

Benefits from both American and Taiwanese
external QA processes:
The case of Ming Chuan University

Nellie S. Cheng

Ming Chuan University

Overview

- **Introduction**
 - MSCHE accreditation: initiation and process
 - HEEACT accreditation: government policy and process
- **Research Methods**
- **Results and Discussion**
 - Differences between HEEACT and MSCHE Accreditation
 - Mutual Reinforcement of these Accreditations
- **Conclusion**

Introduction

- To distinguish itself from other private higher educational institutions in Taiwan, Ming Chuan University (MCU) has established strategies to achieve its vision of becoming an international university.
- MCU underwent the accreditation processes of both the MSCHE and the HEEACT during the same period (2005–2011) and benefited from both.

MSCHE accreditation: initiation and process

- Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)
- one of six regional accrediting bodies recognized by the Council for Higher Education (CHEA)
- Founded in 1919, a voluntary, non-governmental, membership association
- accrediting degree-granting colleges and universities in the Middle States region of the USA and several locations internationally

Phase 1
2005.10~2006.9

Eligibility Requirements

Workshop to start up the process

Filed application for membership & submitted requirements

MSCHE evaluator visited to verify 22 requirements

22 Eligibility requirements verified

Phase 2
~2008.11

Self-Assessment

Self- assessed status of 14 standards

Filed Self-assessment report

Applicant Self-Assessment Team Visit

Awarded candidacy for accreditation

Phase 3
~2010.12

Self-Study

Attended Self-study institute

Conduct Self-study process

Consultant visit

Submitted Self Study report

Self-Study Site Visit

Awarded accreditation



HEEACT accreditation: government policy and process

- Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT)
- An independent legal body, established and is led by the official MOE in Taiwan
- Hawkins (2008) characterized the accreditation process in Taiwan as “basically a centralized approach with some decentralization gestures (p. 19).”
- The legislation of University evaluation, established in January 2007, specifically states that MOE is the planning body of University evaluation affairs (article No.2), and should conduct meta-evaluation through external agencies (article No.7).

- Since its establishment in 2005, HEEACT completed its first cycle of program accreditation during 2006-2009.
 - All of the general universities, numbering 78 institutions, with nearly 3000 programs, were mandated to participate in the first cycle of program accreditation.
- Each program was required to submit a self-evaluation report and to host a two-day site visit review by an accrediting team of five members.

- MCU's Self-Evaluation Reports for HEEACT program accreditation were submitted in August 2008, and site visits were conducted in November 2008.
- This timing coincided with the start-up of self-study for MSCHE accreditation (MCU was awarded candidacy for accreditation on November 21, 2008).

Research Methods

- In-depth interviews with 10 key informers of MCU's accreditations
- Selected based on the criterion that each one should have deep involvement in both accreditations due to role or/and position one played during the processes.
- For the HEEACT accreditation, they were top executive officers (on the administrative side), five Chairs (on the academic side), and two faculty
- For MSCHE accreditation, members of the steering committee, or leaders or members of one of the working groups

- Two main questions lasted from 40 to 90 minutes.
 - 1. What are the differences between HEEACT and MSCHE accreditations?
 - 2. What are the impacts of these two accreditations on the development of MCU?

- Two manuscripts were used to support the documentation of the accreditation process.
 - 1. Written by Chuan Lee, MCU's president since 1999: *Ming Chuan University Striving To Become The First Americanized University in Asia*, published in 2010.
 - 2. Written by Robert S. P. Yien, a Vice President of MCU: *The Making of the First U.S.-Accredited University in Asia*, published in 2011.

Results and Discussion

Differences between MSCHE and HEEACT accreditations

	MSCHE	HEEACT
Timeline	Fit as needed	One size fits all
Procedure	Three-phase design	One-phase design
Use of research questions (criteria)	Altered as needed	Uniform criteria
Evaluators' attitude	Generally respectful & facilitating	Generally demanding & persnickety

Mutual Reinforcement of these Accreditations

- *“For both accreditations, members of MCU were first reluctant and resistant; gradually became participative and cooperative; and finally benefited from the essence of the accreditations and transformed the institution for the better (Interviewee 3).”*

- The effects of mutual reinforcement can best be seen in two aspects:
 - 1. The head start on MSCHE accreditation and the development of the Mission and Goals of MCU in October 2005, provided the renewal of academic programs during 2008 HEEACT accreditation with solid ground
 - 2. Because everyone on the academic side participated and adjusted themselves to the concepts of accreditation for the HEEACT process, a strong basis was built from bottom up to meet the challenge of the MSCHE Self-Study phase, during which the institution as whole was under renewal and scrutiny.

Conclusion

- Accreditation is a mean of transformation, provided HEIs can fully take advantage of what the external agencies have to offer, that is, develop a sense of ownership in the accreditation and commit to the transformation of the HEI inside out.

- And because of the different characteristics of these accreditation agencies, as well as the voluntary/involuntary status of entering the process, these two accreditations appear to have produced difference degrees of ownership and peace, and in turn, affected the end purpose of structural renewal and establishment of QA culture.

- Upon request of the stakeholders, the second cycle of HEEACT academic program accreditation, though started in 2012, was halted to change the process toward one of emphasizing self-evaluation. As every country must develop its own accreditation and QA system, one that best suits their culture and societal context promotes HEIs to be accountable and their quality improved. This is not an easy quest as it needs to reflect the practical experience of HEIs. This research hopefully has made the contrast that different QA bodies have varied accreditation style, and in turn might have made a difference in HEI's development.