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EVALUATION OF THE IQA STRUCTURES AND MECHANISMS EMPLOYED BY UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

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Abstract:
Higher education institutions are today experiencing constant changes due to the rapid expansion of the institutions in student numbers which has not been matched by expansion of infrastructure, facilities and resources. This situation has raised concerns about the quality of higher education institutions (HEIs) and their programmes among stakeholders. While the quality of universities was unquestionable when they were serving a small elite, the institutions in today's diversified and privatized higher education systems worldwide are under pressure to change and adapt. Quality and graduate employability has for quite a while attracted the debate among employers and other education stakeholders on the quality of university graduates. In response to the challenges, external quality assurance (EQA) mechanisms have been developed in higher education in various parts of the world in an effort to assure quality and standards. Governments have also seen the need to engage EQA bodies in the quality control of HEIs through periodic external assessments of the quality of the institutions through programme evaluation, accreditation and quality audit. While quality assurance was initially externally driven, individual HEIs have today set up internal quality assurance (IQA) mechanisms to help them monitor and manage the quality of education as they also align their IQA with external policies and frameworks governing education. This paper reviews literature on the IQA structures and mechanisms used by universities with a view to making recommendations on how the institutions can effectively employ IQA structures and mechanisms in order to offer quality education that is responsive to the needs of the industry.

Keywords: quality assurance, higher education institutions, internal quality assurance, external quality assurance, employability skills

1. Introduction

The increasing demands for good quality higher education by employers and stakeholders imply that HEIs face similar pressures that the business sector has been

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facing for decades. These implications impact HEIs which lack the finance and infrastructure resources even more as they cannot compete with similar institutions locally and internationally (Pereira, Lutz & Heerens, 2002). The institutions are also today drawing lessons from the industry on the need to make quality an overarching principle in every operation; being knowledgeable about the needs of students and academics, and the need to create desirability for the HEIs through meeting social and economic trends while maintaining superior/high quality academic performance.

Diversifying education to incorporate social and economic trends is critical in enhancing a broad and holistic view of education that is so much needed today to enable learners to cope with the complex challenges of the dynamic society. Pereira, Lutz & Heerens (2002) emphasize the need for organizations to provide quality and value in the provision of their educational services so that they can grow and excel above others. This could also help them accrue benefits such as stronger student and staff loyalty, ability to retain quality academic staff and to attract students to their programmes and lower vulnerability to economic changes. However, providing quality education requires learning institutions to establish firm structures and mechanisms of IQA to provide ongoing feedback to all education stakeholders serving an institution for the purpose of continuous improvement of quality in education.

Quality assurance (QA) establishes and maintains set requirements for developing or manufacturing reliable products and also designing a systematic process of determining whether a product or service meets specified requirements. In doing so, a QA system is meant to increase customer confidence and an organization's credibility, while also improving work processes and efficiency, and enabling an organization to better compete with others. Quality assurance is one of the key issues in contemporary policy debates at the international, national and institutional level which has become a major concern for higher education across the world. The move towards integrating QA into higher education started in Bologna process in Europe with a heavy policy emphasis on QA. The Process was set up with the goals of strengthening the attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education and of fostering student employability and mobility within the region. Bologna process has evolved and now includes all aspects of higher education such as student engagement in QA processes, feedback mechanisms for teaching and learning, and staff awareness of quality enhancement processes (Gvaramazde, 2008).

Pereira, Lutz & Heerens (2002) observe that the move towards integrating QA into higher education has benefited institutions and students by setting out to achieve a model in the international co-operation in higher education, which improves the quality, transparency and comparability of degrees, and studies that have been involved in the accreditation process. Comparability allows mobility of graduates and eases credit transfer process across universities regionally and internationally. It further enables graduates to compete for international jobs. Pereira, Lutz, & Heerens (2002) observe that credit transfer and student mobility can be hampered when QA is not aligned with regional, national and international standards. They further argue that in the context of globalization and internationalization, quality assessment enhances

comparing approaches and results as well as learning from best practices. It also extends international co-operation among institutions in implementing quality assessment and assurance mechanism, improving the assessment of academic programmes, sharing assessment methods and exchanging systems. This enhances benchmarking and borrowing of best practices for continuous improvement of quality in education

As such, QA in higher education today is not only an institutional and national issue, but also a global one. Harman (2000) observes that universities and colleges throughout the world are focusing special attention on designing and implementing new QA mechanisms and systems in order to ensure that students receive high quality and relevant education and that degrees and diplomas are nationally and internationally recognized by employers and other universities. In Kenya for instance, the Commission for Higher Education (CHE), currently the Commission for University Education (CUE) was established by the Universities Act 1985 to strengthen the regulatory framework and provide mandatory quality assurance. In its response to the very rapid expansion from one university that had existed from 1964-1984, CHE (2008) declared that the rapid expansion of higher education, entrance of market forces in its education delivery (online, open and distance modes), and globalization of education necessitated the formation of structures and mechanisms, standards and guidelines, to assure quality.

While the commission emphasizes that QA is a continuous process requiring flexibility and adjustments, it also places a lot of emphasis on structured pre-determined standards. To this end, CUE has developed standards and guidelines to enable it to discharge its mandate pertaining to QA through accreditation processes. It has also developed instruments for evaluation of academic programmes and provided curriculum standard guidelines for preparing curriculum of an academic programme; checklist on verification of available academic resources to support the programme; guidelines and standards for Distance and Open Learning; and guidelines and standards for developing study materials for curricula delivered through distance learning. The criteria for evaluation of curricula of academic programmes are also provided in the Curriculum Standards and Guidelines for Preparing Curriculum of an academic programme (Commission for University Education, Guidelines for University Academic Programmes Regulations, 2014). However, training on how to apply the guidelines to develop or evaluate a programme is not provided to teaching faculty to enable them to effectively develop, evaluate or review programmes.

The following section defines the concept 'quality assurance' and illustrates the inter-dependence of internal and external quality assurance structures and mechanisms in HEIs.

1.2 Quality Assurance

QA is the means by which an institution guarantees that the standards and quality of its educational provisions are being maintained and /or enhanced. It is the means through which an institution confirms that conditions are in place for students to achieve

standards set by the institution. QA is a continuous process of evaluation- assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining and improving the quality of a higher education system, institutions or programmes. It is a way of defining and securing good learning through support for students which helps to describe and guarantee the level of achievement represented by higher education qualification. It also entails communication of both intentions and the means of achieving them (Commission for Higher Education, 2008).

Harman (2000) defines QA in higher education as systematic management and assessment procedures adopted by HEIs and systems in order to monitor performance against objectives, and to ensure achievement of quality outputs and quality improvements. Harman further notes that QA systems aim to provide appropriate evidence to substantiate claims made about quality so as to enable key stakeholders to have confidence about the management of quality and the level of outcomes achieved. In universities for instance, QA examines the effectiveness and efficiency of the management, teaching and learning, research and community service. The quality of graduates could be measured by their skills, preparedness and ability to produce and serve the demands of labour market and the society. QA also judges whether teachers are efficient, how adequate and accessible the facilities and materials needed for effective teaching and learning are, and the preparedness and readiness of graduates in meeting the challenges in their discipline. However, although this definition comprehensively encompasses the key areas of QA, it does not outline the tools used to monitor quality among different stakeholders in a university.

Research indicates that quality in HEIs is widely influenced by the regional national policy and external quality assurance requirements. It could also be guided by the regional framework. For instance, the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA) is a regional mechanism aimed at the QA of academic programmes in six member countries (including Kenya) which are guided by a quality handbook entitled 'A Road Map to Quality' (IUCEA, 2010). The framework enhances student mobility in the member countries, mutual recognition of credits and degrees; the comparability of study structures and degrees models; cooperation in quality assurance; utilization of IQA instruments that create transparency such as the Commission for University Education Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (CATS).

Further, the framework enhances lifelong learning culture; student-centred learning approach; inter-linkage of learning with research and the integration of the social dimension in all named targets (Martin, 2018). The comprehensive scope covered by the regional framework above shows that universities are expected to employ very high education standards and practices in education. However, research shows that universities in Sub-Saharan Africa have inadequate facilities and numbers of teaching staff as well as high student–teacher ratios that put a strain on teaching quality. For instance, Kenya's ratio is 64 students per faculty with facilities such as libraries, laboratories and workshops overstretched and poorly equipped (British Council, 2014, cited in the IUCEA, 2015). This raises a big concern on the quality and standards of

education offered by the universities and the effectiveness of IUCEA quality assurance structures and mechanisms for managing the quality of education in the region.

The above challenges notwithstanding, initiatives in regional and international QA should be emphasized for their benefits including facilitating the recognition of study programmes and thus intra-regional student mobility; protecting student and employer interests and facilitating international recognition of the standards of awards. It is also an important element for public accountability, particularly to satisfy taxpayers about value for money. QA also helps to inform student choice, especially in the light of a growing diversity of course offerings, and further contributes to improved teaching, administrative processes and good practice that leads to overall system improvement. Notably, also, globalization and knowledge based economy today demands greater mobility of professional and skilled labour as well as increased efforts to achieve mutual recognition of university and college awards. In addition, effective cooperation between higher education institutions and nations is essential in today's world to ensure that a university maintains a competitive edge that is comparable internationally (Harman, 2000). This cooperation is imperative if a university is to churn out graduates who can compete for jobs in any country across the globe.

1.3 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms and Structures in Higher Education Institutions

Internal quality assurance refers to individual HEI's policies and mechanisms for ensuring that it is fulfilling its own purposes as well as the standards that apply to higher education in general or to the profession or discipline in particular. Vlăsceanu, Grunberg & Parlea (2007) define IQA as '*intra-institutional practices in view of monitoring and improving the quality of higher education'* while Authoritative Glossary of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education defines IQA as '*the process, supported by policies and systems, used by an institution to maintain and enhance the quality of education experienced by its students and of the research undertaken by its staff*'. This definition distinguishes IQA from other management tasks, and puts the emphasis on the maintenance and enhancement of quality in teaching and learning. It is important to integrate management and other structures of the institution into IQA in order to involve all sections of the university with a view to entrenching a culture of quality in the institution. This is crucial in ensuring customer satisfaction in the services offered to them by both teaching and support departments. Harvey (2004–2016) defines an IQA system as 'a set of integrated policies and practices that structure management, implementation and adaptation of quality assurance processes'. He views IQA as an institutional mechanism of reviewing and evaluating the quality of education or research.

Notably, however, universities have not institutionalized QA. Martin (2018) observes that most staff, particularly those who do not hold leadership position are not informed about QA activities including designing QA policies, tools and implementing them; yet involvement of stakeholder in quality management process is a key factor for its success. This implies that most staff participate in QA activities such as programme

review and student evaluation without knowing exactly the reason for engaging in the activities.

Notably, the above definitions have not made reference to how IQA responds to external norms and standards of quality, yet best practices in IQA demand a HEI to align its quality assurance with policies and standards of external bodies or agencies which regulate its operations (Commission for Higher Education, 2008). Addressing the external factor is crucial. Martin (2018) maintains that IQA cannot develop independently without the support of a number of contextual factors, which relate to both the internal and external environment of a university. Thus, the development of IQA is therefore driven by the requirements of the government or by market competition. For instance, the government can ask institutions to create structures and processes of IQA as part of national governance reform. Also, where institutions are operating closer to the market, the enhancement of the external image or an aspiration for international visibility are important elements that strengthen the market position of HEIs.

Further, IQA is also shaped and conditioned by internal institutional environments including leadership support, participation of staff in the development and implementation of IQA and adequate involvement of departments in IQA responsibilities, clarity on the benefits of IQA, statistical information available to support analysis of quality issues, transparent and well-known procedures for IQA as set out in a handbook, quality of training of the staff available to support IQA processes in management of surveys, and participation of staff and students in the development of IQA procedures (Martin, 2018).

Creating such a comprehensive QA environment requires an institution to integrate IQA with the institutional strategic plan and embedding the plan into the vision of the university. Institutionalization is important because it helps to establish conditions for operation that ensure all stakeholders are involved in the processes in their context and that they are well informed of IQA policies and manuals (Martin, 2018). However, a university should put in place a system for mitigating any factors that could hinder its development and implementation of IQA. This is critical because, HEIs are assumed to bear the main responsibility for the quality of their services today (European Standards and Guidelines- ESG, 2015).

In this regard, a HEI is expected to establish IQA mechanisms which comply with the requirements of external quality assurance (EQA) agencies or regulatory bodies, and at the same time to generate information that responds to individual institutions' own requirements for internal quality monitoring and management (Señal et al., 2008). However, the researchers observe that many of the long-established traditions of IQA in HEIs are no longer adequate to meet the expansion, social and economic requirements of the dynamic society as some have been located at different levels of authority, at the level of individual staff and the basic academic units. IQA cannot function as a system in such circumstances.

Reforms in IQA are therefore needed to establish proper structures and mechanism that enable the IQA structures to function as a system. However, reforming

IQA is challenging because policies, structures, and processes vary across national and institutional boundaries (Pratasavitskaya and Stensaker, 2010). Harvey and Green (1993) support the view noting that there are diverse understandings of quality, many of which are contextually determined, reflecting different national, institutional, and disciplinary traditions and cultures. The Commission for Higher Education (2008) also reiterates that quality in higher education is a difficult and confusing concept which is perceived as consisting of a synthesis of conformity, adaptability and continuous improvement; as well as a synthesis of a range of expectations of many stakeholders. It also means different things to different people. For instance, students may focus on facilities provided and perceived usefulness of education on future employment while academic staff may pay attention to the teaching learning process. On the other hand, management may give importance to the institution's achievements while parents may consider the achievement of their children while employers may consider the competence of the graduates. This divergence of approach demands ongoing dialogue and flexibility among stakeholders and understanding the context of the different stakeholders.

Pereira, Lutz & Heerens (2002) also note that the differing approaches to quality reflect different conceptions of higher education itself. Also in line with the discussion, Tam (2001) argues that quality is a highly contested concept with multiple meanings and this makes it necessary to understand the meaning of the concept in the context of higher education. The variations notwithstanding, it is important for a university to establish its IQA structures and mechanisms in the context of its vision and mission but at the same time align it with the external (regional and international) quality assurance standards to ensure that the institution offers degrees and diplomas with a global perspective, to enable its graduates attain global standards.

1.4 Establishment of Quality Assurance Departments in Higher Education Institutions

Universities are required to establish QA departments with a person responsible for QA or committees to run IQA at institutional level. QA department is responsible for the development of institutional policies on quality assurance, quality handbooks, and IQA instruments for data collection. However, the success of the QA department lies on the commitment and support of the management in defining the quality policies and communicating them to all levels of the organization to ensure that all necessary requirements are defined and met, and improvements are made. In addition, developing effective IQA requires overcoming the misconception of associating quality management systems (QMS) exclusively with processes that deal with inspection and disposition of non-conforming products (What is Quality Management System, and how is ISO 9001 related?). A process focused on inspection and disposal does not manage the inputs that help a product or service to be compliant, yet QMS are intended to help assure that a product or service meets or exceeds the customer's expectations. A shift of focus from inspection to continuous improvement of a product or service for compliance is imperative because it is only by consistently meeting or exceeding the

customer's perception of quality that an organization can grow and thrive (QMS/Quality Management System/Quality- One).

HEIs should establish QA departments because development and implementation of a QMS has significant benefits including managing product and process quality to enable an organization to consistently meet the needs and wants of their customers which results in more sales; increased market share and a loyal customer base; ensuring that all government regulations and requirements are met with every new product; making evidence based decisions - based on data; and optimizing utilization of resources for efficiency and effectiveness (QMS/Quality Management System/Quality-One). Applying these benefits in context could help universities to consistently deliver quality and relevant education through continuous quality improvement. However, as noted above, rapid expansion of universities in Kenya and Sub-Saharan Africa continuous to impede quality due to unmanageable student-teacher ratios, overstretching of the available facilities and resources and shortage of teaching staff. Reforms are needed to ensure that any expansion in education is matched with expansion of facilities and resources to safeguard quality.

Successful implementation of QMS in universities requires investment in time and resources to establish and run a QA department. Further, effective implementation of QMS requires the top management to communicate to staff at all levels of the organization to create awareness of how the QMS will benefit the customers and employees, how the system works and the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders at each level and in each department. The management should also influence the participation of all stakeholders and employees in the QMS development and implementation (QMS/Quality Management System/Quality- One. https://quality-one.com/qms/). This is significant in helping stakeholders to understand their significant role in quality management and owning the process.

However, research indicates that only a limited number of actors in certain positions (such as deans and heads of programmes) in universities are involved in the design and revision of IQA tools including student evaluation, student programme surveys, graduate tracer survey and employer survey. The rest who comprise the majority are not informed of the existing IQA policy and manuals. Further, academics perceive quality as a feature inherent to their academic lives rather than as connected to certain administrative processes. These gaps suggest that universities do not conceptualize IQA as a set of integrated policies and practices to manage, implement, and adapt quality assurance processes, instruments, and measures to fulfil external standards and criteria as well as internal standards and objectives (Martin, 2018). Education and training of senior management and employees at all levels of the institution on effective management of QA is critical if effective implementation of QMS is to be realized.

Further, research indicates that QA structures are less developed at faculty or department level as central management plays the central role in QA. This implies that IQA structures remain centralized in most universities. Decentralization should be the option in order to involve all departments in order to enhance participative

implementation of IQA for the purpose of entrenching a culture of quality in all departments. It is also important to formalize IQA in a written commitment to quality which should be embedded in the strategic plan or quality policy. This formalization can be further consolidated in a quality manual describing the operational processes through which quality will be enhanced (Quality Assurance-Educational and Student Policy-University of Cambridge). Universities should align their policies (including Staff recruitment policy, Student assessment policy, Examination policy, Curriculum development policy, Research policy, Internship policy, Teaching practice policy and Discipline policy) with quality policy. They should also shift from centralized to institutionalized quality management to enhance to enhance effectiveness in continuous quality improvement.

Also, university leadership should understand that its quality assurance system (QAS) has to respond to a wide range of different stakeholders' needs. For instance, while academic staff may be interested in ensuring the quality of their research and teaching activities, deans may be more focused on how to fulfil external quality standards for study programmes in each faculty. On the other hand, the leadership may be concerned about incentives for recruiting and retaining academics in the organization. The varied stakeholders' perspectives require the QAS to address and balance the needs (Martin, 2018). It further requires that relevant tools are used to yield appropriate data for each aspect of quality assurance. For instance, assuring the quality of teaching and learning uses student/course evaluation, student' programme surveys while assuring development of student' employability skills uses graduate tracer studies and employer surveys of specific programmes. Programme surveys conducted over time can be a very effective tool to assess quality levels because customers who are very happy with service offered by the organization tell others. Research indicates that 60 percent of new customers in service organizations come from referrals (Quality Management System. www.abahe.co.uk/business-administration/Quality-Management-Systems.pdf).

On the other hand, tools for assuring quality governance and management include target- or service-level agreements which are used to assess whether specified objectives have been achieved. In addition, external certification of certain management processes such as ISO 9001:2015 are used to specify the international standard and requirements for quality management systems. ISO 9001 and other ISO standards quality system structures are supported by documented information including procedures, work instructions, policies and forms. This helps to provide all those who must execute the quality system with documented, understandable and workable instructions which define both expectations, responsibilities and actions to achieve the stated quality goals. Most of the systems include external and internal auditing process to ensure compliance with requirements (What is an ISO 9001-2015 Quality Management System? ISO 900 Store).

However, new approaches to IQA are focusing more on designing innovative structures for IQA which integrate individual quality assurance tools into an IQA system by providing linkages between individual parts and a greater whole. Parsons

(1951) cited by Martin (2018) outlines four functions that must be fulfilled to keep a system stable: adaption of a system to its environment; goal attainment (this requires that goals are defined and the required conditions to attain them are set); integration of system elements in such a way that the pre-set goals are achieved; and carrying out latent (latency) pattern maintenance to stabilize the system structure to be able to deal with conflicts between or within the acting members of a system. Dealing with conflicts requires a university to come up with relevant tools to evaluate various aspects of quality assurance and disseminate the collected data to all stakeholders, and establishing how the feedback can be best used to enhance improvement.

Employing Systems approach to IQA should be employed in order to tap its benefits which include improving processes, reducing waste, lowering costs, facilitating and identifying training opportunities, engaging staff and setting organization-wide direction. It further helps to meet the customer's requirements, which helps to instil confidence in the organization, leading to more customers, more sales, and more repeat business as well as meeting the organization's requirements, which ensures compliance with regulations and provision of products and services in the most cost- and resource-efficient manner, creating room for expansion, growth, and profit (What is Quality Management System/ASQ. asq.org/learn-about-quality/quality-management-system/). Universities should tap from these benefits to improve their QMS.

2. Conclusions

Effective quality management requires a university to integrate its IQA with its strategic plan and mission in order to incorporate and involve all departments in the institution to entrench a total quality culture in all aspects of the institution. Universities should focus more on designing innovative structures for IQA in order to integrate individual stakeholders' quality assurance tools into an IQA system. Given that the goal of education is to promote the development of the society, a university should establish operational strategies to enhance the adaptation of their academic offer to the needs of the labour market and economy. Examples of such strategies include establishing a job placement office and career services; providing student mentorship by professionals from the industry and other support services to enhance their development of personal and professional skills (including clubs and societies, guidance and counselling and sports and games) and involvement of professionals in curriculum development, implementation and review, and in assessment of internship. Individual universities should also ensure that employability is strongly embedded in the vision and mission of the institution in order to enhance the prestige of its programmes. This requires conducting regular and systematic graduate tracer studies and employer surveys.

IQA is also critical in enhancing continuous improvement of teaching, research and community services in higher education.

3. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made with special focus on universities:

3.1 Incorporate Key Quality Management Elements in IQA

IQA processes should incorporate the important elements of a quality system such as participative management, quality system design, customers, purchasing, education and training, statistics, auditing, and technology to enhance quality in all departments. Participative managements entails involvement of all departments in the IQA and this helps to decentralize the processes to enhance better results.

3.2 Formulate and actualize a Quality Assurance Policy

Individual universities should develop a quality assurance policy to ensure that relevant and appropriate standards are achieved to provide high-quality education, research, and community service and to sustain a culture of quality. The policy should be aligned to national, regional, and international trends in higher education to ensure its programmes meet both the local and international needs of the society.

3.3 Institutionalize Policy Manuals and Quality Related Documents

IQA should be formalized in a written quality manual describing the operational processes through which quality will be enhanced. Further, quality related documents should be institutionalized through the university strategic plan. This entails mainstreaming IQA mechanisms and instruments with the other components of the university management system namely strategic plan, the operationalization of strategic goals through the development of plans and programmes, target agreements, and management control.

3.4 Establish Internal Quality Assurance Structures

The organizational structure should create administrative structures responsible for improving and assuring university quality standards at all levels of the university (including academic and administrative units, departments, collegial bodies, and committees) to support IQA processes and tools supporting the work of individuals responsible for quality assurance. Creating awareness of quality policy and manuals among all stakeholders is necessary so as to help them own the policy in order to effectively implement its contents in the manuals.

3.5 Devise new approaches to IQA

Universities should devise new approaches to IQA that view it as a set of integrated policies and practices for managing, implementing, and adapting quality assurance processes, instruments, and measures to fulfil external standards and criteria as well as internal standards and objectives. They should also involve stakeholders relevantly in the design and revision of particular IQA tools to help them see their part in the processes.

3.6 Integrate Quality Assurance with Management

Quality assurance processes should be an integrated part of actual management or developmental processes of a university to ensure that all staff and students are conversant with the processes and that they participate in implementing IQA. This decentralization of IQA has the potential to entrench a university culture of quality in all departments while the central management is still expected to play its significant role in quality assurance.

3.7 Network with the Industry

A university should network with the industry to ensure that professionals are involved in the initial development of the curriculum, implementation and periodic review of a programme to fine-tune curricular structures and course plans to reflect market needs, provide career counselling services and other student support services (including mentorship and coaching by professionals from the industry on employment skills, innovation and entrepreneurship). Involvement of professional bodies and practitioners from the industry also ensures that IQA instruments and processes are compliant with external standards and, enhance organizational learning and control.

3.8 Make Quality Assurance Accountable to all Stakeholders

IQA must be accountable to multiple stakeholders including students, parents, teachers, alumni, businesses, and markets to strengthen quality culture through a more equal participation of all stakeholders in IQA instruments and processes. This ensures that the IQA system is institutionalized and cannot be easily changed, even when leadership changes.

3.9 Ensure Efficiency and Adequacy of Resources

Universities should ensure efficiency and resources adequacy, responsiveness to academic and corporate needs and alignment with external requirements. For example, teaching infrastructure facilities and resources should be aligned to programme goals in order to enhance teaching and learning.

3.10 Enhance Communication Flow to all Levels from the Executive

This demands that universities management should establish effective formal and informal communication on existing IQA structures, IQA policy and manual, the objectives of the university's academic project, the role of IQA in relation to it, and the tools and policies supporting it to all staff, faculty students and stakeholders to ensure effective implementation of quality management.

3.11 Link IQA with opportunities for staff development

Feedback from student evaluation of courses could be used to improve young teachers' performance by involving top-performing teachers to provide 'mentoring' for them. Growth files' for young teachers should be systematically used to keep track of their improving performance and accumulation of experience.

3.12 Follow up on IQA Feedback Processes

Universities should emphasize follow-up actions and feedback processes to enhance effective functioning of the formalized IQA system. They should also integrate perspectives of all stakeholders who have been actively engaged in the provision of information for IQA at the university (students, alumni, academic and administrative staff, and employers) on the quality of education, in order to use the feedback for improvement.

3.13 Provide Leadership Support

The management should provide support in quality management by facilitating information regarding IQA system to all stakeholders including staff and students and creating awareness and understanding of the same. This is crucial because effectiveness of IQA depends on levels of stakeholder's involvement and its perceived usefulness. In addition, the management should take into consideration all other factors that enhance IQA including managing processes, transparent information, reliable data basis, financial incentives, scientific quality of evaluation, participation of students, and accountability towards stakeholders.

3.14 Empower Academic Staff with Quality Assurance Skills

Universities should facilitate academic staff with training workshops on quality assurance activities in aspects related to self-evaluation processes; design of evaluation guidelines; and syllabus design and improvement to raise their level of awareness of and involvement in quality assurance processes. They should also enhance their understanding of IQA concepts, tools, and processes; raise their technical capabilities for quality monitoring and assessment and awareness of the importance of self-assessment and self-improvement. This could enhance their curricular innovations and achievement of nationally and internationally comparable and recognized standards of quality.

3.15 Devise innovative IQA mechanisms

Universities should design innovative IQA mechanisms that suit their context and mission to ensure that perspectives of IQA by all stakeholders are acknowledged in order to ensure systematic collection of perceptions on necessary quality improvement from different university stakeholders.

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