

Chapter 2

Quality Management Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa Business Schools

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ABSTRACT

In Africa globalization and massification of higher education have aided the establishment of foreign and private business schools across the continent. Concomitantly, quality and accountability issues have taken center stage regarding quality of business schools' programs. The dire situation of scarce quality management talent in the continent emphasizes the need for an overarching systemic approach for developing quality management education in the continent. This chapter descriptively investigates existing Sub-Saharan Africa Business Schools' quality management systems using documentary secondary data on purposively selected business schools aimed at identifying an integrated quality management system. The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model, are widely used frameworks for TQM implementation. It is argued that business schools seeking AABS accreditation could benefit if they also implement elements of ISO-9001, a TQM based quality management system as a foundation for continuous improvement.

INTRODUCTION

In a free market economy, business schools are crucial in the management of organisations be they in private, public or third sector. Business schools empower people and organisations to achieve their best possible levels of growth, and thereby enable general improvements in peoples' lives (Cornuel, 2005). Presently, the criteria for assessing top business schools is moving beyond excellence in research and teaching, cutting-edge technology and strong industry links. It is more about delivering impactful learning experiences and opportunities that transform peoples' lives into successful careers.

Questionably the world has entered into an era where educated people, are not only the key to economic prosperity, but also are sources of improved public health, national security, and social wellbeing

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(Duderstadt, 2008). The knowledge they possess which translates to innovation and entrepreneurial skills is a differentiating factor. In their paper, the Determinants of National Competitiveness, Delgado, Ketels, Porter, and Stern (2012) argue that the quantity and quality of workforce training, higher education, managerial education, and research in an economy in addition to broader institutions and policies supporting innovation have positive impacts on national prosperity. Arguably, national competitiveness from a microeconomic perspective is the sum of the productivity of individual firms in the economy. In spite of this, still internal managerial influence on the economy in the African context has been given little attention. According to the global competitiveness report 2017 - 2018, pillar 5 portrays higher education and training as key enablers of efficiency and productivity depicting quality of management schools as one of its sub-pillars (Schwab, 2017). However, in the case of Africa, according to Pedersen and McCormick (1999), the business environment is highly fragmented which reflects the general institutional context. This lacuna is mainly attributed to weak systems of business and management institutions as well as education in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). This environment lacks supportive institutions; often there is low trust and accountability; capital is scarce and sub-contracting mechanisms are not transparent; besides instances of rent-seeking and corrupt practices together with ineffective law-enforcement, practices are extensive. In the current dispensation, where development organizations see firms, entrepreneurship and private sector development as promising solutions to many of the continent's development challenges (Tvedten, Wendelboe, & Jeppesen, 2014); the prevailing institutional environment particularly in Africa requires precise and targeted institutional interventions. Also according to Caerus Capital report (2017), daunting challenges remain in the SSA's education systems, key among them include: access, quality, and relevance. As such, it is arguable that the development of quality African based business schools that understand the African business environment is one such targeted interventions and a gap that requires immediate attention. This statement aligns to the founding goals of the Association of African Business Schools' (AABS) aimed at promoting excellence and responsible business and management education in the continent through capacity building, collaboration and quality improvement of its members (AABS, 2012). AABS contends that by training current and future organisational and business leaders in their home countries, African business schools are instrumental in laying the foundation for a vibrant private sector development (AABS, 2005). This position reflects the global shift in development thinking focusing on firms, entrepreneurship and private sector as drivers of private sector growth and therefore development. This elevates the relevance of business education and therefore business schools particularly in Africa.

In Africa where globalisation and massification of higher education have aided the establishment of foreign and private business schools in addition to public Business Schools across the continent. Prominently issues of quality and accountability often feature in the discussions of the state of business schools' management and service delivery. According to Wächter, Kelo, Lam, Effertz, Jost, and Kottowski (2015), two ideas - quality assurance and rankings are instrumental in discussions of quality and therefore relevance of higher education in the European Union and worldwide. Higher education institutions (HEIs) use three main approaches to quality implementation: accreditation, assessments and audits. Whereas both accreditation and assessments monitor the quality of teaching and learning, audit focuses on internal procedures and processes adopted by a HEI to achieve its goals (Kis, 2005). For HEIs, quality assurance serves two major purposes: improvement and accountability. This notwithstanding, the purpose of accountability appears incompatible with the purpose of improvement implying they cannot be combined. According to Vroeijenstijn (1995b) in Kis (2005), it is difficult for external quality assurance, which is accountability oriented to serve simultaneously two masters: it cannot work for the HEIs to serve internal improvements and outside world for accountability.

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