

Enhancing Graduate Employability through Quality Assurance: Issues, Trends and the Way Forward

Mad Nasir Shamsudin
Aini Ideris
Universiti Putra Malaysia

5th QS-APPLE Annual Conference
Kuala Lumpur
November 24 - 26, 2009

Why do we need Quality Assurance, in the first place, to enhance graduate employability?

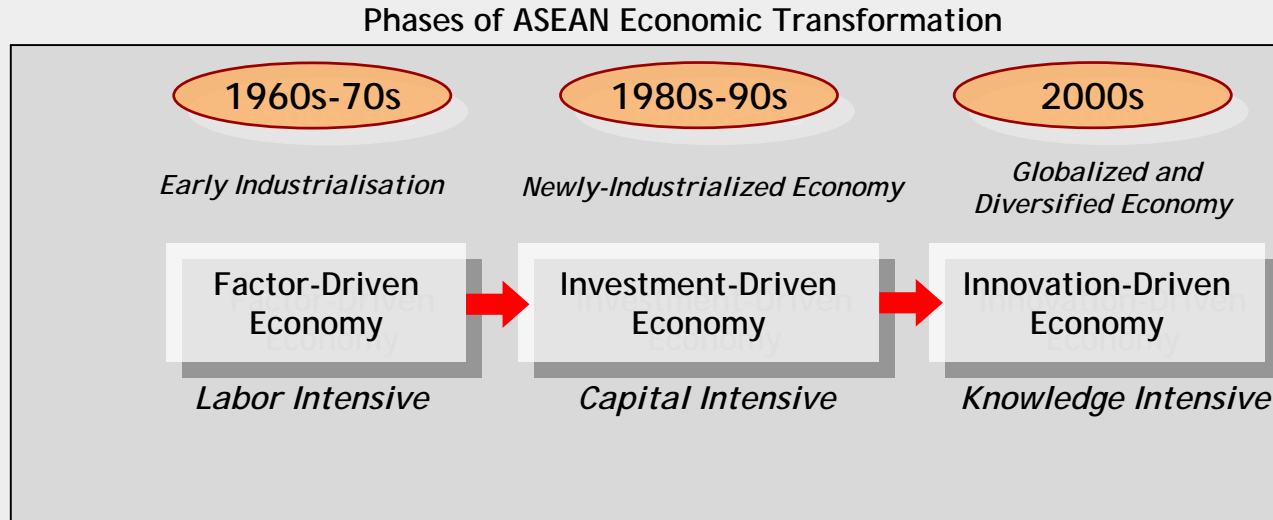
- What are the pertinent issues in higher education?
- What are the role of higher education?
- What is employability?
- Is there a gap between what HEIs intended to produce and realized products that we need Quality Assurance?
- What is Quality Assurance?
- How could Quality Assurance ensure the academic standards & quality, and hence, enhance graduate employability?

Pertinent Issues in Higher Education

- Economic transformation to k-economy and i-economy - recognition of human capital as a catalyst for economic & social development
- Massification - from elite to mass production
- Commodification - higher education as an industry rather than social institution
- Globalization & internationalization - flow of labour across borders, so need benchmarking standards & quality
- Corporate interests - play more important role in determining the purpose of higher education
- Of course, there might be more!

Pertinent Issues in Higher Education

South-East Asian nations need to transition into the k-economy successfully. Higher education plays a critical role.



- Knowledge and innovation will determine our competitiveness and success in the global arena.
- Our future workforce and higher education institutions (HEIs) must be prepared to face these new realities.

➤ Recognition of human capital as a catalyst for economic & social development

Pertinent Issues in Higher Education

Expected contributions of higher education in the k-economy

- Development of human capital with the right qualities in the right quantities:
 - Preparing skilled workforce with positive outlook, attitudes, and values.
 - Catering to the diverse needs of the economy of the future.
 - Instilling excellence in all branches of tertiary education and training.

➤ Need Quality Assurance to ensure academic standards & quality

Current scenario on tertiary education in Malaysia

Tertiary Education^(a) Basic Statistics

	2007 ^(b)	2010 ^(b)	2020 ^(c)	Moving Forward
Enrolment	1,239,100	1,435,600	2,037,900	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renewed emphasis on quality of education.
Cohort 17-23 in Tertiary Education	36%	40%	50%	
Tertiary Educated Workforce	20%	27%	33%	

Number of Institutions under MOHE (2007)

	Public	Private	Total	Moving Forward
Universities & University Colleges	20	36 ^(d)	56	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renewed emphasis on quality of education.
Polytechnics	21	-	21	
Community Colleges	37	-	37	
Other Colleges	-	485	485	

Note: (a) Includes STPM, matriculation, A-Level and equivalent enrolment (2007=297,000; 2010=352,000; 2020=429,000). (b) EPU estimates. (c) MOHE estimates. (d) Includes 4 foreign university branches.

Commodification of Higher Education

- Growing number of Private institutions
 - Over 500 institutions.
 - Not sure about the quality of the programs in some of the smaller colleges.
 - Influx of foreign students and the growing social problems attributed to them.

Economic Globalisation & Internationalisation

- Cross-border mobility of graduate employability.
- Need to benchmark to ensure the academic standards & quality at international level.

Changing Role of Higher Learning Institutions

- Historically, serve as an institution for moral and intellectual development as well as centres of civilization.
- With rapid economic development, becoming more utilitarian with emphasis on professional training.
- Many countries are shifting from elite to mass systems (massification) of higher education.
- Training becomes market driven and responsive to the changing needs of the various sectors of an economy.

Pertinent Issues

■ Purpose of higher education

- Redefinition of higher education - *“Education has been redefined as primarily a means of skilling more and more young workers, and of providing professional and in-service courses in life-long (re)learning; rather than about expanding the minds and developing the capacities of citizens”* - Leonard (2000)
- So has utilitarianism eclipsed intellectualism in HEIs? Do HEIs exist simply to meet the needs of modern capitalism and are students being constructed solely as future workers, rather than fully rounded citizens?

Pertinent Issues

■ Employability vs Employment

- Employment – getting a job, any job!
- Employability – a set of achievement (skills, understanding and personal attributes) that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (Yorke, 2004).
- Employability – having the capability & quality to gain initial employment, maintain employment and progress in the workplace (Generally accepted definition).

Pertinent Issues

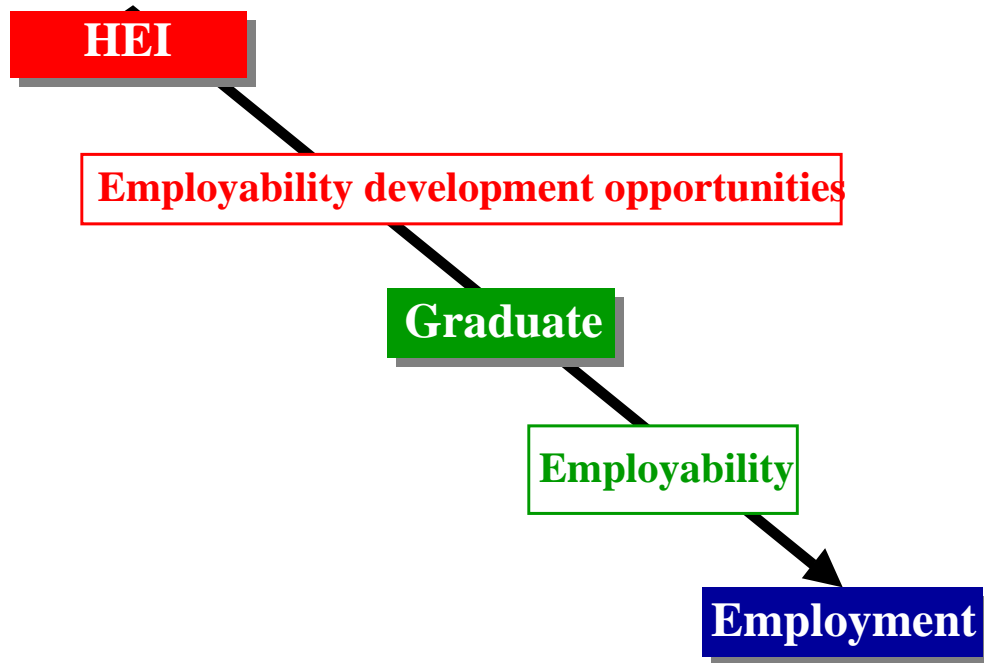
■ Employability vs Employment

- From the employers' perspective - employability is the propensity of the graduate to exhibit attributes that employers anticipate would be necessary for the future effective functioning of their organisation (Harvey, 1997).
- From HEIs perspective - producing graduates who are capable and able, and these impacts upon all areas of university life, in terms of the delivery of academic programmes and extra curricula activities.

Pertinent Issues

“Magic bullet” model of employability

- students are somehow given employability as a result of their having been a student, which leads them to being employed.

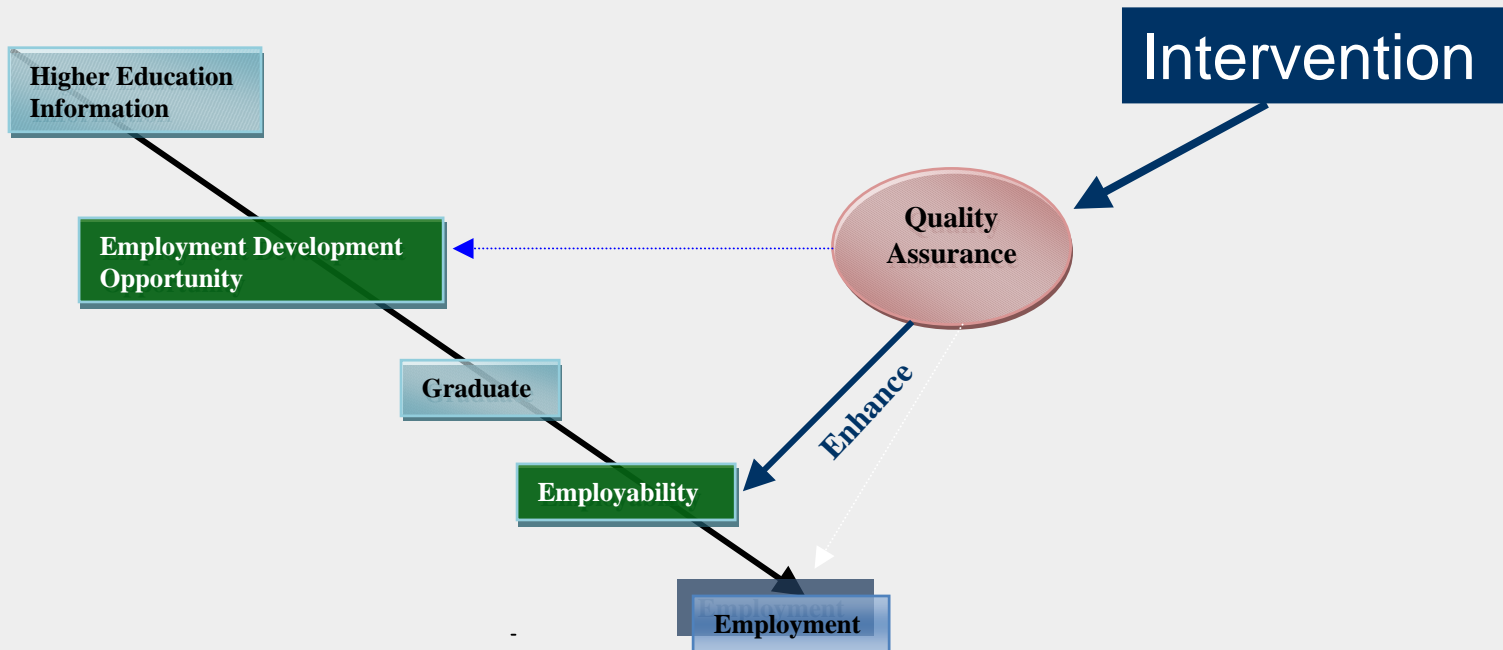


More Questions Effecting Employability

- With K-economy, could HEIs produce the right quality and quantity?
 - With economic globalisation, could HEIs ensure the international academic quality and standard?
 - With massification of higher education, could HEIs ensure the required quality and standard of the graduates?
 - With commodification of higher education, could HEIs ensure the required quality and standard of the graduates?
- Could Quality Assurance (QA) framework ensures the required quality and standard of the graduates, and hence, enhancing graduate employability?

With k-economy, massification, commodification & economic globalisation, could the magic bullet model enhance graduate employability?

Quality Assurance intervention to enhance employability



With K-economy, globalisation, massification, commodification & industry relevance, we need QA to ensure the academic standards & quality are maintained & improved to enhance graduate employability.

Model of employability adopted from "Magic bullet"

Key Terms

- **Academic Standards** - are a way of describing the level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain an academic award (e.g. a degree).
- **Academic Quality** - is a way of describing how well the learning opportunities available to students help them to achieve their award. It is about making sure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are provided for them.
- **Quality Assurance** - refers to a range of review procedures designed to safeguard academic standards and promote learning opportunities for students of acceptable quality.

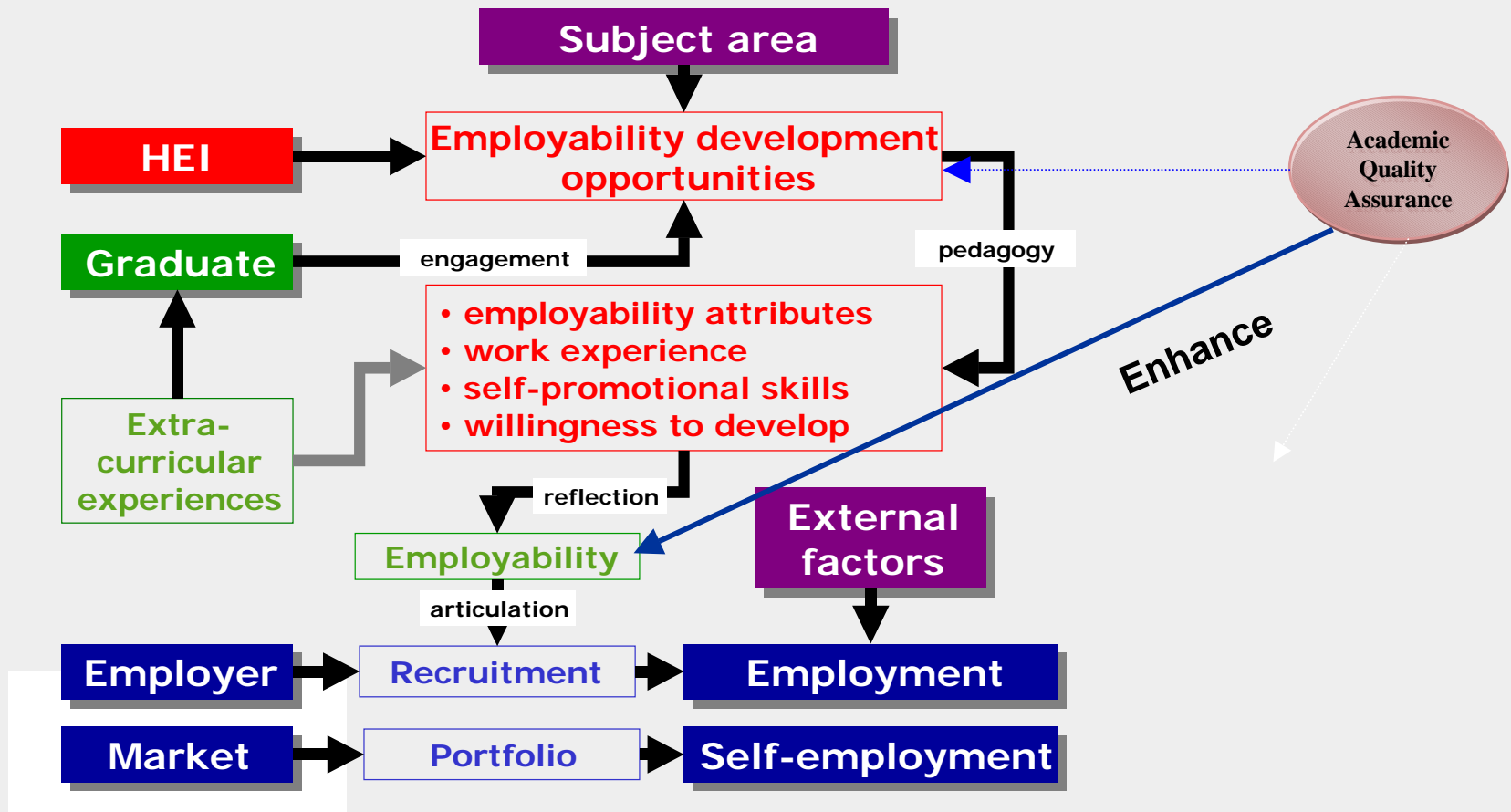
Quality Assurance Framework

- to denote practices whereby academic standards, i.e., the level of academic achievement attained by higher education graduates, are maintained and improved.
- consistent with the emerging focus in higher education policies on student learning outcomes -- the specific levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities that students achieve as a consequence of their engagement in a particular education program - Brennan and Shah (2000).

Why we need Academic QA?

- Seek international recognition for degree framework due to global demand for skilled human capital
- Rapid growth of higher education systems has provided incentives for the development of private institutions, including cross-border franchise and virtual universities
- HEIs in many countries have sought increased flexibility and autonomy so that they can react more swiftly to changing social demands by establishing new academic programs, reconfiguring existing programs, and eliminating outdated programs
- Rapidly expanding social demand for higher education has been caused in large part by students' desire to achieve the increasing private benefits available to individuals with higher degrees
- Improving employability & life-long learning.

QA intervention in employability development



Source: Harvey *et al.* (2002)

Employability Attributes

- Technical skills (cognitive & psychomotor)
- Communication skills
- Interpersonal skills and team working
- Personal attributes - intellect and problem solving, analytic, critical and reflective ability, willingness to learn and continue learning, flexibility and adaptability, risk-taking and self-skills

Learning Outcomes - Malaysian case

■ Based on 8 domains

- Knowledge
- Practical skill
- Social skills and responsibilities
- Values, attitudes and professionalism
- Communication, leadership and team skills
- Problem solving and scientific skill
- Information management and lifelong learning skill
- Managerial and entrepreneurial skills

Thus we need QA to ensure the domains are obtained by students to enhance their employability.

Quality Assurance in Malaysia

- National Accreditation Board (LAN) was established in 1997 – governing the standards & quality of private HEIs
- Quality Assurance Division (QAD), under the Ministry – for public HEIs
- In 2007, LAN & QAD merge to become Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA) – responsible for QA of both public & private HEIs
- MQA – the custodian of the Malaysian Qualification Framework (MQF) & implement it as a basis of QA of higher education.
- MQA – responsible for monitoring and overseeing the QA practices and accreditation of national higher education.

Academic Performance Audit (APA)

9 Areas:

1. Vision, Mission, Educational Goal & Learning outcome
2. Curriculum Design & Delivery
3. Assessment of Students
4. Student Selection & Support Services
5. Academic Staff
6. Educational Resources
7. Programme Monitoring & Review
8. Leadership, Governance & Administration
9. Total Continual Quality Improvement

“Creating the necessary conditions for excellence” is the guiding principle that drives the two strategic documents launched on August 27, 2007.

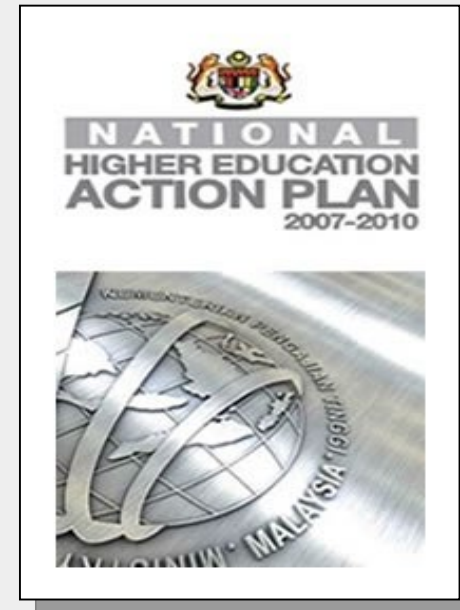
1. The National Higher Education Strategic Plan

Laying the Foundation Beyond 2020.



2. The National Higher Education Action Plan

Triggering Transformation 2007-2010.



The ultimate goal is to support the National Mission in developing human capital.

The National Higher Education Strategic Plan sets the long-range direction and goals.

The National Higher Education Strategic Plan

Laying the Foundation Beyond 2020



Strategic Thrusts:

1. Widening Access and Increasing Equity
2. Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning
3. Intensifying Research and Innovation
4. Strengthening of Higher Education Institutions
5. Intensifying Internationalization
6. Enculturation of Lifelong Learning
7. Reinforcing MOHE Delivery Systems.

The Way Forward for Southeast Asia

- Diversity of economic, social and political systems leads to diverse structure and organisation of higher education and national approaches to QA framework across Southeast Asia.
- Generic approach, however, should be formulated that has relevance for all higher education institutions, QA agencies and quality assessment practices in the region
- Why? Recognising the benefits of QA in enhancing employability & for benchmarking.
- To provide guidance to both HEIs and QA agencies interested in enhancing policies and practices. They are intended to complement national quality assurance approaches and frameworks relating to recognition of qualifications (both domestic and international), institutions, courses and programs and national registers of institutions, courses and QA agencies.

Terima Kasih

(Thank You)



Developing Quality Assurance Framework

