

Theme: Balancing Quality and Quantity: The Global Challenge for Tertiary Education in Barbados

Title of Paper: Perceptions of Tertiary Educational Providers on the Barbados Accreditation Council's Registration Process

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Perceptions of Tertiary Educational Providers on the Barbados Accreditation Council's Registration Process

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Abstract

With the continued growth in the number of entrants into the global postsecondary/tertiary education and training sector, quality assurance of the resultant educational provisions continues to be a major topic of discussion at the national and international levels. Barbados, like many other countries, has established systems geared towards ensuring minimum quality standards in the provision of educational programme offerings nationally. Although the levels of maturity of quality assurance systems vary worldwide, there is a tacit agreement of the need for effective and efficient quality assurance systems/mechanisms.

Barbados' quality assurance system is designed around a mandatory registration-voluntary accreditation model. Traditionally, the Ministry of Education, through the Education Act, Cap. 41 Part III was responsible for the registration of postsecondary/tertiary providers of education and training programmes. This function was transferred to the Barbados Accreditation Council (BAC) through the BAC Act 2004. The aim of registration is to certify that postsecondary/tertiary education and training providers meet or exceed established criteria required to legally operate in Barbados.

This paper will examine and report on the findings of a study on the overall effects of the BAC's registration process on the diverse educational providers engaged in the registration process. The study uses key service areas and characteristics related to the people, processes, services and quality assurance focus to explore the perceptions, challenges, benefits, and lessons learnt by the educational providers. These reflections should provide a useful basis for benchmarking practices of the BAC, as it seeks to facilitate an enabling environment in which the BAC and educational providers can move towards quality enhancement, sustenance and excellence in the postsecondary/tertiary education and training sector in Barbados.

INTRODUCTION

The postsecondary/tertiary education and training environment has seen significant and rapid changes in governance, as governments seek to re-regulate the sector in response to the demands of their citizenry and the increasing diversification of educational providers operating or seeking to operate within their borders. At the same time, citizens are demanding greater access to postsecondary/tertiary educational programmes and accountability from the government and tertiary educational providers. Governments are also demanding greater accountability from educational providers, particularly where there is significant financial investment in the sector. Therefore, it is imperative that providers demonstrate the achievement of national educational goals. The Barbados Accreditation Council (BAC), as the national External Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA) with responsibility for the postsecondary/tertiary education and training sector is responsible for providing this assurance to the government and other stakeholders. This is being achieved through the establishment and management of quality assurance mechanisms within the sector.

Early in its establishment, the Council recognised the need to sensitise postsecondary/tertiary providers of its role and functions. As a consequence, a public seminar was held in June, 2006 and the official launch of the Council was later held in November of that year. During that year, the Council developed and implemented its registration process and at the end of 2007 and 2008, 17 and 31 providers were registered respectively. The number of providers that have come forward for registration has increased significantly since that time.

The main objective of this study was to assess the effectiveness of the BAC's registration process and associated procedures, with a view to ascertaining possible improvements on the basis of lessons learnt. As such, the Council sought to undertake a survey of the over 90 providers currently involved in the registration process. This paper will examine and report on the findings of a study of the overall effects of the Barbados Accreditation Council's (BAC's) registration process on the diverse educational providers engaged in the registration process.

BACKGROUND

Context and Rationale

The need for the establishment of a national accreditation body in Barbados was first recognized in the mid 1990s. Globalisation and market forces were placing significant pressures on the structures of national education systems. The number of local providers was growing steadily and an increasing number of foreign providers were seeking to operate in Barbados. The primary concern was the currency and value of various postsecondary/tertiary qualifications for educational purposes and labour mobility regionally and extra-regionally. Consequently, the issue of quality assurance arose in the context of the changing postsecondary/tertiary education and training environment in Barbados, as citizens and residents of Barbados were no longer restricted in their choice of educational providers.

The situation was exacerbated as there was no comprehensive quality assurance process in place for postsecondary educational providers. As it pertained to registration, under the Education Act Cap 41, all educational providers were required to register with the Ministry of Education. However, some educational providers only registered with the Ministry of Education in order to qualify for tax exemptions and government funding. Further, monitoring these providers was not a continuous function of the Ministry. As a consequence, there may have been a number of undocumented postsecondary/tertiary educational providers operating in Barbados. Additionally, the Education Act stipulates no penalties for operating without registration. There was need for a change in the status quo. The establishment of the BAC and the transfer of the registration of postsecondary/tertiary educational providers function from the Ministry of Education to the BAC was a means of responding to these challenges.

The quality assurance framework in Barbados revolves around a mandatory registration-voluntary accreditation model. Traditionally, the Ministry of Education, through the Education Act, Cap. 41 Part III was responsible for the registration of postsecondary/tertiary providers of education and training programmes. However, this function was transferred to the Barbados Accreditation Council (BAC) through the BAC Act 2004, which effectively set out the Council's areas of operation. It should be noted that on its inception in May 2006, the Council in determining the model of quality assurance (QA) that it would follow reviewed existing QA systems regionally and extra-regionally. While the model took into consideration international trends, the approved system also considered the local context, particularly government's policy and direction for tertiary educational provision in Barbados.

The Registration Process

Registration signals that an educational¹ provider has met certain operating standards required to deliver post-secondary or tertiary education and training in Barbados. These standards are established by the BAC. The current registration process requires that educational providers satisfy all the requirements established by the BAC to be granted registration. In so doing, providers are given a foundation upon which to develop an effective internal quality management system (QMS), and as such assure the provision of quality educational offerings. In addition, the BAC's approved registration process also requires an in-depth evaluation by external reviewers once every three (3) years for all educational providers. This evaluation may occur at the start or end of the three (3) year cycle.

To maintain their registered status, providers are required to undergo the re-registration process. In this form, the focus of the registration process is that of quality control. That is, ensuring that postsecondary/tertiary educational provisions are in line with the minimum requirements of quality. This still remains a part of the process. However, there have been augmentations to the system, such as the new requirement for a self-evaluative report to be submitted by providers as a part of the registration process. The purpose of this new requirement is to add another element of quality into the overall process, make the process more robust, as well as act as a catalyst in developing or enhancing a quality culture within the tertiary educational sector. The steps in the overall registration process are shown in Figure 1.

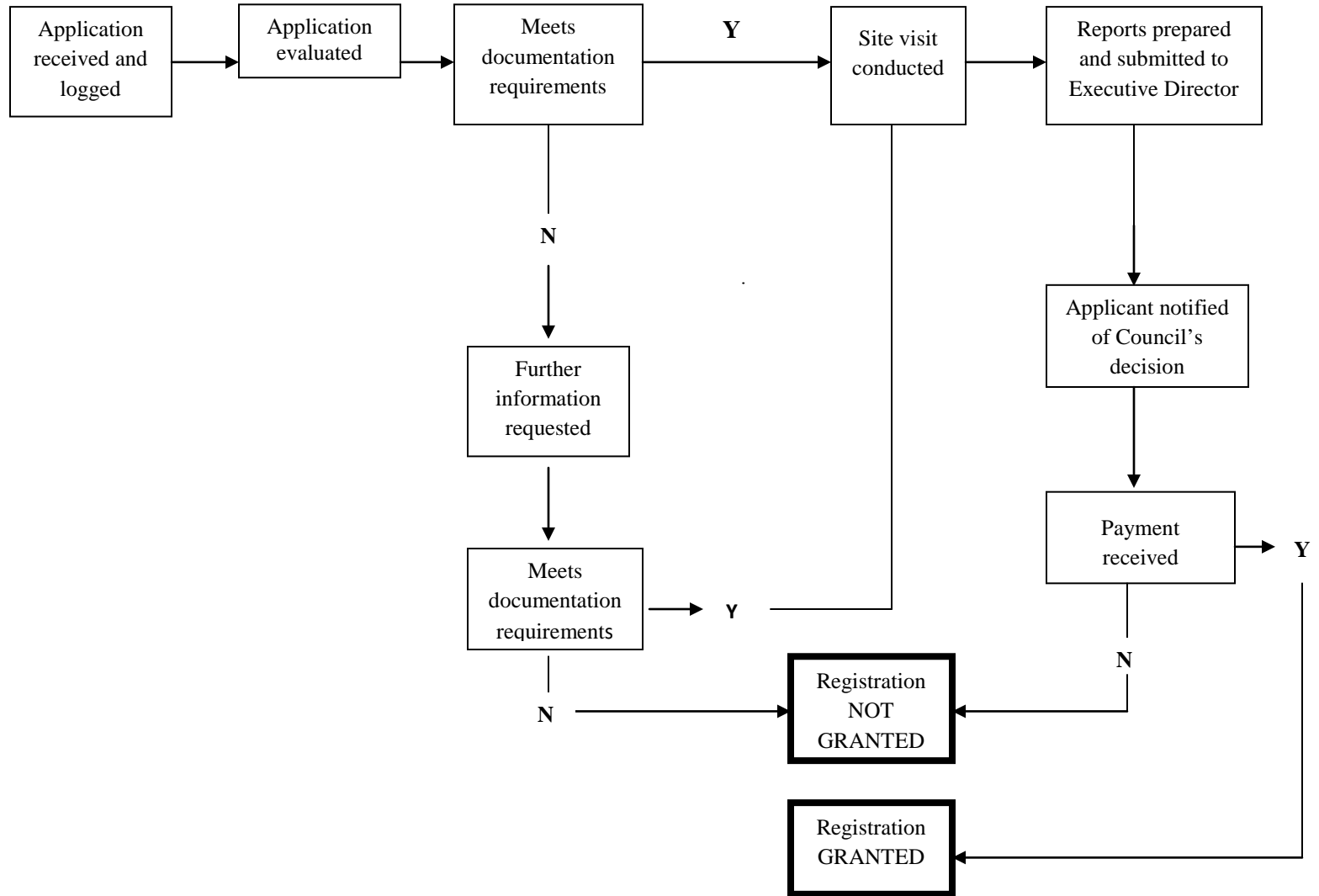
As previously stated, since becoming operational, the Council has established specific criteria governing the registration of educational providers. These criteria are closely related to the accreditation standards as they are meant to provide registered providers with the basic foundation for logical development towards accreditation. Over time it was noticed that some providers were unable to meet all of the requirements for registration and as such, were operating somewhat "illegally" while undergoing the registration process. As such, the registration system was recently revised to include an additional registered status – *provisional registration*. A new set of criteria was developed for this registered status. The registration criteria are shown at Appendix I.

It should be noted that the documents designed for registration, particularly the application forms are also closely aligned to the established registration criteria. Currently there are two types of registration forms for new registrants – one focuses on the providers of academic-oriented programmes and the other focuses on providers of training/vocationally-oriented programmes/courses. The application forms for new registrants require a significant amount of details on all aspects of the provider's operations. This is to assure the BAC that the provider has the appropriate resources (human, physical and financial) to effectively and efficiently provide the stated programme offering(s).

The re-registration application form requires that a provider report only on any significant change(s) in its operations in the areas set out in the application form. These registration forms have undergone several revisions using the knowledge gained by BAC personnel through research and participation in international QA fora, as well as feedback from the educational providers. The information gathered from the initial application form also facilitates the development of a database of providers and programme offerings available within the sector. The changes reported in the re-registration form are used to update the individual records accordingly.

¹The term educational shall refer to education and training.

Figure 1: Steps in the Registration Process



PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

After three (3) years of operation, the Council felt the need to conduct an evaluation of its registration process. This evaluation also shows a level of accountability and transparency by the BAC to its stakeholders, inter alia the government, learners, educational providers, employers, professional bodies, and the general public. The overall value of this exercise is seen as providing a basis upon which the Council could improve its registration and other related processes.

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. to ascertain the effectiveness of BAC's registration process
2. to ascertain to what extent BAC is achieving its goals for the registration process
3. to encourage/facilitate self-examination by providers
4. to ascertain the overall impact the BAC's registration process has had on providers, particularly in terms of:
 - a. any resultant changes in how providers operate,
 - b. any enhancement of programme offerings
 - c. any changes in student services
5. to identify lessons learnt by providers which were engaged in the process
6. to identify areas for improvement in the process
7. to use information from the analysis to:
 - a. amend or formulate policies and procedures;
 - b. determine the type of technical support required by providers; and
 - c. design and deliver appropriate developmental activities for providers.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The main focus of this study was the exploration and description of the experiences of all educational providers involved in the BAC's registration process. An explorative, a descriptive and an explanatory research design were used, including both qualitative and quantitative methodology. Babbie (2001) stated that exploratory research is designed to examine a new topic/interest/subject of study. Further, descriptive research aims to provide a description of the characteristics of persons, situations or groups based on what was observed. He also stated that where descriptive research sought to answer questions of 'what', 'where', 'when' and 'how', explanatory research sought to answer questions of 'why'.

The research was done in the following phases:

- Phase 1 – Conceptual (formulation of the research objectives and the purpose of the study);
- Phase 2 – Research design and planning of the study (development of data collection instrument and sample frame); and
- Phase 3 – Empirical (actual data collection; data analysis and interpretation). (Babbie, 2001).

In order to ensure that relevant data was collected, the approach used was the survey research method. In this study, the sample frame was the 92 educational providers currently involved in the registration process. The questionnaire used in the study comprised Likert-scale type and open-ended questions. The questions were designed to measure the perception of providers on various aspects of the BAC's registration. This was reviewed with the research organisation contracted to administer the survey on behalf of the BAC and a final version was agreed upon for use with the interviewers.

The questionnaire was administered by the interviewers who were able to make contact with and obtain responses from 85 of the 92 providers; a response rate of 92.39%. The contract required that the raw data be input by the research company and basic statistical reports be generated (e.g. frequencies, tables, cross-tabulation) before being submitted to the BAC. The information gathered would assist the BAC in determining the extent to which the process and procedures used by the BAC were valid and fit for purpose, and provide an opportunity to evaluate various aspects of the registration process. There was no comparative data as this was an inaugural exercise.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

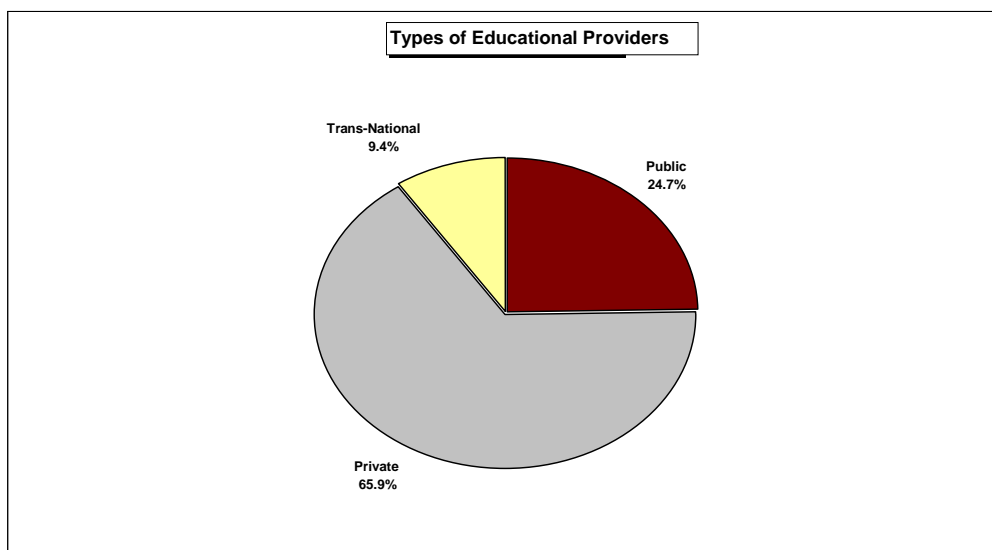
I. PROVIDER PROFILE

Types of Educational Providers

According to the survey data, approximately two-thirds (65.9%) of the educational providers represented in the sample were private, while just under a quarter (24.7%) were public. The remaining 8.4% were classified as trans-national providers. This implies that the Barbadian postsecondary/tertiary educational landscape is comprised primarily of private providers. Typically, transnational refers to those educational providers with a presence in another country. This may be through collaborative arrangement with a provider in the receiving country, establishing a physical presence in another country (e.g. a branch campus), or offering courses through distance education with or without a presence in the receiving country.

Based on the BAC's knowledge about the providers, only one (1) of the eight (8) providers that indicated that they were transnational would be considered a 'true' transnational provider. This indicates the need to inform providers about the meaning of the various terminologies in use. Chart 1 below illustrates the distribution of the types of educational providers in the sample.

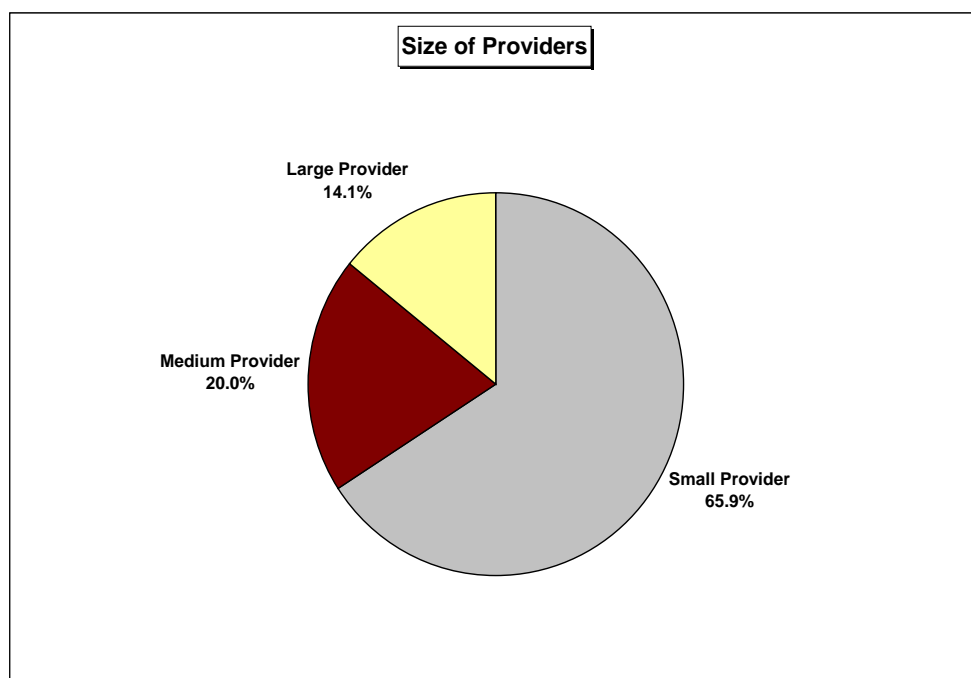
Chart 1: Types of Educational Providers



Size of Provider

Of the providers surveyed, the majority, represented by nearly two-thirds (65.9%) of the sample were small providers (i.e. less than 100 students). Approximately one-fifth (20.0%) of the providers were medium-sized (i.e. between 100 and 500 students) and approximately two-fifteenths (14.1%) of the sample were large (i.e. over 500 students). The data suggests that the Barbadian postsecondary/tertiary educational landscape has a large composition of small educational providers. The growth in the number of private educational providers may be a consequence of the increasing demand for access to postsecondary educational opportunities and the inability of the established public providers such as the Barbados Community College, Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic, and the University of the West Indies (UWI) Cave Hill and Open campuses to meet this demand. Chart 2 illustrates the distribution of providers in the sample based on size.

Chart 2: Size of Provider

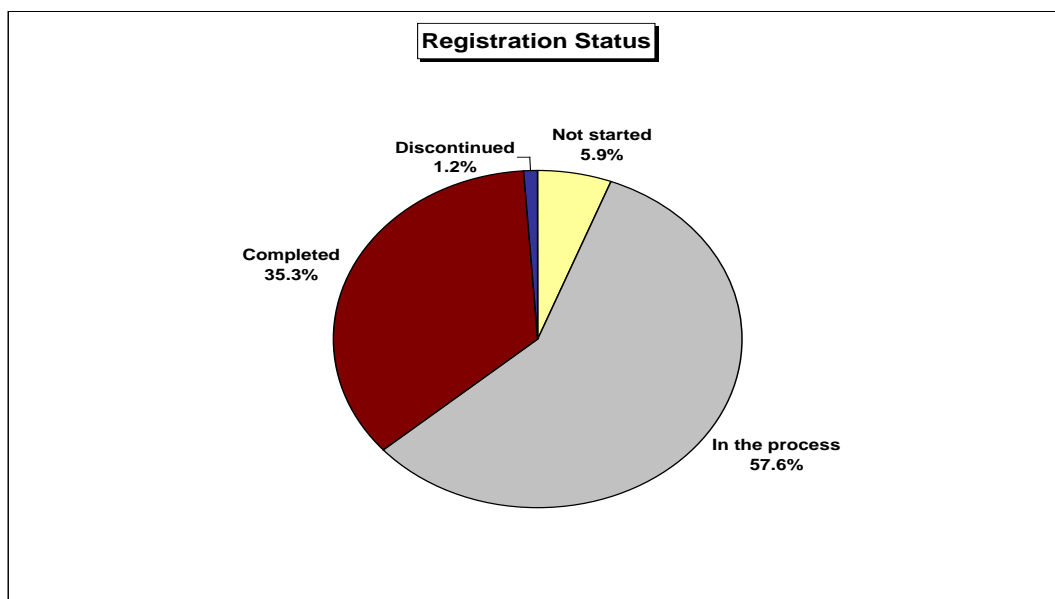


Levy (2003) stated that private providers provided alternate access routes to higher education for those persons whom the public providers could not accommodate. As indicated by the survey data the Barbadian postsecondary/tertiary educational sector is comprised primarily of private providers. This trend is geared towards facilitating the achievement of goal three (3) of the *National Strategic Plan of Barbados 2006-2025*. Goal three of the plan speaks to building social capital. Further, objective 3.1 speaks to the expansion of the level and quality of education and training and strategies 3.3 and 3.4 look at increasing access to an enrolment in tertiary education using a variety of modalities and enhancing adult education, training and lifelong learning respectively. It should be emphasised however that while access is being increased, it is essential that educational provision has some degree of quality. The registration process provided by the BAC serves to provide that element of quality to the educational provision.

Registration Status

Just over a third (35.3%) of the respondents had already completed the registration process, while nearly three in every five of the respondents (57.6%) indicated that they were in the process of registering. Approximately 5.9% had not yet started the registration process. The remaining 1.2% (one provider) indicated that the registration had been discontinued. The chart below illustrates the registration status of the respondents.

Chart 3: Registration Status



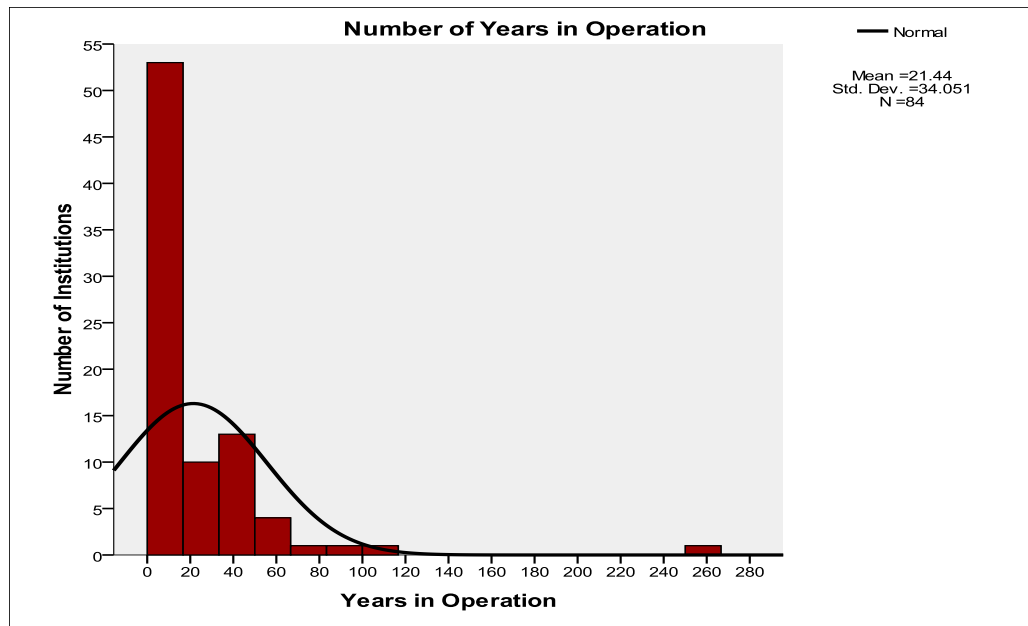
The registration of educational providers was one of the BAC's first priorities as it related to the implementation of its mandate. This is because registration is viewed as the first step in the quality assurance framework. The next step is the accreditation of providers and/or the programmes of study which are offered. The survey data indicates that many providers have not completed the registration process (57.6%). One explanation may be that they found the need to pay a fee a deterrent, as traditionally all education-related services offered by government or quasi-government agencies were free of charge, or providers realised that they did not qualify to register with the BAC using the general registration criteria.

However, with the recent revisions made to the registration system, a closer look may need to be taken at the 57.6% of providers indicated as currently going through the registration process. It is possible that some of these providers may qualify for *provisional registration*. Additionally, the inclusion of this new registered status may encourage the participation by those providers which may have discontinued or not started the registration process.

Number of Years in Operation

On average, the educational providers in the sample had been in operation for approximately 21.4 years. The median number of years in operation was 10, meaning that half the providers in the sample were in operation for more than 10 years, while half had been in operation for less than 10 years. The oldest provider in the sample had been in operation for 264 years. Chart 4 illustrates the distribution for the number of years in operation for sample providers.

Chart 4: Number of Years in Operation

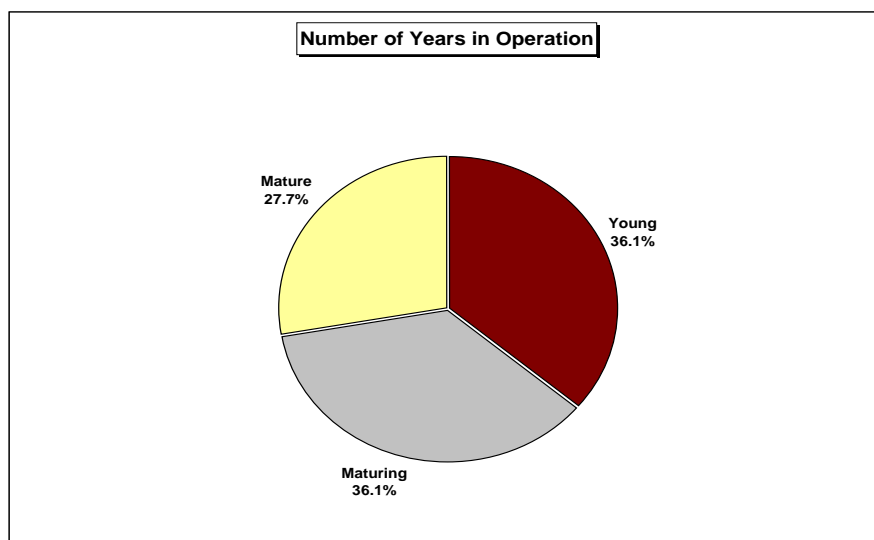


For the purpose of analysis, respondents were classified into three primary groups based on the number of years in operation. These groups were as follows:

- (i) Young: 0-5 years in operation
- (ii) Maturing: 6 – 20 years in operation
- (iii) Mature: More than 20 years in operation

More than a quarter (27.7%) of the sample providers was classified as ‘mature’. The remaining providers were evenly distributed between ‘young’ and ‘maturing’ categories, with approximately 36.1% of sample providers being classified as ‘young’ and the same proportion being classified as mature. Chart 5 below illustrates the distribution of providers based on the categories outlined above for number of years in operation.

Chart 5: Number of Years in Operation



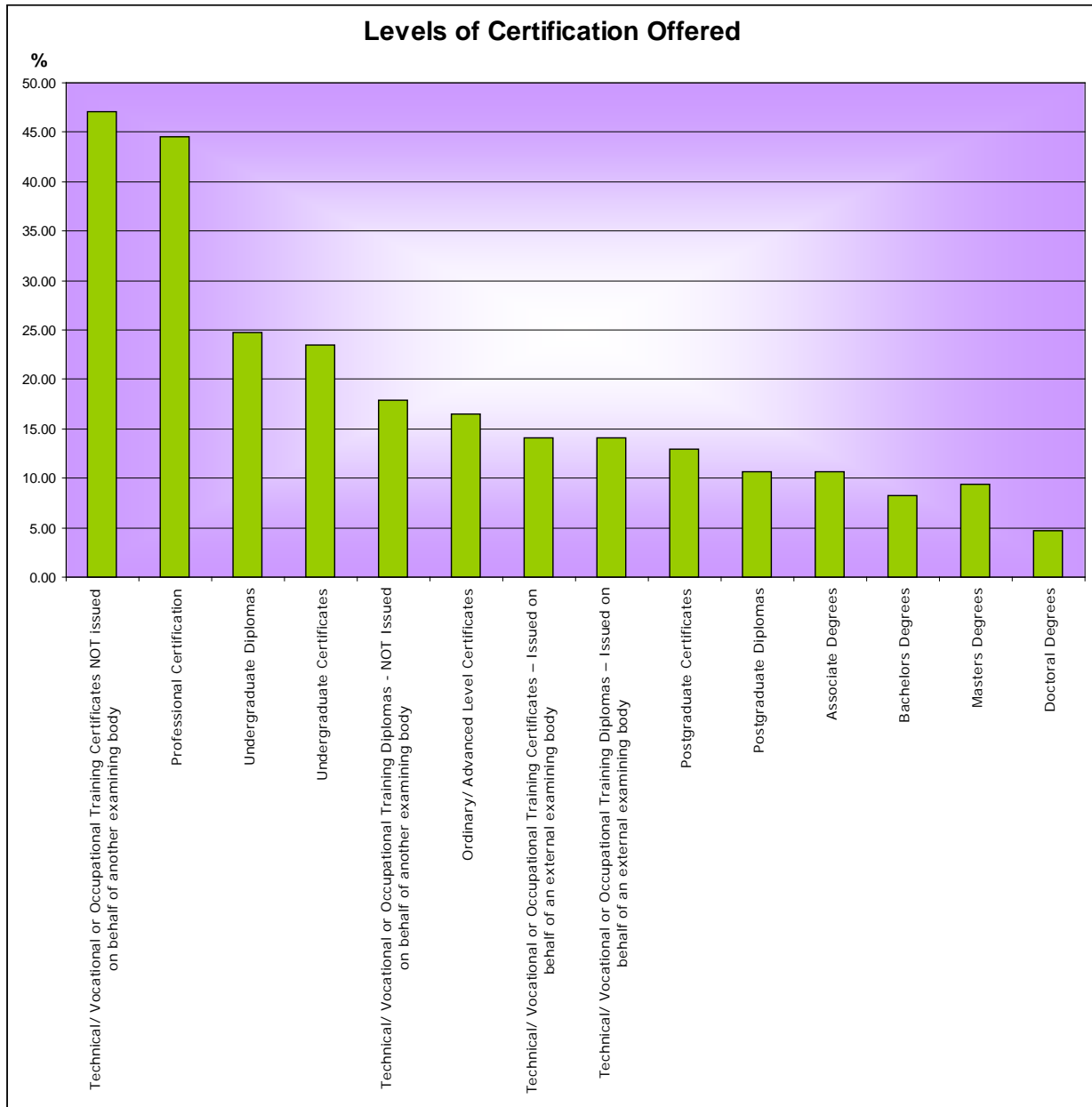
Levels of Certification Offered

The survey data indicates that the level of certification most frequently offered by providers in the sample was technical/vocational or occupational training certificates that are not issued on behalf of another examining body (47.1%), followed by professional certification (44.6%). Other frequently offered levels of certification were undergraduate diplomas (24.7%) and undergraduate certificates (23.5%). Puthi and Maphosa (2007) stated that “TVE has played an important role in charting the course for human civilization into modern times. Most of today’s increasingly more complex and specialized technical jobs require systematic strategies of handing down vital cumulative skills to younger generations” (p1). The level of certification most commonly offered as indicated by the survey data, may relate to them being vocationally focused certifications that can lead to increased employability in local and international employment markets, as well as provide a faster return on investment (Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2003). Table 1 and Chart 6 below illustrate the levels of certification offered by providers in the sample.

Table 1: Levels of Certification Offered

| Level of Certification | % of Institutions Offering per Level |
|--|---|
| Technical/ Vocational or Occupational Training Certificates – NOT issued on behalf of another examining body | 47.1% |
| Professional Certification | 44.6% |
| Undergraduate Diplomas | 24.7% |
| Undergraduate Certificates | 23.5% |
| Technical/ Vocational or Occupational Training Diplomas - NOT Issued on behalf of another examining body | 17.9% |
| Ordinary/ Advanced Level Certificates | 16.5% |
| Technical/ Vocational or Occupational Training Certificates – Issued on behalf of an external examining body | 14.1% |
| Technical/ Vocational or Occupational Training Diplomas – Issued on behalf of an external examining body | 14.1% |
| Postgraduate Certificates | 12.9% |
| Postgraduate Diplomas | 10.6% |
| Associate Degrees | 10.6% |
| Bachelors Degrees | 8.2% |
| Masters Degrees | 9.4% |
| Doctoral Degrees | 4.7% |

Chart 6: Levels of Certification Offered



According to a World Bank (2002) study, within the context of globalisation, particularly where local firms produce for overseas markets and compete with international firms within their own domestic markets, the demand for internationally recognised qualifications usually increases. Further, international recognition of qualifications is a contributing factor in the demand for training. The desire for local and international recognition of qualifications may explain the wide variety of certifications offered locally and the increasing number of private providers. Within the local QA framework, registration is seen as the first form of recognition given to educational providers by the BAC. The need for recognition is evidenced by the overall percentage (92.9%) of educational providers which are actively engaged in the registration process (35.3% completed and 57.6% in process).

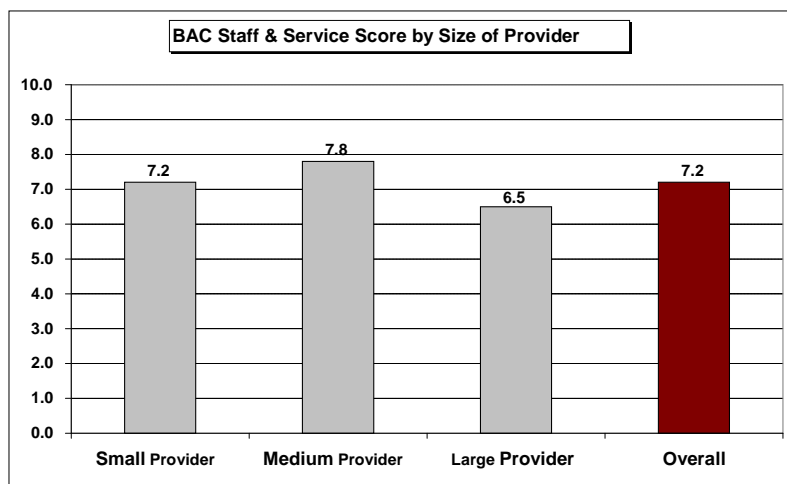
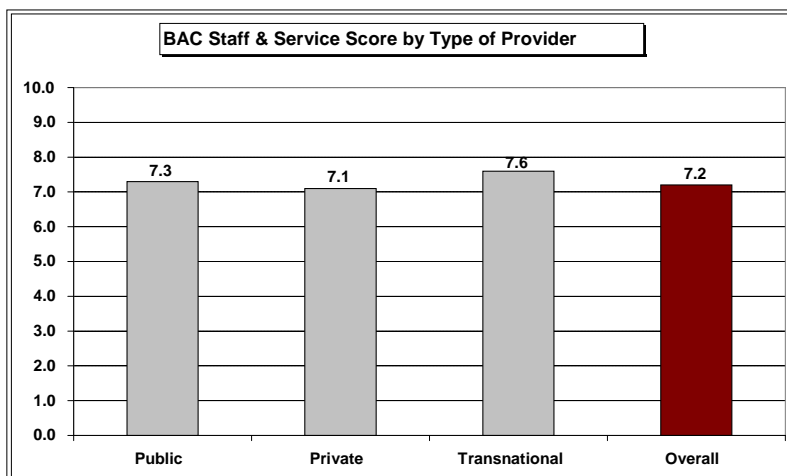
II. REGISTRATION PROCESS

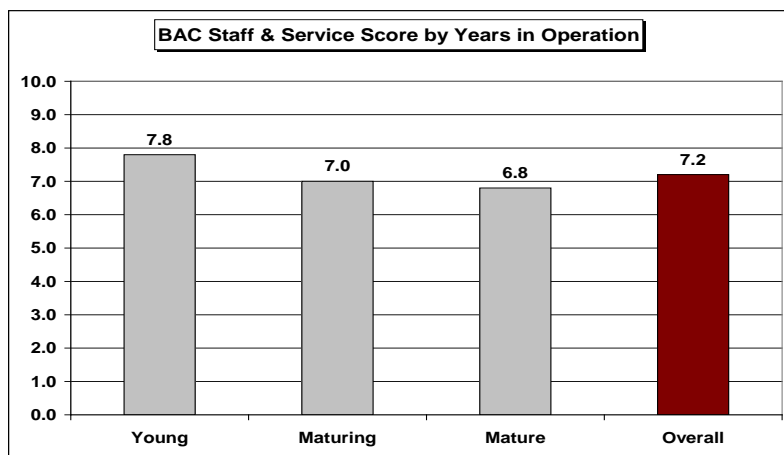
A. BAC STAFF AND SERVICE

Provider Profile

The Barbados Accreditation Council staff and service received an average score of 7.2 from the sample providers. On average, transnational providers gave higher scores for BAC staff and service than public and private providers. Medium sized providers also gave higher scores on average than small and large providers, with a 1.3 difference between the average scores given by medium providers when compared with the average scores given by large providers. Another trend observed was that the average score for staff and service tended to show a decline based on number of years in operation. The graphs below illustrate the mean scores for BAC staff and service based on the category of educational provider.

Chart 7: Average Scores for BAC Staff & Service





User Perceptions

Attributes used to evaluate the BAC staff and service included users' perceptions of: (i) the BAC staff, (ii) the registration process, and (iii) ability of BAC services to meet users' needs, expectations and priorities. The responses given to the posed statements relating to the BAC staff and service are outlined below.

i. The BAC Staff

With respect to the perception of the staff at the BAC, the factor that was rated highest was the courtesy of staff, with 97.6% of respondents agreeing that the staff they encountered was courteous. The factor that received the lowest rating was the provision of timely information with nearly one in every 10 (9.6%) of the respondents indicating that they did not agree that the staff encountered provided timely information. This indicates that the BAC must maintain and improve its level staff courtesy. Additionally, it needs to improve upon its communication with customers, particularly as it relates to the timeliness of feedback provided by BAC personnel. According to Johnston, Cazaly and Olekals (2008), feedback plays a significant role in how persons perceive something and also impacts their attitudes to the subject, as well as the usefulness of the feedback. Timely feedback ensures that there is enough time for persons to act upon the information received. Therefore, delayed feedback has significant implications for the timeframe within which the registration process may be completed and the perception and attitudes of providers towards the BAC.

Table 2 below illustrates the overall perceptions of the respondents with respect to statements about the BAC's staff and service.

Table 2: User Perception of BAC Staff and Service

| The BAC staff I encountered... | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Unsure/ No response (%) |
|--|-----------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Were courteous | 97.6% | 1.2% | 1.2% |
| Were knowledgeable of services offered | 95.6% | 3.2% | 1.2% |
| Were competent | 91.7% | 1.2% | 7.1% |
| Were available (<i>to my organisation</i>) | 95.2% | 1.2% | 3.6% |
| Provided timely information | 84.3% | 9.6% | 6.0% |
| Provided accurate information | 94.0% | 2.4% | 3.6% |

ii. The Registration Process

With respect to the registration process at the BAC, the factor that received the most favourable rating was the definition of the registration process by BAC employees, with 87.7% agreeing that the process was clearly defined by BAC employees. The factor that received the lowest rating was the clarity of the definition of the process on the website, with only 35.0% of respondents agreeing that the process was clearly defined on the website. Notably, no significant differences were observed in the perceptions held by providers that were already registered or in the process of registering when compared with the others. This implies that information on the website may need to be reviewed to ascertain what is needed to make it more easily understood. Table 3 below illustrates respondents' perceptions with respect to statements about the registration process.

Table 3: User Perception of the Registration Process

| The registration process was clearly defined... | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Unsure/ No response (%) |
|--|------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| In the application form | 79.5% | 13.3% | 7.2% |
| In the guidelines | 78.6% | 14.3% | 7.1% |
| In the promotional literature | 66.7% | 14.3% | 19.0% |
| On the website | 35.0% | 10.0% | 55.0% |
| By the BAC staff | 87.7% | 8.6% | 3.7% |

iii. Ability of BAC Services to Meet Needs, Expectations and Priorities of Providers

Respondents were asked to state their opinion about whether the services provided by the BAC met their needs, expectations, and priorities. Approximately 69.5% of respondents agreed that the services provided met their needs, 62.7% agreed that the services met their expectations, and 61.4% agreed that their priorities were met. Nearly one in every five (19.3%) of the respondents, however indicated that the services provided did not meet their priorities, while just over one in every five (20.5%) were unsure or unable to respond to whether the services met their expectations. The responses indicate that the BAC is performing fairly well in this area, however, work needs to be done to ascertain the factor(s) impacting providers which resulted in the perception that their priorities are not being met, or who were unable to respond. Table 4, below, illustrates responses in relation to whether the services provided were able to meet respondents needs, expectations and priorities.

Table 4: User Perception of Services in Relation to Needs, Expectations and Priorities

| The services offered by BAC met my organisation's... | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Unsure/ No response (%) |
|---|------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| Needs | 69.5% | 12.2% | 18.3% |
| Expectations | 62.7% | 16.9% | 20.5% |
| Priorities | 61.4% | 19.3% | 19.3% |

B. GENERAL BAC SERVICE COMMENTS

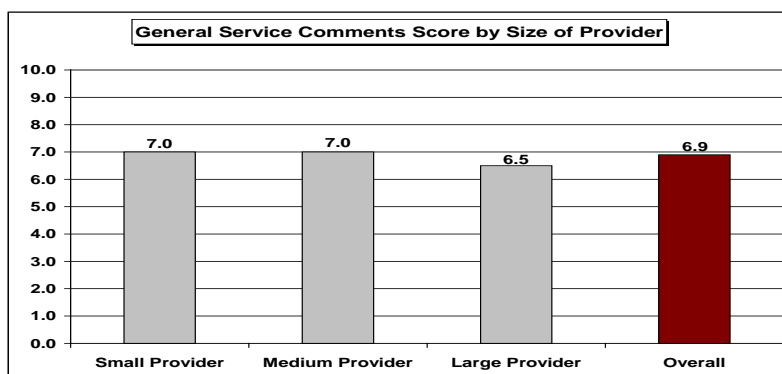
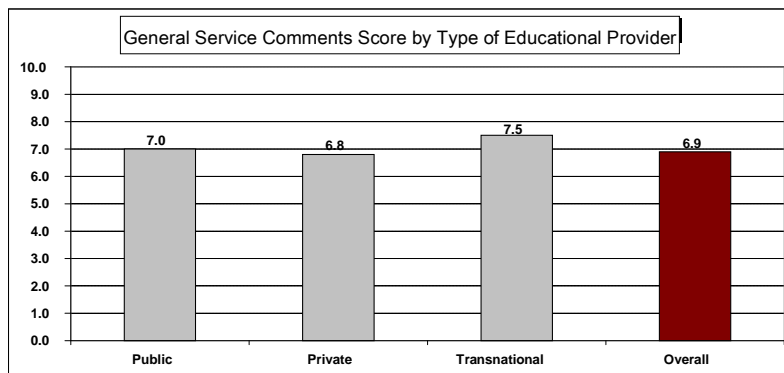
General service comments relating to the BAC received an average score of 6.9 from the providers surveyed. Transnational providers, on average, indicated higher levels of satisfaction with the general services offered than public or private providers. Small and medium size providers seemed equally satisfied with the general services offered by the BAC, with small and medium providers giving similar average ratings of 7.0. Large providers appeared less satisfied than their counterparts, with a lower rating on average. Satisfaction with the general service

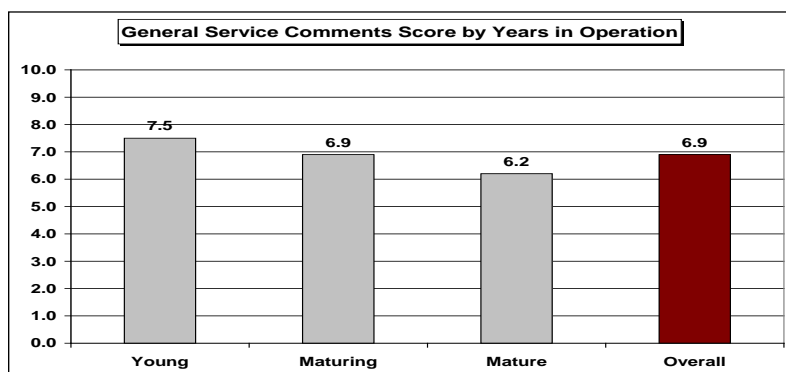
provided also seemed to show a decline with the years of service. Young educational providers gave the highest rating while mature providers gave the lowest rating on average.

The differences in satisfaction levels among small, medium, large, young and mature providers may be an indication of the responsiveness of smaller, medium and younger providers to change, as against that of larger and mature providers. It is undisputable that registration under the BAC represents a significant change from the process which was used by the Ministry of Education. Like any other change event the first response of people is that of resistance (Kotter, 1996; Newstrom 2007). Persons may resist change because they feel there is no need for the change, or the change will do more harm than good; it may have come across as a criticism of the way they are currently performing; and the change may increase their workload. Resistance to change may also result from group pressures, fear, inertia, and self-interest (Newstrom, 2007; Hayes, 1996; Bacal, 2009). Therefore it is essential for the BAC to employ effective change management strategies when dealing with providers in this “changed” environment in order to overcome resistance. The change management strategy should be best suited to the circumstances of the particular provider (Kotter, 1996; Newstrom 2007).

Chart 8 below illustrates the mean scores received for general service comments based on the category of educational provider.

Chart 8: Average Scores for General Service Comments





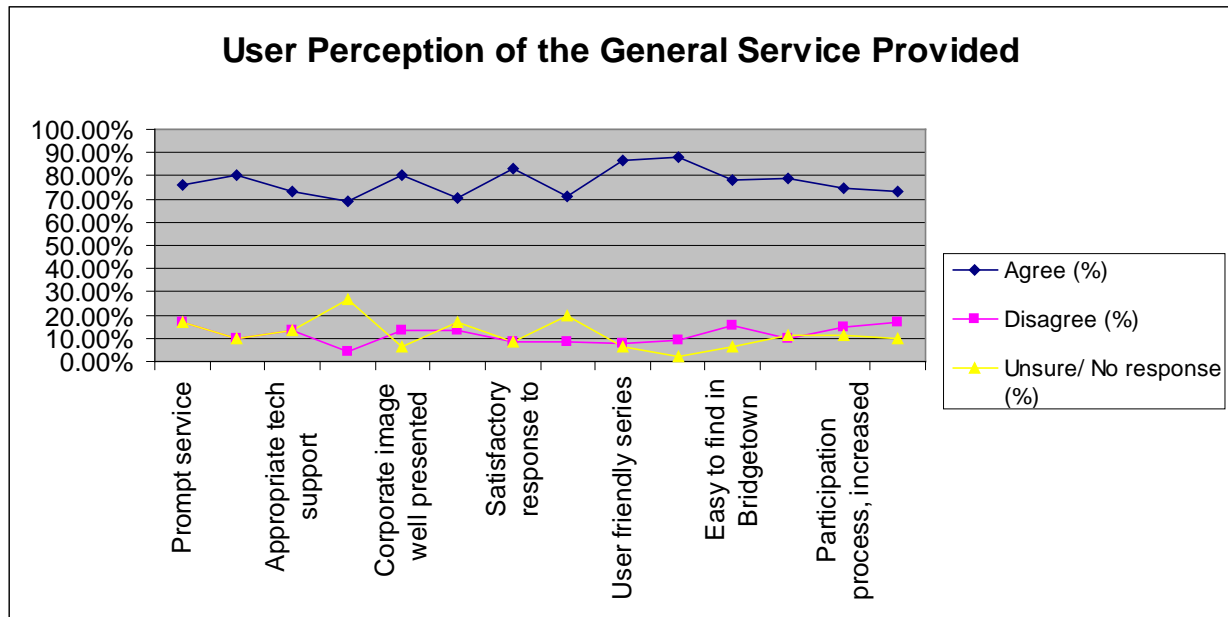
It is clear from table 5 below that there was a high degree of satisfaction among the respondents with the general service provided by the BAC. Overall, 73.5% of respondents agreed that they were satisfied with the services provided by the BAC. Notably, overall satisfaction with the services provided was the factor with which respondents disagreed with the most - 16.9% of respondents disagreed with the posed statement. In relation to the general service provided, respondents were most in agreement with the statement, “The BAC is ‘easy’ to do business with”, as indicated by approximately 88.1% of respondents. The service factor that received the lowest rating was the institutional (site) visit, with approximately 69.3% of respondents agreeing that “The BAC institutional (site) visit was useful”. This implies that there are still some areas of customer service that need to be addressed.

Table 5 and Chart 9 below illustrate the respondents’ levels of agreement with statements related to the general service provided by the BAC.

Table 5: User Perception of the General Service Provided

| General BAC Service Comments | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Unsure/ No response (%) |
|--|-----------|--------------|-------------------------|
| The BAC service was prompt | 76.2% | 16.7% | 17.1% |
| The BAC technical advice was appropriate | 80.5% | 9.8% | 9.8% |
| The BAC technical support was appropriate | 73.2% | 13.4% | 13.4% |
| The BAC institutional (site) visit was useful | 69.3% | 4.0% | 26.7% |
| The BAC corporate image was well presented | 80.5% | 13.4% | 6.1% |
| The BAC took adequate time to complete (my organisation’s) transactions | 70.2% | 13.6% | 16.7% |
| The BAC responded to any complaints and/ or queries in a satisfactory manner | 83.1% | 8.4% | 8.4% |
| The BAC services were affordably priced | 71.2% | 8.8% | 20.0% |
| The BAC services were user friendly/ easy to understand | 86.4% | 7.4% | 6.2% |
| The BAC is “easy” to do business with | 88.1% | 9.5% | 2.4% |
| The BAC is “easy” to find/ locate in Bridgetown | 78.3% | 15.7% | 6.0% |
| The BAC services were beneficial | 78.8% | 10.0% | 11.2% |
| After participating in the registration process, I felt more educated on its content and purpose | 74.4% | 14.6% | 11.0% |
| Our institution is satisfied overall with the service(s) provided by the BAC | 73.5% | 16.9% | 9.6% |

Chart 9: User perception of the general service provided

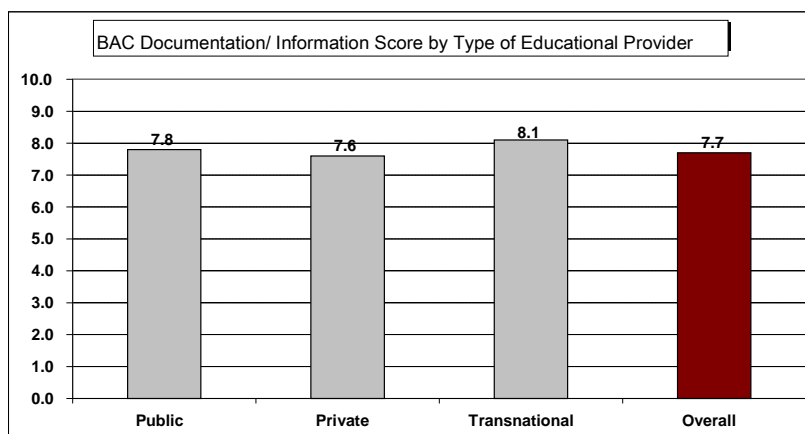


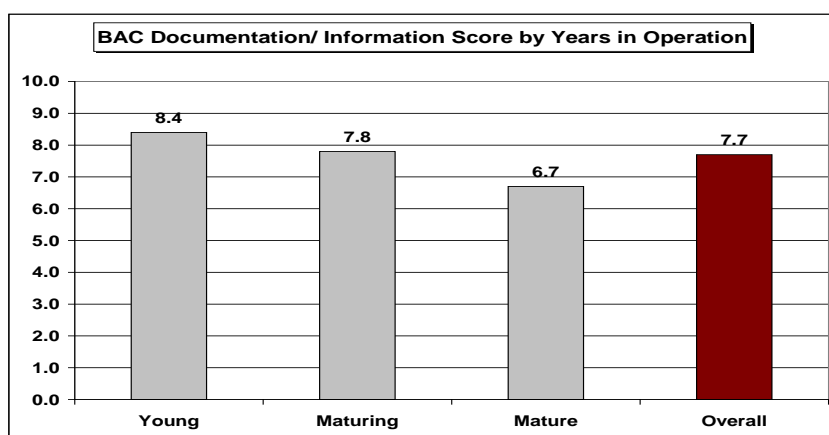
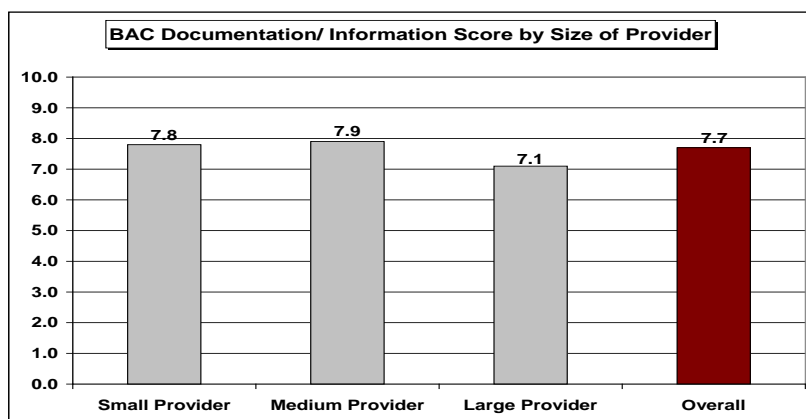
C. BAC DOCUMENTATION/INFORMATION

The Barbados Accreditation Council documentation/information received an average score of 7.7 from the respondents. Transnational providers gave higher scores on average than public and private providers. Similarly, medium providers gave higher scores on average than small or large providers, although average scores given by small and medium providers only varied by 0.1. When observed on the basis of number of years in operation, the average score for BAC documentation/information appeared to decline from young providers to mature providers.

The charts below illustrate the mean scores for BAC documentation/information based on the category of educational provider.

Chart 10: Average Scores for BAC Documentation/Information





Attributes used to evaluate the BAC documentation/information included: (i) user friendliness/comprehensibility of BAC documentation/information, (ii) relevance of BAC documentation, and (iii) availability, currency and clarity of BAC documentation/information. The responses given to the posed statements relating to the BAC documentation/information are outlined below.

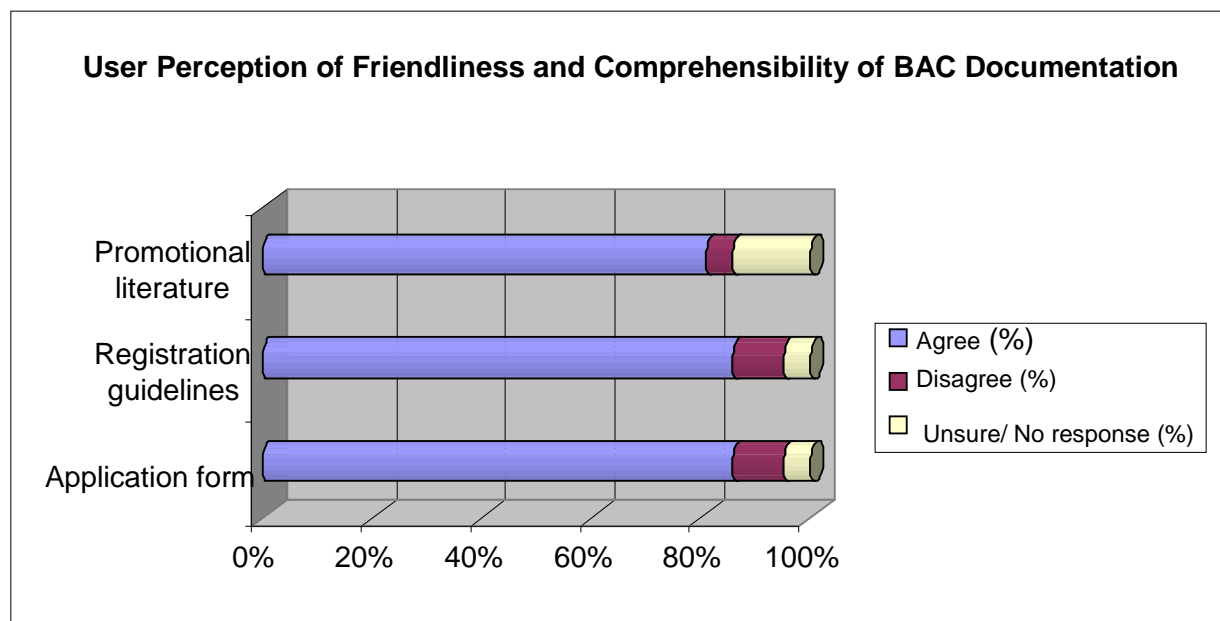
User Friendliness/Comprehensibility of BAC Documentation

Approximately 85.9% of the respondents agreed that the application form and registration guidelines provided by the BAC were easy to understand. However, nearly one in every ten respondents (9.4%) indicated that they did not agree that these documents were user friendly/easy to understand, while 4.7% of respondents did not give a direct response. With respect to the promotional literature provided, approximately 81.8% of respondents indicated that it was user friendly/easy to understand, while 4.8% disagreed and 14.3% did not give a direct response. The table below illustrates the respondents' agreement in relation to the user friendliness/ease of understanding documents provided by the BAC.

Table 6: User Perception of Friendliness and Comprehensibility of Documentation/Information

| The BAC documentation was user friendly/easy to understand... | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Unsure/ No response (%) |
|---|-----------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Application form | 85.9% | 9.4% | 4.7% |
| Registration guidelines | 85.9% | 9.4% | 4.7% |
| Promotional literature | 81.8% | 4.8% | 14.3% |

Chart 11: User perception of friendliness and comprehensibility of documentation/information



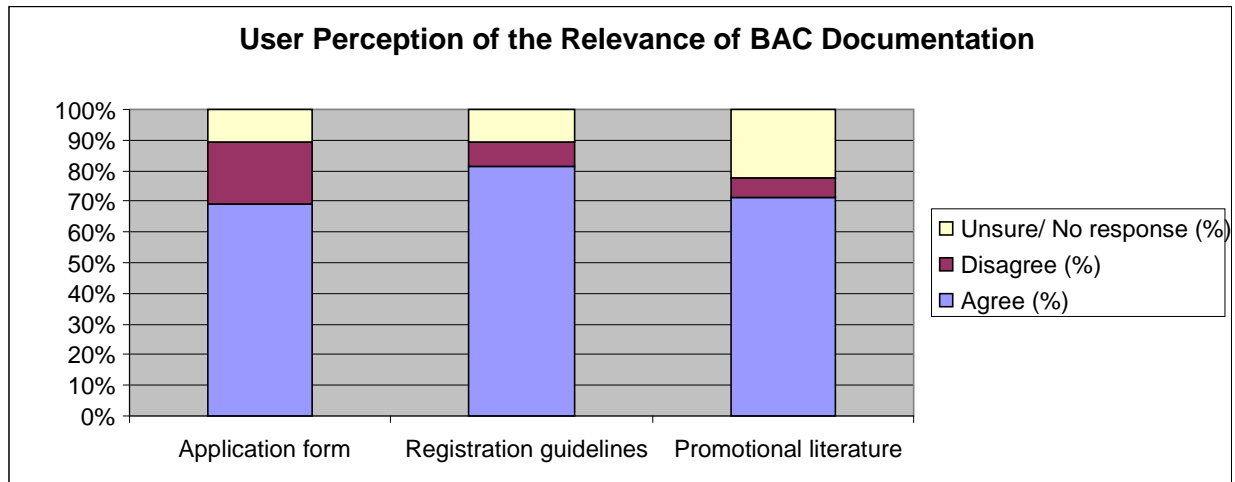
Relevance of BAC Documentation

The registration guidelines were the documentation/ information provided that was seen as being most relevant, as indicated by approximately 81.2% of respondents who agreed that the registration guidelines were relevant. The application form was considered least relevant, as indicated by the lowest level of agreement (69.4% of respondents) with its relevance. One in every five (20.0%) of the respondents did not agree that the application form was relevant. Approximately, 71.4% of respondents agreed that the promotional literature was relevant; however, 22.6% did not give a direct response with respect to the promotional literature. The table below illustrates respondents' level of agreement in relation to the relevance of the documentation/information provided by the BAC.

Table 7: User Perception of the Relevance of BAC Documentation

| The BAC documentation was relevant (in my opinion)... | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Unsure/ No response (%) |
|---|-----------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Application form | 69.4% | 20.0% | 10.6% |
| Registration guidelines | 81.2% | 8.2% | 10.6% |
| Promotional literature | 71.4% | 6.0% | 22.6% |

Chart 12: User perception of the relevance of BAC documentation



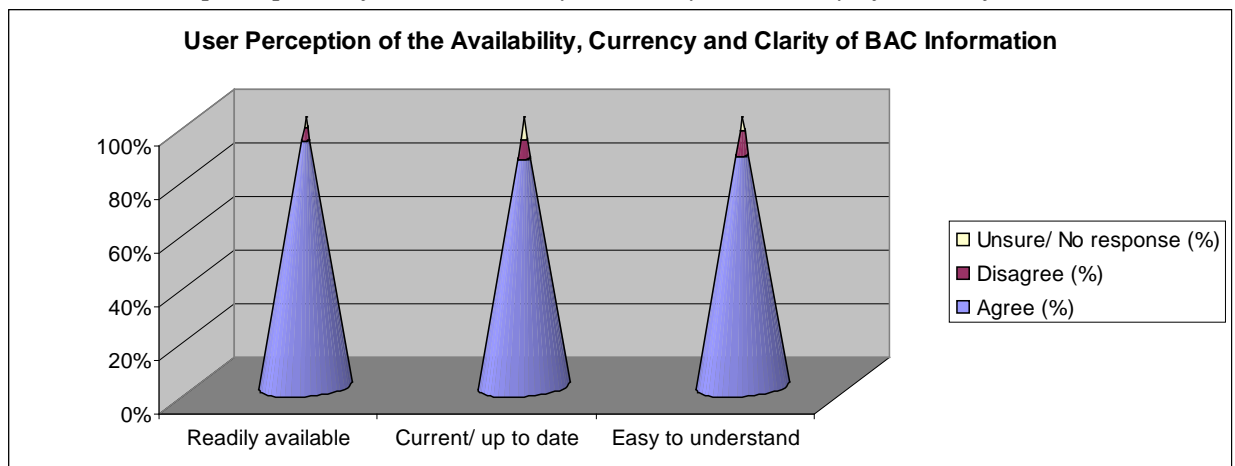
Availability, Currency and Clarity of BAC Information

Approximately 91.7% of respondents agreed that BAC information was readily available, while 85.9% and 84.7% respectively agreed that the information provided was easy to understand and current/ up to date. The table below illustrates respondents’ level of agreement with respect to the availability, currency and clarity of BAC Information.

Table 8: User Perception of the Availability, Currency and Clarity of BAC Information

| The BAC information was... | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Unsure/ No response (%) |
|----------------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Readily available | 91.7% | 4.8% | 3.6% |
| Current/up to date | 84.7% | 7.1% | 8.2% |
| Easy to understand | 85.9% | 9.4% | 4.7% |

Chart 13: User perception of the availability, currency and clarity of BAC information



The exploration of user perception was aimed at better understanding the perceptions of users so that the BAC can align expectations and identify areas requiring amendments in service provision to effectively satisfy customer needs. It should be noted that ongoing reviews and revision of BAC documentation are conducted to make the documentation and information available to stakeholders, including educational providers more effective. Revisions may be initiated as a result of internal decisions to amend the documentation and information made available to stakeholders, or from feedback received from stakeholders. However, the

shortcomings highlighted in this section suggest that the BAC will need to do more reviews of all its public literature with a view to increasing user satisfaction and to provide better guidance to users.

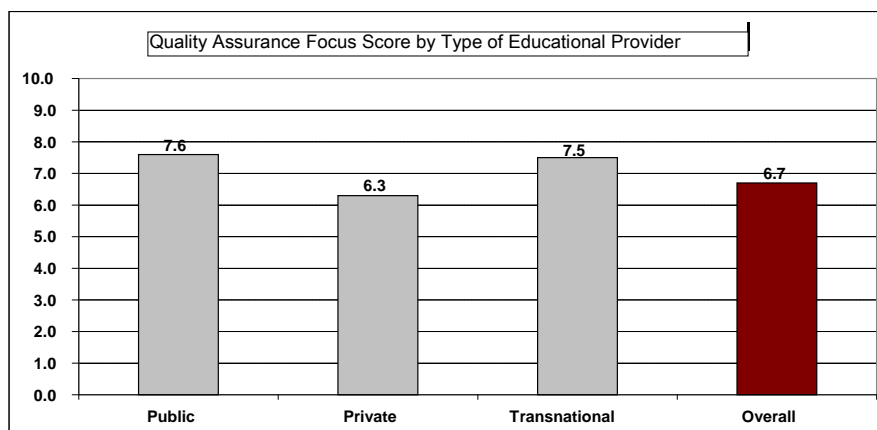
Initial findings indicate that there may be some confusion as to the meanings of different terms being used. Face-to-face interactions allow for clarification which enables improved understanding of the information available. Additionally, to improve the quality and clarity of the documentation/information provided, the BAC will need to ensure that any duplication of information within each document is eliminated, or significantly reduced.

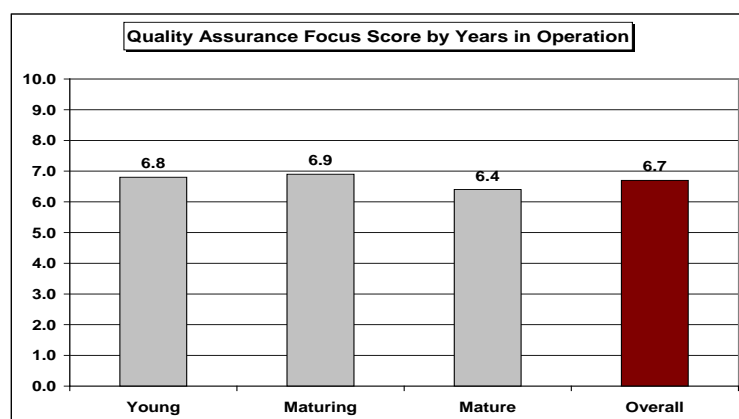
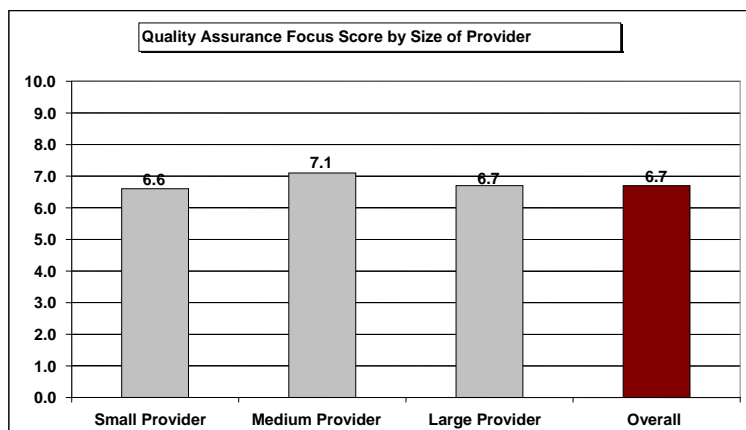
D. QUALITY ASSURANCE FOCUS

The quality assurance focus of the BAC’s registration process received an average score of 6.7 from the sample educational providers. Public providers gave higher scores on average than transnational or private providers. The average score given by private providers (6.3) was however, notably lower than that given by public (7.6) or transnational providers (7.5). Medium providers gave higher scores on average than small or large providers. Maturing and young educational providers gave similar average scores for the quality assurance focus of the registration process, with average scores of 6.9 and 6.8 respectively, while mature providers gave average scores of 6.4. Public providers are the larger providers in the sample and this grouping tends to have a better understanding of and more experience with QA systems and/or mechanisms, which may explain the higher scores provided by this group in the survey. However, overall, the responses indicate that to facilitate greater understanding of QA and its benefits, there is a need for the BAC to continue its work on educating the providers.

The graphs below illustrate the mean scores received for the quality assurance aspect of the registration process based on the category of educational provider.

Chart 14: Average Scores for Quality Assurance Focus



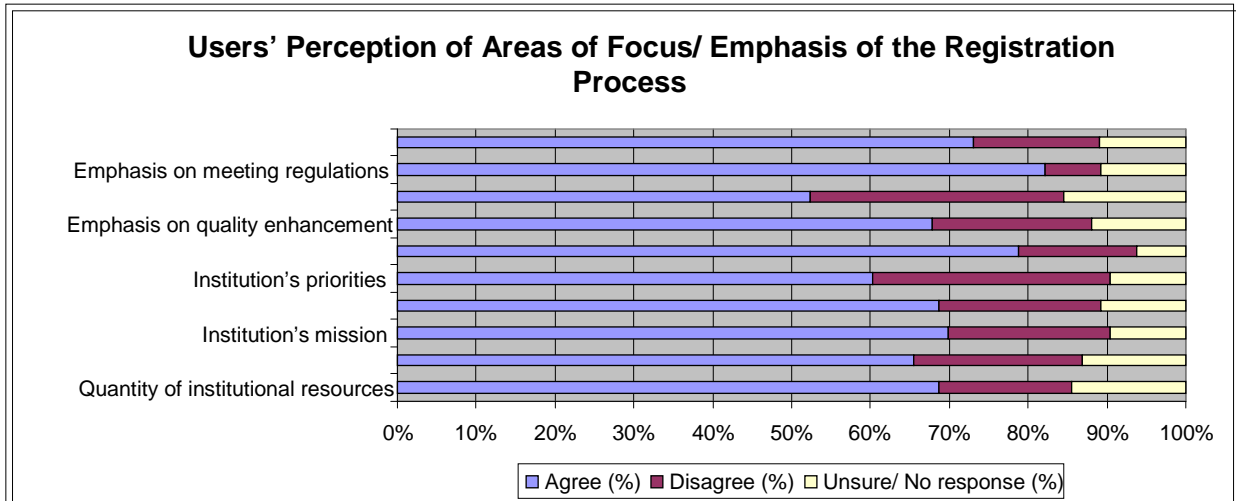


With respect to the areas of focus/emphasis for the registration process at the BAC, most respondents (82.1%) indicated that greater emphasis was placed on meeting regulations. Nearly a third of respondents (30.1%) did not agree that the BAC focused on the priorities of the providers. Table 11 below illustrates the respondents' levels of agreement regarding the areas of focus/emphasis of the registration process.

Table 9: Users' Perception of Areas of Focus/ Emphasis of the Registration Process

| The BAC registration process was... | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Unsure/ No response (%) |
|---|-----------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Focused on the quantity of institutional resources | 68.7% | 16.9% | 14.5% |
| Focused on the effectiveness of institutional resources | 65.5% | 21.4% | 13.1% |
| Focused on my institution's mission | 69.9% | 20.5% | 9.6% |
| Focused on my institution's vision | 68.7% | 20.5% | 10.8% |
| Focused on my institution's priorities | 60.2% | 30.1% | 9.6% |
| Focused on the quality of systems available for effective teaching learning | 78.8% | 15.0% | 6.2% |
| Placed greater emphasis on quality enhancement | 67.9% | 20.2% | 11.9% |
| Placed greater emphasis on students | 52.4% | 32.1% | 15.5% |
| Placed greater emphasis on meeting regulations | 82.1% | 7.1% | 10.7% |
| Placed greater emphasis on quality assurance | 73.2% | 15.9% | 11.0% |

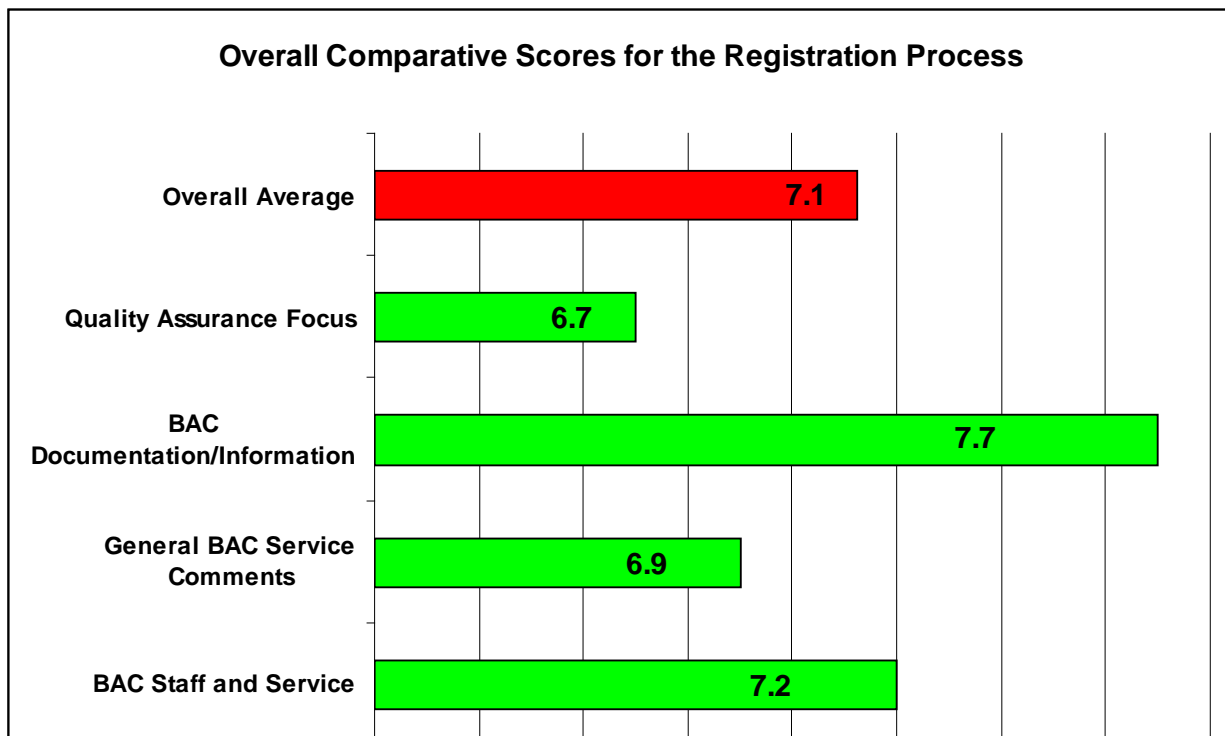
Chart 15: Users' perception of Areas of Focus/Emphasis of the Registration Process



It is evident from the analysis of the responses that the providers are at different levels of understanding regarding QA. There is therefore a need for the BAC to ensure the level of understanding is the same across the board. This is especially important since QA is a crucial component of the registration process and the overall QA framework in Barbados.

Based on survey data, the overall comparative scores for the registration process based on the criteria used for measurement are as shown in chart 16.

Chart 16: Overall Comparative Scores for the Registration Process



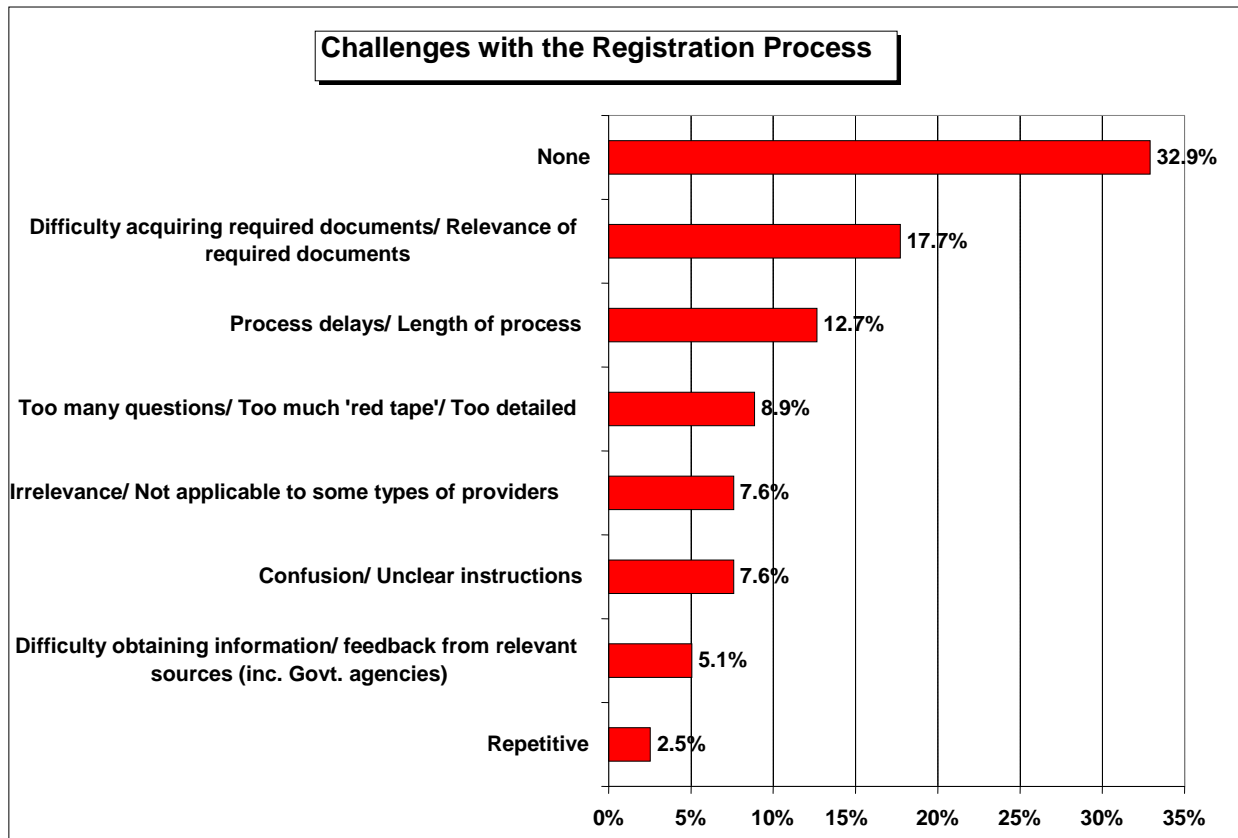
These scores indicate that although the BAC has performed favourably in all areas, there is still room for improvement to achieve greater levels of customer satisfaction. These scores can be used as baseline measurements in a benchmarking exercise.

III. GENERAL COMMENTS

Specific Challenges with Registration Process

When asked about challenges with the registration process, almost a third of the respondents indicated that there were no challenges. The challenge cited most frequently was the availability/question of relevance of documentation (17.7%). The figure below illustrates the responses that were given most frequently when respondents were asked to identify specific challenges with the process.

Chart 17: Specific Challenges with the Registration Process as Stated by More than 2% of Respondents



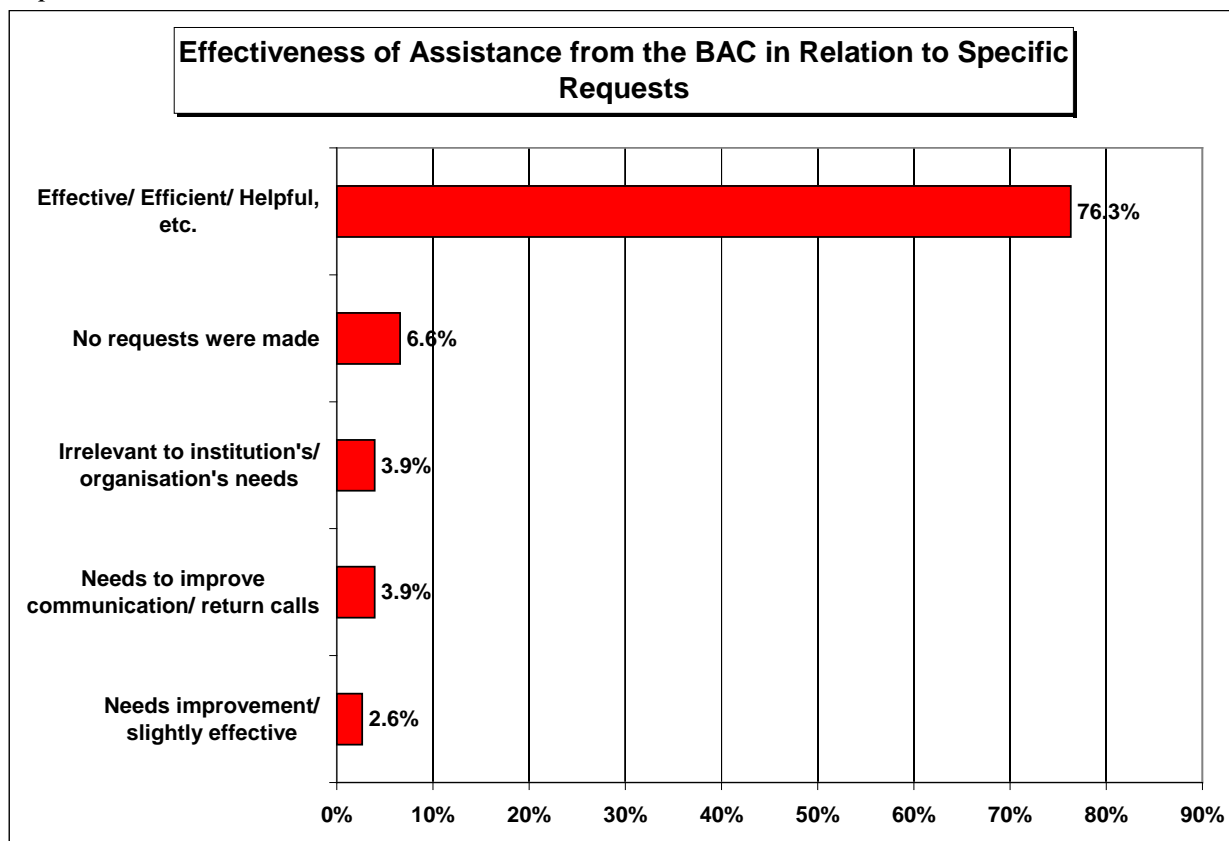
Other challenges with the registration process as identified by less than 2% of respondents were as follows:

- Process not designed for programmes
- No deadlines
- Difficulty gathering information at institution
- Requirements for statutory bodies should be revised
- Unplanned costs
- Institution was relocated
- Different requirements for old and new registrants
- Differentiating between children's and adults' institution
- Difficulty meeting requirements
- Misunderstandings/ Miscommunication

Effectiveness of Assistance from the BAC in Relation to Specific Requests

When asked about the effectiveness of the assistance from the BAC in relation to specific requests, more than three-quarters (76.3%) of respondents noted that the assistance provided was effective. The figure below illustrates responses that were given by more than 2% of responses.

Chart 18: Responses to 'Effectiveness of Assistance from the BAC' given by more than 2% of respondents



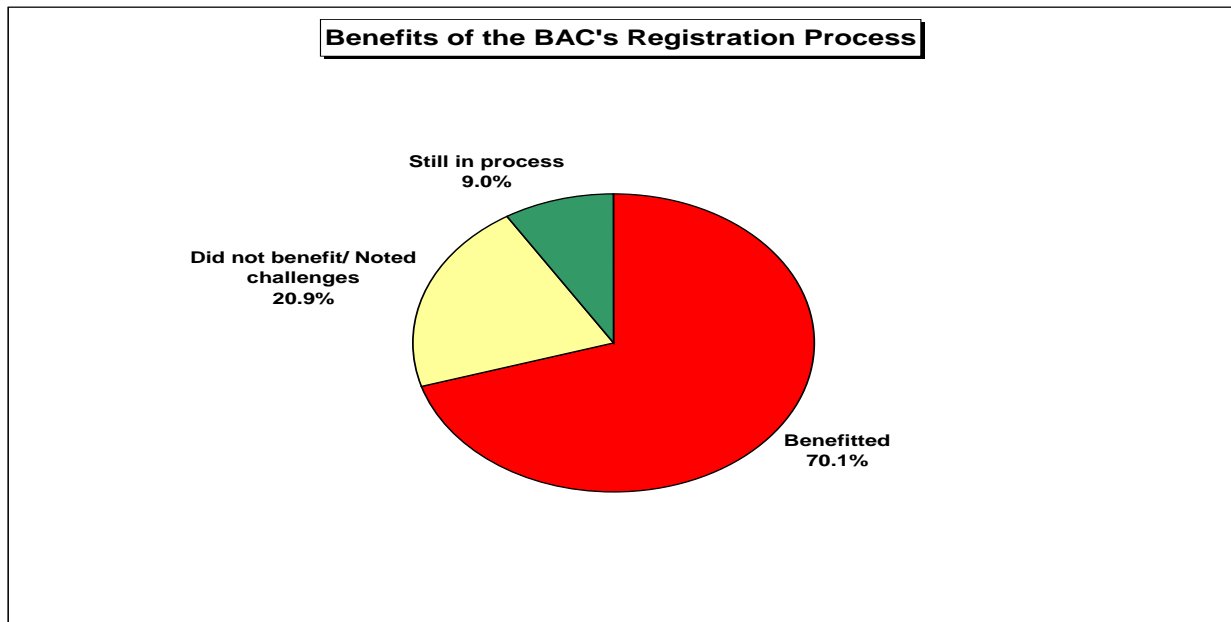
Other responses given by less than 2% of respondents in relation to the effectiveness of assistance provided by the BAC were as follows:

- Unhelpful/ Frustrating
- Varies
- Staff is approachable
- Institution was kept informed
- No impact
- Accreditation took too long
- Not sufficiently geared towards small education providers

Benefits of the BAC's Registration Process

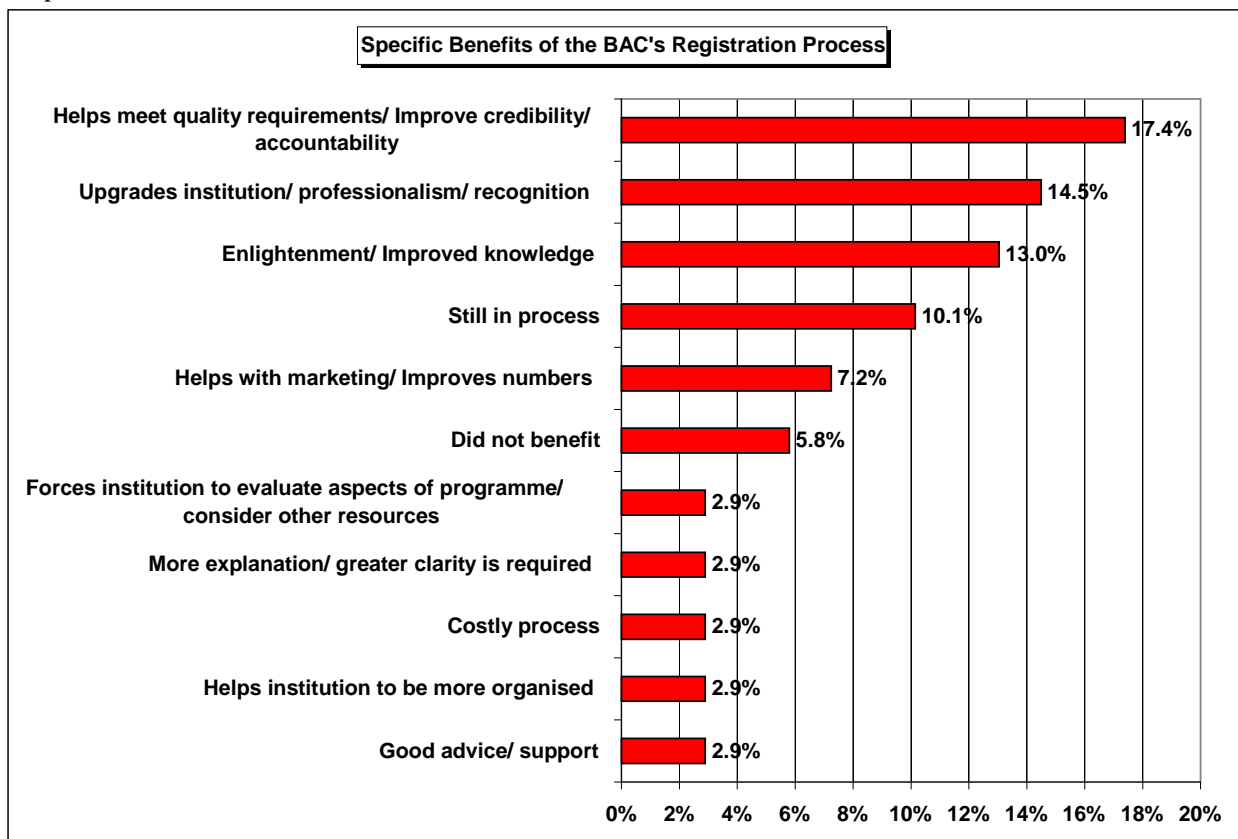
The majority of respondents (70.1%) indicated that they benefitted from the BAC's registration process. However, approximately one in every five respondents (20.9%) indicated that they did not benefit/ noted challenges with the process. The remaining 9.0% of respondents did not commit to a response, noting that they were still in the registration process.

Chart 19: Benefits of the BAC's Registration Process



Specific benefits of the process as stated by responses were mostly positive in keeping with the views of the majority that the process was beneficial. Helping to meet quality requirements/ improving credibility was the most cited specific benefit of the process as noted by approximately 17.4% of respondents. The figure below illustrates specific impacts of the process as cited by more than 2% of respondents.

Chart 20: Specific Benefits of the Registration Process as Stated by More than 2% of Respondents



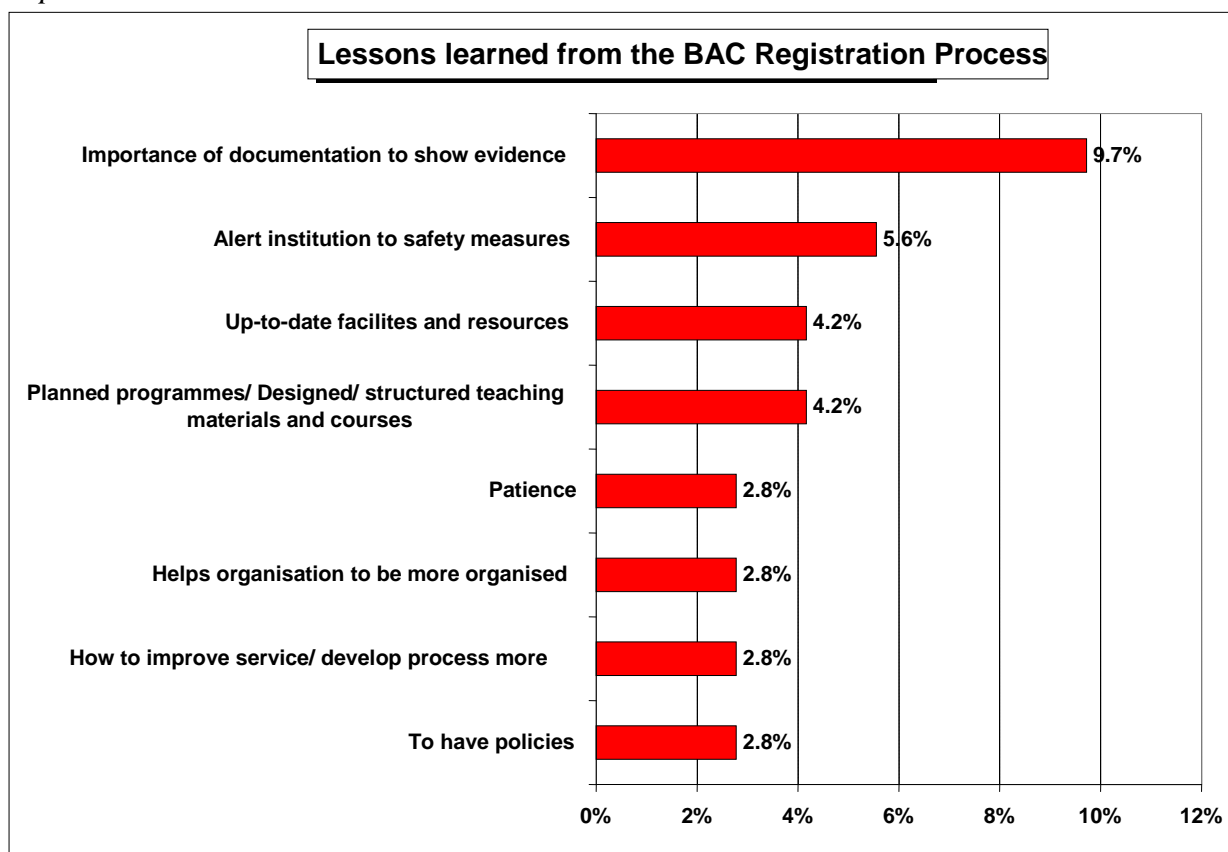
Other specific benefits of the registration process as stated by less than 2% of respondents included:

- Helps focus on students' input
- Communication needs improvement
- Certification may be misleading
- Clients are eligible for funding for training
- Not aware of benefits
- Already accredited internationally
- Difficult to explain
- Difficult to explain

Lessons learned from the BAC's Registration Process

When asked about lessons learned from the registration process, the most cited lesson related to the importance of proper documentation (9.7%). The figure below illustrated the lessons cited by more than 2% of respondents.

Chart 21: Lessons learned from the registration process as stated by more than 2% of respondents



Other lessons learned from the process as stated by less than 2% of respondents included:

- Not enough focus on small training institutions
- Forced to formalise mission statements
- Aim higher
- Not enough focus on quality of institution
- Improve efficiency with certifying bodies
- Critical review process in context of quality assurance
- Teaching staff must be well qualified

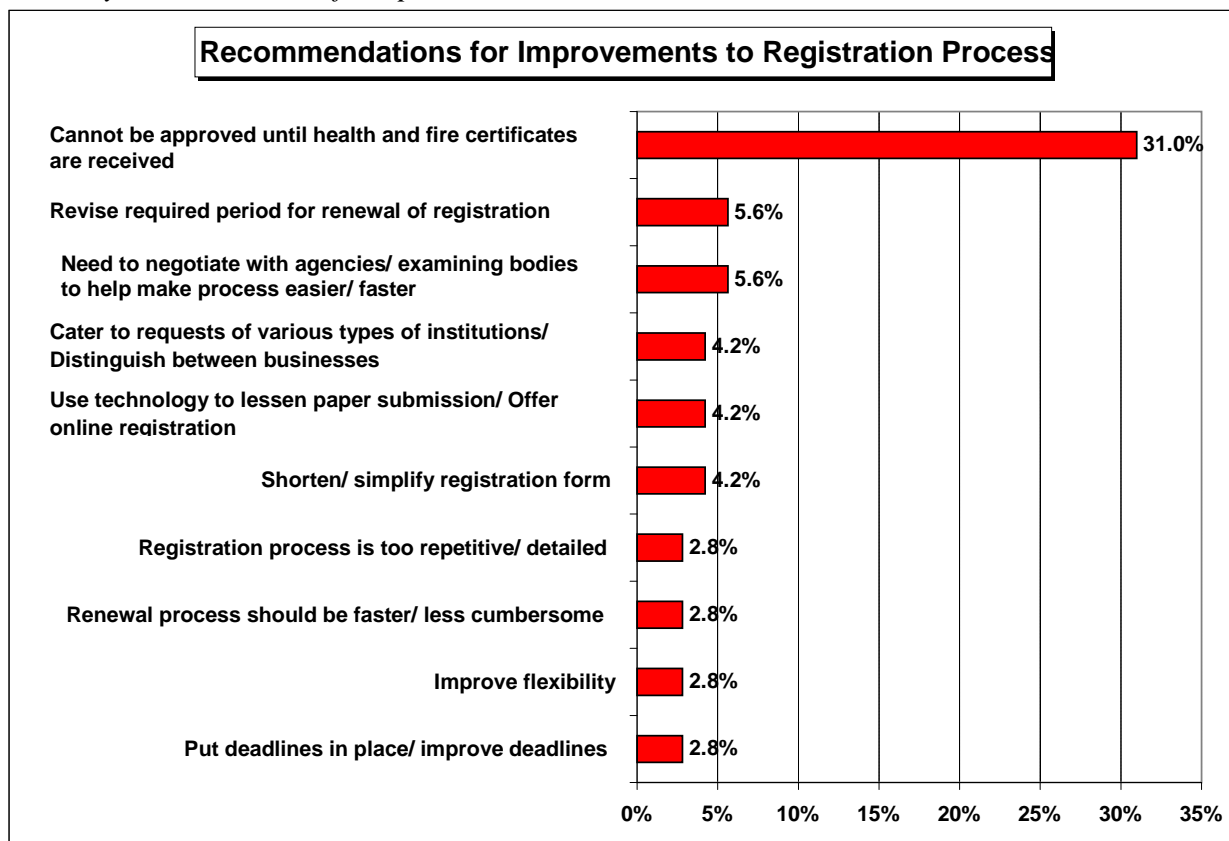
- Ensuring everything is complete
- Need for accreditation
- Greater focus on students' needs
- Enforces things that may be forgotten
- Value of information
- Process of setting up institutions may be challenging
- Improved/set standards

Recommendations for Improvement to the Registration Process

Nearly a third (31.0%) of respondents indicated that they could not think of specific ways of improving the registration process. However, the desire to have the required period for renewal of registration revised and need for greater collaboration with external/ examining bodies were the most popular recommendations.

Chart 22 below illustrates recommendations for improvement as stated by more than 2% of respondents.

Chart 22: Recommendations/Comments Regarding Ways to Improve the Registration Process as Stated by More than 2% of Respondents



Other suggestions/comments regarding ways to improve the registration process as stated by less than 2% of the respondents included:

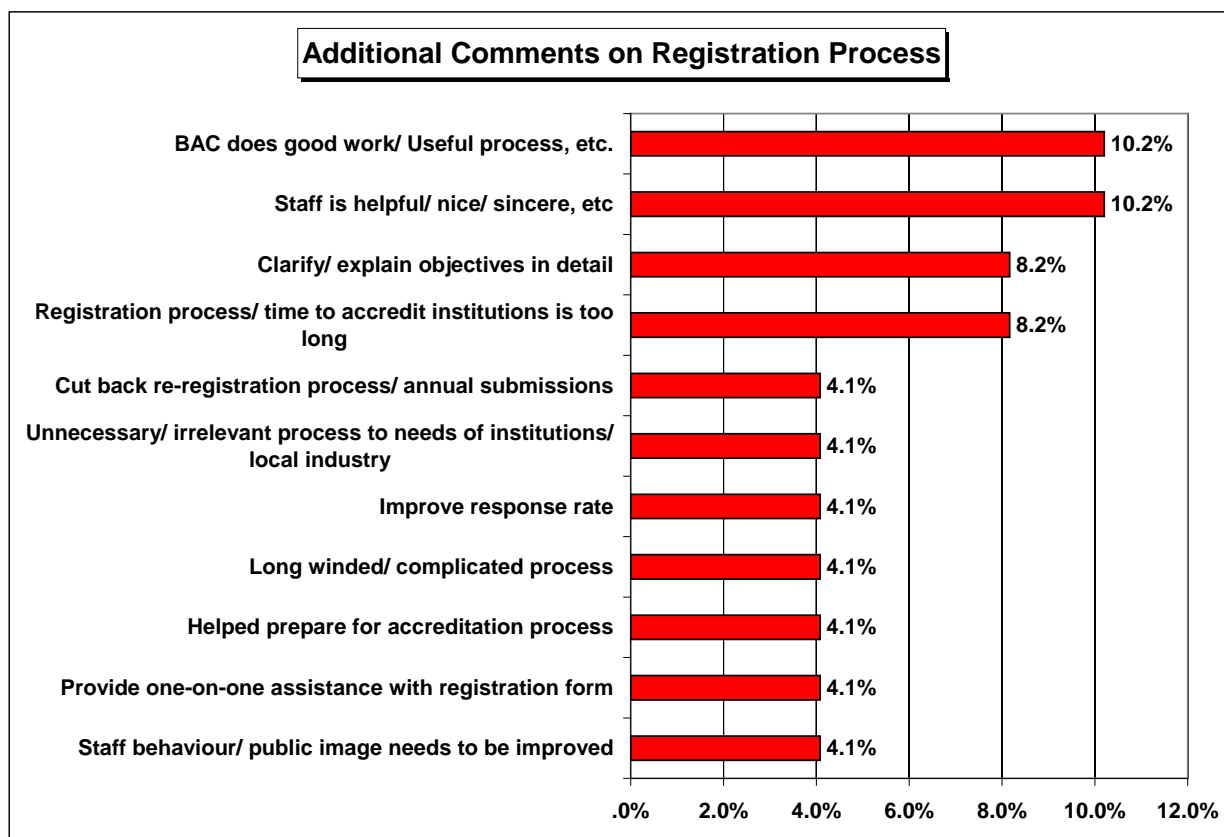
- Need to support institutions' programmes
- Need to focus on smaller institutions
- Find a way to assist the health department
- Easy solutions for process implementation
- Tie registration to the accreditation process
- Find ways to assist larger institutions

- Provide menu of service options
- Have more discussion with institutions
- Have staff that can provide fire/safety/health inspections
- Remove the aspect relating to finances
- Guide persons who need to be accredited
- There is too much emphasis on accreditation
- Improve conduct/corporate image
- Cannot be approved until health and fire are addressed

Other Comments Regarding the Registration Process

Chart 23 below summarises the additional comments made by respondents regarding the registration process as stated on the questionnaires.

Chart 23: Additional comments from providers on the registration process



The responses provided in this section indicate that there is more work to be done by the BAC in terms of educating providers on the differences in terminologies used; content of the registration process; roles and responsibilities of both providers and the BAC in the registration process; link between registration and accreditation amongst other things. For example, providers have indicated a desire to have ‘one-on-one assistance with the registration form, tie registration to the accreditation process and these are services already available through the technical support and assistance offered by the Accreditation Officers. Dialogue with providers is ongoing however, the feedback provided by the respondents will assist the BAC in zeroing in on those areas of more importance to providers. The responses have also highlighted areas of concern which the BAC is currently addressing, such as the response time of those government agencies responsible for handling the health and safety aspects of the registration process.

Summary of Findings

Generally, the data indicates that there is a significant proportion of small, private tertiary providers in the postsecondary/tertiary educational sector in Barbados. Approximately, 72% are in the “maturing” stage of development, that is, providers which have been operating between 6-20 years. According to the data, most of the certification offered is at the level of Professional and Technical/Vocational or Occupational Training Certificates NOT issued on behalf of another examining body. For ease of presentation, the findings will be summarised under two (2) broad areas:

- a. Registration Process (System and Procedures),
- b. Customer Service (People and Delivery).

a. Registration Process (System and Procedures)

The study has revealed that the registration of tertiary providers has been accepted as part of the quality assurance process, notwithstanding the challenges of acquiring the Health and Fire Certificates of Compliance to complete the registration process. The BAC has sought to address this problem through discussions with the relevant authorities and issuing them with a list of providers that are seeking registration, in order to expedite the process. The BAC has already approved and implemented strategies such as the new registration status (Provisional Registration) to promote the effectiveness and efficiency of the registration process. Further, additional strategies will be implemented based on the feedback from the survey to further improve the process.

The findings of the study also indicate that the BAC’s registration process is a mix of quality control, accountability and improvement. Lewis and Lemaitre (2009) stated that the broad purposes of external quality assurance are quality control, accountability and improvement. Each purpose is linked to specific features of the tertiary education system, but most QA systems have elements of all three (3) purposes. They further stated that quality control (licensing processes) is very important for tertiary education systems experiencing large increases in the number and/or diversity of higher education providers, or where there is a wide range of programme offerings, or new modes of provision emerging. Additionally, the establishment of threshold standards for programmes and educational providers becomes essential. These features are typical of the current postsecondary/tertiary educational environment in Barbados.

The registration process was perceived by users to be clearly defined through the application form and guidelines and these documents were stated as “easy to understand”. However, the scores received for the information on the website suggest that there is need for improvement to ensure that the process is better understood by the users. Of note, also was the score received from respondents on the relevance of the application form (69.4% agreed, 20% disagreed, and 10.6% unsure/no response). Further investigation will be required to ascertain the reason(s) that led to the application form being considered irrelevant, particularly as the guidelines were found to be highly relevant and both documents are closely aligned.

Of concern is the score received for the statement “The BAC institutional (site) visit was useful” (69.3% agree). The institutional site visit is considered to be a critical component of the registration process. It allows the provider to discuss its status for registration in the context of the registration criteria. It is also one of the means by which the Council can determine the readiness of the provider for registration. As such, further investigation will need to be done to determine the reason(s) why 4% of respondents disagreed with this statement and 26.7% were unsure or provided no response.

The high perception by public providers that the registration focused on quality assurance is a good sign for the BAC. It is also an indication that these providers have experience with quality assurance processes and systems. On the other hand, the lower score by private providers suggests that there is need for more dialogue between the BAC and these providers to determine areas of concern or for clarification. There seems to be also the need for improved communication on the purpose of registration, as there is the perception that the registration process has a strong focus on meeting regulations rather than on quality.

Generally, the findings indicate that the registration process has impacted positively on the tertiary providers as it has allowed them to meet specific quality requirements, improved their recognition and/or credibility, accountability and knowledge of quality assurance. Providers have also been alerted to the need for safety measures, to ensure that facilities and resources are up-to-date, as well to improve their services and the planning and design of programmes/courses and instructional materials. These observations are encouraging to the BAC and will be monitored to see whether providers actually implement these practices

b. Customer Service (People and Delivery)

The findings indicate that the small providers accounted for the largest number in the survey and the large providers accounted for the highest number of student enrolment. Of the total respondents, 75.5% of the total small providers, 70.6% of the total medium providers, and 41.7% of the total large providers agreed that the BAC's services met their organisation's needs. However, the findings indicate that there is more work to be done by the BAC in this area to increase the satisfaction levels of all providers. As a consequence, it is critical that the BAC be perceived as addressing the needs, expectations and priorities of these categories of providers, particularly the large providers. Continuous dialogue should assist in ascertaining the areas of dissatisfaction and ways of addressing these deficiencies.

The high scores related to the courtesy of the staff, knowledge of the services offered, availability to customers and effectiveness of assistance given, and the feedback provided send a positive message to BAC. On the other hand, there is room for improvement as it pertains to timeliness with which information is provided.

LESSONS LEARNED

In undertaking this study, providers involved in the BAC's registration process were surveyed so that an understanding could be gained about their perceptions of the process and to assist the BAC with identifying areas of success and areas for improvement such as educating providers about the terminologies used in QA. This was to facilitate better management of the registration process in the areas surveyed. Based on the results of the study, the BAC has identified specific areas for examination. While the relative importance of each may vary, the chances of success will be enhanced if all elements are addressed at some level.

The BAC has also learned that effective change management/transition strategies were needed for the transfer of the registration process from the Ministry of Education to the BAC, particularly as new approaches and a new organisation were being introduced. Additionally, continuous dialogue is critical for keeping the communication open between itself and its stakeholders and for generally building support and commitment. Open communication, as well as the investigation and evaluation of the experiences of stakeholders should lead to an overall improvement in the provision of quality postsecondary/tertiary education and training in Barbados.

WAY FORWARD

Over the next three year period 2010-2013, the BAC will continue to undertake further research into its registration process, particularly the customer service element. The overall comparative scores received for the registration process from the study (see Chart 16) will be utilized as baseline data. Scores/targets will be set and agreed with the involvement of the Board and Secretariat. In addition during the same period, the BAC will be undertaking a review of its operations to determine its efficiency and effectiveness in keeping with the stipulation stated in Section 25 of the Barbados Accreditation Council Act 2004-11 which states that *“The Minister shall undertake a review of the Council every 3 years to determine its effectiveness and efficiency”*.

The study has shown that despite the overall average score of 7.1 that the BAC attained in the various aspects of its registration process, there is still room for improvement. This is to enable the BAC to better meet providers’ expectations in specific areas. Benchmarking can enable the BAC to understand how much improvement is needed to accomplish its mission which is: **“To be a high quality provider of registration, accreditation and related services in post-secondary or tertiary education and training in Barbados and beyond”**.

The BAC may also seek to improve its operations by benchmarking itself against its counterparts, not for competitive reasons but rather with a view to improving its own internal quality system. According to Losh (1994) and Stralser (1995), as cited by Bennett (date unknown), benchmarking provides a systematic process for identifying best practices by comparing its performance with similar organizations. It is argued that benchmarking can allow an organization to determine:

- How well it is doing, compared to others?
- How good it wants to be?
- Who is doing it best?
- How they do it?
- How can the best practice be adapted or even adopted?

In terms of international recognition, the BAC as a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) will strive to adopt best practices which can be found in documents such as the INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practices. It is also anticipated that the BAC will seek to invite an external review of its operations which would lead to enhanced recognition amongst its peers and stakeholders.

In January, 2010, the BAC will be embarking on the development of its next three-year Strategic Plan as the current plan expires in 2011. It is anticipated that the implementation of the new or revised strategic directions of the BAC will result in improved relations and confidence by all its stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

Whether activated by external or internal forces, organisations frequently need to change the way they operate to some degree, in order to produce better outcomes (Kotter, 1996). This is one of the goals of the BAC’s registration process. In the prevailing global postsecondary/tertiary educational environment, it is important for developing nations like Barbados to show that their tertiary educational system compares favourably with international standards.

According to Petersen (1999), for countries with developed and developing higher education systems issues of increasing access and providing value for money is a driving force for the development of quality assurance mechanisms. He further stated that “*reasonable assurance of quality and integrity is a necessity as institutions, students, academic credit, and qualifications extend beyond state, regional and national borders.*” Middlehurst and Woodfield (2003) also stated that accompanying the development or revision of regulation and QA structures is the expansion and diversification of educational provision. The challenge then becomes the ability of the country to effectively support the development and implementation of these structures. Registration is one mechanism being employed at the postsecondary/tertiary educational level in Barbados by the BAC to achieve these goals.

The survey exercise has revealed that both the BAC and the postsecondary/tertiary educational providers have a number of issues to address before the entire registration process reaches the desired level of quality and effectiveness. There are issues common to the different categories of providers (large, medium, small; young, maturing, mature; private, public, transnational) and some which are peculiar to each type of provider. The BAC will need to tailor its activities to meet the needs of each provider category.

The feedback from respondents also indicated that there was a need to make provisions for providers which have not fully complied with all the registration requirements. The recently revised registration process which now includes the opportunity for provisional registration should address this issue. The education of providers on this new registered status will need to be done. Additionally, dialogue will need to be undertaken with providers in response to the issues raised based on their feedback to the open-ended questions.

There is enough evidence that the BAC is committed to fostering strong relations with its stakeholders, providing excellent customer service and retaining the engagement of stakeholders, particularly educational providers, in the registration process. Goal One of its *Strategic Plan of 2007-2011* provided for the “Establishment of relationships with institutions and provides in the interest of developing and sustaining a **Quality Culture** in post secondary education and training.” In addition, Goal Two of the *Strategic Plan of 2007-2011* speaks to the identification and satisfaction of customer needs. It is therefore understandable that this survey was conducted and is being reported to stakeholders.

The paper highlighted the QA framework in Barbados at the postsecondary/tertiary level and the feedback sought from the educational providers with regards to their experiences in the registration process. Many lessons have been learnt by the BAC from this exercise which will play a significant role in how the BAC improves upon the various aspects of the registration process for the future. The BAC will continue to work with providers to ensure that its services remain relevant; providers are able to fulfil their role to society; and the BAC effectively fulfils its registration mandate.

Finally, the BAC recognizes the importance of the registration process as part of its quality assurance framework and is mindful of the quote by Mingle (1977) as cited by Peterson (1999) which states that:

“Education is too important to exist without controls, without licensing, or without credentials. Government’s role as authoriser should hold providers accountable for educational results. Means are superfluous: it is results that count”.

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Appendix I

General Registration Criteria

1. Governance and Mission

- a. There should be a structure of governance which formulates general policies and exercises authority over the implementation of programmes of study or courses.
- b. The composition of the governing body should be broad-based and should allow for objective input into the management of the institution.
- c. There should be a clearly defined and published Mission Statement or Statement of Purpose.
- d. The goals, aims and objectives of the provider should relate to the intended target population and should be relevant to the needs of the society.

2. Admission Policies

- a. The provider should have clearly defined admission policies compatible with its stated purpose. These should be published and should be adhered to by the provider.
- b. The provider should have clearly defined procedures and policies for the selection of students with alternative qualifications.
- c. The provider should have clearly defined procedures and policies for courses.

3. Educational Programmes

- a. The programmes or curricula should be consistent with the provider's mission.
- b. The programme structure should be well formulated and should facilitate adequate supervision of the provider's education and/or training activities.
- c. Responsibility for the development of programmes and the monitoring of education and training matters should be clearly stated.
- d. The provider should have well-developed procedures for modifications to curricula that are based on current education and training philosophy and practices as evidenced by its commitment to quality.
- e. The provider should have current, up-to-date information on all its programmes of study with information on the related awards and associated credit hours.
- f. There should be a coherent mechanism for developing programmes and for monitoring education and training standards.
- g. The provider should be able to provide, at all times, evidence of its commitment to quality.

4. Staffing and Professional Development

- a. The teaching, administrative, technical support, library and other professional staff should be adequate in terms of quality and quantity, in order to efficiently deliver the educational programmes of study.
- b. The academic qualifications for teaching staff should be at least one level higher than the level being taught. For example, for diploma and certificate programmes, faculty should be qualified at least at the Bachelor's level.
- c. The provider should have in place an ongoing programme for staff development.
- d. The provider should have an effective system of communication between staff and management.
- e. Periodic staff appraisals should be conducted, the results of which should be used for improvement of the faculty and of educational programmes.

- f. The provider should have a mechanism for the assignment of faculty workload to prevent staff overload and for effective supervision of staff in order to maintain and enhance the quality of teaching.

5. Student Assessment

- a. There should be a rigorous evaluation process, which should assist in the attainment of certificates, diplomas or degrees.
- b. There should be a system of documenting the pattern of student performance.
- c. The examination system should be transparent and should allow for the production of reports on student performance in a timely manner.
- d. Assessment of student achievement should be appropriate to the post-secondary or tertiary level with emphasis on the assessment of the cognitive skills of evaluation, synthesis, analysis and application, as well as practical competence.
- e. Assessment should take a variety of forms.
- f. The method of assessment should fit the expected learning outcomes.

6. Student Support Services

- a. The institution should foster student support services through provision of services such as counselling and career guidance.
- b. Monitoring and guidance of student performance should also be an ongoing part of the counselling process.
- c. Provision should be made for students' comfort e.g. provision of cafeteria facilities.
- d. There should be facilities to allow students to meet in recreational situations.

7. Physical Plant and Equipment

- a. There should be adequate physical resources to serve the needs of the programme and to contribute to an atmosphere of effective learning.
- b. Teaching and learning areas should facilitate the proper supervision and monitoring of classes in session and the attendance of lectures.
- c. There should be adequate physical space to accommodate all class sizes and differently-abled students/faculty.
- d. Facilities should meet fire and other appropriate health and safety code regulations.

8. Learning and Information Services

- a. There should be ownership of, or provision for access to adequate learning and information resources and services required to support the courses and programmes offered.
- b. The library should provide adequate resource materials, current journals and up-to-date equipment conveniently located and easily accessible. These should facilitate the accomplishment of curriculum objectives.
- c. Laboratories and computer facilities should be adequate in range, quantity, quality and modernity to support the programme.
- d. Learning and information services should have flexible operating hours and appropriate technologies (e.g. Internet) to facilitate students from all programmes.
- e. The staff with responsibility for learning and information resources and services should be adequate in number and professionally qualified.

9. Laboratory Facilities

- a. Where applicable, the provider should be adequately equipped with laboratories designed to facilitate the application of theory and principles of the relevant disciplines.
- b. There should be adequate support staff to maintain the laboratory facilities.
- c. Laboratory equipment should be kept current.

10. Finances

- a. The financial structure should be able to support the programmes offered and to effectively discharge the provider's obligations to students.
- b. Where applicable, an annual audit of accounts should be conducted.

11. Institutional Plan

- a. There should be a plan, as well as a planning and evaluation process, which addresses the institution's human, educational, physical and financial growth.
- b. The provider should have clearly defined administration systems in place that are compatible with its stated mission.
- c. The provider should have a written plan for various stages of its development.

Provisional Registration Criteria

1. Governance and Mission

- a. There should be a structure of governance which formulates general policies and exercises authority over the implementation of programmes of study or courses.
- b. The composition of the governing body should be broad-based and should allow for objective input into the management of the institution.
- c. There should be a clearly defined and published Mission Statement or Statement of Purpose.
- d. The goals, aims and objectives of the provider should relate to the intended target population and should be relevant to the needs of the society.

2. Admission Policies

- a. The provider should have clearly defined admission policies compatible with its stated purpose. These should be published and should be adhered to by the provider.

3. Educational Programmes

- a. The programmes or curricula should be consistent with the provider's mission.
- b. The programme structure should be well formulated and should facilitate adequate supervision of the provider's education and/or training activities.
- c. Responsibility for the development of programmes and the monitoring of education and training matters should be clearly stated.
- d. The provider should have well-developed procedures for modifications to curricula that are based on current education and training philosophy and practices as evidenced by its commitment to quality.
- e. The provider should have current, up-to-date information on all its programmes of study with information on the related awards and associated credit hours.
- f. There should be a coherent mechanism for developing programmes and for monitoring education and training standards.
- g. The provider should be able to provide, at all times, evidence of its commitment to quality.

4. Staffing and Professional Development

- a. The academic qualifications for teaching staff should be at least one level higher than the level being taught. For example, for diploma and certificate programmes, faculty should be qualified at least at the Bachelor's level.
- b. The provider should have an effective system of communication between staff and management.

5. Student Assessment

- a. There should be a rigorous evaluation process, which should assist in the attainment of certificates, diplomas or degrees.
- b. There should be a system of documenting the pattern of student performance.
- c. The examination system should be transparent and should allow for the production of reports on student performance in a timely manner.
- d. Assessment of student achievement should be appropriate to the post-secondary or tertiary level with emphasis on the assessment of the cognitive skills of evaluation, synthesis, analysis and application, as well as practical competence.
- e. Assessment should take a variety of forms.
- f. The method of assessment should fit the expected learning outcomes.

6. Physical Plant and Equipment

- a. There should be adequate physical resources to serve the needs of the programme and to contribute to an atmosphere of effective learning.
- b. Teaching and learning areas should facilitate the proper supervision and monitoring of classes in session and the attendance of lectures.

7. Learning and Information Services

- a. There should be ownership of, or provision for access to adequate learning and information resources and services required to support the courses and programmes offered.
- b. The staff with responsibility for learning and information resources and services should be adequate in number and professionally qualified.

8. Laboratory Facilities

- a. Where applicable, the provider should be adequately equipped with laboratories designed to facilitate the application of theory and principles of the relevant disciplines.

9. Finances

- a. The financial structure should be able to support the programmes offered and to effectively discharge the provider's obligations to students.
- b. Where applicable, an annual audit of accounts should be conducted.

10. Institutional Plan

- a. The provider should have clearly defined administration systems in place that are compatible with its stated mission.
- b. The provider should have a written plan for various stages of its development.