



HAQAA Training Course/Exchange Meeting

“Developing a Common Understanding on QA in Africa”

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Quality and Relevance of Higher Education in Africa

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Outline of Presentation

- Why Poor Quality of HE in Africa?
- Consequences of Poor Quality
- Agenda for Improving Quality
- Approaches to Assuring Quality
- National, Regional & Continental QA Initiatives
- Challenges in Promoting QA
- Issues for Discussion

Why Poor Quality of HE in Africa?

- Institutional massification – far greater student enrolment than carrying capacity of institutions
- Increase in funds in public HEIs not commensurate with enrolment
- Shortage of academic staff, especially well-qualified ones
- Poor research output
- Lack of relevance of programmes – poor linkages with productive sector and community
- Large number of private & CBHE institutions – many of dubious quality
- Poor governance & efficiency in management of HEIs

Consequences of Poor Quality

- Overcrowded lecture rooms, crumbling infrastructure, lack of labs & equipment
- Large drop-out and failure rates in degree courses
- Poorly trained graduates, e.g. 2014 survey of employers in 5 East African countries found 51-62% of graduates 'half-baked'
- Increasing unemployment of graduates, e.g. 2011 survey of 1,000 graduates in South Africa showed 30% of them unemployed
- Non-accreditation of programs, e.g. in 2010 NUC of Nigeria withdrew accreditation of academic depts. in over 20 Nigerian universities – lack of infrastructure and academic staff
- Non-recognition of professional quals e.g. in 2011 Engg Reg Board of Kenya refused recognition of engg degrees from 3 leading public universities

Agenda for Improving Quality

- Control student enrolment & ensure success
- Generate alternate sources of funding – cost-sharing
- Upgrade qualifications of existing academic staff – both in research (PhD) & Teaching & Learning (Pedagogical Training)
- Undertake more postgraduate training & research, especially in S&T
- Have greater linkages with productive sectors & improve employability of students
- Improve governance & efficiency in management of HEIs
- Wider use of ICT in T&L, research, administration, etc.
- Promote regional collaboration for sharing experiences & resources
- Establish Quality Assurance, within institutions and externally

Approaches to Assuring Quality (13)

Two complementary but different approaches to QA:

I. Accreditation:

- Meeting standards set by governments, national agencies or professional bodies
- Can be applied to programmes, academic units or the whole institution
- Mainly externally driven
- Has been in use for professional courses (medicine, engineering, etc.) for quite some time
- Several countries set up accreditation bodies, Kenya being the 1st in 1985, followed by Nigeria in 1990s; initially mainly for accrediting private HEIs, later also accrediting public HE programmes & institutions

Approaches to Assuring Quality (2/3)

2. Academic Evaluation/Assessment/Audit :

- Undertaken by governments or national agencies
- Uses the *fitness for purpose* approach i.e. is the institution achieving its own set objectives and standards?
- Applied to whole or part of the institution
- Involves preparing an institutional self-assessment report which is reviewed by a panel of external assessors who undertake a site visit & submit their report
- Objective is development & enhancement, but in some countries linked to accountability & public funding
- Evaluation process now widely used internationally

Approaches to Assuring Quality (3/3)

- Both Accreditation & Evaluation processes are important for improving Quality in African HEIs
- 3 key drivers of QA are:
 - Accountability & transparency
 - Fitness for purpose
 - Continuous improvement
- Can there be a universal understanding of QA?
- Or does the concept of QA vary across cultures, regions and nations?
- Should QA take into consideration the historical background and development of HE in a region or nation?
- Do the concepts Evaluation and Accreditation achieve the same goal of ensuring Quality? Should they co-exist and be complementary?

National, Regional & Continental QA Initiatives (1/15)

- End 1990s & early 2000s: several HEIs e.g. U of Mauritius , St Mary's Uni College, Ethiopia, U of Dar es Salaam, introduced QA at institutional level through collaboration with European universities, before introduction of national QA processes
- c. 2001: South Africa's Council for Higher Education was first to introduce national QA processes through its HEQC
- In several of African countries a QA unit/section under the Commission or Council for HE undertakes this function (Nigeria, Kenya, Mauritius, Ghana); in some countries Quality is assured by the Ministry responsible for HE
- A few countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Tanzania) have set up specific QA agencies for Accreditation and/or Evaluation processes in HEIs
- However, only about half of 48 SSA countries have dedicated national QA agencies

National, Regional & Continental QA Initiatives (2/5)

- 2003: HEQMISA, an initiative started in 2002 to promote QA in Southern African HEIs with support from GIZ(GTZ); assistance provided to Malawi, Namibia, etc. Not much progress made
- 2005-2014: IUCEA with support from DAAD & HRK embarked on promoting QA systems in public & private HEIs in 5 East African countries:
 - Handbook (4 Vols) produced
 - Establishment of East African HE QA Network (EAQAN) in 2012
- 2006: ICQAHEA launched as African QA Forum, supported by UNESCO, AUC, AAU, GUNI, ADEA, etc. Meets every 1-2 years; 8th Conference in Sept. 2016 in Namibia

National, Regional & Continental QA Initiatives (3/5)

- 2009: AfriQAN formally launched and hosted by AAU. Mainly for capacity building of national QA agencies, but also HEIs. Initially supported by World Bank & UNESCO. Activities limited by lack of funds
- 2010: African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) for rating HEIs, launched by AUC as pilot; uses self-assessment against set standards + external evaluation - 32 HEIs responded. Second call: 2014. Only about 10 HEIs responded. Complements internal & external QA process
- 2010-2012: 'Africa Quality Connect' project run by AAU, EUA & IUQB to build institutional capacity through Partnership. EUA's IEP methodology applied to 5 African universities. Was successful but not continued because of lack of funding

National, Regional & Continental QA Initiatives (4/5)

- 2013: DAAD and several African partner organisations, launched EWAQAS (*Enhancing West African QA Structures*) in West & Central Africa:
 - Francophone countries: training courses in EQA & IQA; RAQUES - Alumni Network created
 - Anglophone countries: training for IQA; WAAQAN - Alumni Network created
- 2014: Initiative to launch Southern African QA Network (SAQAN) by Zimbabwe. Limited progress made because of financial constraints

National, Regional & Continental QA Initiatives (5/5)

- 2014: Benchmarking of African Univs Initiative by World Bank to improve quality & relevance of univs by comparing data & performance indicators with other univs. Pilot phase of 7 HEIs assisted by SJTU of China. Initial activity – capacity building in benchmarking in QA agencies & HEIs
- 2017: AUC aims for greater visibility and uptake of its AQRM: funds 15 additional evaluations under HAQAA
 - 15 universities in 15 African countries selected for participation
 - Evaluation teams visiting 15 universities in June 2017

Challenges in Implementing QA in HE (1/2)

- Many initiatives in promoting QA in HE in Africa but they are disparate & uncoordinated, with little collaboration among regions & key organisations
- At institutional level, major handicaps are lack of knowledge about QA process, inadequate capacity for internal reviews, too heavy teaching & administrative load of academic staff & lack of funds
- National QA agencies also lack trained staff, capacity for implementing evaluation process in HEIs, and funds; few have developed standards and guidelines
- Evaluation process rarely applied to private HEIs – mainly Accreditation, and only at the start; yet this is the emerging sector

Challenges in Implementing QA in HE (2/2)

- Lack of experience in Africa in applying Evaluation process to ODL and CBHE – again increasingly important
- Very little work done on QA in postgraduate programmes, yet they are vital for Africa's development
- Most QA Networks are struggling to survive because of lack of funds – funding through membership fees grossly insufficient
- HAQAA initiative comes at an opportune time to coordinate and harmonise QA activities and ensure ownership by African countries, associations, agencies and institutions

Issues for Discussion

- 1) Evaluation v/s Accreditation or co-existence of both
- 2) Best approach to achieving a harmonised continental QA framework in Africa: Regional? Linguistic?
- 3) Best approach for QA capacity building in both QA agencies & HEIs – regional, linguistic, continental?
- 4) Successful examples of funding to sustain QA Networks & initiatives – from Africa or elsewhere
- 5) AQRM: to be complementary to QA approaches? How to encourage HEIs to use AQRM?
- 6) QA approach to postgraduate programmes (especially PhD)



THANK YOU