

Chapter 18

Faculty Perspective Regarding Challenges in Implementing Quality Assurance in Zimbabwean Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on challenges in implementing quality assurance in HEI in Zimbabwe. Quality assurance has been regarded as the linchpin in HEI delivery. Intensive competition from both local and international boundaries are threatening the survival of HEI if they are not taking cognizance of the importance of quality assurance. The world is becoming increasingly global, hence stakeholders' preferences and tastes are also changing, demanding more and more quality education. The demand for quality assurance is increasing with the dispensation of higher education in the world. The study was premised in the qualitative research paradigm where narrative research design was adopted. Results indicated that numerous challenges surround the implementation of quality assurance in HEI. Therefore, the study recommended a raft of measures to curb those challenges.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Governments of today are increasingly recognising education as an economic free standing that is responsible and essential for the progress of contemporary societies. In Zimbabwe, soon after attaining independence in 1980, the Zimbabwe African National Union- Patriotic Front (ZANUPF) government embarked on the policy of education for all, which resulted in, leaps, and bounces increases in enrolments in all sectors of the education including Higher education. Advancement of contemporary societies is inherently associated with increased demand for quality goods and services by the population at

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-9829-9.ch018

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large (Saeed and Fadlallah, 2015). Education remains the veritable vehicle to advance the provision of quality services and goods in the dynamic community in which we find HEI operating. Competition is inevitably increasing amongst the HEI thriving to produce competent graduates who can fit squarely in both domestic and international industries. Expectations are that the graduates must provide solutions to the socio-economic problems bedeviling the contemporary societies. Therefore, this renders education as a pillar for socio-economic transformation necessary for an advancing society like Zimbabwe. HEI are expected to champion in the delivery of quality graduates that are responsible for the emancipation of the economic development of the country. It is HEI that are responsible for churning out leaders that are supposed to take initiatives in transformation of the economy at large.

Higher education landscape is developing at a tremendous rate. Competitiveness is becoming more important as institutions strive to satisfy the knowledge market. Lack of attention on quality assurance phenomenon may lead to failure of these institutions (Ali and Shastri, 2010). Domestically if quality assurance is ignored, as globalisation is increasing, HEI turn to perish completely and become replaced by cross-border education systems and institutions. On the backdrop of this cause, this necessitates HEI to reformulate their curricula, pedagogies and of prevalent importance, quality execution. Focus on quality assurance phenomenon in HEI revitalises and reinvigorates the quality delivery of the three main pillars of reason for existence of universities, that of teaching research and community engagement. Quality assurance has received considerable attention in most developed and developing countries as one of the fundamental cornerstones of HEI systems poised to keep pace with global change.

The purpose of quality assurance in HEI is to advance methods to improve the delivery of service at a competitive level through activation of existing practices and achieve higher level of output (Nadim and Al-Hinai, 2016). Because of this, on the turn of the new millennium, HEI have turned their attention to improving performance than ever before. In their endeavour to improve performance and outwitting competition in the intensified globalised higher education environment, HEI are increasingly incorporating private sector performance improvement approaches into operations (Zubair, 2013). Quality assurance is the nerve centre of performance of the HEI in producing sound teams of human resources dedicated to solving problems bedeviling the contemporary society. Saeed and Fadlallah (2015) argued that HEI should be regarded as efficacious if only it is able to produce to society a dedicated, committed, and professionally sound team of human capital to decide for the future.

Extant literature on quality assurance in HEI (Ahmed & Siddiek, 2012; Sudha, 2013, Hasan, Miskon, Ahmad, Ali, Hashim, Abdullah, Alias, & Maarof, 2016; Yarahmadi & Magd, 2016; Papanthymou & Darra, 2017) have focused attention general concerns of quality assurance without focusing much attention on the part of implementation. A lot of information is lacking as far as the challenges of implementing quality assurance is concerned in high education from the perspectives of the lecturers. This has motivated the current study to explore the perceptions of the lectures on the challenges faced by the HEI. These accords an opportunity of the always-side-lined stream of perceptions on quality assurance as in most case it is a phenomenon devoted to management and administration part without thinking much about who is the key stakeholder in the implementation of the phenomenon (O'Reilly, Healy, Murphy, & O'Dubhghaill, 2017).

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