



The Accreditation Council
of Trinidad and Tobago

Established by Chapter 39:06

Quality is the Key

ACTT NOW

A Publication of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago

A Project of the Office of the Executive Director

WHO WE ARE

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) was established by Chapter 39:06 as the principal body in Trinidad and Tobago for conducting and advising on the accreditation and recognition of post secondary and tertiary education training institutions, programmes and awards, whether local or foreign, and for the promotion of quality and standards for post secondary and tertiary education and training in Trinidad and Tobago.

WHAT WE DO

-  Conferment of Institutional Title
-  Registration of Higher Education Institutions
-  Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes and Institutions
-  Recognition of Foreign Programmes and Awards
-  Institutional Development
-  Programme Approval

A list of our functions may be found in our Act on the website

www.actt.org.tt

WHERE WE ARE LOCATED

TRINIDAD

Ground Floor and Level 3
Building B, Pan American Life Plaza
91-93 St Vincent Street
Port of Spain, Trinidad, W.I.
Tel: (868) 623-2500/5282/8389
Fax: (868) 624-5711
Email: customerservice@actt.org.tt
Webste: www.actt.org.tt

SAN FERNANDO

108 Independence Avenue
Tel/Fax: (868)652-0729

TOBAGO

Tobago Technology Center
79 Milford Road, Canaan
Tel/Fax: (868)639-1333



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From the Desk of the Executive Director Michael Bradshaw

International conferences are now recognised as mainstay elements of higher education systems. They provide opportunities for networking as well as interactive sharing of best practices, both of which contribute to the conversation on the internationalisation of higher education. The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT), having recognised the value of such conferences to higher education development in Trinidad and Tobago, engaged in its first International Conference in 2013. Now, two years later, ACTT has successfully hosted its 2nd International Conference, as part of its commemoration of its 10th Anniversary.

ACTT's continuous drive to improve this nation's quality of higher education and to create a "culture of quality" leads it to examine aspects of creating a superior local product that is export-worthy. Hence, the genesis of the 2015 theme: Thinking Global, Acting Local: The Changing Realities of Higher Education and Training. ACTT is gaining recognition regionally as well as internationally as a world class quality assurance body. At this conference ACTT signed a Memorandum of Co-operation with UK- QAA in an effort to formalise a collaborative relationship between both agencies. ACTT has capitalised on such partnerships established to create a conference package with twenty (20) percent of the total participants coming from foreign agencies and institutions. An increase from fifteen (15) percent at the 2013 Conference.

Participants were exposed to thirty-four (34) papers from six (6) strands, on topics ranging from 'Meeting the Labour Market Demands' to 'Designing Curricula in Higher Education and Training' among others. The most popular strand proved to be 'Effective Student Support Services.' The most popular presenters were Haisham Ramdeo, who spoke on the topic of "Expanding the Learning Opportunities to Develop the Accounting Profession" and Dr Ruby Alleyne, with her paper "Accrediting the Accreditors: Exploring Issues and Approaches to the Recognition of External Quality Assurance Agencies in the Caribbean Community".



ACTT also facilitated two presentations via videoconferencing, from Professor Asha Kanwar of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and Francisco Marmolejo of the World Bank. Their presentations, along with several other plenary speakers', were well received and garnered significant post conversation around the lunch tables.

Several other speakers captivated the audience with thought-provoking sessions. Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, Senator the Honourable Fazal Karim, challenged participants to think ahead in his feature address at the Opening Ceremony. He stated "... Trinidad and Tobago has gone beyond its target for participation in tertiary education. The time is therefore opportune for us as a nation and a CARICOM region to look beyond participation." Now that we have surpassed the desired participation rate, what is the next logical step in our drive towards building this knowledge economy? Minister Karim spoke to the necessity of aligning labour market needs with programme development and offerings as we move forward. He also spoke to the "skills mismatch that is often linked to incomplete and asymmetric information, leading to many assumptions about over-education or under-education."

In sum, this was another project of ACTT that was well worth the attention it received. Thanks to all for making it the success that it was!

Learning Analytics: From Buzzword to Implementation

Ulrich Rauch - Professor, The Learning Centre, The University of Trinidad and Tobago



These days everyone seems to call for a reform of Higher Education: voiced frequently are notions such as education is too expensive, it fails the student, and that fails society. So what are the foundations to make a decision on how to guide change? Gaining popularity in reimagining education is a focus on 'data-driven' or evidence-based decision-making. In the case of education, the collecting, analysing, measuring and reporting of data about learners and their context has been labeled as 'Learning Analytics'.

By extension, the analysis of institutional and academic data promises improved organisational output and productivity because it bases decision making on evidence derived from experimenting and evaluating with diverse operational models on how to improve academic viability of students and institutions. Also worth mentioning are the fiscal benefits of data analysis in support of operational and financial decision making in the institution.

If we focus for a moment on graduation rates, it becomes painfully obvious that measuring the effectiveness of an educational system by computing high rates of student participation only, - intake, while not considering low rates of graduation, - output, leaves us with a false sense of accomplishment. Applying analytics to the teaching and learning process requires institutional navel gazing, honesty and a willingness to become part of change. Learning analytics promise to

set a new focus and become a transformative force: a new model to improve teaching, learning, organisational efficiency, decision making and as a consequence serve as a foundation for systemic change (*Long & Siemens, Educause Review 9/2011*).

But how does this work? As students interact with digital learning environments they leave data trails that reveal sentiments, attitudes, social connections, intentions, what they know, how they learn, and even what they might do next. Some of the desired outcomes from analysing digital breadcrumbs left by students are: 1) predicting student performance, 2) improving learning outcomes, and 3) identifying early intervention with all three activities leading to improved student retention and a subsequent improvement of graduation rates.

In summary:

- Analytics form a path to a personal learning environment
- Analytics generate a meaningful and accurate estimate of each student's learning state
- Analytics are the basis of real time personalisation that help translate 'learning needs' to individual needs and abilities

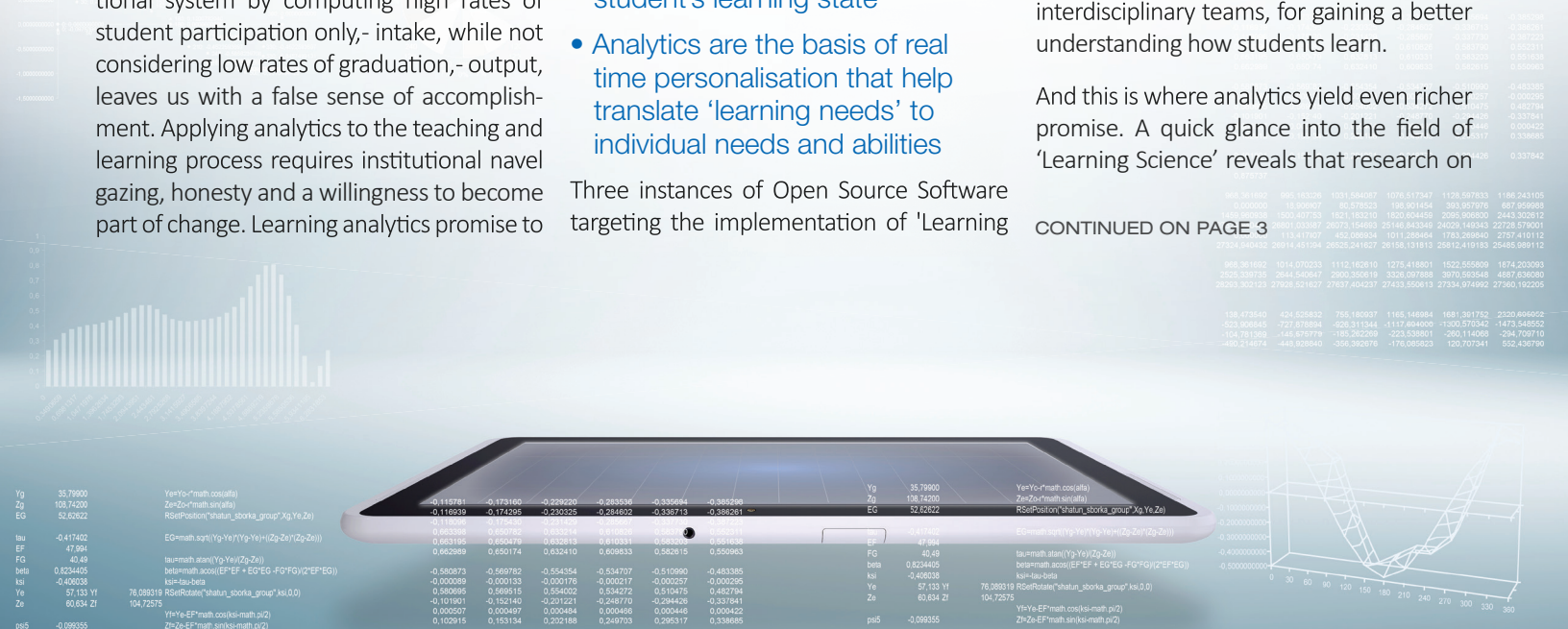
Three instances of Open Source Software targeting the implementation of 'Learning

Analytics' were supported by an EDUCAUSE Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) Grant 2011-2013, and funded by the Gates and Hewlett Foundations: (a) Student Success Plan (SSP- Sinclair Community College); (b) Online Student Profile Learning System (OSP- Piedmont Community College); and (c) Open Archive Academic Initiative (OAAI- Marist College). For the purpose of brevity, I will confine myself to a description of the latter.

OAAI is using analytical software to find patterns in "big data" sets as a means to predict student success. Primary data sources are: Student Information System (SIS); Demographics, Aptitude (SATs, GPA); Learning Management System (LMS) with event logs, and the gradebook. The goal is to create an "early alert" system that predicts "at risk" students in the first 2-3 weeks of a course and affords intervention to ensure that students succeed. This initial stage of predicting attrition and academic performance to inform institutional strategies is now followed by a second stage, where researchers and practitioners are focusing their efforts on using Learning Analytics methodologies, often through interdisciplinary teams, for gaining a better understanding how students learn.

And this is where analytics yield even richer promise. A quick glance into the field of 'Learning Science' reveals that research on

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ANALYTICS

LEARNING ANALYTICS: FROM BUZZWORD TO IMPLEMENTATION CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

the interaction effect of human with machine learning suggests that advanced educational technologies, with their dynamic interfaces, generate an accelerated enhancement in a wide range of skills that the natural environment alone cannot account for. According to extensive longitudinal research on the improvement of cognitive skills, (Passig, 2013) neither nutrition nor education, but immersive technologies are responsible for a measurable increase worldwide of the average IQ.

This research suggests that human mental capabilities are improving, whether through stimulus-filled environments (highly interactive and dynamic) or through advanced technologies that personalise learning and accurately analyse a person's learning state. This implies that Learning Analytics may catalyse a next step in an evolutionary process of human cognition in the decades to come.

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Congratulations Dr Zaffar Khan, Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) congratulates Dr Zaffar Khan, Programme Director at the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business for winning the prestigious *Regional Energy Professional Development award* from the Association of Energy Engineers (AEE). AEE is a network of 1,700 professionals in 90 countries working successfully in the dynamic fields of energy engineering, energy management, renewables, power generation, energy services, sustainability, and related areas. AEE's International, Regional and Chapter Awards Programs extend special recognition to individuals and organisations that have demonstrated notable contributions to the profession through individual accomplishments, noteworthy projects, or outstanding corporate energy programmes. Dr Khan won the Regional Energy Professional Development which is presented to 'an individual for outstanding accomplishments in training and development of energy engineers and managers, and for superior service to the Association.'

Dr Zaffar Khan wins Energy Institute's 'Individual Achievement Award 2014'

The UWI Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business is pleased to announce that one of its Faculty Members, Dr Zaffar Khan was nominated for and eventually won the 'Individual Achievement Award 2014' from the Energy Institute for its 2014 Energy Awards. On 13th November 2014, the Energy Institute (EI) held its annual Awards ceremony in London to recognise excellence within the global energy sector. The EI is the leading chartered professional membership body for the energy industry, supporting over 16,000 individuals working in or studying energy and 250 companies worldwide and is based in the UK.

Dr Zaffar Khan, the Programme Director for the MBA in Sustainable Energy Management, the Master of Port and Maritime Management and the MBA in International Trade, Logistics and Procurement is the team lead that designed the MBA in Sustainable Energy Management, which received an award for being one of the most innovative programmes in the world in November 2012 from the Association of MBAs (AMBA), an international accreditation body based in the UK and by which the degree is accredited.



Dr Zaffar Khan, Faculty member, centre, accepts his award from representatives of the Energy Institute, for 'Individual Achievement'.

Source: <http://lokjackgsb.edu.tt/media-room-m/97-press-releases/>

ACTT's 2nd International Conference on Higher Education and Training

'Thinking Global, Acting Local: The Changing Realities of Higher Education and Training' was the theme of ACTT's 2nd Annual International Conference on Higher Education and Training, held at the Hyatt Trinidad. The conference provided a forum for over 200 participants to share international best practices, present research findings and review recent developments impacting on the development of higher education skills training.

At the formal opening, Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT, presented a paper entitled "Diversity in Higher Education Training: The Quality Imperative". Senator the Honourable Fazal Karim, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (MTEST), also spoke at the formal proceedings, delivering the keynote address "Beyond Participation: Building the Global Citizen."

The Opening Ceremony culminated with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ACTT and the Quality Assurance Agency of Higher Education (QAA). The QAA is responsible for monitoring and advising on standards of quality in higher education in the United Kingdom. This MoU will further facilitate the establishment and promotion of international best practices in quality assurance systems governing education and training in Trinidad and Tobago.

The 3-day conference featured an exceptional cadre of local and international speakers who presented on the following topics:

- Learning Analytics: From Buzzword to Implementation
- Meeting Labour Market Demands: Increasing Relevance in Education Training
- The Impact of Online and Distance Education on the Development of Higher Education and Training
- Competency Based Education: Promises and Challenges
- The Changing Realities of Higher Education: Perspectives from the World Bank
- Aligning Programmes with Labour Market Needs
- Transitional Education in Trinidad and Tobago

The conference concluded with a closing ceremony and dinner where Rampersad Mootilal, Director, Energy Training Institute of Trinidad and Tobago, UTT, delivered the feature address at this event.



Senator the Honourable Fazal Karim, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, signs the Memorandum of Understanding. He is flanked by Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT (right) and Dr Stephen Jackson, Director of The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) (left). Looking on at back are Amroodeen Ali, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (left) and Dr Michael R Dowlath, Chairman, ACTT (right).



Senator the Honourable Fazal Karim, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, presents a commemoration plaque to Dr Stephen Jackson, Director of The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding. Looking on (from left to right) are Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT, Amroodeen Ali, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training and Dr Michael R Dowlath, Chairman, ACTT.



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Other Sponsors:

Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT, interviews John Solomon, Chief Executive Officer, THTI

Q *What will it mean for the Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute (THTI), the first Tobago indigenous institution, to be granted accreditation status at this time?*

A Being granted accredited status at this time signals to students, stakeholders and the wider community that the institution, and the programmes it offers, can live up to its promises. It means that a student can have confidence that a degree or credential from THTI has value. ACTT accreditation signals to prospective employers that our educational programmes have met widely accepted educational standards and ensures the public that they can have confidence in the worth of the institution and our programmes.

Q *How has THTI's experience with participating in the accreditation self-study benefitted/changed the institution?*

A The accreditation self-study process was beneficial in many ways to the institution because it involved careful consideration of our educational programmes and services. We had to pay particular attention to our levels of success in the areas of student learning and achievement, and it enabled us to determine how well the programmes and services we offer accomplish the institution's goals, fulfil our mission, and meet ACTT's standards. Given the comprehensive nature of the self-study, it was an opportunity for a broad cross-section of the THTI community to participate in the process and gain a sense of empowerment as we worked together to advance institutional self-understanding and self-improvement. The self-study report, therefore, has been useful in identifying problems and finding solutions to these problems, as well as identifying opportunities for growth and development at the institution through its educational and student services.

Q *What advice would you give to other institutions embarking on the accreditation journey?*

A Institutions embarking on this journey should understand that planning and implementing the self-study is a complex process. While the staff at the ACTT is extremely helpful and instructive throughout the process, you must



John Solomon
Chief Executive Officer,
THTI

adapt the process to your own situation and organisational culture. You should be very familiar with and address all of the standards, but ensure that you focus on issues of importance to your own institution and shape the self-study so that the information you acquire through the process can guide true growth and development and will remain useful to you after the ACTT team leaves.

It is important to find ways to communicate with all members of your community and explain the purpose of the self-study and accreditation process. It is imperative that you involve a wide cross-section of your organisation's community in the process and find ways, like town meetings, to keep the entire campus community updated and provide opportunities to receive feedback during every stage of the process. Of course, ensuring that the entire community is apprised of the outcome of the self-study is paramount to continued growth and collective improvement.

Q *How would achieving accredited status benefit students and other stakeholders?*

A For students, ACTT accreditation provides value related to not only the quality of the programmes offered, but also in securing employment. Accreditation encourages confidence that the educational activities and programmes have been judged by an impartial, external body and found to be satisfactory. Accredited status indicates to other institutions considering requests for

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MICHAEL BRADSHAW, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ACTT,
INTERVIEWS MR JOHN SOLOMON ON THE ACCREDITATION OF
THE THTI • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

transfer or applications for further study that the sending institution has met threshold expectations of quality. It also signals to prospective employers that a student's educational programme has met widely accepted standards.

For other stakeholders, ACTT accreditation confirms that the public presentation of our educational programmes and services is fair and accurate. It promotes accountability as the institution goes through on-going external evaluations to ensure compliance with the general expectations in higher education and it signals the openness of the institution, having voluntarily undertaken such explicit activities aimed at improving the quality of its programmes and services, and further have been judged as successfully performing its defined functions.

Q *What impact might the accreditation of institutions have on the local and regional education sectors?*

A The accreditation of higher education institutions in the region is important in guiding institutions to a culture of sustainable

academic quality and integrity and will facilitate transparency and joint planning among regional institutions. Accreditation ensures documentation of high quality standards and high quality graduates. As Dr Brunton pointed out in his paper entitled Justifying Investments in Quality Assurance in Higher Education, this in itself is an incentive for foreign investment which benefits all citizens.

Q *How do you see your status as an accredited institution impacting on the quality of graduates and their ability to acquire jobs?*

A Gaining ACTT accredited status gives our stakeholders and the general public a reliable indication of the value and quality of our educational programmes, and in turn, the quality of our graduates. It signals to prospective employers that the prospective employee has undergone appropriate training and has met the accepted standards of the profession. Therefore, employers and graduate programs can be confident that our graduates are appropriately prepared to perform in the jobs in the industry. This, therefore, will give our graduates an advantage over those from unaccredited institutions.



ACTT is pleased to invite faculty and staff of accredited and/or registered institutions/providers to submit nominees for the annual Quality in Tertiary Education (QuiTE) Awards 2015.

INDIVIDUAL Awards

Heads of institutions, faculty members and peers are encouraged to submit nominees for the following Awards:

- *Leadership in Tertiary Education (LiTE)*
- *Excellence in Teaching Award*
- *Excellence in Applied and Academic Research*

*Eligibility Requirements-
Individuals nominated for a QuiTE Individual Award, must comprise the administration or teaching staff of registered and accredited post secondary or tertiary institution*

Deadline for the submission of all nominations for the QuiTE Awards is

August 11, 2015

*For further information, please visit
www.actt.org.tt*

INSTITUTIONAL Awards

Institutions may make submissions for the following:

- *Excellence in Quality Management Systems (QMS)*
- *Excellence in Student Support Services in Tertiary Education (SSSiTE)*
- *Excellence in Teaching and Learning*

Eligibility Requirements-

To be eligible for a QuiTE Institutional Award, a post secondary or tertiary institution/organisation must be:

- *a registered or accredited institution*
- *current in the payments of all fees to ACTT*
- *in adherence to the guidelines and stipulations of the Conditions of Registration or Conditions of Accreditation*

QuiTE Awards Workshop

On Wednesday May 27, 2015, The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) hosted a workshop which aimed at facilitating institutions taking part in the Quality in Tertiary Education (QuiTE) competition in October this year. At the QuiTE Awards Ceremony, ACTT will present awards to the most outstanding registered and accredited Higher Education Institutions operating in Trinidad and Tobago in the following categories:

- *Excellence for an Established Quality Management System*
- *Student Support Services in Tertiary Education*
- *Excellence in Teaching and Learning*

In addition, ACTT will also present individual awards to outstanding researchers, tertiary level teachers and leaders in higher education who have contributed to the development of sector in the following categories:

- *Excellence in Applied and Academic Research*
- *Excellence in Teaching*
- *Leaders in Tertiary Education (LiTE)*

At the workshop, institutions became acquainted with the requirements of the various categories and, in addition, previous



Margaret Richardson, Facilitator explains the criteria for the different QuiTE Awards to participating institutions.

winners of the QuiTE Awards shared their experiences in preparing documents for submission in the various categories.

The QuiTE Awards competition is hosted as part of ACTT's annual Quality Assurance Month.



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PROFESSIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFERED:

- Preparing the Self-Study for Registration
- *Guiding the Self-Study Process for Institutional Accreditation*
- Recognition of Transnational Programmes
- *Institutional Governance and Administration Workshop*
- Managing Institutional Finances
- *Strategic Planning for Higher Education and Training Institutions*
- Quality Management Systems for Institutional Effectiveness
- *Developing Policies for Higher Education Institutions*
- Effective Teaching and Learning
- *Designing Student Assessment*
- Programme Design and Development
- *The Forensics of Academic Credential and CV Fraud*
- Calculating Credits and Determining the Level of Academic Programmes
- *External Evaluator Training*
- Report Writing for Team Chairs
- *Professional Development for External Evaluators*
- Quality in Tertiary Education (QuiTE) Awards Workshops for Institutional and Individual Applications