

Chapter 15

Factors Influencing Quality Assurance and Accreditation Systems in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of the quality assurance and accreditation processes in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are naturally dependent on human and non-human factors. This means that the human role in the whole process is quite essential. The workforce is the concerned side to implement, review the implementation, correct the mistakes, document procedures, and defend the quality systems being followed. The HEI internal stakeholders are major factors in deciding whether the institution can successfully go about its quality assurance activities or not. The review of the literature intensifies the necessity to expand upon the main elements to influence higher education quality assurance activities and accreditation. This chapter discusses in detail the major factors to influence quality assurance practices and HEIs' accreditation processes. They include the following: quality assurance awareness, investment priorities, capacity and capability, perception of stakeholders, the recruitment – roles of quality managers, and gaming the quality assurance and accreditation systems.

1. INTRODUCTION

Where higher education is nowadays globalized, to raise issues relating to student mobility, standardization, quality, employability, recognition, to name but a few, quality assurance turns out to be the tool to ensure the authenticity of the institution and the high-quality service being provided to an ever-changing category of students. Undeniably, it “incurs numerous facets of the profession [which] are inclusive of pedagogical approaches, assessment methodologies, and institutional governance structures.” (Saravanan

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et al., 2024, p. 5899) Where the proper implementation of quality assurance mechanisms augments the credibility of the institution, to improve its rank and thus prestige, any inadequate practice may possibly yield deterioration in rank and thus prestige (Obi et al., 2024). With this considered, governments across the world seem to have directed considerable investment in quality assurance for higher education. Tremendous changes have happened over the last thirty years with the internal and external needs to form the major drivers. To address notions of accountability, academic freedom, outcomes for community service, national and international mobility, visibility, ranking, the need to adhere to universally common quality conventions ...etc., governments across the globe seemed to have set the required reforms and policies together with the necessary agencies to cater for the cause of education (Pushpakumara et al., 2023).

Despite the continuous efforts, there are still diverse universally common challenges that influence the successful implementation of quality assurance mechanisms in HEIs. To this, the institution's optimal and effective performance would undoubtedly need redefining the obstacles being encountered and discussing the influential factors towards a successful implementation of quality mechanisms. In this context, the current chapter proposes to discuss the major elements quality policy makers and practitioners will need to consider in dealing with implementation mechanisms in higher education. The points include, but definitely are not limited to, quality culture awareness, top-level management investments' priorities, capacity and capability to cope with HEIs, stakeholders' perceptions, the way quality managers are recruited and their roles with their institutions, and gaming quality assurance and accreditation systems.

2. FACTORS INFLUENCING QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION SYSTEMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1 Quality Culture Awareness

According to Nguyen et al., 2021, the notion of quality culture relates directly to the employees' cultures within an organization that participate in giving shape to the management quality. The set of human values, beliefs, habits, behaviors, understandings, and backgrounds tend to compose altogether the general culture of an organization. When strictly adhered to, such homogeneous, and sometimes heterogenous, norms would literally engage employees in the input-process-output chain of practices where products are ultimately reflective of the dominating concept of quality culture. For instance, if all employees abide by the values of professionalism, integrity, accountability, authenticity ...etc., the organization's performance certainly meets the expectations of the customers and all stakeholders in general. Nowadays, this concept has become relevant to almost all types of organizations including HEIs where the culture of excellence plays a major role in promoting quality (Wiśniewska and Grudowski, 2024). According to Hildesheim and Sonntag (2020, p. 892), "Quality culture refers to an organizational culture, which emphasizes the importance of continuous quality improvement, shared attitudes, and commitment towards quality." Where the cultural / psychological element is all about the abstract aspect of the concept, beliefs and values, the structural / managerial element is all about the concrete one, the efforts being made at the individual level to foster the quality culture and enhance quality practices. When reasonably balanced in practice, both elements create the solid ground for trust and development. As a matter of fact, the shared beliefs and values are translated into the high standard performance of individuals on the one hand and reflected in the high-quality service or product on the other. The considerable body of literature related to the concept emphasizes the fact that it is intertwined with other

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