

## Chapter 4

# Quality Management and Higher Education Scenario in Namibia: A Critical Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

*The new wave in the higher education space, which includes mass access to higher education, changes in the diverse needs of the student body, economic challenges faced by many countries, societal and general stakeholder expectations, relationships with external stakeholders, and new funding mechanisms has necessitated new forms of accountability in the sector. These factors have a profound influence on the handling of quality assurance arrangements at both national and institutional levels. This chapter seeks to critically analyze the current state of quality management practices in higher education in Namibia at both national and institutional levels. The chapter identifies achievements that have been recorded so far, as well as challenges and areas for further development.*

### INTRODUCTION

Globally, quality has emerged as one of the determinants of a university's world ranking and competitiveness. The concept of "quality in higher education" is thus of immense concern for academics and academia globally, and Namibia is no exemption. In its visions of becoming a knowledge-based industrialised country, Namibia recognises quality higher education as one of the key aspects in moving towards

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its long-term development aspiration of Vision 2030. To realise this, the acquisition of relevant skills through quality higher education remains a priority (National Planning Commission Secretariat, 2004).

Higher education in the Namibian context refers to all learning programmes that lead to qualifications equivalent to National Qualification Framework (NQF) level 5 and higher and are offered by higher education institutions as defined in the Higher Education Act, Act 26 of 2003 (GRN, Act No. 26 of 2003). This Act established the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) to promote a coordinated higher education system, enhance students' access to higher education and ensure quality higher education. It mandates the NCHE to conduct registration of private higher education providers, programme accreditation and institutional audit. Another Act that regulates higher education is the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) Act (NQA Act No. 29 of 1996), which established the NQA and mandated it to set up and administer the NQF, set standards for all occupations, evaluate international qualifications, and accredit education and training providers (GRN, Act No. 29 of 1996). The third Act is the Vocational Education and Training Act (Act No. 1 of 2008), which establishes the Namibia Training Authority (NTA) with the mandate to coordinate and ensure quality in technical vocational education and training (TVET) (GRN, Act No. 1 of 2008).

Higher education in Namibia is relatively small, with only two public universities and one private university; the rest are colleges without university status. The focus of this chapter is on higher education institutions with university status. Public universities are established by Acts of Parliament and consist of the University of Namibia (UNAM) which was established in 1992 (Act no. 18 of 1992), and Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) (Act no. 7 of 2015). The latter was transformed from a polytechnic. The only private university, the International University of Management (IUM), was established in 2002.

It is acknowledged that higher education plays a significant role in national socioeconomic development. For higher education to play this role meaningfully, quality becomes paramount. Although studies have identified critical issues and concerns pertaining to quality management in academic organisations around the globe, little emphasis has been placed on the quality management practices of higher education institutions in Namibia. According to Kadhila (2012), there is a lack of publicly available, transparent information on quality assurance and management processes and their outcomes in higher education institutions in Namibia. This is supported by Papanthymou and Darra (2017), who found that apart from a few studies in the field of quality management, there are also gaps in the quality models that are used by higher education institutions. Hence, the need to provide valuable information on the subject in order to improve quality management in Namibian higher education institutions.

The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to examine the current status, challenges and practical implications of quality management in higher education in Namibia, with a specific focus on national quality assurance agencies and the two public universities, in comparison to international best practice. Based on the conclusions made and as informed by the analysis, the chapter makes suggestions aimed at the improvement of the practice of quality management in higher education in Namibia. In addition, the chapter is informed by the authors' experiences, an analysis of official institutional documents and individual interviews conducted with personnel from public higher education institutions and the national quality assurance agencies in Namibia.

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