

**A Collaborative Transnational Model for Contemporary Higher  
Education at the Info- Globalization Age, 2013**

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***Abstract***

Man, who had confined his schooling from the era of Plato with needs on earth, had entered by the end of twentieth century the space-electronic age. Consequently, his psycho-social, physical and educational means and priorities for a productive schooling seem to have changed. The reason beyond this shift in priorities stems from the fact that the cognitive as well as the behavioral fields in which man operates have extended to infinity.

It follows for schooling to indicate that if educational institutions tend to be effective in academic and professional missions, they should open up their individual borders to other fellow institutions, exchange knowledge, academics, professional values and experiences, and developmental plans for the future.

While institutions could maintain their individual identities, academic integrity and the independence of in-house decision making, they could at the same time initiate among themselves new interactive relations that are informed, equitable, productive, and responsive to field institutional needs. These intents and actions resemble what this Author calls: inter-independence collaboration.

A strategic model and meta audit and quality evaluation frameworks for institutional inter-independent collaboration are proposed, embracing the basic components, mechanisms, and working principles by which current conventional higher education institutions could transform into transnational, digital and Global organizations.

**Key Terms:** Collaboration, Globalization, Information Age, Inter-independence, Inter-independence Collaboration, Inter-independence Collaboration Model, Inter-independence Collaborative Strategies, Transnational Higher Education.

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## Introduction

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## *Introduction*

Man, who had limited his schooling from the era of Plato to needs within confined borders on earth, had entered by the mid-nineties of the twentieth century the cyberspace age. As a result, the psycho-social, economic, physical and educational means and priorities for a

productive schooling seem to have changed. The reason beyond this shift in schooling priorities stems from the fact that the cognitive as well as the behavioral fields in which man operates have extended to infinity.

To continue schooling within restricted classroom walls or specific school borders means simply gearing priorities of educational system backward to outdated conventional knowledge, preparing generations at best to live the past, since isolated educational institutions can't empower learners to develop themselves for living the open Space Age as much as to be attached to memories, folklores and obsolete epistemology.

It follows that if educational institutions tend to be effective in academic, professional missions, should open up their individual borders to other fellow institutions, exchange knowledge and academics, professional values and experiences, and mutual developmental plans for the future.

While institutions could keep their individual identities, academic integrity and the independence of in-house decision making, they could at the same time initiate new interactive relationships that are professional, equitable, productive, and responsive to field institutional needs. These intents and processes resemble what this writer calls in this article inter-independence collaboration.

### *Contemporary Bases of Inter-independence Collaboration in Transnational Higher Education*

Transnational Higher Education "THE" came strongly to the fore few years ago due to the accelerating developments of two factors: globalization movement, and information and communication technologies.

To achieve optimized consequences of these two speedy moving factors and to neutralize their possible negative side effects, "THE" institutions need to adopt two operational factors: inter-independence which enables them individually and as groups to interact with a sense of dignity, and collaboration which allows each educational partner to maintain equitable agreed upon needs.

## Transnational Higher Education "THE"

"THE" which started its university practice around twenty years ago, represents simply a task, a process, an achievement degree, or an academic program required and /or designed by one environment, e.g. institution then delivered in collaboration of other non- local parallel partner/s.

However, "THE" should not be looked upon as merely "across the border" activity or assignment, joint degrees or programs, rather is seen by this Writer as one of the most lasting universal and promising approaches for higher education.

"THE" has transformed the concept and practice of local isolated higher education institutions to global collaborating networks in which each partner accomplishes the assigned tasks according to mutually agreed upon plans and well-defined standards and/or outcomes.

The Concept and Practice of Transnational Higher Education according to the UNESCO/Council of Europe Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (Vignoli, 2004, PP. 1-2), is *"all types of higher education study programs, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based"*. TNE may encompass *"all forms of higher education activities operating in parallel to and outside the official higher education system of the host country"*. As such, these programs may belong to the educational system of a country different from the one in which they are offered, or yet may be offered independently of any national system.

Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong, among others, are three notable cases in which the states have explicitly declared their intentions respectively to make their territories a regional hub of education, thus leading to a dramatic development of transnational higher education as part of the states' coping strategies.

It was stated that pressures of globalization and constant demands of info technologies and knowledge economy had driven these Asian States to launch a series of educational reforms since the mid-1990s, in order to reform and promote quality education, to globalize their

higher education, and to be recognized as exporters of higher education services(Mok,2009).

In fact, expanding direct governmental backing and financial support to higher education institutions for collaborative transnational initiatives, will encourage further civic society gurus to empower universities to address sustainable development challenges of the twenty-first century(Koehn, 2012).

### **Concept of Inter-independence**

The concept of inter-independence was firstly coined by this Writer in a work published in Arabic at 1987, under the title: “Clinical Schooling- Toward an approach for the education of personal inter-independence”; then in English at 1992, under the title: “Re-Schooling Society with a Clinical Approach for the Education of Global Inter-Independence”, both published by Modern Education house, Damascus- Syria.

It was written, *“ contemporary technologies have contributed immensely to the solving of human problems and to better communication and mutual understanding. However, people and institutions, especially in developing countries, seem cornered by receiving ever flowing information and worse yet, threatened occasionally by the excessively corrupted content of this information. What appears crucially needed nowadays is turning to two-way rational communication that fosters new means of responsive but equitable relations; in which all parties exchange needs in thoughtfully constructive manners. that is: the concept and practice of inter-independence(Hamdan, 1987, P. 11).*

With inter-independence, an organization may appear more aware of its strengths, limits and needs and those of others. it is expected that while can maintain a highly integrative own profile and mutually exclusive identity, it tends without apparent reservations to share own qualities and shortcomings for the sake of achieving better independence which is free of dismay, threat, or uncertainty.

Working with the concept of inter-independence is expected to lead to an educational process by which every organization can explore its uniqueness then to develop it and share it without the sense of being

hopeless or the risk of being overtaken, subdued, or offended by others.

The basic parameters of one's inter-independence are seen in his owned worth by means of self-initiation, self-direction, self-productivity, self-security, self-confidence, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, self-autonomy and rational collaboration and affiliation with others. It may follow then, that for any educational institution to be capable of inter-independence, means tentatively has the ability to survive and to share his survival with others for the enhancement of more mutual worthy and higher order goals concerned primarily for epistemological and professional excellence (Hamdan, 1992).

### Concept of *Collaboration*

*For collaboration, it is a life-work philosophy, a way of thinking and relating, a behavioral paradigm, and an attitudinal change toward human positivity (ETC- Education Transition Choices, 1997).* It is a mutually beneficial and a well-defined relationship performed by two or more higher education institutions (or individuals) to achieve mutual strategic goals.

To succeed however, *collaboration* calls for a relationship built upon commitments to: the concept of mutual relationships and goals, a *sense of shared ownership*, jointly developed tasks and shared responsibilities, mutual authority and accountability for success, and sharing of resources and rewards (Bishop, 1993).

Further, a real feeling of mutual trust among partners of transnational higher education (THE) should be continuously available to motivate working together without too many risks. THE collaborating institutions by utilizing the *philosophy, working principles and techniques of inter-independence*, will help them in neutralizing emerging risks and balancing them against academic and professional vulnerabilities (Ruohomaa and Kutvonen, 2008).

### Exchange Theories

*Leading pioneers of Exchange Theories* are George Homans, John Thibaut, Harold Kelley, Peter Blau, and several others. Terms such as Social exchange theory, network theory, and network exchange theory are commonly practiced in the context of human

communication ([McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2004](#); [Wikimedia, May 2012](#)).

Generally however, inter-independence *collaboration* is built primarily on mutual benefits. Rational human behavior is normally purposeful activity leading to rewarding outcomes. This principle governs the conducts of Individuals, communities, and institutions including corporations of higher education. When educational institutions behave for benefits with very minimal costs, and are willing to share the benefits and costs with others according to agreed upon conditions and mutual work protocols, they practice the combined term “inter-independence *collaboration nbased professional exchange*”.

### Information and Communication Technologies

Information-Age is changing who we are, how we think, what we believe, and how we behave. The human race is in essence developing a new humanity. By digital tablets and cellular phones, it becomes possible to communicate, interact, and learn- receive information instantly , to pinpoint almost objects and individuals' location, and track their movements at any moment ([Papp and Alberts, 1997](#); [Stewart, 1997](#); [Kupfer, 1997](#)).

for the Information Age, if higher education institutions provide free access to the telecommunications lines that will connect students, instructors, and support personnel to new sources of knowledge, free education for all is tentatively realized.

The potential for information sharing by Transnational Higher Education institutions is exceeding every imagination, particularly if they have clear professional and academic goals, well-defined joint plans, and the sincere will to pursue their agreed upon efforts to the ultimate achievement ends([International Research Center, 2006](#); [Kok, 2006](#)).

This Writer stated 2007 that "In the Information Age, information represents the true power, not raw materials or physical labor" ([Hamdan, 2007](#)). Hence time is due for higher education institutions to initiate a profound reform by which they shift their conventional

paradigm as isolated information warehouses to the information age paradigm as transnational knowledge production laboratories.

What appears necessary from reforming higher education institutions to comply with the premises of the information paradigm, is to start renovating their educational missions, goals, academic contents, curricular designs, strategies and technologies of instruction, assessment techniques and methods, and as well support services. It is imperative also to transform without delay current static university campuses into live multi-purpose information and skill development facilities, serving students, scholars, and local communities for twenty four hours a day.

What seems promising recently that *"the internet and social networking sites provide endless flow of information, opinion exchange, human interaction, new values, and attitude change, leading as observed lately in Middle East and other regions around the globe, to new social and political orders, new power structures, individual's high sense of own rights and responsibilities, and new emerging communities."* (Partly, Kok, 2006).

Moreover, the profound effects of information and communication technologies in the realms of education are already noticed. Many facets of education are changing; on-line education and teaching, global universities, distance instructional methods, new models of teaching and learning are emerging; the role of the teacher and trainer is becoming one of a facilitator of learning discovery. Education institutions are due a change in the structure and the ethos (O'Donoghue and Others 2000).

Education systems are embracing the information age, and adapting processes to accommodate lecturers and students with the vast range of available information, thus securing for them the best possible chance in providing and receiving education. Too, the dynamic and fast developing information technologies are changing current university organizational structures to become more transformational than incremental.

The management of education institutions has also undergone a change to adapt their management styles to meet the working

demands of information technologies and the vision needed to allow students and instructors to be more effective learners and teachers.

In brief, Information technologies have marked the end of an era of traditional paradigm of learning in which conventional higher education and university residential campuses had dominated the academic scene for almost 1500 years; opening the way for a new educational global and mostly digital paradigm by which academicians, professionals, study programs, specialized knowledge, and support services can reach learners wherever they are, at their convenient time, pace, and goals of learning and training. Needless to indicate, that these characteristics will resemble within few years the coming concept and fabric of transnational higher education.

**Globalization** Globalization has caused a massive flow of information and innovation throughout the globe. Others may interpret the effects of globalization to be a massive homogenization of different cultures that will ultimately ruin individual societal traditions and unique qualities. Despite of this reservation, globalization as seen by this Writer, represents the essence and operational schema of the current transnational higher education "THE". In fact, the flow of human resources, programs, skills, expertise, and academic and professional exchange embodies the core of the conceptual and practical core of "THE".

Along with globalization however, came the information and communication technologies to change the purposes' nature of education. In that, the objectives of education are no longer simply to convey knowledge within confined borders, but in regardless of time and space, to teach how to learn, problem-solve and synthesize the old with the new to come-up with more contemporary facts and solutions (Answers Corporation, 1997; UNESCO (2007)). Hence, globalization of education requires different techniques that enhance the ability of learners to access, assess, adopt, and apply knowledge, to think critically and independently, to maintain appropriate judgment, and to collaborate transnationally with others to make sense of new needs, experiences, and situations.

Globalization, when implemented by bilateral, multilateral, and international organizations, could reflect in an educational agenda

that benefits policies for testing, assessment, evaluation, financing, work standards, teacher, training, instruction, and curriculum (Burbules and Torres, 2000; Cogburn, 2012).

### *Proposed Systemic Model for Inter-independence Collaboration Strategies for Transnational Higher Education*

"THE" has conventionally handled issues of students' learning and academic programs. It is strongly advocated by this Writer however, that the mission of Inter-independence collaboration of "THE" institutions should extend to all other factors and processes, since educational institutions are in reality Gestalt operating systems built upon "inputs- processes- outputs". Hence students' learning and academic programs are not operating in isolation of other components of the "THE" system. In fact, they are affecting and affected by all twin factors within any concerned systems.

Thus, "THE" institutions, in order to be effectively responsive in their inter-independence collaboration strategies and succeeding consequently in their educational missions, are required to customize, transform, or develop their human, academic, professional, educational, psychological, physical, regulatory laws, and other support services, whenever decided to initiate the transnational collaborated efforts. Needless to indicate that without this Gestalt systemic operational approach, "THE" may turn into a "trial- error" risky endeavor, failing students as well institutions as any negative condition may emerge.

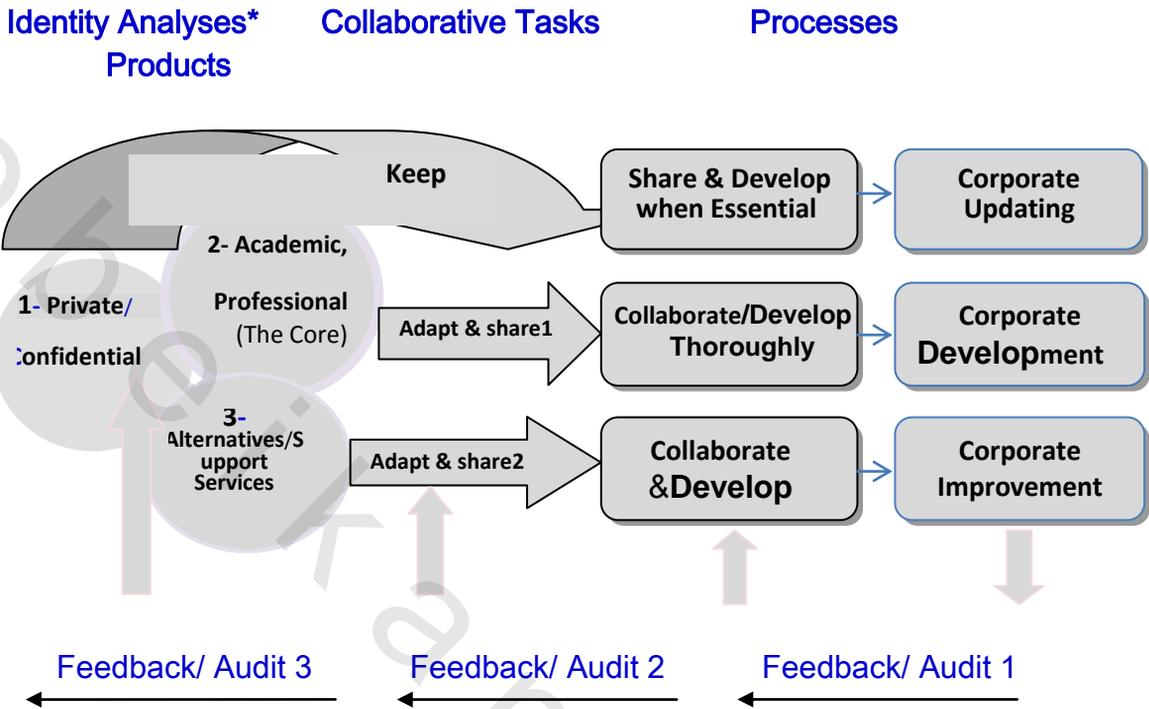
The strategic Model System of Inter-independence Collaboration is depicted in the following diagram (Figure 1).

#### *Structure of the Systemic Model*

The model in figure 1, is composed of three major elements, which are:

- A. Inputs of the Systemic Model** which form the academic and professional identity of higher education institution (HEI). These are sorted in three categories, briefed as follows:

1-Private / confidential elements which the HEI keeps as a special concern that rarely shares them with outsiders except in extremely emergent cases. Examples of these elements are the following:



- Identity Analyses of Higher Education Institution

Figure 1: Proposed Strategic Systemic Model for Inter-independence Collaboration in Transnational Higher Education

- Faculty and Staff Personal Information-Students' personal and academic records -Human resources records - University Financial Records - Organizational security practices and controls, and classified information.

2- Academic/Professional elements which represent the core of Institutional every day Inter-independence collaboration. A sample of these:

- Instructors - academic and professional qualifications
- Study plans and programs
- Curricula and academic content

- Instruction and methods
- Learning techniques and alternatives
- Assessment and evaluation
- Degrees and accreditation

**3-Alternative/Support Services.** These represent all the factors and activities which help in transforming above academic/professional elements from paper documents into actions with more effective results. Collaborating institutions share and improve these elements when educational and management contexts call for more development and better outcomes. A sample of alternative/support services is in the following:

- Faculty & Staff services, e.g. Alumni Association, Office of Development, office of Faculty Affairs.
- Physical support services. e.g. University enterprises, Facilities, University affairs office, Mental health advisory services, The counseling services, and Student health services.
- Academic support services. e.g. Library services, Undergraduate study support technology services,
- Technical support and services
- Education support services. e.g. Campus programs, Outreach programs, Parents role related services.

### ***B. Processes of the Systemic Model***

Inter-independence Collaboration institutions inquire their own needs, searching for more effective achievements, locating willing parties, designing joint plans and efforts to achieve priorities, initiating mutual exchange of experiences and knowledge, and accomplishing collaborative missions as stated. They adopt here three tasks:

- 1- Keep confidentially their private identity elements, or share them and develop when deems essential.
- 2- Adapt & share academic and professional elements, collaborate with other fellow institutions and develop thoroughly as much possible.
- 3- Adapt & share support service elements, collaborate with other fellow institutions to develop for more improvements.

### *C. Outputs of the Systemic Model*

Inter-independence collaboration empowers transnational higher education institutions to develop their academic as well professional knowledge and operation services, and to achieve effectiveness in their delegated responsibilities by:

- Exploring, testing, and refining own purposes, strategies, and actions in light of priority outcomes.
- Seek ultimate corporate (transnational higher education institution) updating of private identity elements whenever needed, confirm thorough development of academic and professional elements, and maintain corporate improvement of support services for better productivity.
- Revising Inter-independence collaboration plans and processes according to observed quality of results, by means of auditing and assessment feedback.

### *Implementation Stages of Inter-independence Collaboration within the Systemic Model*

Three consecutive Stages (Torbert & Others, 2010) are involved in the Systemic Model (figure 1):

Stage 1: Individual Institution Perspective – analysis of status, priorities and needs, by means of:

- Observing ongoing actions and the effects, strengths and weaknesses in inputs, processes and outcomes, academic and professional satisfactions / dissatisfactions, and needs still to be realized.
- Proposing protective alternatives against becoming subsumed by ‘collaborative institutional group’, their norms or own personal ‘official stories’.

**Stage 2:** Collaborating Transnational Institutions Perspective - analysis of status, priorities and needs of collaborative institutions as individual units, inter-groups, and as a gestalt collaborative partnership, by means of:

- Initiating collaborative tasks as generated in above Stage 1 which are (figure 1): keep private elements or share and develop as

essential; share academic and professional elements, collaborate, and develop thoroughly for more progress; share, collaborate, and develop selectively for institutional improvement.

- Encouraging mutual auditing of attributions and assessments in real practices, and generating mutual critical and constructive implications for collaboration and change.
- Proposing mutual protective alternatives against becoming limited by own institution perspective, or become overwhelmed in unproven assumptions and norms.

**Stage 3:** Collaborative Data Perspective– Steering the future of institutional Inter-independence collaboration, by means of:

- Using collaborative generated data to establish 'objective' perspectives that are highly strategic, rational and more productive for all collaborative parties.
- Protecting collaborative parties, individually and as a group against becoming overly subjective by their own proclaimed truths.

### *Expected Barriers to Effective Systemic Inter-independence Collaboration*

Torbert and Others (2010, P.11) stated seven barriers, appear as follows:

- 1- Chauvinism: some higher education institutions are observed in need to be seen as source of knowledge and competence; ignoring consequently the academic as well professional priorities and conditions of other member institutions, and the educational values imbedded in the concept of inter-independence collaboration.
- 2- Close- mindedness: when having fixated mind.. Being locked onto a particular issue, perspective, methodology, a specific time schedule or a way of collaboration.
- 3- Academic nagging: appears in showing-off a personal or academic view, persisting subjectively on talking or asking for specific idea or demand, debating a point endlessly, and seeming unsatisfied regardless of authentic facts or the logic involved in the situation.

### *An authentic example of above three barriers*

*The Author of this article had experienced the above three barriers during the academic year 2005-2006 as professor and head of the psychology and education department (PED) at a private university in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Briefly, the real story happened as follows: the University Administration asked the Head of (PED) to develop a master's degree program in educational administration and*

*supervision(EAS) directed to teachers, supervisors, and principals of the (UAE) Ministry of Education (ME) schools.*

*The accreditation system adopted by the (UAE) Ministry of Higher Education requires referring the new programs to a critical review by an academic committee of two “experts” from a western country such as USA. So, two academicians (man and a woman) were invited from two American universities on the expense of the University who owned the graduate program.*

*The two external examiners and this Writer as the designer of the program and head of the (PED) had long sessions discussing along two days every detail of the program. Then the committee met separately with faculty members of the program. At the end of the appraisal week, the reviewers suddenly pressed for the issue of English language as a first medium of instruction of the (EAS) program. Needless to point out that reversing the role of English as a second language to the first one for a graduate program dedicated to Arab trainees with Arabic cultural and educational backgrounds; belonging to Arab schools, students, local environments, values, traditions, and history; teaching and supervising Arab pupils, curricula and activities in Arabic; fostering strategic goals to better future for Arab generations.. Seemed extremely abnormal, chauvinistic, close- minded, and academic nagging!*

*It was felt at the time that those academicians appeared overwhelmed by the psychology of a military campaign assuming (wrongly) they are invading an underdeveloped, helpless, low- quality higher education institution (which is in reality not the case). Their proposal was resisted by this Writer since Arabic was seen a sovereign identity issue, and the program was failed as inter-independent collaboration endeavor.*

4- Self-depreciation: some collaborated parties seem lacking professional confidence, feeling somewhat inferior or incapable of contributing anything of value. Hence resist revealing their own vulnerability, insecure academic status, or receiving judgments.

5- Behavior- rushing as institutional collaboration is resulted from short-sighted work plans, speedy decisions, and careless performance.

6- Day- dreaming: collaborated member institutions appear here absent- minded, task- disoriented, inattentive, uninterested, occupied by things other than collaboration, or listening without hearing. Hence the mission of inter-independent collaboration could not be realized.

7- Withdrawal opposition by means of ignoring collaboration without vocalizing, negligent performance, procrastination of assignments or tasks.

### *Quality Assurance of Inter-independence Collaboration in Transnational Higher Education- Proposed Brief Meta Audit and Evaluation Frameworks*

Three meta audit and evaluation frameworks are offered, they are briefly as follows:

#### *Inter-institutional Meta Audit and Evaluation Framework*

TNE collaborating institutions that form in reality a regional or international league, could set up an internal quality assurance agency or a steering committee, to:

- handle auditing and quality issues related to processes and outcomes of inter-independent collaboration partnerships,
- help in setting up quality standards, practices and inter-relations needed by individual members to improve their "TNE" missions.
- serve as a liaison body who helps in settling disagreements that could emerge between collaborating institutions. However, this agency is expected further to fulfill the following specific tasks (Bennett and Others, 2004):

- *"Monitoring the activities of imported transnational education providers;*
- *Liaising with providers (and countries of origin) when problems arise;*
- *Reporting bogus institutions to appropriate national and international authorities;*
- *Seeking bilateral solutions to TNE problems;*
- *Providing advice and information to the public associated with imported TNE".*

#### *External Meta Audit and Evaluation Framework*

This framework focuses primarily on institutional quality accreditation, and usually is administered by professional governmental local agencies, and/or regional and international accreditation associations. These official affiliations provide "TNE" institutions with the following services (Bennett and Others, 2004, P. 15)):

- *Establish, or encourage the establishment of a comprehensive, fair and transparent system of registration or licensing for cross-border higher education providers wishing to operate in their territory.*
- *Establish, or encourage the establishment of a comprehensive capacity for reliable quality assurance and accreditation of cross-border higher education provision, recognizing that quality assurance and accreditation of cross-border higher education provision involves both sending and receiving countries.*
- *Consult and coordinate amongst the various competent bodies for quality assurance and accreditation both nationally and internationally.*

Baird (2006) added for issues of recognition and accreditation of programs, degrees, and “TNE” institutions, the following tasks:

- Provide accurate, reliable and easily accessible information in regard to criteria and standards for registration, licensure, quality assurance and accreditation of cross-border higher education, their consequences on the funding of students, institutions or programs, and their voluntary or mandatory nature.
- Contribute to efforts to improve the accessibility at the international level of up-to date, accurate and comprehensive information on recognized higher education institutions/providers.
- Consider becoming party to and contribute to the development and/or updating of the appropriate UNESCO regional conventions on recognition of qualifications and establish national information centers as stipulated by the conventions.
- develop or encourage bilateral or multilateral recognition agreements, facilitating the recognition or equivalence of each country’s qualifications based on the procedures and criteria included in mutual agreements (Baird, 2006, PP.

#### *A Proposed Brief Meta Audit and Evaluation Framework*

In a competitive open market for higher education, coupled with the profound effects of globalization, communication and information technologies, source countries have an interest in ensuring that the standards of their transnational programs at least maintain those of programs offered at parallel professional facilities(Baird, 2006).

For a “HEI”, to insure tentatively a quality Inter-independence collaboration with fellow institutions, it could build its mutual endeavors on two criteria: priority

A Quality Audit and Assurance searching Grid for improving Transnational Higher Education (\*S. S= support services)

Tentative "THE"Topics	Specifics &Criteria of Program Owner	Specifics& Criteria of Program Collaborator	Observed Differences (+ &-)	Improvement decisions
Students				
Instructors				
Learning				
Teaching				
Programs				
Facilities				
Equipments				
Human S. S.*				
Educational S. S.				
PsychoS. S. Technical S. S.				
Managing S. S. Financial S. S.				
<i>Notes:</i>				

needs and mission standards. Each institution should know exactly what it needs the most (a sample is in above auditing form) , and the operational attributes and outcomes that should be observed at each formative stage of inter-independence collaboration, and then the mechanisms and steps by which each collaborating partner will be held accountable.

Comparing intended inputs and processes with observed outcomes, will simply reveal the minus and plus differences (as indicated in above form) which in turn will lead to required auditing and accountability sessions necessary for maintaining more quality inter-independence collaboration.

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