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University Quality Culture: Trends and Practices in Africa

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Outline of Presentation

1. Background to Quality in HE in Africa
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    - HE in Africa at Beginning of 21st Century
    - Beginning of Revitalization
2. Quality Assurance Initiatives in HE in Africa:
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3. Consequences of Poor Quality and Challenges in Implementing QA in HE

1. Background to Quality in HE in Africa

The Rise & Fall of HE in Africa *(1)*

- Modern public HE in Africa has its roots in university colleges created during European colonial period

- After independence in 1960s, colleges became universities modelled on European ones – same academic structure, governance, curricula, methods of instruction, etc.

- 1960-1980: African universities thrived with generous support from their government & Europe

- Several became centres of excellence, e.g. Makerere, Ibadan, Khartoum, Cheikh Anta Diop.

The Rise & Fall of HE in Africa *(2)*

- 1970s & 1980s:
    - economic crisis
    - political upheavals, wars
    - military regimes, dictatorship
    - gross misuse of resources
- These inevitably had an impact on funding of HE
- 1990s: World Bank's decision to support basic education and not higher education
- In spite of being cash-strapped, African universities continued to survive & to increase HE provision, vital for development; but Quality suffered
- 1998: the saving grace – UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education

HE in Africa at Beginning of 21st Century *(1/2)*

- Increased enrolment – institutional massification
- Reduced public funding, insufficient infrastructural development
- Lack of qualified academic staff – brain drain
- Disastrous effect of HIV/AIDS
- Poor governance, political interference
- Poor internal efficiency
- Mismatch between graduate output & employment
- Increasing presence of private HEIs and CBHE, often of dubious quality
- Wide consensus on importance of improving quality of HEIs in Africa for them to play development role in achieving EFA targets and the then MDGs

<u>Agenda for Improving Quality in HE in Africa</u>

- Control student enrolment according to capacity
- Improve & expand infrastructure, but with little increase in public funding
- Train & retain existing academic staff, & recruit qualified staff to replace ageing ones
- Increase research output
- Generate alternate sources of funding – cost-sharing
- Ensure relevance of programmes, greater linkages with productive sectors & improve employability of graduates
- Improve governance & efficiency in management of HEIs
- Wide use of ICT in T&L, research, administration, etc.
- Meet demands for greater transparency & accountability

Beginning of Revitalization *(1/2)*

- Development assistance to post-secondary education in Africa increased significantly after UNESCO WCHE 1998:

  1990-1999 - $ 110m/year

  2000-2005 - $ 515m/year

- Revitalization really started as from 2005

- AUC's COMEDAF II, Algeria, April 2005: HE recognised as a priority area

- African Union's Action Plan for the 2nd Decade of Education (2006-2015) identifies HE as one of 7 focus areas

- AUC's harmonization strategy (2007): greater intra-regional mobility, benchmarking & QA in HE

Beginning of Revitalization *(2/2)*

- 2007 Africa-EU Strategic Partnership: triangular cooperation (A-A-E) for development; teacher education at all levels; Africa-EU cooperation in S&T research for development

- Regional Economic Communities (RECs) (SADC, EAC, ECOWAS, etc.) in Africa take the cue from AU and include HE in their respective plan of action

- UNESCO WCHE 2009 gave special attention to Africa. Noted progress made since WCHE 1998 but recognised that many challenges still existed in revitalisation of HE in Africa.

2. QA Initiatives in HE in Africa:

National, Regional & Continental

QA Initiatives in HE in Africa *(1/3)*

<u>National Initiatives</u>

- 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 <u>institutional</u> 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 national QA agencies

Regional Initiatives

- 2003: HEQMISA, an initiative started in 2002 to promote QA in SADC (Southern African) HEIs with support from GIZ(GTZ); assistance provided to Malawi, Namibia, etc. Not much progress made

- 2005: IUCEA embarks on promoting QA systems in public & private HEIs in 5 East African countries with support from DAAD; the project has now been extended to West & Central Africa

- 2005-06: CAMES undertakes LMD reform as per the Bologna Process in Francophone HEIs to improve Quality; it is also responsible for Accreditation; but no explicit activities in Evaluation processes; similar initiatives in Central & West African countries

Continental Initiatives

- 2007: After surveying HEI needs for QA in a first phase, AAU launches its second phase for promoting QA in HEIs

- 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

- Pilot African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) for rating HEIs launched by AUC in 2010. 32 HEIs responded to first call. Second call sent out in 2014

- ICQAHEA as QA Forum usually held every year by Bamako Cluster Office with support from GUNI Africa, 8th Conference in 2016 in Windhoek, Namibia

- 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 univs. Was successful but not continued because of lack of funding

- HAQAA: covers period Dec 2015-Nov 2018

3. Consequences of Poor Quality & Challenges in Implementing QA in HE

Consequences of Poor Quality in HE *(1/2)*

- In spite of many efforts, Quality of HE in Africa is still wanting, as evidenced by several surveys and reports

- Large drop-out and failure rates in degree courses

- Poorly trained graduates: 2014 IUCEA survey employers in 5 East African countries reported 51-62% of graduates considered as '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 departments in over 20 Nigerian universities – lack of infrastructure & qualified academic staff

Consequences of Poor Quality in HE *(2/2)*

- Non-recognition of professional qualifications, e.g. in 2011, Engg Reg Board of Kenya refused to recognize engg degrees from 3 leading public univs – poor curricula, lack of qualified staff & insufficient physical facilities

- In 2011, Council of Legal Education of Kenya rejected applications to practice law from graduates of several public & private univs – similar grounds

- In South Africa as well many law firms find LLB graduates deficient in basic skills for practising law

Challenges in Implementing QA in HE *(1/2)*

- Many initiatives in promoting QA in HE in Africa but they are disparate & uncoordinated, mostly at regional levels, with little collaboration among regions & key organisations

- Effective application of QA process requires institutional QA systems to be set up. Major handicaps:
  - lack of knowledge about QA process,
  - inadequate capacity for internal reviews,
  - too heavy teaching & administrative load of academic staff &
  - lack of financial resources

- National QA agencies also lack trained staff & capacity for implementing Evaluation process in HEIs; few have developed guidelines and standards

Challenges in Implementing QA in HE *(2/2)*

- Evaluation process rarely applied to private HEIs – mainly Accreditation at initial launch

- Lack of experience in Africa in applying Evaluation process to ODL and CBHE

- 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

THANK YOU