Self-assessment processes as objects of research in the Inter-American School of Library Science of the University of Antioquia

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Abstract

The article gives an account of the self-assessment process carried out in 2011 at the Inter-American School of Librarianship at the University of Antioquia for the purpose of renewal of the High Quality Certificate. This process is presented as an object of research and can serve as a benchmark for other institutions involved in similar activities.

Keywords: Accreditation; Self-Assessment; Science Information; Library Science; Quality Assurance.

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Resumen

Procesos de autoevaluación en la Escuela Interamericana de Bibliotecología de la Universidad de Antioquia, en clave de investigación
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El artículo da cuenta del proceso de Autoevaluación (2011), con fines de renovación de la Acreditación de Alta Calidad, que se desarrolló en la Escuela Interamericana de Bibliotecología de la Universidad de Antioquia, como una dinámica de orden investigativo, que pueda servir como referente a experiencias similares.

Palabras clave: Acreditación, Autoevaluación, Ciencia de la Información, Bibliotecología, Aseguramiento de la Calidad.

Introduction

The self-evaluation process for securing certification of higher education programs of the Inter-American School of Librarianship of the University of Antioquia promote ongoing innovation and improvement actions, in addition to providing an excellent opportunity for the institution to reaffirm its commitment to change, as it reviews its current status and projects toward the future, thereby ensuring its role as a socially legitimate institution and leading benchmark in higher education in the field of Information Science, both here and abroad.

Because the certification means to make oneself deserving of credit, which is to say one earns or ratifies the trust by producing the evidence of quality and believing in it, self-evaluation and certification processes allow the institution to verify and maintain societal and state supports, while facilitating dialogue with its peers in other national and international university programs.

This paper provides a description of the most salient aspects of the latest self-evaluation carried out in the Inter-American School of Library Science (EIB) as part of its certification process. Moreover, researchers describe a problem to be solved; a methodological approach and analysis of information gathered; while also examining the results of the measurement techniques deployed for the purpose of assessing the quality of the University of Antioquia

Library Science program. This examination is executed in light of current Colombian legal standards and culminates with conclusions and recommendations. The text of which is cited in *Resolution* 14957 (Nov. 19, 2012) issued by the National Ministry of Education, which brings together recommendations of the National Accreditation Board to the Program.

Methodology

The methodology developed for the accreditation process is executed pursuant to the guidelines issued by the National Accreditation Board (CAN), an agency of the Colombian Ministry of Education (MEN), and in the general terms is rolled out in three stages: self-evaluation, evaluation by external peers and final evaluation carried out by the CAN on the basis of the information gathered in first and second stages.

Statement of the problem

Since the formation successful professional practitioners is achieved through proper and efficient academic preparation, the quality of higher education is one of the most important aspects entailed in the performance of a professional equipped with a body of knowledge and competencies learned during his or her education. Nonetheless, some areas of professional performance exhibit limitations and other deficiencies that could be improved. Consequently, it is necessary to carry out a dynamic process to study the diverse aspects that influence, whether positively or negatively, in the academic formation of certain professionals. In this sense, governments of diverse countries in the world have created and promoted review dynamics and self-regulatory or self-evaluation processes in universities and corresponding academic programs. One of said dynamics is the definition of self-evaluation protocols with the aim of achieving high accreditation scores and attendant prestige in larger society. This paper aims to learn about the most recent self-evaluation carried out in the Inter-American School of Library Science of the University of Antioquia for the purpose of securing High Quality Accreditation for its Library Science program.

Objectives

The objectives sought by the self-evaluation process are set as per the guidelines issued by the National Accreditation Board of the Colombian Ministry

of Education. Consequently, the academic programs accreditation process pursues the following objectives: (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, Consejo Nacional de Acreditación, 2006a: 38):

a) To serve as an accountability mechanism for institutions of higher education before society at large and the state with regard to the quality of the educational services they provide.
b) To be an instrument by which the state attests to the quality of the higher education programs.
c) To provide reliable information to users of the higher education services and inform the National Information System created by law.
d) To promote improvement of higher education.
e) To promote the aptitude and solidity of academic programs, especially with regard to the Inter-American School of Library Science of the University of Antioquia.
f) To posit a quality paradigm for Colombian higher education programs, specifically with regard to the library science education.
g) To be an incentive for academic staff insofar as it explicates the purpose and credibility of their work and promotes acknowledgment of their efforts and achievements.
h) To promote the practice in institutions of verification of compliance with mission, purposes and objectives within the framework of the Constitution and the Law pursuant to their own by-laws.

Accreditation process methodology

The accreditation of process consists of the stages of self-evaluation, external evaluation and final evaluation, which are executed consecutively as described below.

Self-evaluation stage

Within the framework of high quality accreditation, self-evaluation constitutes an important instrument of reflection and support for the purpose of reviewing the degree of quality of the institution of higher education or a given academic program. This process includes an evaluation of the university or given academic program carried out by the institution itself on the basis of criteria defined by the agency coordinating the quality assurance programs in each country. In Colombia, this agency is the National Accreditation Board, which in turn is an

agency of the National Education Ministry. The self-evaluation criteria are expressed in factors, characteristics and indicators (MEN/CNA, 2006a: 49).

Each institution must implement a self-evaluation that includes the participation and commitment of constituent stakeholders; that is, students, teachers, administrators, directors, alumni and employers. Moreover, the following stages are required:

a) Establishment of the self-evaluation committee;
b) Process design and methodological development , and
c) Analysis and interpretation of results, and issuance of a final report.

External peer evaluation stage

This stage is carried out fundamentally on the basis of the self-evaluation report, on which basis results are verified. The stage also entails identification of the internal operation conditions of the university or academic program under study, ultimately allowing a judgment to be issued with regard to the quality of said university or academic program.

This activity is the responsibility of the external peer, who on the basis of the self-evaluation identify the internal operation conditions of the university or academic program, verify data, compare documentation and information gathered directly in meetings with stakeholders (teachers, directors, students, alumni and employers); and finally issue conclusions in a peer report submitted to the agency authorized in each country to coordinate the quality assurance process. In Colombia, this agency is the CNA. This process is carried out on the basis of program accreditation guidelines and legal standards governing the program accreditation process for accredited institutions.

Final evaluation stage

This stage entails the final evaluation issued by the coordinating agency in charge of quality assurance in the country, i.e., the Colombian National Accreditation Board, and includes the results of the self-evaluation and external peer evaluation.

Using the information supplied by external peers, who have issued an assessment of the quality of the program and recommendations for improvement of the same, the CNA assess the evaluation and submits its judgment to the National Education Ministry, the agency with final authority to renew the high quality accreditation.

Scope

The self-evaluation accreditation process examined herein is the most recent process executed by the Inter-American School of Library Science of the University of Antioquia. The period under review in the self-evaluation process extended from November 2004 to November 2010.

EIB Self-evaluation process

In the case of the Inter-American School of Library Science (EIB) of the University of Antioquia, the self-evaluation is the activity by which the Academic Unit analyzes and examines the condition and quality of one of its academic programs, i.e., the Library Science program. In fact, it is the key strategy used to examine its commitments and procedures, while gathering information needed to understand to what degree programs are fulfilling their mission and objectives; as well their relevance, quality and commitment to ongoing improvement. Moreover, this examination serves to assess to what degree the profession is socially viable. To achieve this end, the school implements and executes a self-evaluation process involving all stakeholders (students, professors, alumni, administrators, directors and employers), for the purpose of submitting results to the scrutiny of academic peers who in turn express their views regarding the conditions and quality of the Library Science Program.

In the Inter-American School of Library Science of the University of Antioquia, the self-evaluation process is deployed in three phases: (Universidad de Antioquia Escuela Interamericana de Bibliotecología, 2011: 40):

1. Establishment of the committee.
2. Methodological design of the process.
3. Process results.

Establishment of the committee

The coordinating committee consists of three professors with experience in the EIB in accreditation self-evaluation processes. The purpose of this committee is to consolidate the evaluation as a key component of the Library Science Program on the basis of a participative methodology in close contact with the actors involved in the evaluation process.

In order to have an instrument that can serve as a road map for the development of this activity, the committee designs a self-evaluation action plan,

which contemplates the tasks, calendar and duties involved. This plan is subject to ongoing review and adjustment. Moreover, the plan is shared with all of the stakeholders in the academic community, i.e., students, administrators, alumni and employers. This action plan becomes the basic tool for orienting and regulating the process, and its main purpose is to juxtapose the information gathered against the context and reality of the program under review. Consequently, the main activity is focused on the constant analysis of the information and communication with the academic community.

- Review and analysis of the existing document
  After drafting the action plan, the committee takes on the central task of reviewing and analyzing the information contained in the primary and secondary sources. This task is executed exhaustively, with rigor and objectivity, approaches that are essential to the process. The institutional information produced during the accreditation period under review (2003-2010) is approach in this way. Moreover, a review is made of the information contained in files on the EIB held by the University of Antioquia.
- Sensitizing the academic community
  In order to sensitize the community and disseminate the process, the following communication strategies are deployed: posters, motivational and readiness talks (in classrooms within the plan of study), email, School webpage, social networks and the discussion board of EIB.

Process methodology design

The self-evaluation process is designed and developed with a qualitative-interpretive focus, employing a case study methodology using primary and secondary sources of information. This approach employs documental analysis, surveys and group discussions. This stage entails the definition of the population, the techniques and instruments for gathering information, and the analysis and interpretation of the information.

- Population
  To achieve a broad scope, the self-evaluation involves the participation of every group that makes up the academic community of the school (teachers, students, employees, administrators, alumni and employers). These people are the actors and protagonists of the process. As such, their value to the process is duly acknowledged. Each group, as warranted, voluntarily establishes academic and logistical demands

which are taken into account in order to potentiate the work. Sensitization is essential insofar as it makes actors of the subjects themselves and helps the process move forward positively and in a timely way. With the support of the Office of the Vice-Rector of Teaching of the University of Antioquia, the department leading the self-evaluation process in the institution, the survey is applied to all of the groups via email, with the exception of the employers in Medellin who take the survey in person.

- Data collection criteria and techniques
  Documental analysis, surveys and group discussion are the techniques used to gather information.
  - Documental analysis: The documentation produced during the most recent accreditation period (2004-2011) was reviewed and analyzed.
  - Survey: A survey designed specifically by the Office of the Vice Rector of Teaching of the University of Antioquia for the institutional self-evaluation process was applied to each of the groups making up the academic community. This instrument was studied, revised and adapted to the characteristics of the program and the target population.
  - Discussion groups: This quick response technique allows evaluators to gather qualitative information by means of guided discussion in which opinions, perceptions and knowledge of the programs are expressed. This technique was a key source of information for understanding the full scope of the institutional culture. Professors and member of the School Board participated in these discussions which gathered their perceptions and assertions regarding the condition of the Library Science program.
- Survey application criteria
  Students: Students selected had to have completed at least twenty credits of the 144 total required for graduation. In this way, only students having completed at least one semester were eligible to take the survey. A total of 291 surveys were sent out.
  Teachers: The entire body of lecturers associated with the School, including members of the faculty, associate professors and tenured senior staff. A total of 41 surveys were sent out.
  Administrative personnel and employees: The survey was applied to employees with at least one year of service with Library Science program in the period from 2004-2011. A total of 13 surveys were applied to this group.

Alumni: This target population was selected on the basis of all alumni registered in the alumni data base after the year 2000 and from among those participating in activities of the Library Science School during the period 2004-2010. A total of 238 surveys were sent by email to members of this group.

Employers: Institutions known to hire EIB graduates and those with which the university has advisory and consulting contracts were selected.

For the purposes of efficiency, the survey was sent out via email to all target groups, with the exception of employers in Medellin, Bogota and Cartagena, who answered the survey in person. *Table 1* shows the total sample and the rate of response.

Table 1. Analysis and interpretation of information and results of the process.

Target populations	Population universe	Total responses	Return rate
Students	291	248	60 %
Teachers	41	27	67 %
Administrators	13	11	90 %
Alumni	238	67	30 %
Employers	23	22	90 %

Once the documental information and the survey data were gathered, analysis and interpretation followed.

- Definition of categories and sub-categories

  For the purpose of analysis of the information, the following categories and subcategories were subjected to the analysis as per the eight features established by CNA for the purpose of self-evaluation of institutions of higher education. These eight features include: Institutional Educational Project; students; professors; academic processes; institutional well-being; organization; administration and management; physical plant and financial resources, which are in turn articulated in 42 specific characteristics and 152 indicators. The surveys were designed and applied to the diverse targets on the basis of these factors. The discussion groups were also informed by these criteria, which provide the basis for the analysis of the information (*Cf.* MNE/CNA, 2006a).
- Analysis of variables

  Once the surveys were applied, the responses per category of the diverse target groups were compared in order to obtained analytical variables. These variables allow one to observe the coincidences and divergences in the opinions expressed by respondents, and this information served to support the descriptive analysis information gathered on the program.

- Descriptive analysis
  Once the categories and sub-categories were defined, evaluators carried out a descriptive analysis of each of the factors of the self-evaluation process. This analysis is characterized by being built on the basis of the voice, perceptions, feelings and opinions of the actors with regard to the diverse processes analyzed in the report. On the basis of the survey designed by the Office of the Vice Rector of Teaching of the University of Antioquia, the responses of the diverse target groups were graphed. The trends observed in these categories, showing and are discussed and explained extensively in the evaluation report.
- Validation and triangulation of the information
  After executing the descriptive analysis, evaluators proceeded to execute the validation and confrontation of results in meetings and discussion with target groups, professors and the Board. This stage is a participative process in which the diverse stakeholders heard the interpretation of the opinions expressed in the surveys. In this process, they had the opportunity to compare, analyze and revise their respective outlooks and perception.
- Weighting of factors, characteristics and indicators
  The self-evaluation committee executed the weighting of the factors in accord with the following criteria:
  1. Guidelines are provided in the self-evaluation weighting of factors and characteristics document (MEN/CNA, 2006), which classifies the factors into three groups: Group 1 includes the institutional project, academic processes, professors, students and alumni; Group 2 contemplates organization, administration and management, physical and financial resources; and Group three entails institutional wellbeing.
  2. Improvement plan and the 2003 self-evaluation process results. Greater weight is assigned to the factors for which the program exhibits weaknesses.
  3. Academic processes considered the purpose of the program.

  As a result of the application of these criteria, the weighting of these factors is done as follows:

Table 2. Factor weights

Factor	Weight
Institutional project and educational project	15
Students	15

Professors	15
Academic processes	15
Institutional wellbeing	20
Administration, organization and management	10
Alumni and articulation with the milieu	7.5
Physical and financial resources	10
Total	7.5

- Characteristics
  The committee adopted the 42 characteristics contained in the self-evaluation guide of the University of Antioquia (2006). The weighting of these characteristics corresponded to the sum of the weights of the indicators corresponding to each one.
- Indicators
  Pursuant to the specifics of the program, the Committee adopted 152 of the 183 indicators included in the self-evaluation guide. Weighting was done with the participation of the professors belonging to the Library Science program and the administrative staff of the School. In accord with the strengths and experience of the teaching and administrative staff, the committee assigned indicators of each factor to a group of three professors who scored the indicators on scale of 1 to 5, as per their respective priority or degree of importance in the Library Science program. The assignment of three evaluators was done in order ensure higher degrees of objectivity in the evaluation process.
- Scoring and quantification of indicators and characteristics
  Once the descriptive analysis of the factors was executed and the corresponding validation by the respective target groups and the Board of the School was completed, evaluators proceeded to score the indicators and characterized evaluated. This scoring process is done in accord with the weights established for each characteristic in the process and the weighting established for each indicator established by the program teachers in their respective areas of expertise. The indicators of perception and characteristics were scored on a scale of 1 to 5.
  On the basis of the points assigned to each factor and the scoring of each indicator it is possible to define the weight of each characteristics in accord with its group of indicators. Once this score is obtained, the committee proceeded to define the determination and importance of each characteristic within the analytical process of the information.
  The final grade was applied to the three groups defined for scoring and weighting as per the percentages obtained in the following qua-

litative rubric: A. Full compliance; B. High degree of compliance: C. Acceptable degree of compliance; D. Unsatisfactory; E. Fail to comply.

Process results

The process of self-evaluation of the Library Science undergraduate program focused on the revision of the 2003-2007 Improvement Plan, in the light of the strengths and weaknesses found by CNA. It is also informed by a comparison of the documents that govern the institutional duties; the results of the surveys applied to the target groups within the EIB academic community; weights accorded to assessment factors; the scores earned for each characteristic and the indicators proposed by CNA.

Consequently, upon executing an analysis of the 152 indicators distributed among 42 characteristics established by CAN to evaluate the quality of the Library Science program, it became apparent that conditions exist to demonstrate the program's quality, as can be seen in the grades obtained in each of the eight factors which are described in more detail below.

Institutional Educational Project (IEP). The school has an IEP, but it needs to be updated in light of the new academic programs and changes in curriculum occurring in recent years. For the period evaluated, two curricular improvements were carried out, which is evidence of ongoing evaluation of the curriculum.

Professors. The faculty has continued to secure professional credentials. To date, all of the professors on staff hold or are candidates for master's degree or PhD. The school is also remarkable for its interdisciplinary character, which is staffed by professors boasting expertise in diverse fields associated with Library Science. The academic output and participation of professors in academic forums and conferences continues to grow, evidencing increasing visibility of the school in both national and international venues.

Students. Inclusion of ICT as part of the professional training of students is remarkable. In the area of research, the modalities of Students in Formation, Research Auxiliaries and Young Researchers are outstanding. Moreover student-professor interactions and communication, and the accessibility of administrative staff with regard to the student community are also worthy of note. A high percentage of students entered the Library Science School as a second option, and they are gradually developing a sense of belonging as they align their personal interests and motivations with the field.

Academic process. For the period under evaluation, several curricular improvements were effectuated, giving rise to the fourth version of the curricu-

lum, which has enjoyed the favor and acceptance of students, professors and extra-institutional sectors. These changes have favored reflection on the foundations of the profession and the roles of the information professional in society.

In addition to these curricular improvements, the school has launched new programs, inducting new cohorts into the Information Science master's degree program, the Publishing and Edition Specialization and the Archive Technology Specialist undergrad program; the latter of which arose from the Library Science School's efforts to respond to the requirements of professional practice. In this way, the school made the determination to strengthen the discipline by offering separate undergraduate studies and merging research activities with its post-graduate programs, bringing together all of these under the umbrella of information sciences."

Institutional wellbeing. The programs and activities of the School aim to provide an environment that promotes the consolidation of the academic community and the comprehensive preparation of the student, while also reducing desertion factors. To achieve this, the Wellbeing Coordination Office of the School carried out community-wide educational, cultural, recreational and financial aid activities, as well as targeted support actions in the areas of academics, and physical and mental health.

Administration, organization and management. One the School's most salient achievements lies in the area of curriculum management, which has received high ratings across the entire academic community, which praises the performance of the Academic Formation Office and acknowledges the outstanding work of the Directorate Office and administrative support personnel.

Alumni and impact in society. Outreach and external consulting efforts are very important for the School. Through such actions, the School establishes contact with larger society, allowing the academy to participate in society, while keeping abreast of the realities of the working world and identifying the needs and demands of employers. Moreover, by working in a consulting and advisory role, the School gathers invaluable feedback, which is used to improve the curriculum. According to the scores assigned, alumni-School interaction and the impact of ongoing professional education are areas in need of improvement.

Physical and financial resources. A university level educational institution requires appropriate budget management in order to operate properly. In this regard, the investments committed by the School in recent years in the physical plant, classrooms, equipment, furnishings and informatics resources are quite remarkable. Moreover, the School has made considerable efforts to support participation of stakeholders in academic event. All of these actions are key to ensuring the proper implementation of the program. A sig-

nificant percentage of these resources are devoted to providing university extension and outreach services.

Overall assessment of the program

In light of the strengths and weaknesses found by the CNA, the internal institutional comparison and the results of surveys applied to stakeholder groups in the EIB academic community, it is evident that the 2003-2007 Improvement Plan has fulfilled stated goals and has made a proper accounting to society. Moreover, the Plan carried forward actions to enhance the School's quality and social affiliation, as can be seen in the renewal of its qualified registration; and in the following academic programs: Library Science, Archival Technology, Specialization in Information Services Management, and Specialization in Publication and Edition. This outlook is also support by the launch of the Information Science master's degree program, and the approval of the professionalization of the Archival Technology program, as well as by a broad range of activities and supports associated with public policy in reading and libraries, the Student Talent Stimulus and Young Researchers programs, as well as management of profitable, professional consulting contracts.

The weaknesses in terms of students and professors that persist are structural in nature: that is, they correspond to the conditions of the country's educational system. Nonetheless, the School has implemented diverse mechanisms to achieve quantitative and qualitative improvements in its teaching staff, promoting and supporting teachers' effort to attain master's degrees and doctorates. This holds true for both staff faculty and associate professors. These actions include support for professors wishing to attend national and international events and for service on administrative commissions. Moreover, the School supports ongoing education and sabbatical leave for qualified candidates. The school has also had notable success in promoting public calls for papers among the professional teaching and research staff, which has had a positive impact on publication of research and concomitant improvements in remuneration.

Student desertion rates have been lowered, while making their passage through the program of studies much more agile. These achievements can be attributed to the many programs deployed by the University Wellbeing Office and counseling services provided by the Academic Formation Office. The executive directors have not failed to invite students to participate in diverse academic-administrative agencies.

The lack of flexibility of the curriculum is a weakness that is currently being addressed through the design of strategies to associate students with the three latest versions of the plan of studies, which include providing common

core courses in Archival Technology, promotion of the *Sígueme* [Follow me] program, recognition of elective course credits successfully completed in other schools and new professional elective options.

Moreover, the strengths identified in previous evaluation reports have been preserved and consolidated. These elements include: the *Revista Interamericana de Bibliotecología* (RIB) [Inter-American Library Science Journal], assigned to category A2 of Publindex, and the Grupo de Investigación en Información, Conocimiento y Sociedad [Information, Knowledge and Society Research Group], assigned category A in Colciencias; an overall increase in research and papers published and professional consulting contracts; continuity of the Student Talent Stimulus and participation in the Young Researchers program; ongoing curricular evaluation activities made patent in curriculum versions five and six; national and international acknowledgement of the School and its professors in the form of awards, including the Premio [Prize] Luis Florén (ASEIBI), Premio Rubén Pérez Ortiz (ASCOLBI) and the Juan del Corral Order of Merit from the Medellin Council. The prevalence of master's and doctorate degrees among the faculty is also remarkable. Finally, one of the principle strengths stressed by the CNA is associated with the administration and management of the program, which during the period under evaluation was consolidated and strengthened, as evidenced in the annual action plans and corresponding management reports.

Also remarkable are the implementation of innovative actions such as securing for the second time qualified registration of the program; the launch of the Edition and Publishing Specialization; the launch of the first cohort of twelve candidates in the Information Sciences Master's program, hailing from fields as diverse as engineering, library science, social communication and nutrition; numerous consulting contracts and participation in establishment of public policy in the areas of reading (CERLALC, National Plan for Reading and Libraries, Municipality of Medellin, Library Parks); the development of the Student Talent Stimulus program; participation in the Young researchers program directed by the Vice Rector's Office of Research of the University of Antioquia and the School's capacity to self-finance the program.

In accord with the guidelines of the National Accreditation Board and the results of the self-evaluation, we conclude that the Library Science program has earned a high quality score of 4.1 out 5 possible points, a score achieved on the basis of fully addressing and remediating the weaknesses cited in the 2004 report. We fully expect the School to preserve its strengths and to persevere in the implementation of innovative actions to promote the growth of the EIB in accord with the increasing demands of society, and within a context of multifaceted competition, complex interconnectivity and rapid change.

External evaluation

The external evaluation states that the factors undergoing self-evaluation within the EIB have an overall compliance rank of "in high degree." This evaluative judgment is supported by the following strengths observed:

> The faculty teaching staff is of a very high level, the staff has been expanded […] Strong incidence of staff studying for master's or doctorate degrees […]. The areas of research and outreach are quite solid and with the potential of generating high level knowledge that can be exploited much more in terms of bringing in revenue and ensuring the sustainability of the School. The School had Colciencias category A research groups with papers published. There is ample evidence of increased research activity in conjunction with the continuation of the Inter American Library Science Journal (RIB) in category A2 of Publindex; the participation of academic staff in national and international colloquies, in addition to a body of papers translated for publication in foreign journals […]. The academic community (students, teacher and administrators) is very strong and cohesive, working in an atmosphere of trust and security […]. The School has near- and medium-term plans to strengthen all facets associated with teaching, research and administration of the EIB (External peer evaluation report, July 2012).

Final evaluation and public acknowledgement of quality

On the basis of a review and analysis of the information contained in the reports on the processes of self-evaluation and external peer evaluation, the National Accreditation Board of Colombia submitted a definitive assessment to the Colombian Ministry of Education, which is the authority ultimately granting the renewal of the High Quality Accreditation of the Library Science Program. Consequently, on November 19, 2012, it issued *Resolution* number 14957 by which the High Quality Accreditation is extended for a term of eight years. This accreditation is granted on the basis of the program's continuing relevance, interdisciplinary nature, curricular flexibility in the service of developing students' research competencies , the strength of the teaching staff, increased academic output and the School's outstanding cooperative effort among local, national and international academic communities, as well as its collaboration with professional guilds and the "Information, Knowledge and Society" research group, classified by Colciencias in category A; the Inter-American Library Science Journal, classified at A2 by Publindex and the recognition of and awards earned by the School and its faculty from ASEIBI, ASCOLBI and local governmental authorities.

Notwithstanding having secured the renewal of the High Quality Accreditation, the Library Science program must focus its attention on strengthening the teaching staff, research activities, bilateral national and international mobility of teachers and students, and building relationships with alumni. The school should also seek a better balance between administrative and academic activities of faculty. It should also promote participation of the student body in decision making instances of the program, while improving the transition between the diverse versions of the curriculum and optimizing the quality of the supply of technology for the program and achieving further reduction in the desertion rate.

Conclusions

The accreditation processes are fundamental in the dynamics of evaluation and ongoing improvement of higher education. In Colombia these processes began to be introduced after the promulgation of the *Higher Education Act 30* in 1992. This Act stimulated the introduction of processes of ongoing improvement and quality assurance, an approach the country embraced enthusiastically, placing it among the leading nations in the development of new institutional self-regulating paradigms.

Colombian accreditation dynamics are executed on the basis of methodologies and procedures established by CNA, a government entity in charge of orienting and leading evaluation accreditation processes of diverse institutions of higher education in the country. Consequently, the stages of the accreditation process, such as self-evaluation, external peer evaluation, and final evaluation comprise an interesting activity of reflection and review of the academic and administrative realities of the institution and academic units offering professional training programs. It provides an opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses, while introducing significant actions and innovations that contribute to improvement and modernization of these endeavors.

In 1997 EIB embraced this process which allowed it to recognize and reveal itself as the country's leading Library Science teaching institution. As a result in 1999, the Library Science secured accreditation from the Ministry of Education/CNA for a period of four years. In 2004 it was granted renewal of the accreditation for seven years, and in 2012 it secured high quality accreditation for a period of eight years.

The Inter-American Library Science School has been at the vanguard of quality assurance/accreditation processes Latin American. Through deploy-

ment of these processes, the school has earned recognition for educating high-quality professionals and their projection into society, while constituting a benchmark for the implementation of institutional assessment processes. Moreover, these processes have allowed the school to generate dynamics to improve the curriculum, while ensuring the quality of faculty and promoting research, which has resulted in greater academic output. The school has also been able to improve the physical plant and equipment required to develop the program.

The successful completion of the self-evaluation and accreditation places the EIB face-to-face with the challenge posed by its first international self-evaluation, the doorway to a new period of quality assurance. In terms of the results obtained in these three processes, the progress and quality of the School in the area of curriculum, research and retention of enrollment is clearly evident. Improvements in administrative and curriculum management, especially with regard to aiding teacher secure their master's and doctorate degrees are also patent. Quality assurance actions implemented in the first accreditation process, such as the publication of scientific journals, participation in national and international conferences and the sustainability of professional external consulting services, are also worthy of note. Interestingly, the scores earned on the self-evaluation and the eternal peer evaluation were very similar, a circumstance also reflected in the final evaluation report issued by the National Accreditation Board of the National Ministry of Education.

In general terms, the self-evaluation and accreditation processes have allowed the School to optimize curricular processes, develop planning on the basis of approaches established in the self-evaluations, which lend a long-term strategic character to the program, thereby clearing the way to re-structuring of both administrative and curricular processes for the purpose of modernizing the course of study and the Institutional Education Project. On the other hand, the School has also learned about certain weaknesses associated with the scant participation of alumni in its vocation, the lack of systemization to ensure permanent improvement, and the need to create and implement an effective communication plan with stakeholders in the academic community. Likewise, this process challenges the School to take on the task of securing international accreditation.

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