaluate not only how quality assurance mechanisms are constituted and how they work but also how effective they are, and this finds expression in results that are consistent with the objectives declared ... which means quantitative and qualitative indicators have to be established to capture the current performance of the institution, and its evolution over time and in the various areas of operation in question, and to compare these data with the institution's declared objectives."¹⁶

In nearly all the countries in the region there are provisions for setting up and developing national accreditation systems in the regulations that govern education in general or higher education sub-systems. In many cases the national bodies responsible for quality assurance in higher education are also officially regulated in this way.¹⁷

The emergence of these organizations in the countries in region is presented here in chronological sequence:¹⁸

- In 1989 Mexico set up a National Committee for the Evaluation of Higher Education (CONAEVA - Comisión Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación Superior), under the umbrella of the National Coordinator for Higher Education Planning (CONPES - Coordinación Nacional para la Planeación de la Educación Superior).
- In 1990 Chile set up a Higher Education Council for non-autonomous private institutions (new private universities).
- In 1995 Colombia set up its National Accreditation Council (CNA - Consejo Nacional de Acreditación).
- In 1996 Argentina set up a National University Evaluation and Accreditation Committee (CONEAU - Comisión Nacional de Evaluación y Acreditación).

¹⁶ Chilean Ministry of Education, National Undergraduate Accreditation Committee (CNAP), "Guía para la Evaluación Externa, Proyecto Piloto de Acreditación Institucional", Santiago de Chile, 2004.

¹⁷ An extract from the legal framework of the higher education accreditation system in Colombia is given in Annex 3.2.

¹⁸ The main source for this chronological summary is Fernández Lamarra, Norberto, "Los sistemas de evaluación y acreditación de la calidad y el desarrollo universitario: una visión latinoamericana comparada", in *Los Procesos de Acreditación en el Desarrollo de las Universidades*, CINDA, UNESCO-IESAL and the Universidad de los Andes, Santiago de Chile, 2005.

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- In 1998 the Central American Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation System (SICEVAES - Sistema Centroamericano de Evaluación y Acreditación de la Educación Superior) was established.
 - In 1998 the Mercosur established an Experimental Course Accreditation Mechanism for the Recognition of University Degrees (Mecanismo Experimental de Acreditación de Carreras para el Reconocimiento de Grado Universitario).
 - In 1999 Chile set up its National Undergraduate Accreditation Committee (CNAP) in the framework of the activities of the quality assurance component of the Mecesus (Improvement of Quality in Higher Education) project.
 - At the end of the 1990s and the start of the new century new university accreditation evaluation bodies and projects emerged in other countries like Uruguay, Ecuador, Paraguay, El Salvador, Bolivia and Nicaragua.
 - Between 1999 and 2002 Costa Rica developed a National Higher Education Evaluation System (SINAES - Sistema Nacional de Evaluación de la Educación Superior).
 - In 2000 Mexico organized its Higher Education Accreditation Council (COPAES - Consejo para la Acreditación de la Educación Superior).
 - In 2003 Paraguay set up a National Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (Agencia Nacional de Evaluación y Acreditación de la Educación Superior).
 - In 2003 Colombia formed its National Inter-Sectoral Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee (CONACES - Comisión Nacional Intersectorial de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior).
 - In 2004 Brazil set up a National Higher Education Evaluation System (SINAES - Sistema Nacional de Evaluación de la Educación Superior).

The experience of these countries in the evaluation and accreditation not only of institutions but also of programmes has meant that their institutions have been assimilating a culture of quality evaluation, and this has enabled them to examine their own operations in the light of previously established parameters and to define mechanisms for improvement. In most of the countries the results of this process are oriented either internally, for institutional learning and improving quality, or externally, to be able to give society information and a guarantee of the quality of the services on offer or to guide the State in the area of providing finance.¹⁹

3.4 Four special cases: Colombia (two), Costa Rica and Jamaica

At the present time there are four processes under way that merit special attention –two in Colombia, one in Costa Rica and one in Jamaica– because they reflect important new departures in formalizing and consolidating accreditation systems for work training programmes and institutions. First there is a Training for Work Programmes and Institutions Accreditation System currently being designed in Colombia; second, also in Colombia, a Courses and Programmes Recognition and Authorization Programme that the State has made the National Training Service (SENA) responsible for; third, a Courses and Programmes Accreditation Service at the National Training Institute (INA) in Costa Rica; and fourth, a training institutions accreditation Process at the National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Council of the HEART-NTA in Jamaica.

3.4.1 *The Colombian Training for Work Programmes and Institutions Accreditation System*

In line with government policy guidelines laid down in 2004 in document No. 81 of the National Council for Economic and Social Policy, the Ministry of Social Protection, the Ministry of Education, the National Planning Department and the SENA itself are taking the lead in designing a system to accredit programmes and institutions in the framework of the National Training for Work System (SNFT).

At the time of writing this study, the author had access to a working document written by two consultants for the Ministry of Social Protection in Colombia²⁰ that dealt with a number of subjects including the concepts of training for work and quality assurance, the programmes and institutions that accreditation is geared to, the characteristics of the proposed system, and recommendations as to how it should be put into operation. In November 2005 the MPS and the MEN were preparing the text of a decree to give this new system a legal grounding.

The accreditation system that these consultants propose for the SNFT in Colombia would be *“oriented to certifying that work training providers*

²⁰ Peña B., Margarita and González A., Liliana, “Propuesta para la Estructura y Funcionamiento del Sistema de Acreditación de Programas e Instituciones de Formación para el Trabajo”. Working document, Bogotá, 6 September, 2005.

have the means and the capability to carry out quality training processes that would meet the needs of the productive sector (relevance) and would have the potential to produce good results (standards)”. The key characteristics of this accreditation are that it would be (a) a voluntary process, (b) external, and (c) temporary, in that accreditation would have to be periodically renewed.

Training for work is understood as an educational process that teaches a person specific or generally-applicable labour competencies related to one or more occupational fields.²¹ Based on this definition, and on the new learning contract standards that came into force in 2002 and 2003,²² the following programmes and institutions shall be accredited in the framework of the new system:

- Vocational/professional technical and technological higher education programmes.
- The methodical and complete vocational training programmes run by the SENA and by non-formal educational institutions.
- Work training programmes of the secondary technical education modality.
- Programmes run by enterprises to fulfil the learning contract.
- Institutions providing work training services that belong to the SNFT and are recognized as educational bodies (that is to say in higher technical and technological education) in the SENA, in non-formal education, and in secondary technical education.²³

*“The accreditation of work training presupposes the approval of how this functions, and it has two dimensions: the accreditation of programmes and that of institutions. In the former, an organization offering work training services submits its programmes to quality evaluation to obtain **authorized registration** for each of them. After all its programmes (or a significant percentage of them) have received this authorized registration, the institution can submit one or more of its key processes (in training or in its management system as a whole) for quality certification based on international standards so as to obtain **accreditation as an institution.**”²⁴*

²¹ Peña B., Margarita and González A., Liliana, op. cit.

²² Republic of Colombia: Law 789 of December 2002 and Decrees 933 and 2,585 of 2003.

²³ Peña B., Margarita and González A., Liliana, op. cit.

²⁴ Idem.

In this process the ISO 9000:2000 family of standards can be used. There are Colombian versions of these standards, like the NTC 9000, the Colombian Public Management Quality Technical Standard (the NTCGP 1000:2004, which is derived from the ISO 9001:2000) for the certification of quality management systems, and the GTC 200 interpretation guidelines for implementing the ISO 9001:2000 standard in formal educational establishments at pre-school, basic and secondary levels and in non-formal higher education institutions²⁵ (see chapter 2, section 2.3, above).

The functional structure of the accreditation system would consist of the following: (a) a **rector body**, set up by the Ministry of Social Protection, the National Education Ministry, and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism, which would have an **executive secretariat** from one of the two ministries. (b) Some **sectoral technical units** made up of representatives from the sectoral committees convened by the SENA, and the higher councils for small and medium enterprises coordinated by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism. (c) Some **evaluation units** to carry out the auditing to verify conformity with the quality and pertinence standards, criteria and indicators defined by the rector body.²⁶

To define the standards, criteria and indicators for authorized registration, these authors suggest using those employed by the National Inter-Sectoral Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee (CONACES) and the National Accreditation Council (CNA) (see section 3.2 of this chapter), along with other more specific instruments for work training organizations like those of the Youth in Action (Jóvenes en Acción) programme and those used by the SENA for awarding recognition to programmes and courses that may be contracted to provide training services (this will be dealt with in the next section below). In all cases these standards should, at the very least, cover the following components: curricular design, teaching staff profile and professional area, infrastructure and equipment, evaluation systems for students, and administrative processes like enrolment, programme evaluation and the certification of those who complete the course.

When it comes to accreditation of the institution, the evaluation units will have the following functions:

“... ”

²⁵ Colombian Technical Standards and Certification Institute (ICONTEC – Instituto Colombiano de Normas Técnicas y Certificación), “GTC 200 Guía para...” op. cit.

²⁶ Peña B., Margarita and González A., Liliana, op. cit.

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1. *To adopt the standards, criteria and indicators additional to NTC ISO 9001:2000, and the standards defined by the SNFT Accreditation Council for the certification of institutions offering work training services.*
 2. *To assign suitable auditors to carry out evaluations, in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the NTC ISO 062.*
 3. *To carry out the audit as stipulated in the NTC ISO 062.*
 4. *To award quality certification for the institution or processes submitted for evaluation.*"²⁷

These consultants propose that the process of setting up the system should include the following steps:

- a) Enact legislation to set up the system.
- b) Put the executive secretariat into operation.
- c) Assemble the members of the SNFT Accreditation Council.
- d) Define and announce the standards, criteria, variables and indicators for general and sectoral evaluation of programmes and institutions.
- e) Define a communications and publicity strategy for the system and inform the interested parties about this.
- f) Explore mechanisms to support work training institutions so they will be able to start their improvement processes and ultimately obtain accreditation.

3.4.2 Recognition or Authorization of Courses and Programmes by the SENA

Since 1960, the SENA has been the body legally authorized to award recognition to programmes in specialized institutions and enterprises that give integrated, methodical and complete vocational training. Until a few years ago the benefit of recognition was limited to the students on those programmes being subject to the learning contract. In 2002, Law 789 considerably widened the kind and the number of trainees that must be contracted by their Colombian employers, and now these can be (a) SENA trainees, (b) students in the prac-

tice stage of higher education in the university or vocational technology or technical modalities, (c) pupils in secondary education, that is to say in the 10th and 11th grade or year of high school, and (d) learners on programmes in enterprises that directly train their trainees.

In this context, the National Management Council of the institution made **Agreement 0016 of 2003** “...which regulates aspects of the recognition and authorization of integrated, methodical and complete vocational training programmes” (see Annex 3.3), and the management of the National Work Training System (which comes under the SENA itself) drew up a *Manual for the Recognition and Authorization of integrated, methodical and complete vocational training programmes and courses*. The summary in this section is based on this.²⁸

In this manual, the recognition and authorization of courses and programmes is defined as “...a process that interested educational institutions, specialized establishments and enterprises that give training for work can avail themselves of, voluntarily and individually, whereby their integrated, methodical and complete vocational training programmes are evaluated and recognized or authorized by the SENA.”

The recognition of courses and programmes has a number of **objectives**:

- First, it is a mechanism to strengthen the National Training for Work Institutions Network, which is one of the instruments of the National Work Training System (SNFT) and “...is a means whereby work training institutions are coordinated so as to integrate their efforts, products, services and experience in human resources training.”²⁹
- Second, it is a procedure whereby trainees from a specific programme have to be accepted by the State as counting towards the compulsory quota of learning contracts that enterprises have to have.
- Third, it will strengthen quality, pertinence and coverage improvement processes in training for work, and help to publicize and promote the labour competencies focus in institutions with work training programmes.

²⁸ SENA, General Management, *Manual para el reconocimiento y autorización de cursos y programas de formación profesional integral metódica y completa*, Bogotá, August, 2004 (mimeo). (Also see: www.sena.edu.co/portal).

²⁹ SENA, SNFT Management, “Red de Entidades de Formación para el Trabajo”. Power Point presentation, Bogotá, 2004.

Programme recognition is aimed “...mainly at programmes that have been structured with the labour competencies focus, except in trades and occupations for which the SENA does not have labour competency standards or programmes designed by competencies. These programmes must take account of the phases of the labour training process, which are the academic phase (general training for work) and the work practice phase, geared to the human development components that correspond to the life project and training for undertakings that lead to a certificate of vocational or occupational aptitude on a technical level in skilled or semi-skilled trades, with a minimum duration of 440 hours in the academic stage and 440 hours in the production stage.”³⁰

For a programme to be able to obtain SENA recognition it will have to satisfy a number of **quality and pertinence criteria**, including the following:

- a. “Offer academic and practical training content that meets the needs of integrated vocational training and of the labour market.
- b. Have human resources skilled in the areas in which integrated vocational training programmes are run.
- c. Guarantee, either directly or through agreements with third parties, the technical, pedagogic and administrative resources to ensure the satisfactory implementation of training programmes.
- d. The training programme must be geared to an occupation or trade that figures on the trades and occupations list approved by the SENA National Management Council, in line with article 5 of Decree 2.585 of 2003.
- e. The profile of the successful trainee must be clearly related to the competencies and functions of the trade or occupation he was trained for.”

When interested parties apply for SENA recognition of their programmes, the **documents** they have to submit include the following:

- A written application to the SENA Regional Director from the institution or enterprise’s main office or from the premises where the programme will be run, countersigned by the institution’s legal representative.
- Authorization for the programme from the appropriate official authority, if this is a legal or regulatory requirement.

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- The curricular structure of the programme, a description of the programme's didactic and support resources, and a list of the teaching staff for the programme along with the CV of each teacher or instructor and the training plan for what they are to teach.
 - In the case of alliances, a copy of the current contract or agreement whereby technical, pedagogic and educational resources are to be provided.
 - A market study demonstrating the programme's connection with the world of work and identifying the physical places (municipalities or departments) and enterprises where the worker profile in question is in demand.
 - Projected administration of the programme indicating the enrolment process, selection, induction, follow up on the training process, evaluation, certification, trainee services and follow up on trained participants.

According to the *Manual*, the recognition or authorization of courses or programmes yields the following **benefits**:

- *“Registration as a provider of vocational training programmes recognized or authorized by the SENA.*
- *Membership of the National Training for Work System. This means a network of national and international vocational training providers can be built up, which facilitates training mobility and the updating of teachers or instructors.*
- *The updating and tailoring of the institution's programmes according to changes in the labour market.*
- *Trainees on these programmes will be able to access a learning contract and resources from the Enterprises Fund (FE - Fondo Emprender).*
- *The right to reimbursement as laid down in clause 3 of article 38 of Law 789 (2002) for enterprises running programmes authorized by the SENA, through calls for offers make for this purpose. (In no case can the annual amount reimbursed per enterprise, in virtue of the different services rendered by the SENA, directly or through agreements, exceed 50% of the value of the extra-fiscal contributions paid to the SENA by the enterprise in question in the previous financial year).”*

The recognition of programmes also involves **obligations** for the institution in question, and some of the outstanding ones are as follows:

- To maintain and improve the quality and pertinence of the programmes, and continue to comply with each of the requirements that recognition or authorization was based on.
- To carry out a twice-yearly self-evaluation of the recognized or authorized programmes and to act on the recommendations of these evaluations within the stipulated time period.
- To evaluate trainees who complete the programme during the year after training so as to determine impact in the world of work.
- To facilitate programme follow up and monitoring carried out by the SENA.

“The SENA’s vocational training centres and regional offices are responsible for the technical concepts involved in applications for programme recognition or authorization, and in follow-up evaluations of recognized or authorized programmes, in which the institution or enterprise’s own twice-early self-evaluation will be taken into account.”³¹

The evaluators have a “*Guide to the analysis and evaluation for recognition of the quality of courses and programmes*”, which contains instructions for giving a percentage valuation for each of the variables.³² The variables and indicators and the maximum percentages for each are given in the table below.

³¹ Idem.

³² Idem.

Box 1
Guide to the Analysis and Evaluation for Recognition of the
Quality of Courses and Programmes. SENA Colombia
 Percentage rating of each variable

VARIABLE	INDICATOR	MAXIMUM % VALUE
CURRICULAR STRUCTURE 35%	Consistency of objectives, title, name and duration of course	5
	Labour demand information and course justification	5
	Consistency of entrance requirements, objectives and graduate profile	5
	Harmony among areas, subjects and timetable intensity	5
	Consistency of content, course objectives and graduate profile	7
	Suitable distribution of subjects, updated and with appropriate methodology	5
	Affordable cost	3
	SUB TOTAL	35
TEACHING STAFF 30%	Number of teachers	6
	Level of studies	6
	Experience	6
	Full time/part time	6
	Consistency of teacher profile with subject	6
	SUB TOTAL	30
LABORATORIES, WORKSHOPS AND DIDACTIC RESOURCES 20%	Appropriate practice space	3
	Machinery and equipment	3
	Distribution of physical space	3
	Replacement of machinery and equipment	1
	Requirements for agreements for practice	3
	Didactic resources related to course and in appropriate quantity	3
	Appropriate equipment and spaces	3
	Replacement of equipment	1
SUB TOTAL	20	
PROGRAMME ADMINISTRATION 15%	Information and promotion	2
	Enrolment	1
	Selection	2
	Registration	1
	Follow up	4
	Evaluation	1
	Certification	1
	Trainee well being	3
SUB TOTAL	15	
TOTAL		100

Source: SENA, General Management, *Manual for the recognition and authorization of integrated, methodical and complete vocational training courses and programmes*, Bogotá, August, 2004.

3.4.3 Costa Rica National Training Institute (INA) *Accreditation Service for Training Courses and Programmes*³³

Accreditation is a free service that the INA provides so as to organize and coordinate the vocational training offered by the various institutions in Costa Rica. The INA provides this service in line with the provisions of Organization Law No. 6.868 and the policies laid down by its Directing Council in the framework of one of its most important functions, which is to “...organize and coordinate the country’s systems of vocational training for all sectors of economic activity” (Law 6.868, article 3, sub-clause a). The official regulation that defines and regulates this activity was issued by the INA Board of Directors and is in article 4 of session No. 3.293, which was held on 30 October, 1995 (see Annex 3.4).

*“Accreditation is a free service that the institution offers to private or public physical persons or legal entities who have a training programme for the general public in Costa Rica or for their own workers, and who wish to obtain accreditation from the appropriate official body for the training they offer... Accreditation is official recognition that the vocational training offered by private or public physical persons or legal entities meets the training quality standards set by the system, and it is awarded once they have satisfied the requirements of the respective regulations... Thus people who study are assured of teaching that is underwritten by the INA.”*³⁴

The **general principles** of the INA accreditation service are as follows:

- **Voluntary:** The entity itself must voluntarily apply for accreditation.
- **Experience:** The courses the entity runs must have a minimum of two grades.
- **Temporary:** Accreditation is valid only for a period of between one and three years.
- **Renewable:** The entity can apply for accreditation to be renewed.
- **Revocability:** Accreditation can be revoked if the conditions under which it was awarded undergo some negative change.

³³ Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje de Costa Rica (INA), “Servicio de Acreditación”. www.ina.ac.cr (December, 2006).

³⁴ All quotes in this section are taken from the source in footnote 65 (www.ina.ac.cr).

The **process** to obtain accreditation consists of the following steps:

a) Submission, follow-up and receipt of packet of documents: When the interested entity collects the application form (with a list of the documents required) from the INA Accreditation Unit, it is advised of the information it will have to submit. Once the complete package of documents is submitted, it receives a response about the condition of these documents within five working days.

b) Pre-diagnosis: When the application and supporting documentation have been submitted there is a pre-diagnosis which consists of a duly-programmed visit to the installations where the training takes place. The aim of this is to verify the information given and determine whether the application can proceed to the next stage of the accreditation process, and a decision is made and a reply given no more than ten days after the last visit. If the decision is affirmative, the Accreditation Unit and the applicant sign a letter of intent which includes a list of both parties' responsibilities in the following stage.

c) Evaluation of the physical and academic conditions of the courses: If the pre-diagnosis proves positive, evaluation of the entity begins within two months. For this stage the Accreditation Unit sets up a panel of experts to evaluate five important areas of the physical and academic conditions under which the training takes place. These areas are as follows:

- Curricular structure
- Infrastructure
- Furniture, machinery and equipment
- Human resources
- Occupational safety and hygiene.

“There will be a concurrent evaluation which consists of questionnaires for students who are actively undergoing the training for which accreditation is sought. The purpose of this is to check the effectiveness and suitability of the physical and academic conditions that are utilized in that training. At the same time there will be an evaluation of the impact of courses that have been completed through questionnaires for ex-trainees and their bosses, whose main purpose is to measure the usefulness of the training and how much advantage is taken of it, and this can be used a basis for suggesting corrective measures and introducing such measures in future training. The evaluation stage shall take no longer than five months to complete, and it ends when the panel of experts make their final report.”

d) Analysis and Ruling by the Accreditation Council: The report from the previous stage will be the main input for the final ruling by the Accreditation Council, which is made up the management of INA, the chiefs of the Accreditation Unit and a member of the chamber of the sector for which the applying institution's courses are giving training.

If the **result** is **positive** the institution receives:

- The Accreditation Council's ruling.
- Proof of accreditation.
- Recommendations about the accredited courses that must be complied with (if merited).
- Certificate or registration numbers, whenever an accredited course is run.

If the **result** is **negative** the institution receives:

- The Accreditation Council's ruling.
- Justification as to why the courses have not been accredited, and the appropriate recommendations.

The result(s) will be communicated to the institution no more than two months after the panel of experts submits its report to the Accreditation Unit.

e) Monitoring for Renewal of Accreditation: Once accreditation has been awarded, the monitoring of the accredited courses begins. This is broken down into:

- **Verification of Compliance with Recommendations:** There are checks to verify that the obligatory recommendations made as a result of the evaluation are being complied with.
- **Course monitoring:** This is done while the courses are under way to check that quality standards are being maintained.
- **Course supervision:** After accreditation is awarded there is an annual supervisory check to make sure that quality on the courses is maintained at the levels pertaining at the time of accreditation. When this phase is about to start less than ten days notice is given, and the whole procedure takes no more than three months. The results are communicated to the institution no more than two months after study has finished.

Accreditation brings the following benefits: “(a) the quality of the vocational training offered by the public or private physical person or legal entity is regulated and improved. (b) There is a guarantee to society that the training given is solid, credible, and comes up to the quality standards required by the accreditation system. And (c) the enterprise is evaluated by a system that is recognized internationally for the quality of the service it renders.”

On the INA web page: www.ina.ac.cr in the section entitled Accreditation Service” (Servicio de Acreditación) the following links are available:

- Accreditation Regulations
- Form to apply for the service
- Evaluation guidelines
- Requirements to make up the panel of experts
- Form to make up the panel of experts
- Classification of sectors, sub-sectors and functional areas
- Courses accredited by the INA listed under the institution that offers them

3.4.4 Accreditation of Training Institutions by the National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Council of the HEART-NTA in Jamaica

The Jamaican HEART Trust - NTA (Human Employment and Resource Training Trust – National Training Agency) has a number of mechanisms in its Technical Operation Model (TOM) designed with the aim of building a quality assurance system.

A Technical Operation Model centred on quality: The Technical Operation Model is based on establishing national standards for accredited training institutions. These standards make it possible to establish the quality of an institution as regards training and evaluation, and also of the institution’s administrative and client service systems. These standards (and their application) make up the concept of a quality assurance system.

The HEART-NTA Technical Operation Model stipulates quality requirements that training institutions must comply with in order to qualify for accreditation. These requirements include the following – the institution must:

- Maintain training and quality evaluation documentation systems
- Carry out internal audits at least once a year
- Have written procedures for the recruitment, guidance and professional development of its staff
- Employ instructors and evaluators with specified competencies
- Comply with the explicit quality assurance requirements in evaluations
- Have processes to recognize prior learning and offer this service to all interested parties
- Comply with the specific requirements to operate, validate and implement training and evaluation strategies

A national qualifications framework (NQF): In Jamaica the training system has provisions for a national qualifications framework whose objective is to describe, in a clearly articulated and comprehensible way, the different vocational education and training offers available at different levels, and also the routes open to workers to progress in the system. Besides this, the framework is geared to the needs of the labour market.

The national qualifications framework is to be inclusive, incorporating the whole range of different kinds of certification (not only in vocational but also in tertiary education), diplomas and grades that come under the framework. The HEART-NTA national qualifications framework has five levels of competency that describe the so-called National Qualifications that are defined by enterprises and required by them when it comes to filling a job post. The description of each level and occupation is based on the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are needed for performance in a particular job.

Level 1 consists of routine activities that are carried out in a narrow context and usually under close supervision. In level 2 there is more variety and autonomy, and there can be cooperation with other workers. In level 3 the activities are complex, non-routine, involve a considerable degree of responsibility and autonomy, and involve controlling other workers. Level 4 covers a wide range of technical and professional activities involving considerable responsibility and personal autonomy, and includes responsibility for other people's work and for distributing resources. Lastly, level 5 activities involve more

responsibilities, great autonomy, and responsibility for the planning, execution and evaluation of work.

Training institutions participate in the qualifications framework through their training offer since they develop competencies in line with the standards that make up this national framework. Training providers recognized by the NCTVET as accredited training institutions can offer programmes and evaluation services to candidates who wish to have their competencies certified. Further information about the national qualifications framework is available at the HEART-NTA web site: www.heart-nta.org ³⁵

The National Council on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NCTVET): This was set up in 1992. It is the body responsible for quality in the national qualifications framework. In fact it is the branch of the HEART-NTA responsible for quality assurance in educational, accreditation and certification processes, and its authorized functions include setting the rules under which the accreditation of training or competency evaluation organizations takes place in the national qualifications framework.

The NCTVET is responsible for managing quality assurance in processes and its functions include the following:

- To establish the quality framework to develop competency standards and the guidelines and procedures for evaluation.
- To develop standards for training and for the evaluation of the trainees.
- To accredit institutions providing training.
- To accredit training programmes for which standards are not yet available.
- To establish the standards for evaluators and register them.
- To administer the registration of accredited training institutions.
- To carry out quality audits in accredited training institutions.
- To establish equivalences for other qualifications that may be requested.

³⁵ The Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA) has decided that this national qualifications framework will be used as a regional framework covering the English-speaking Caribbean. This will facilitate the international recognition of labour competency certification.

To sum up, the main aim of the quality assurance system is to provide the base for a national technical and vocational training and education system that meets the quality standards established for accreditation, training, evaluation and certification processes.

The standards in the quality assurance system have a double orientation: they are for training institutions and also for evaluation bodies.

Accreditation of Training Institutions: The NCTVET awards accreditation to training institutions that apply for it. The NCTVET gauges the institution's capability to carry out training by competency units, national qualifications or curriculum, and also its capability to evaluate individuals' competencies with respect to the requirements of a competencies standard. Two kinds of accreditation are awarded, for training and evaluation together or just for evaluation.

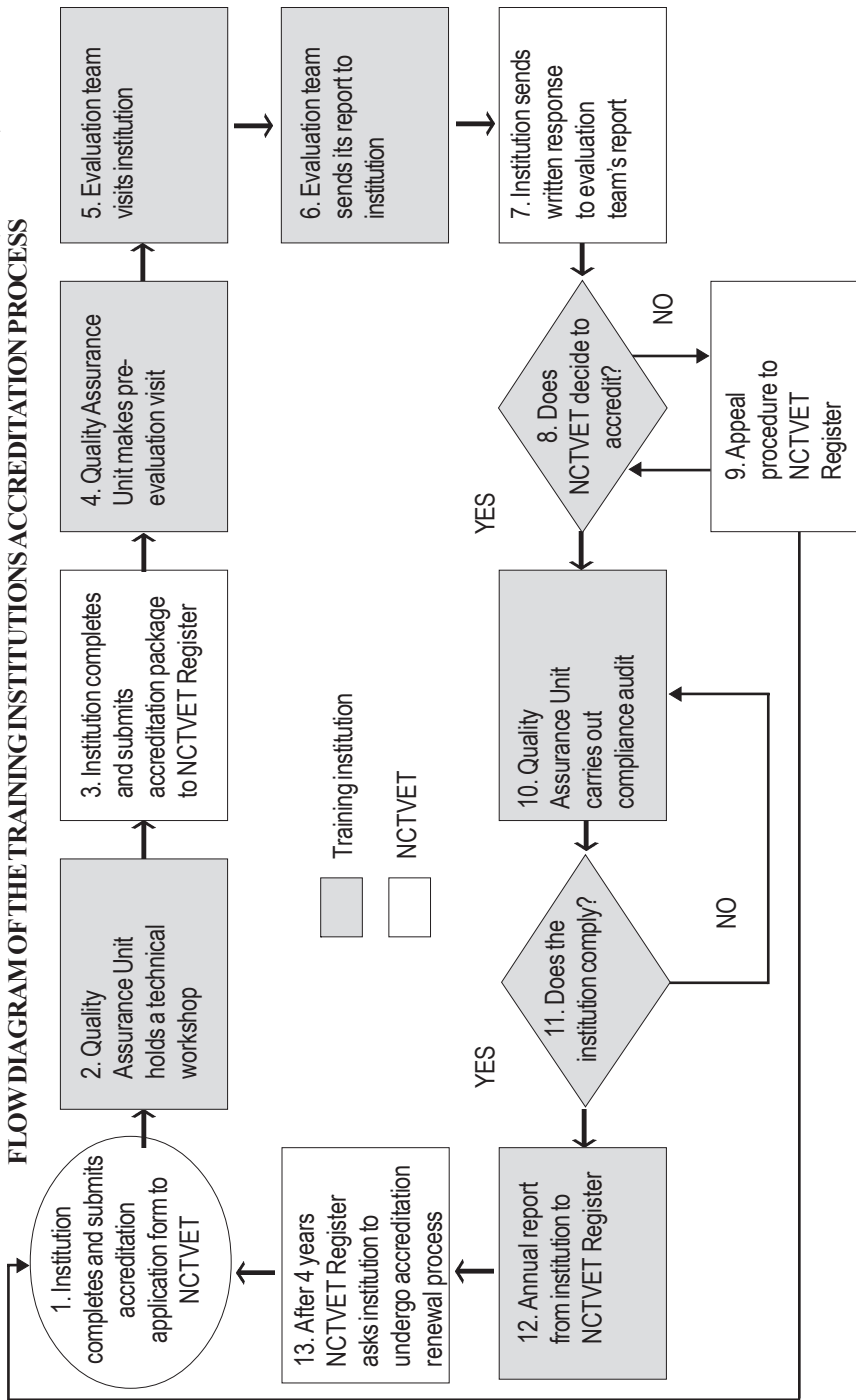
In recent years accreditation has become more prominent in the evaluation of training programme quality. Marjorie Barrett, from the NCTVET information and promotion area, made the point that "Accreditation gives training programmes greater credibility, which is therefore reflected in good performance on the job by individuals trained at the accredited institution". The Council has produced an accreditation manual which explains the policies, procedures and standards used in the process so as to make accreditation easier for institutions that are interested.

Accreditation of evaluation organizations: The aim of this process is to ensure that the evaluation process is based on competency standards, and is fair and consistent throughout the country. There is an evaluation guidebook that makes clear the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the process: the training institution, the evaluating organization, and the NCTVET as quality controller.

The guidebook explains the process of evaluation to guarantee the recognition of competencies within the national quality framework, and these guidelines must be followed to ensure that evaluation is transparent, fair and valid. The accreditation process in Jamaica is shown in the diagram below.

In this case accreditation is focused on the standards that are applied in evaluation, covers a period of four years, and is initiated and validated by a team of external evaluators that includes representatives of enterprises.

**NATIONAL COUNCIL ON TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (NCTVET)
FLOW DIAGRAM OF THE TRAINING INSTITUTIONS ACCREDITATION PROCESS**



Source: HEART-NTA.