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A people’s platform to advance quality assurance review

Fay Patel 23 July 2022

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Among the many exemplary and unique initiatives in the glocal (local and global) sphere that champion and uphold quality education (Sustainable Development Goal 4) is the Peer Review Portal.

Led by Ian and Sara Booth from Tasmania, Australia, the Peer Review Portal transcends national boundaries to embrace communities beyond. It is a unique quality assurance initiative that encourages community partnership and engagement with international higher education institutions together with respectful interactions and a voluntary exchange of skills, perspectives and approaches.

As a key mechanism in advancing quality assurance review processes across institutional, geographical and virtual boundaries, the Peer Review Portal has attracted national and international expertise and recognition.

It should be celebrated for the way it fills the gaps which are growing and visible within national and international quality assurance agencies, higher education institutions, provincial and state funding agencies and international higher education organisations.

Organisations such as the Higher Education and Research Development Society of Australasia, or HERDSA, the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, or STLHE, and the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning or ISSOTL, have aspired to new heights in recent years.

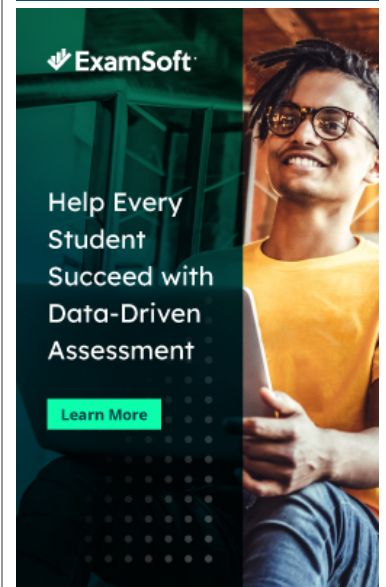
For decades, they have hosted conferences on various cross-referenced topics around international higher education in crisis. However, they have not come to the table with context-based solutions to lead and advocate for a national and international quality assurance collective community initiative.

Neither have they developed a sustained community partnership that nurtures quality education through quality assurance initiatives within a community building framework such as that of the Peer Review Portal.

Alignment with SDGs



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The Peer Review Portal has succeeded in aligning the peer review process and outcomes with the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through collective community partnerships.

The hosts of the Peer Review Portal have taken it where others have not dared to go, making it both a repository of achievements that align with the SDGs and an interactive learning experience for many educators from different quality assurance, disciplinary, institutional and higher educational perspectives.

The Annual Health Check Peer Review Report 2021 attests to stakeholder commitment to quality education. The 2021 report's foreword confirms its large SDG 4 footprint within Australia.

As noted in the report, the Peer Review Portal supported 27 higher education institutions, did a sector review of 362 projects and conducted six case studies between 2018 and 2021 involving 202 higher education institutions in order to "inform the sector process". The authors "linked four strategies, developed by the Incheon Declaration (2016), to measure the performance and outcomes of the Annual Health Check".

This led to the emergence of seven quality principles aligned to **the Australian Higher Education Standards Framework 2021**.

This mapping of the initiative to the four development strategies from the Incheon Declaration 2016 has had a visible impact at an international level. These are the strategies:

Strategy 1: Increasing access must be accompanied by measures to improve the quality and relevance of education and learning.

Strategy 2: Teachers and educators are empowered, well trained and efficiently deployed across the whole education system and supported with well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems.

Strategy 3: Systems and practices for assessment of quality learning that include evaluation of inputs, environments, processes and outcomes should be instituted or improved. Relevant learning outcomes must be continually assessed as an integral part of the teaching and learning process.

Strategy 4: A focus on quality and innovation also requires strengthening science, technology, engineering and mathematics education (STEM).

The report identifies three calls to action for 2022 which also align with SDG 4 on quality education: 1) Supporting a comparable, timely student performance dataset; 2) Educating and monitoring academic integrity through external referencing activities; and 3) Involving industry and professional bodies, including students, in sector reviews and outcomes.

A people's platform

The Peer Review Portal is an innovative quality assurance approach which encourages public and private institutions and higher education stakeholder groups to connect through the portal.

The hosts provide online connectivity, relationship building and learning opportunities to enhance peer review processes, assist higher education institutions in their preparation of quality assurance audits and support the online Peer Review Portal community of peer review experts, academics, students and community members with an inexhaustible range of education-related resources.

The Peer Review Portal is a people's platform that allows human



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interaction to remain fundamental to its mission, building community and transcending the bureaucratic limitations of academia.

*Dr Fay Patel is an academic, researcher and international higher education consultant in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States, South Africa, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Hong Kong. Patel was the former associate vice-president, teaching and student analytics, at the University of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. She also contributed to the UNESCO Forums (by invitation of UNESCO Bangkok) in Bangkok, Thailand and in Chengdu, China; as external peer reviewer in the World Bank quality assurance project Bangladesh; as senior case manager at the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency in Melbourne, Australia; and as an independent reviewer in the Peer Review Portal project in Tasmania, Australia. Patel is the editor of the book (2021) **Power Imbalance, Bullying and Harassment in Academia and the Glocal (Local and Global) Workplace**. She also authored the paper 'Learning Analytics: Framing the right question for the right data to impact teaching and learning effectiveness'.*



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