



AfriQAN – INQAAHE DOCUMENTATION OF GOOD PRACTICES IN QUALITY ASSURANCE

African Quality Assurance Network – Accra, Ghana
Commission for Higher Education – Nairobi, Kenya

Assuring Quality Higher Education

August 2012

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FOREWORD

This report represents a consolidation of Good Practices (GPs) employed by external higher education quality assurance agencies while undertaking external quality assurance. These GPs were selected from a list of over thirty (30) good practices that were submitted by eighteen (18) External Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAAs) operating in various countries in Africa. The GPs were presented at a regional workshop jointly funded by The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) under the Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity (GIQAC) scheme. The one day workshop held on May 15th 2012 was organized by the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) in Kenya, provided an opportunity for EQAAs to present two (2) GPs that fulfilled a predetermined criteria outlined by INQAAHE. The GPs presented were then subjected to critique and thereafter scored using an instrument that took into account the following:

1. Clarity of objectives/purpose;
2. Positive impact on input, process and output/outcome of quality in the higher education system;
3. Sustainability of the GP in the short, medium and long term;
4. The viability of the resources set aside for implementation of the GP;
5. Adoptability of the GPs by other EQAAs.

This report documents a total of ten (10) GPs that were reviewed by two (2) appointed reviewers and approved by INQAAHE on the 24th and 27th July 2012 respectively. The GPs are in use in eight (8) African countries, namely: Ethiopia, Lesotho, Tanzania, Nigeria, Kenya, Namibia, Uganda and Ghana. They represent good practices that can be borrowed by other external quality assurance agencies operating in Africa and other parts of the world. In addition to this, the GPs have been entered into the INQAAHE database of good practices and hence provide Africa's contribution to the process of assuring quality higher education. The report is a step towards the documentation of salient practices used by the EQAAs in Africa.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AfriQAN	African Quality Assurance Network
CAS	Central Admissions System
CHE	Commission for Higher Education
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EQAA	External Quality Assurance Agency
GGPQA	Guidelines for Good Practice in Quality Assurance
GPQA	Good Practice in Quality Assurance
GUNI	Global University Network for Innovation
HEQMISA	Higher Education Quality Management in Southern Africa
INQAAHE	International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
NCHE	National Council on Higher Education
NECTA	National Council for Technical Education
NRA	National Regulatory Agencies
QAA	Quality Assurance Agencies
RIE	Research and Intellectual Expo
RIEOC	Research and Intellectual Expo Organizing Committee
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TCU	Tanzanian Commission for Universities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ZIMCHE	Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education

AfriQAN – INQAAHE DOCUMENTATION OF GOOD PRACTICES IN QUALITY ASSURANCE

1.0 TRANSPARENT AND INCLUSIVE ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

1.1 Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) - Ethiopia (<http://www.herqa.edu.et>)

1.1.1 Purposes achieved by, or objective of the good practice

- a) To develop a transparent and inclusive regime of assessing quality of private higher education institutions.
- b) To improve the quality of private higher education institutions to ensure comparability and improvement over their public counterparts.

1.1.2 Context

Until 2000, the higher education system in Ethiopia comprised only two universities. Seventeen (17) colleges, a total of 31, 000 students and a small supervisory department in the Ministry of Education (World Bank Sector Study 2003). Today there are 31 public universities and over 66 private degree offering higher education institutions, together enrolling almost 500, 000 students. Due to this rapid growth in the number of higher education institutions and students enrolment, there is watering down of the quality of higher education offered by both public and private HEIs. Herein lies the important intervention through the good practice on Transparent and Inclusive Assessment of Quality of Private Higher Education Institutions.

1.1.3 Contextual features or challenging issues that have to be addressed in the designing and implementing the good practice.

A major challenge confronting higher education in Ethiopia is quality improvement especially in private higher education institutions. A localized intervention involving only the national quality assurance agency especially in standards setting and monitoring is seen as not inclusive. Wider acceptability is assured when all stakeholders are mobilized in a transparent way in prosecuting the quality agenda. It is this challenge that this good practice addressed.

Also noteworthy is the challenge of the existence of fraudulent credentials issued by some private HEIs due to lax and poor security system of documentation. Other challenges are not-up-standard training in certain areas which need particular attention such as law, teacher education and medicine and insufficient trust of the public on some private HEIs were some of the challenges that triggered the establishment of assessment teams that involved private HEIs and other stakeholders.

1.1.4 Practice

1st – Assessment criteria and procedures based on the existing HERQA standards, threshold descriptors and reference points were drafted by the Agency staff and passed through a series of discussions and deliberations involving HERQA Board, Bureau representatives, Regional Education Bureau representatives and other sections of the Ministry of Education working in

quality of education at lower levels.

2nd – Teams, consisting of members from all the various sections participated in the preparation of the procedures and the development of criteria were formed. Each team was made to be led and coordinated by HERQA staff members as they are the ones who have better knowledge and experience of quality assurance at the higher education level.

3rd – the teams were sent out to the various sections of the country at the same time with the assessment criteria and checklists prepared to go along with it to make the job of the assessment uniform and increase its objectivity.

4th – Information was gathered from all private higher education institutions and their satellite campuses using criteria and checklists.

5th – Decisions were made on the status of the quality of education offered by the private HEIs and their satellite campuses. Improvement plan was also developed.

1.1.5 Evidence of success, impact or realization of the objectives

The good practice is successful to the extent that stakeholders are unanimous in the criteria for assessment and for quality assuring private higher education institutions; the quality of private higher education institutions has observed a steady upward swing since the implementation of the good practice and the programmes of private higher education institutions are now well-aligned with national minimum standards.

Ranking of the private HEIs in three levels – A, B, C – was made for the first time in the country's quality assurance history. Those under "A" were commended for having up to standard quality assurance system in place while those in "B" were given a one year probation period to address all concerns of quality. Those HEIs under "C" were banned not to operate in the areas and told to transfer their students to other well performing HEIs. The decision was announced by a panel of higher officials, quality assurance experts, delegates from the Association of Private Higher Education and other stakeholders.

The quality assessment exercise spotlighted some basic gaps the private higher education institutions and HERQA have to fill. Consequently HERQA has developed a database of accredited universities in different parts of the globe in order to check educational credentials obtained from universities all over the world. For instance, more than 1822 accredited universities in USA have been identified and a complete access to the register secured. The same thing holds true for Europe, Africa and Asia. This enables the agency to offer equivalency of credential services in time and as it should be. The findings of this assessment is also used to develop a data base on the list of all enrolled graduates by sex, year of entrance, department, ID, institutions, grades scored in each semester as well as the cumulative grade point average etc that enable the agency to give timely and proper authentication.

1.1.5 Resources required

Resources used

- a) More than 500, 000 Birr (about USD 30,000) as per diem for assessors and for fuel and other costs.
- b) 25 quality audit experts and stakeholders from the various sections of stakeholders.
- c) Additional vehicles from other sections of the Ministry of Education

As the amount of money required for undertaking the assessment in all the 66 private HEIs and their satellite campuses was enormous, the Agency had to ask the support of the Ministry of Education.

1.1.6 Notes

The whole practice as later assessed and found to be very useful and the decisions passed by the assessor teams were reliable and objective. The Agency has now planned to incorporate such participation from stakeholder in the assessment of quality assurance of HEIs in its system in the future.

2.0 CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MINIMUM PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

2.1 Council for Higher Education - Lesotho (<http://www.che.ac.ls>)

2.1.1 Purposes achieved by, or objective of, the good practice

The purpose of the good practice was to develop and implement in a creative and innovative way, minimum programme accreditation standards as a credible and authentic quality assurance tool that takes the views of stakeholders on board while being at par with similar documents used in the international world. As a regulatory body founded by the Higher Education Act of 2004 (see the attachments), the mandate of CHE include programme accreditation and institutional audits. CHE is currently in the process of developing its quality assurance systems and tools.

2.1.2 Context

Lesotho has 13 higher education institutions, 8 public and 5 private institutions that service 26000+ students. There is a lot of variation in governance structures, infrastructure, student enrolment and caliber of teaching staff. Apart from the traditional external examiner system and moderation the units responsible for quality assurance do not exist. There is little if any involvement of industry, business and the workplace in the design and review of academic programmes. CHE only started the development of the National Quality Assurance System and tools including minimum programme accreditation standards in July 2011. However the four institutions offering accounting, nursing, technology and management programmes have each had contacts with some external accreditation bodies. Additionally, the challenges of implementation include: lack of capacity to accredit programmes, need for technical support and the high cost of programme accreditation. It is believed that as a new player in the quality assurance terrain, lessons learned from older quality assurance agencies can be creatively adapted in the development and implementation of minimum academic standards for programmes accreditation.

2.1.3 Practice

Initially we wanted the development of Minimum Programmme Accreditation Standards to include the following activities: (a) reading of documents, (b) study visits to regulatory bodies in other countries, (c) consultations with key stakeholders for inputs and buy-in, (d) piloting of the standards prior to official approval and gazetting, and (e) external feedback on the standards. We then proceed creatively by reading relevant documentation concurrently with visits to regulatory bodies including South Africa, Namibia, Ireland and Botswana with a view of getting a novel slant to the process.

After incorporating the views of stakeholders gathered at the consultative workshop, external opinion was obtained from the experts working in the regulatory bodies in Botswana and South Africa resulting in further revisions. Piloting the standards confronted us with a number of ethical challenges, including the status of a programme that would have been subjected to pilot accreditation. Consequently we abandoned the idea of piloting the standards and

subjected them to further scrutiny by the CHE structures. The document has now been approved by Council and is being prepared for legislation. Meanwhile the institutions will be expected to ensure that each academic programme that was not accredited is reviewed and revised so that it is in line with the minimum programme accreditation standards.

Although most countries have avoided over-specification by using only minimum programme accreditation standards, we are developing domain-specific standards. Whereas minimum programme accreditation standards will be a legislated document with a force of law, domain-specific standards are CHE approved documents that will serve as reference materials for programme review teams, those offering or intending to offer programmes and employers. To make the process manageable, we cluster the subjects into groups such as education (all teacher education programmes), science (all science subjects, including mathematics), languages and technology. Furthermore, we are currently building a database of a critical mass of local professionals who will constitute accreditation panels, programme review panels and institutional audit teams. By making full use of local expertise, we intend to reduce the high cost of external quality assurance processes.

2.1.4 Evidence of success, impact or realization of the objectives

Apart from the positive comments from stakeholders and external reviewers, and the fact that the document has now been approved by Council and is now awaiting legislation, major stakeholders including institutions, employers and professional bodies have expressed their appreciation of the appropriateness of the document. Additionally, the institutions have intimated that the plan we now have for implementing programme accreditation for the first time in our country should enable us to get started while ensuring that all programmes are revised accordingly.

2.1.5 Resources required

We have mobilized human and financial resources to implement this good practice. To set up and implement a national quality assurance system, technical assistance will be needed to develop quality assurance tools, edit quality assurance manuals, develop the quality assurance system and oversee the initial implementation. Finally, CHE will need funds to finance its quality assurance processes, including travel and accommodation for non-local accreditation panel members and other personnel.

2.1.6 Notes

We have mobilized human and financial resources to implement this good practice. To set up and implement a national quality assurance system, technical assistance and will be needed to develop quality assurance tools, edit quality assurance manuals, develop the quality assurance system and oversee its initial implementation. Finally, CHE will need funds to finance its quality assurance processes including travel and accommodation for non-local accreditation panel members and other personnel.

2.1.7 Related documents

- a) CHE Lesotho Strategic Plan 2010-2014. pdf (PDF/237.4 KB)
- b) CHE Lesotho Brochure.pdf (PDF/448.7 KB)

3.0 QUALITY ASSURING ADMISSION OF STUDENTS INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

3.1 Tanzania Commission for Universities (<http://www.tcu.go.tz>)

3.1.1 Purposes achieved by, or objective of the good practice

- a) To eliminate multiple students admission and use of forged certificates during the application for admission.
- b) To allow only those who meet the minimum entry requirements to proceed with the admission process therefore eliminate the unqualified before the process goes further, hence save time and resources needed in the process.
- c) To track selected applicants through registration in their institutions, their performance and progression in subsequent years until graduation.
- d) To eliminate multiple loan application and disbursements.

3.1.2 Context

The growing number of higher education institutions in Tanzania and the subsequent expansion of student enrolment coupled with the complexity of selection for admission created a number of challenges during the admission sessions including the following:

- a) Multiple student admission.
- b) Use of forged certificates during the application for admission.
- c) Multiple loans allocation and disbursements.
- d) Higher admission costs as applicants were obliged to physically visit institutions and pay for each individual institution in which admission is sought.
- e) Delayed commencement of academic year due to admission irregularities.
- f) Inability for some universities to meet their admission capacity.

3.1.3 Practice

The Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) is a body corporate established on 1st July 2005 under the Universities Act No. 7 of 2005 (chapter 346 of the Laws of Tanzania). One of the major roles of TCU is to ensure orderly performance of the universities and the maintenance of the set quality standards by providing support to universities in terms of coordinating the admission of students in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the admission of students into higher education institutions in Tanzania. TCU developed an electronic admission system named the Central Admission System (CAS) which was used for the first time during the admissions for the 2010/2011 academic year. With this new system a number of long standing admissions challenges listed above were addressed in a more participatory and consultative way by involving various stakeholders of higher education within and outside Tanzania. Among the registered achievements of this system include the following:

- a) Ability to the process for admission of applicants from both the School and TVET systems
- b) The CAS has addressed all the challenges related to forgery of certificates during the application process because all applications are lodged online and the examination results for each applicant are directly obtained from the National

- Examinations Council of Tanzania (NECTA) and the National Council for Technical Education (NACTE) databases using applicant's index number.
- c) The applicant can apply for admission into more than one institution at once, hence reducing the cost and time spent for the application process. Applications are made electronically through internet or SMS.
 - d) CAS has made it possible to determine the actual admission capacity of each institution. This has resulted into the increased number of admitted applicants than ever before.
 - e) Multiple admissions have become a matter of history as the system allocates the applicant to only one programme out of the many chosen programmes.
 - f) CAS has generated a handful of important data and reports to be used by researchers, policy makers and decision makers.

Some of the major limitations of CAS include the following:

- a) Limited computer skills for most applicants;
- b) Fear of change mindset made some institutions to opt out of the CAS;
- c) Difficulty in verifying authenticity of foreign certificates;
- d) Mismatch of names of applicants between O' level and A level certificates made the system to reject applications.

The details on the Central Admissions System can be obtained on <http://www.tcu.go.tz>.

3.1.4 Evidence of success, impact or realization the objectives

- a) Forgery of certificates by applicants during the application process has been significantly minimized.
- b) Multiple admissions have been minimized to zero degrees.
- c) Ability of the system to capture applications from different categories of applicants from both the School and TVET system.
- d) Ability of the system to capture and process information for applicants on the maximum loan amount expected for each programme to enable them make an informed choice.
- e) Ability of the system to support full admission lifecycle management from admission to graduation
- f) Ability of the system to generate pre-defined and customized reports.

3.1.5 Resources required

- a) Requirement in terms of financial resources may vary depending on the context and scope of investment. But generally investing in this system requires intensive capital
- b) ICT infrastructure (software and hardware).
- c) ICT specialist (in terms of both hardware and software).
- d) Computer programming specialist.
- e) Reliable internet connectivity.

3.1.6 Notes

- a) CAS is also being improved to include the applications for admissions into various programmes for the applicants under the equivalent qualifications entry scheme.

- b) The CAS is worth emulating by other institutions dealing with education everywhere because it saves both time and financial resources while maximizing efficiency and effectiveness. The CAS model could be adopted as the system to be used for admission into all levels of education.
- c) Having generated a useful data in terms of programmes, gender and other variables. CAS is being linked with other sectors for making projections in the national development plans.

3.1.7 Related documents

- a) Admissions Guidebook for 2012-2013.pdf (PDF/5.9 MB)
- b) CAS booklet 2012.pdf (PDF/1.1 MB)

4.0 ENHANCING SYNERGY BETWEEN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

4.1 National Universities Commission – Nigeria (<http://www.nuc.edu.ng>)

Related terms: Relationship between EQAA and Higher Education institutions
EQAA's Requirements for institutional/Program performance
EQAA's Evaluation of the institution and/or Program Collaboration

4.1.1 Purposes achieved by, or objective of, the good practice

The overall aim of the good practice is to guarantee a strong link between internal and external quality assurance in the Nigerian University System by ensuring that academic programmes take –off on a sound footing.

The National Universities Commission (NUC) is therefore able to:

- a) Keep record of programmes in the Nigerian University System with to their dates of establishment and the department and Faculty/College where they are domicile and
- b) Monitor the progress

4.1.2 Context

There are 124 universities in Nigeria comprising 37 federal, 37 State and 50 Private. By implication there is a large number of programmes in the Nigerian University. The best practice is therefore necessary for effectiveness and efficiency as well as continuous quality improvement in the system.

4.1.3 Practice

The process of approval of academic programmes in the Nigerian University System is as follows:

- a) The proposed programme must have satisfied the internal requirements for the establishment of academic programmes in the university, which include the

approval of the Senate.

- b) The University thereafter completes the NUC form for the establishment of new academic programmes.
- c) Completed forms are analyzed and a panel of academic experts is constituted to carry out resource verification by assessing the adequacy of the human and material resources for the programme.
- d) Following satisfactory resource verification, approval is given for the establishment of the programme.

4.1.4 Focal Areas

The areas covered during resource verification are the curriculum, staffing (categories of staffing in relation to the number of students to be enrolled for each year). The physical facilities, equipment and consumables as well as library resources available for staff and students to be enrolled.

4.1.5 Tracking Challenges

The best practice has succeeded in tracking the following challenges:

- a) Non declaration of programmes
- b) Proliferation of nomenclature of programmes, which is now streamlined.
- c) General public/Employers of labour are more aware of approved programmes for informed decisions.

4.1.6 Evidence of success, impact or realization the objectives

- a) Most Universities seek NUC approval before commencing academic programmes
- b) Approval of programmes is tied to accreditation as only approved programmes are eligible for accreditation.
- c) The best practice has facilitated stronger ties between NUC and University entrance examination body (JAMB) and the national post-graduation service scheme (NYSC). This has ensured that students are admitted into programmes that are approved and only graduates from such programmes are mobilized for national service.
- d) The Commission and General Public, through the best practice are aware of approved academic programmes in Nigerian Universities.
- e) Academic programmes in the system are gazette beyond listing in the NUC website.

The best practice has succeeded in tackling the following challenges:

- a) Non declaration of programmes
- b) Proliferation of nomenclature of programmes, which is now streamlined.

- c) General public/Employers of labour are more aware of approved programmes for informed decisions.

4.1.7 Resources required

- a) Trained NUC Staff and Panel of Experts for Resource Verification.
- b) Funding for Site visits for Resource Verification and Report writing.

4.1.8 Notes

Most Africa countries have Quality Assurance agencies similar to NUC and institutions with academic programmes. Consequently, the best practice is adaptable to African countries.

5.0 INNOVATIVE USE OF THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN THE GOVERNANCE OF THE COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

5.1 Commission for Higher Education – Kenya (<http://www.che.or.ke>)

5.1.1 Purposes achieved by, or objective of, the good practice

- a) To ensure that through participation in Committees, staff of the Commission play active part in the realization of the mandate of CHE.
- b) To optimally utilize human resources available to the Commission in the prosecution of its mandate.
- c) To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission.

5.1.2 Context

The Commission was established in 1985 through an Act of parliament Cap 210 B. the Act endorses the Committee System as a mode of governance and management. The innovative application of this provision is the essence of this Good Practice.

It is worth noting that by 1985, private entrepreneurs had began establishing institutions of higher learning whose credentials were unknown to the general public. The need to regulate the mushrooming institutions was foreseen. The Act was put in place to regulate university education with particular focus on private providers. The rules to operationalize the Act were developed in 1989 (Universities Rules, 1989) and have been in use ever since. The same act established the governing organ of the Commission and also prescribed its members and their constituencies.

5.1.3 Practice

The Governing organ of the Commission for Higher Education operates through the committee system. Upon the appointment of Commissioners by the appointing authority the members are placed into committees based on their qualifications and experience. The committees include: The Steering Audit; Institutional Accreditation; Programme Accreditation; Documentation, Information and Qualification committee, Legislation, Compliance and Enforcement, and Accreditation Appeals committee. Each committee works under written terms of reference that are approved by the Board and which encourage innovative implementation of the overall mandate of the Commission.

The Committees receive and consider reports from peers/experts synthesized by the Secretariat for approval, recommendation or rejection. The decisions of the committees are ratified by the full Board at the end of every three months. At all times conflict of interest is avoided.

During the initial assigning of the membership in the area of universities, all Vice Chancellors of Public Universities were appointed as members of the Commission and only two Vice Chancellors represented the Private Universities. This started with only one public university in 1985 to seven in 2007. As the number of public universities increased there was need to reconsider the membership of the Commission. In 2009 the change in membership of the Commission, especially the public universities representation was effected. This has now been changed to only two representatives of vice chancellors each for both private and public universities.

5.1.4 Evidence of success, impact or realization the objectives

Since the implementation of the Committee System, the efficiency of the Commission has increased as indexed by the speedy implementation of the quality assurance activities. Instruments for the implementation of the Act have been developed and approved. These are the processes in use in accreditation and quality assurance. They include: Universities Rules of 1989, Guidelines for Establishing a Private University, Curriculum and Library Standards, Criteria for Recognition of Qualifications, and Human Resource Policy. The Commission (Board) also makes quarterly reports on its performance to government.

5.1.5 Resources required

Resources available to run the governance organ and committees include the organization's own premises within Nairobi of approximately 10.97 acres of land with a two story office complex housing two Board rooms with the requisite facilities and one bungalow house-cum office. A Secretary who is the Chief Executive Officer and serves as secretary to the Board; staff of the Secretariat who service the various Committees. The Commission also has a specific vote in its budget for running the affairs of the Board.

5.1.6 Notes

There is a proposed Universities Bill 2012 that is intended to bring all universities, public and private, under one regulatory framework. In the proposed bill the membership of the Commission is envisaged to exclude representation from institutions that will in one way or another be under the supervision of the Commission. The mandate of the Board will therefore be extended and Kenya will at last have a harmonized legal framework governing university education for purposes of accreditation and quality assurance.

5.1.7 Related documents

Attachments Innovative Use of Committee System in the Governance of the Commission for Higher Education (ZIP/7.4)

6.0 ENHANCING QUALITY OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES TO ASSURE EMPLOYABILITY OF GRADUATES ...

6.1 National Council for Higher Education – Namibia (<http://www.nche.orgna>)

6.1.1 Purposes achieved by, or objective of, the good practice

- a) To enhance the quality of academic programmes in higher education institutions based on reports of graduate tracer studies in order to meet the demands of the labour market.
- b) To ensure that the graduates trained through the improved programs have high employability potentials.

6.1.2 Context

After year of academic offering without the benefit of nationality and internationally benchmarked quality assurance framework. Namibia, under the auspices of the NCHE developed a Programme Accreditation Sub-system within the National Quality Assurance System for Higher Education in Namibia.

In developing the programme accreditation sub-system, it was crucial to conduct an incisive review of the various existing quality assurance practices in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the country and also benchmark internationally, taking into account Namibia's context. The review was of great use in knowing the status-quo which was of great help in determining direction for the new system.

A fundamental element in the initiation of the development process, was getting the stakeholders buy-in. Initially the project was met with mixed feelings, especially by academics who felt that the exercise would increase their workload. However, the NCHE managed to convince academics by reiterating the importance of the practice, implication of employable graduates, recognition status and the advantage of cross border mobility. On a lighter side, the political will was promising.

6.1.3 Practice

The NCHE's programme accreditation system applies to all types of higher education academic programmes offered by both public and private institutions, at all sites and in all modes of delivery and provision. The evidence-based approach also applies to academic programmes offered abroad by Namibian higher education providers. Higher education foreign providers in Namibia are also required to meet the accreditation standards of the NCHE system.

In practice, a few important standard procedures for the practice have to be followed: Self-Evaluation Report (SER). Site Visit and finally the Panel Report (an implementation Plan is also critical when a programme is new). However, regarding short courses higher education institutions are required to establish internal mechanisms for ensuring the quality of these courses.

In order to ensure the link between academic programs and employability of graduates, and to increase the effectiveness of the QA system, NCHE has introduced a system of 'Tracer Study' is also crucial in identifying and understanding areas of improvement within the higher education system or respective institutions. Unemployed graduates are equally important in fulfilling the aims of the Tracer Study by providing possible reasons of being unemployed. These could also be areas needing improvement in the system of higher education.

Not only does the Tracer Study focus on graduates, but on employees as well. Employers have important views derived from the experience of working with graduates, thus able to make

concrete suggestion to HEIs which can strengthen the link between academic programmes and (future) employability. The findings of the tracer studies form the basis for improving the quality of academic programmes in the institutions. The improved programmes as captured in the NCHE minimum academic standards are then subjected to periodic programme accreditation.

The accreditation process runs cyclically for six years. Where a programme is not accredited, it is suspended and will not be offered until accreditation is granted. In order to protect students, the phasing out plan is important. NCHE would ensure that students are systematically phased out with full protection of their rights and privileges. NCHE would also require a detailed report from the affected institution of the phase-out plan and time frame for implementation thereof.

6.1.4 Evidence for success, impact or realization the objectives

Evidence of success of this practice is indicated by the outcomes of the pilot exercise. The pilot exercise was done using NCHE's newly developed system with its criteria. From the results, one can proudly say that the pilot went as planned and has met the expectations. For instance, academic programmes have improved in quality and there are higher expectations that graduates from these programmes will be job creators rather than job seekers. The pilot was also useful in highlighting the challenges and loopholes within the system. For the specific academics who were involved, appreciation of the system emerged, despite initial mixed feelings toward the sub-system.

6.1.5 Resources required

a) Time

The exercise is quite time consuming, especially considering the procedures involved. This also means a lot of planning regarding documentation and organizing a review panel. From the pilot exercise, it would take 9 months for a single programme.

b) Finance

It is a costly exercise, especially for the agency (NCHE). The baseline from the pilot exercise was about N\$ 150, 000 00/US\$ 21,428.00. There is need for proper financial planning.

c) Human capacity/technical expertise

It is evident that technical expertise is a requirement for this practice in order to achieve credibility on the sub-system, especially from HEIs. Currently this is the greatest challenge facing the NCHE.

6.1.6 Notes

The practice faces challenges, such as resources, both in terms of human capacity as well as finance. The challenge of human capacity is mainly due to the newness of the system in the country. There are few QA experts in Namibia, who are by the way also just emerging. To address these challenges, NCHE solicits funds (from organizations such as ADB) to employ fulltime QA experts from everywhere in Africa. On the finance challenge, the NCHE has been successfully acquiring extra funds from the government specifically for QA activities.

The major challenge regarding the 'Tracer Study' has been the inadequate understanding of it amongst the graduates and/or the misconception thereof. This has in the end affected the sample of the respondents in a negative way. The response was so poor that the study could

not be generalized but only used as an indicative study. Education campaigns are on to have society educated on tracer studies and their importance. The aim is to yield desired results in future.

Lessons learnt from developing the system:

- a) Piloting the system prior to actual implementation;
- b) Wide consultation of stakeholders;
- c) Gaining political will and support; and
- d) Documenting the system

6.1.7 Related documents

- a) National Quality Assurance System for Higher Education in Namibia (PDF/536.4 KB)
- b) Programme Accreditation Manual (PDF/759.3 KB)

7.0 INNOVATIVE METHODOLOGY FOR ACCREDITATION OF ACADEMIC/PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMMES

7.1 National Council for Higher Education, Uganda (<http://www.unche.or.ug>)

7.1.1 Purposes achieved by, or objective of, the good practice

- a) To meet the mandate of Government of the Republic of Uganda which requires that programmes of all higher education institutions in the country must be accredited by the National Council for Higher Education.
- b) Assure parents, stakeholders and potential employers that graduates of Ugandan institutions of higher learning deliver quality education to graduates.
- c) Certify to international community that programmes done at Ugandan institutions of higher learning are adequately prepared for employment and for further studies.
- d) Satisfy the stakeholders that the professional/academic programmes done at Uganda's universities and other tertiary institutions are relevant to the social economic and cultural needs of the society.

7.1.2 Context

In 2006, NCHE was mandated by law to quality assure programmes in Ugandan higher education institutions through accreditation. NCHE faced initial resistance in implementing the mandate. Universities with a long tradition (e.g. Makerere) were at first hesitant to submit their programmes for accreditation. But they later gave in to the law. NCHE did not originally have adequate and highly qualified staff to implement the Government requirement. Since 2006, NCHE has recruited a larger number of qualified staff from a wider selection of academic disciplines to ensure success in the implementation of the mandate.

7.1.3 Practice

After learning lessons from practices of quality assurance agencies with longer history of accreditation, NCHE proceeded in an innovative way in executing the assessment of academic/professional programmes. The following broad area were scrutinized, namely, academic

content, staffing, physical facilities, library facilities and funding of the programme.

1. Academic content

- a) The philosophy and objectives of the programme
- b) The curriculum content of the programmes with emphasis on expected outcomes
- c) Programme organization
- d) The admission requirements into the programme
- e) Academic regulation governing the programme – including duration
- f) Course evaluation – examination and continuous assessments
- g) Standards of students practical/project work
- h) External examination system

2. On staffing

- a) Quality of academic staff
- b) Quality of Administrative and support staff
- c) Staff mix by ranks
- d) Staff development Programme and activities

3. Physical Facilities

- a) Laboratories/Studio/Clinics/Farm/equipment
- b) Classrooms – equipment and facilities, ICT
- c) Office accommodation
- d) Safety of the environment

4. Library facilities

- a) Seating capacity relative to student population
- b) Journals and books
- c) ICT installation

5. Sources of funds for the programmes and for the institution

In implementation of this practice, programmes in a given specialization are perused by experts in the field and a decision is made on whether the programme needs to be improved or whether it qualifies on the first shot. Any amendments may be recommended by the relevant committee of experts which must be made before the programme could be recommended for accreditation by the full Council of NCHC. Accredited programmes remain valid for five years after which they must be re-submitted.

The decision to accredit an academic programme or an institution lies with the National Council for Higher Education which then informs the line Ministry (Ministry of Education and Sports) for noting only.

7.1.4 Evidence of success, impact or realization the objectives

The Good Practice is enormously successful. Evidence of success include:

- a) The programmes are acclaimed by international experts to be of world standard.
- b) The process is adjudged to be innovative and transparent by the experts and endorsed by the higher education institutions and other stakeholders.
- c) The Uganda Government strongly supports activities of NCHE with special reference to accreditation of programmes to which it has provided additional funding.
- d) Students demand from universities to show evidence that courses they are about to pursue enjoy the support of the National Council. NCHE publishes the list of accredited courses in the print media at regular intervals.

7.1.5 Resources required

- a) Human resource requirements include subject experts and quality assurance practitioners
- b) Funding requirements are for cost of programme review and implementation of accreditation.

8.0 MENTORING THROUGH AFFILIATION TO BOOST QUALITY IN PRIVATE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

8.1 National Accreditation Board, Ghana (<http://www.nab.gov.gh>)

8.1.1 Purpose achieved by, or objective of, the good practice

- a) Ensure that newly established tertiary educational institutions mature with Quality culture imparted by their mentoring institutions.
- b) Adequately prepare newly established tertiary educational institutions for smooth grant of Presidential Charter after stipulate 10-year minimum period of operation for charter consideration.
- c) Facilitate the establishment of functional structures and systems within new institutions for avoidance of experimentation with critical issues relating to quality assurance.

8.1.2 Context

Private sector participation in tertiary education delivery is on the ascendancy. Most of the initiators of such institutions are businessmen who have limited knowledge of how tertiary educational institutions operate. With their profit motives, they would like to maximize profit by compromising on quality by investing in low cost inputs for higher gains expectations. The inputs may include academic and non-academic staff physical facilities structures and systems including governance. Encouraging partnership with order chartered institution helps introduce the social service perspective of tertiary education with its attendant quality assurance. Appropriate legal instruments exist for the National Accreditation Board (NAB) of Ghana to enforce this.

8.1.3 Practice

Private participation in tertiary education service delivery is on the increase. The primary goal of most, if not all private enterprises is to make profit ultimately. To ensure that the profit motive of businessman/women and institutions for educational service delivery does not compromise quality, nations and their quality assurance agencies may have to go a step further beyond the minimum standards usually looked for in accreditation exercise to put in evolutionary measures that support new tertiary institutions to grow qualitatively. One of such quality measures is the concept of affiliation Quality assurance is best achieved when it is imbedded as a culture by the practicing institution rather than perceived as an imposition.

When quality is regularly enforced directly by a quality assurance agency after accreditation the agency is usually wrongfully perceived as an enemy. The new institution with its profit-making mindset for a good balance with quality usually comes much faster with regular gentle pressure from like-institution through mentorship in Affiliation relationship.

In a typical affiliation arrangement the Mentored Institution would usually be running similar or related if not same programmes like the Mentoring Institution. Where the Mentored Institution intends to mount any programme unrelated to those operated by the Mentoring Institution, it is required to go into additional Affiliation agreement with another Mentoring Institution with the capacity to supervise the new programme (multiple Affiliation). The Mentoring institution may also go into Multiple Affiliation with other Mentored Institutions and would usually have a Unit Section or Department in charge of the management of all its Affiliation agreements.

The mentoring institution designs separate annual action plans to supervise each programme in the mentored institution as captured in the affiliation agreement. The programme would among others, include moderation of examination questions review the work of external examiners involvement in the conduct of examinations, checks on quality and quantity of staffing for quality teaching and learning checks on student and staff workload, equipment etc. It finally reviews marked scripts against grades on the final results sheets and approves of grading for certification of graduates by the mentoring institution. The mentoring institution also vets new programme accreditation applications of the mentored institution before they are presented for accreditation consideration by NAB. The mentored institution remains under mentorship for a minimum of ten (10) years before it can apply for autonomy under a presidential Charter. Following the application for a charter, NAB does a full audit of the institution covering governance, programmes operations, quality assurance etc. and makes appropriate recommendations to the President for the grant of charter or otherwise.

8.1.4 Evidence of success, impact or realization the objectives

The governance structure and systems, personnel and general operations of new institutions have recorded significant improvements during re-accreditation. The rate of improvement of such institutions have been commendable and most, if not all, have attributed these achievements to support derived from their Mentoring Institutions. The Mentoring Institutions themselves, have, in most instances, stepped in to reprimand their Mentoring Institutions for not complying with some quality assurance tenets which might go a long way to tarnish the image of the Mentoring Institutions through the certificates they award to graduates of their Mentored Institutions.

8.1.5 Resources required

The major resource requirements are financial, material and human According to NAB guidelines on affiliation, the Mentored Institution must be operating a similar programme and must have,

at least, a senior lecture to oversee the programme in the Mentored Institution. NAB analyses the health of all Affiliation relationships by the application of an appropriate tool (Affiliation Barometer) and make interventions when necessary. Similarly, the Mentoring institution may have to establish a Unit to manage its Affiliation agreements. The Mentored Institution must pay the Affiliation charges to the Mentoring Institution. All these would come with resource implications including office space, equipment, staffing and finance. These however, can be contained in existing set ups as additional functions without major investment implications.

8.1.6 Notes

The concept of affiliation in the tertiary educational sector has proven to be a very important practice for quality assurance in the face of increasing private participation in tertiary education service delivery. Not only has it transformed new institutions from their profit orientation to keeping in balance with quality assurance, but it has impacted positively on the efficiency of NAB, the quality assurance agency. By the involvement of older chartered institutions in the supervision of new ones, the monitoring load on NAB is significantly reduced making it possible for NAB to maintain relatively fewer numbers of staff than it would have otherwise used for good results.

8.1.7 Related documents

- a) Affiliation Barometer – Mentored Institutions November 2011.pdf (PDF/42.5 KB)
- b) Affiliation Barometer – Mentored Institutions November 2011.pdf (PDF/47.0 KB)
- c) NAB Affiliation Guidelines November 2011.pdf (PDF/83.3 KB)

9.0 INPUT-PROCESS-OUTPUT COMPREHENSIVE ACADEMIC AUDIT

9.1 National Accreditation Board, Ghana (<http://www.nab.gov.gh>)

9.1.1 Purposes achieved by, or objective of, the good practice

The objective of the National Accreditation Board's academic Audit exercise is to ensure that:

- a) Quality assurance begins from the point of entry to completion and that due diligence prevails in deciding the academic credentials of graduates of an accredited tertiary institution in Ghana.
- b) Accredited tertiary educational institutions comply with the tenets of accreditation on which their applications were considered.

9.1.2 Context

The education system in Ghana emphasizes holistic education for all graduates with the aim of preparing them adequately to appreciate and address the emerging socio-economic, environmental and political challenges confronting mankind at the end of their training. The broad-based education approach seeks to orient the Ghanaian graduate to better situate the practice his/her expertise in the broader developmental context for balanced development.

To this end national minimum standards have been set for entry into tertiary educational institutions. The standards elicit the strength of the prospective student in the areas of

science, social studies, mathematics, English language and other three subjects which usually reflect the candidate's interest areas for further studies. Each prospective student is to obtain, at least a credit pass in each of these subjects in the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) before the person is deemed qualified to enter into a tertiary institution.

Most often than not, recognized tertiary institutions particularly, the private ones overlook these national conditions in their quest to populate their students numbers to meet their budgets.

The Academic Audits, unlike the more general institutions audits conducted by NAB and other quality assurance Agencies (QAA), specifically targets the meeting of the national standards for admissions and other academic-specific issues such as the conduct of examinations checking of marked scripts against results sheets, grading systems conduct of examinations etc which directly impact on the quality of products of these institutions and the determination of their final credentials. A spot check on how institutions are being governed as a reflection on the quality of academic work is also done during the exercise.

9.1.3 Practice

The Comprehensive-Academic Audit exercise is usually conducted, at least once from the date of grant of accreditation to an institution to the date of expiry of same. It is conducted by NAB experts selected from academia and industry who are given special training to gather the right information during the exercise and advise the Board appropriately by the recommendations they make in their reports.

The audits are guided by specific Terms of Reference (TOR) and a reporting format designed for the purpose. At least three of these experts are selected from the pool to embark on each visit Depending on the size of the institution and the volume of work involved the number of experts may be increased or, the number of days for the assignment extended.

Each member of the team is made to sign a "Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Form" to declare any interest they may have in the target institution or otherwise members with any form of interest in the institution are replaced.

The team is accompanied by a staff of the Board who does all the communication with both the institution and the auditors prior to the visit and makes all the logistical arrangements for the exercise. The staff also ensures that report from the audit is received in good time from the auditors as stipulated in the TOR and also ensures that the report is properly processed for consideration by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) of the Board which would make recommendations on each audit report for subsequent consideration by the full Board.

The institution is usually given a short notice (maximum 3 days) to reduce the possibility of institutions altering record information before the visit. Guided by a checklist of documents to be made available and the reporting format, the Team requests and scrutinizes relevant documents and ask appropriate questions to confirm their observations. The accompanying staff also prepares a situational report parallel to the experts report to inform the Board on the situation on the ground at the time of the visit The team led by its chairman is required to produce its report within two weeks.

The report without the recommendations to the Board is sent to the institution to confirm the findings of the Team or otherwise before it is tabled for discussion by the QAC together with the institution's comments. The Board issues directives to audit institutions based on the recommendations of QAC. The affected institution is expected to act on the directives and report to the Board within a given period. QAC may conduct a follow-up Quality Monitoring visit to assess the extent of compliance with the directives by the institution and advise the

Board accordingly. Where the Board is of the view that a particular affected institution is being recalcitrant, it may issue sanctions of varying magnitude including withdrawal of accreditation.

The major constraints have been:

- a) Identifying suitable time for the exercise convenient for the experts
- b) Monitoring/enforcing compliance with Board directives
- c) The large numbers of institutions concerned
- d) Late submission of experts reports sometimes
- e) Inadequate responses from institutions (suspected to be deliberately calculated to frustrate the process), and
- f) The cost implication for the institution involved.

9.1.4 Evidence of success, impact or realization the objectives

Through the academic audit exercises, institutions have strengthened their quality assurance systems including the following:-

- a) Ensuring that the national minimum entry requirements are followed
- b) Borrowed systems from elsewhere are subjected to appropriate checks before they are applied.
- c) Strengthening of institutions' governance systems (e.g.having a good balance of members on the governing council, available members of council, key stakeholder representation on the council, proper examinations results complain systems etc)
- d) Proper conduct of examinations
- e) Withdrawal of students with defective entry requirements
- f) Desisting from issuing graduation certificates when it is not qualified to do so.
- g) Stopping unqualified students from graduating etc.

9.1.5 Resources Required

Quite a significant human resource capacity is needed in this exercise. Not so much of numbers but staff with the requisite Monitoring and Evaluation expertise to follow through to the end on each issue of concern with a particular institution. A great deal of energy, mental alertness and man hours is needed in this exercise as institutions find intelligent means to cover-up and to frustrate the process. To properly manage the process therefore, there might be the need for the establishment of a unit within the Quality assurance Agency to keep track of the dynamics, manage the inherent conflict issues through tactful communication and effective records keeping. Logistics available and adequate to get the experts to deliver.

9.1.6 Notes

The National Accreditation Board (NAB) |Ghana, seeks to support institutions to develop functional internal Quality Assurance Units (QAU) to facilitate the building of quality culture which would increasingly make the Academic Audit work of the Board unnecessary.

9.1.7 Related documents

- a) NAB_Ghana_Panel Declareation Conflict of Interest.pdf (PDF/22.0 KB)
- b) NAB_Ghana_Academic Audit Reporing Format.pdf (PDF/86.8 KB)
- c) NAB_Guidelines for Academic Audit.pdf (PDF/55.8 KB)
- d) NAB_Ghana_Checklist for Government and Administraitont.pdf (PDF/42.7 KB)

10.0 INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION THROUGH EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF UNIVERSITIES FOR ENHANCED QUALITY

10.1 Commission for Higher Education Kenya (<http://www.che.or.ke>)

10.1.1 Purposes achieved by, or objective of, the good practice

- a) To entrench a culture of quality before establishment/licensing of prospective universities.
- b) To ensure continuous promotion of quality in approved universities.
- c) To catalyse the rise of Kenyan universities on global university league tables as a consequence of institutional audits.

10.1.2 Context

Standards for physical facilities have been contextualized to conform to the requirement of Government's building code, public health and safety, and environmental health and management. Institutions are required to have at least 50 acres of land. This was intended to facilitate rural development, as universities have been known to spur economic growth in areas where they have been established. The requirement has been a challenge to new entrepreneurs wishing to establish universities in urban areas over the years, due to rising costs of land acquisition and annual rates paid thereafter. Yet urban areas readily provide the much needed basic amenities. In addition to this there are curriculum standards for the development of academic programmes and guidelines for university libraries and governance structures and tools.

10.1.3 Practice

For licensing, institutions have to meet predetermined criteria in terms of physical facilities, governancem academic programmes, academic orientation and institutional philosophy. To meet these criteria, the institution has to submit a proposal to the Commission and subsequently the institutional resources are verified on the ground against the criteria. Institutions are licensed (accredited) to operate when they meet the criteria. After licensing, there are institutional audits every three to five years to ensure that the institution maintains and advances the quality of education it offers. The institution is assessed in terms of its performance in relation to its objective, effectiveness of its governance organs, achievement of development plans, student enrollment and staffing. The re-audit combines the standard based and the fitness for purpose approach in determining the status of the institution.

Institutional accreditation has various constraints. Although accreditation is time bound, sometimes institutions take longer to comply with requirements of the Commission. In

other instances institutions try to use political pressure to get accredited. However due to the independence of the Commission, they still have to comply. Some institutions still find it a challenge to meet the minimum standards as their intention is to be allowed to start first and be accredited later.

10.1.4 Evidence of success, impact or realization the objectives

All universities that are subjected to the regime of institutional accreditation have taken off on a good quality note. Culture of quality is ingrained in their operations. Since its inception, the Commission has been able to accredit twenty five (25) private universities and this has increased access to quality university education. Out of these seven have been re-audited and noted to have enhanced the quality of education they offer.

Kenya universities have been rising steadily on the league table of global ranking of universities, accounted for in part by the effect of institutional accreditation.

Website of some of the accredited institutions are given herein as:

<http://www.anu.ac.ke>, <http://ueab.ac.ke>, <http://daystart.ac.ke>, <http://www.scott.ac.ke>, <http://www.usiu.ac.ke>, <http://www.stpaulslimuru.ac.ke>, <http://pacuniversity.ac.ke>, <http://www.kheu.ac.ke>, <http://africainternational.edu>, <http://www.cuea.edu>, <http://www.anu.ac.ke>, <http://www.strathmore.edu>, <http://www.kemu.ac.ke>, <http://www.kabarak.ac.ke>, <http://www.mku.ac.ke>, <http://www.kwust.ac.ke>, <http://www.aku.edu>, <http://www.greetsauniversity.ac.ke>, <http://www.gluk.ac.ke>, <http://www.kca.ac.ke>, <http://www.puea.ac.ke>, <http://www.aua.ac.ke>, <http://www.iu.ac.ke>, <http://www.eastafricauniversity.net>, <http://www.gencouniversity.net>, <http://www.mua.ac.ke>

10.1.5 Resources required

In implementing the institutional accreditation process, the Commission uses both staff at the secretariat and experts from diverse fields. At the secretariat, the Commission has three staff members dealing with physical resources, five staff members in charge of programme accreditation and two staff members who carry out the evaluation of the library resource and services of the institutions. The Commission also has a database of experts for the review of academic programmes, physical and library resources. The financial implication of this process includes expert fees for the resource persons and other operational costs, such as accommodation and travel costs. The total budget is granted by the Kenya Government on an annual basis, against a budget drawn by the Commission at the beginning of every calendar year for the subsequent financial year.

10.1.6 Notes

Over the years institutional accreditation has been enriched by other processes. These include:

- a) Dual accreditation of institutions by the Commission and other accrediting bodies such as professional bodies. These include: the Medical and Dentistry Board, the Nursing Council of Kenya and the Pharmacy and Poisons Board;
- b) ISO certification of the Commission; and
- c) Audited annual performance contract with the Government

10.1.7 Related documents

- a) CHE ISO Certification.pdf (PDF/137.8 KB)
- b) List of Accredited Private Universities.pdf (PDF/60.5 KB)
- c) List of Re-inspected Chartered Private Universities.pdf (PDF/42.4 KB)

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