# Assessment of Implementation of Inter-University Council For East Africa`s quality assurance principles and guidelines at the University of Nairobi

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# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background to the Study

Education is the most effective means that society possesses for confronting the challenges of the present and future. It is considered a prerequisite for sustainable development in any country, developed or developing (Assefa, 2002). UNESCO (2012) points out that education is the corner stone of social and economic development. As Agenda four (4) of the Sustainable Development Goals(SDGS 2030) which is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all ,education is an essential foundation for development in modern technology and a vital instrument in the modern economy. It is also a powerful means to preserve cultural values and heritages, to maintain and improve cohesion.

However, education cannot play this role unless it is of high quality. Kedir (2008) reinforced the idea that quality aspect is necessary to realize full benefits of occurring from education and in education.

Globalization has necessitated many international organizations to recruit employees from different parts (corners) of the world while increasing competition at the same time. The implication being, that developing countries including Kenya must provide quality education for its citizens to become competitive, productive and consistent with the current market dynamism. Quality education is equally essential for producing graduates who are job creators rather than job seekers and enhances creativity. Thus, a vital role in solving the problem of unemployment by enhancing entrepreneurial skills, enabling graduates to be more competent in the local, regional, continental and global market thus filling the human resource gap.

In The East African Community (EAC) common market protocol, standardised higher education is critical in the attainment of socioeconomic and regional integration development, culminating to the EAC constituting and mandating the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA) to coordinating the networking and standardisation of higher learning institutions in the region.

In order to achieve this goal, IUCEA established principles, guidelines, procedures and standards including benchmarks for academic programs, focusing on capacity building through providing appropriate training on the implementation of the quality assurance system to staff in universities and national commissions and councils for higher education in the Partner States. (IUCEA/DAAD, 2010).

The initiative is also linked to the establishment of a regional qualifications framework, whose development is currently in progress. The framework will articulate harmonization of education and training systems, and qualifications thereby clearly indicating the program learning outcomes, the different qualification levels, credit system and recognition of prior learning, among others hence, it is anticipated that the framework will easily facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications across the region as envisioned in the EAC Common Market Protocol. (IUCEA/DAAD, 2010).

On a broad perspective, these principles and guidelines encompass governance and management, institutionalization of quality assurance structures, policy and procedures for quality assurance, learning environmen, student support services, students with special needs, program development, implementation and review, criteria for admission of students, granting of qualifications awards, quality of staff, management of information, and research and innovation. (IUCEA, 2014)

This study seeks to assess the implementation of these quality assurance principles and guidelines of Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA) at the University of Nairobi with specific focus on Governance and Management of the University and academic staff.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

There has been a rapid expansion of university education in East Africa in the last decade in the region and particularly in Kenya birthing the concern for Quality of content. According to (Kigondu R & Marwa, 2017), The higher education sector in Kenya has in the recent past expanded greatly both in terms of the number of institutions and in student enrolments. Enrolments to Public universities rose by 41 per cent from 195,428 students in 2012 to 276,349 by end of 2013 (Nganga 2014). The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) (2015) records that the combined student enrolment in public universities and private accredited universities in Kenya in the academic years 2009/2010–2014/2015 grew from 142,789 to 446,183 representing a massive increase of 213 per cent. The number of higher education institutions in Kenya has also expanded from one institution, the University of Nairobi (UON) in the year 1970 (Sifuna, 2010) to seventy four (74) universities comprising 31 public and 6 constituent public universities,18 private chartered ,5 private constituent colleges and 14 Institutions with letters of interim Authority in 2017.(CUE 2017). The increased student enrolment has, however, not been proportional to the required number of qualified lecturers, trained university Administrators, teaching and adequate learning facilities among others (Assefa, 2002).

One of the major challenges in the Education sector in this age of globalization is bringing transparency, comparability and compatibility in the numerous competitive programs in higher education sector. In the East African Community`s common market protocol, Education Science and Technology is emphasized as a vehicle steering Free Movement of Labor and Persons and a means of promoting culture as a driver to stronger Integration, contributing to attainment of the Communities common objective of sustainable development. This can only be achieved through development and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms aimed at harmonizing higher education system across the region.

This study is therefore premised on two key issues; to establish if the University of Nairobi is adhering to the IUCEA guidelines, specifically in terms of quality of academic staff and general governance and management of the University. It is against this background that the study embarked on assessing the implementation of inter-university council for East Africa quality assurance principles and guidelines at the University of Nairobi.

***1.3 Justification of the study***

Higher education in East Africa is characterized by challenges of expansion space, resource availability, competition and accountability. As a result of these challenges, the East African Community member states have opted to adopt policies that are favourable to mass higher education admissions as a means of redressing past imbalances and providing quality human resource to enhance economic development.

The University of Nairobi is part of the global market, which is characterized by rapid information change, intense information flows and increasing competition through reduction of barriers to trade and exchanges, culminating to commercial driven imperative of market forces thus strategies for resource utilization that are embedded in conventional business models.

The driving factors among others, being inadequate funding especially for research and development, quality and relevance, inadequate use of IT, lack of a uniform accreditation system, inadequate management capacity and the general management of the Institution and academic staff.

## *1.4 Conceptual Framework*

**Fig.1.0: A conceptual framework is a figure that shows the relationship between study variables (Liang & Mackey, (2011b).**

**Source: Author (2018)**

IUCEA Quality Assurance Guidelines

**Adherence to IUCEA QA guidelines**

* Quality Governance & Management
* Quality of academic staff

**Implementation**

Dependent variables

Independent Variables

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From fig.1 above, it is conceptualised that for the purpose of this study, quality governance and management and quality of academic staff are great indicators to the implementation of the IUCEA quality assurance guidelines.

# Theoretical & Literature Review

## 2.0 Theoretical Framework

The study was grounded on the General System Theory (GST) originally developed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, later on adapted by Robert Owens (1981) in education institutions. Ludwig sees General System Theory as holistic system in organizational management. According to this theory, a system is a collection of parts unified to accomplish an overall goal. If one part of the system is removed, the nature of the system is changed as well. For example, a pile of sand is not a system. If one removes a sand particle, you have still got a pile of sand. However, a functioning car is a system. Remove the carburettor and you have no longer got a working car.

A system can therefore be looked at as having inputs, processes, outputs and share feedback among each of the three aspects of the systems. In an organization input would include resources such as raw materials, finances, technologies and human resources. These inputs go through a process where they are planned, organized, motivated and controlled, ultimately to meet the organizational goals. Outputs to society according to Robert Owens (1981) would be individuals who are more able to serve themselves and society because of improved: intellectual and manual skills, power of reason analysis, values, attitudes and motivation, creativity and inventiveness, communication skills, cultural appreciation, understanding of the world and sense of social responsibility. Feedback would be information from the consumers of systems output. Feedback also comes from the larger environment of the organization which includes influences from government, society, economics and technologies .This overall system framework applies to any system including sub-systems (departments and programmes) in the overall organization.

In this context, the theory fits into this research because University of Nairobi is both a system and social organization with inputs such as Proper Governance in sections like finance, staff and student personnel, physical and material resources. Processes include such things as curriculum and instruction and administration processes. Outputs include knowledge, skills or competences acquired by the students, quality research findings and consultancy and other services rendered to the community. The University receives feedback from the EAC, National government, society, economics and technologies.

**2.1 Empirical review**

Quality assurance has been perceived differently by different scholars. Historically, the notion of QA in higher education is largely dominated by the formal tradition of accreditation in Europe and United States: a system that largely staved off close government oversight of colleges and universities by those institutions’ adherence to carefully crafted processes of self-study and peer evaluation (Jones & Jones, 2011; and Kumar et al., 2013).

The (ISO 90000) defines Quality Assurance a part of quality management focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled. Other sources define QA as “the planned and systematic activities implemented within the quality system that can be demonstrated to provide confidence that a product or service will fulfil requirements for quality”

From these observations, there is a need to define QA in higher education according to its importance in terms of economic and social advancement. The National Council for Higher Education of Uganda defines QA as: “…the mechanism put in place to guarantee that the education is ‘fit for purpose,’ i.e., is good. Every higher education must have appropriate and effective internal structures and mechanisms for monitoring its quality control procedures to ensure QA…” The Commission for University Education of Kenya defines QA as: “…the means by which an institution can guarantee 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…”

In a nutshell, manifestation of adequate definitions of QA depends highly on the institutions’ mission, vision and goal to be achieved as examples, to guarantee standards and maintain quality by having appropriate internal structures and procedures for monitoring quality of education offered. Thus, the process of establishing stakeholders’ confidence that provision (i.e. input, process and outcomes) fulfils expectations or measures up to threshold minimum requirements is what constitutes QA systems, procedures and practices (Mourkani and Shohoodi, 2013). For instance, the growing influence of international ranking systems, are placing pressure on accreditation agencies to move beyond their traditional roles in quality assurance and accreditation and to respond to growing demand for information accessible to the general public, and improved QA practices.

***2.10 Perspective of Quality Assurance in Higher Education***

The ripple effect nature of globalization has brought about international issues in all sectors including in the education sector. Higher education has evolved greatly in the recent years with global changes prompting an expansion in terms of infrastructure of the institutions changes in curriculum and teaching methods, embracing diversities as well as student enrolment. These diversifications in the provision of higher education have created a need to relook at the quality of education being offered and if of international standards.

In June 1999, The European Union (EU) through the European Higher Education Area came up with the Bologna Declaration, a Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education which was signed by 29 ministers; to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher-education qualifications. One of the objectives of the declaration was “promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies.” (Bologna Declaration, 1999)

Globalization, has led to growth in internationalization creating a need for QA strategies to be developed to ensure comparability of degrees and certificates, transferability of educational achievements and international competitiveness of both institutions and graduates of higher education institutions.

“Internationalization of higher education has created the need for countries and regions to demonstrate and assure the quality and standards of their higher education systems and programs.” (IUCEA, 2014) . One of the major global reforms in internationalization of quality assurance in higher education has been experienced through the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), which supports individual external quality assurance agencies to improve their performance on their mandates and encourages interaction between agencies for mutual learning, increased effectiveness and continual improvement, leading to mutual trust, which is necessary for mutual recognition. It is important to note that most QA agencies are national or sub-national, with no authority to operate outside those national borders also that HEIs are increasingly operating across borders, and their students and graduates are moving across borders as well (Woodhouse, 2015).

## 2.2 Quality Assurance guidelines of IUCEA

The quality assurance guidelines of IUCEA were formulated in 2003 with the aim of enhancing quality education both in private and public higher institutions in East Africa and one of the mandates to maintain high and comparable academic standards in higher education regionally and internationally, with special emphasis on the promotion of Quality Assurance (QA), Quality Management, and maintenance of comparable international academic standards in the East African universities. In that regard, IUCEA aspires to operate within the expectations to deliver services that enhance and harness QA in higher education in the region. (IUCEA, 2013) This will in the long run enhance Cooperation in Education which will further ease free movement of labour and markets.

For the purposes of this study, we will look into the Governance and management of the University and the quality of academic staff.

### 2.2.1 The Quality of Academic Staff

Higher education institutions should provide opportunities and incentives for staff to develop their knowledge and skills in teaching diverse group of students and their understanding of learning process. For the quality of teaching and learning, improving academic staff should actively extend their knowledge and skills not only in their discipline of profession but also in their teaching ability (Abebe, 2006). This indicated that they needed to acquire, and develop knowledge and understanding of a wide range teaching and assessment methods and of the principles, which underline student learning, pedagogical training programs, and help teaching staff to develop skills, techniques and methodologies that improve the current educational practice and introduce new ways of teaching, in view of quality enhancement in students‟ learning.

Academic staff has always been described as one of the most crucial resources of higher education institution for educational programs (Assefa, 2002). Good teachers are skilled not only in instructional methods but also in evaluation and assessment practices that allow them to measure individual student learning progress so as to adapt activities according to student needs which include both performance assessment and assessment of factual Knowledge (Astin, 1994). Besides, the issue of teachers‟ Professional development is the heart of quality in education.

Teachers need to have pedagogical skills, organizational skills and motivational abilities that will help them to work with their students and colleagues. Instructors need to increase their profession by expanding their sound knowledge base as a reservoir (Lim, 2001).

Aschroft (2005) asserts, that the adequacy and strength of academic staff is usually expressed in the form of a desirable proportion of staff possessing Master’s degree and PhD qualification, depicting that a staff member with higher academic qualification and appropriate professional experience is likely to handle a particular study program better than one with lower qualification and shorter relevant professional experience. Therefore, the minimum teaching staff combination in higher education institutions offering degree courses should be 30% with PhD, 50% with master’s Degree, and 20% with bachelors’ Degree (IUCEA, 2008).

### 2.3.4 Quality Governance and Management

“Higher Education Institutions shall be governed and managed through good governance practices, in line with the legal frameworks for their establishment” (IUCEA,2008).According to Adesine (2004), management in general can be defined as the organization and mobilization of all human and material resources in any system for effective achievement of the identified objectives of the system. In any organization including the public universities, effective management is considered to be a prerequisite for successful accomplishment of the organizational objectives.

In the university management system, the vice-chancellor; DVC Administrator; DVC Academics; DVC Finance; Deans and HODs are the key people to organize and mobilize the university’s human and material resources for the successful realization of the educational objectives so as to bring about quality education. This means that leadership is the key for organizational success. To carry out this responsibility, university vice-chancellors should be well qualified and experienced in related area. A good administrator/leader has multiplier effects on his/her teaching staff (Schiefelbein, 2002).

The University Management should equally ensure proper remuneration of the lecturers to avoid disruptions of learning activities through staff strikes as the same have adverse effects like Closure of school frequency, Irregularity of academic programmes, Examination malpractice and cultism among student, Certificate racketeering, Erosion of the dignity and respect of higher education. A case in point, between the year 2017 and 2018, the lecturers in public universities in Kenya, University of Nairobi included, have been on strike severally thus interfering with the learning activities and academic calendar of the students, This has had adverse effects especially on the International Students as well as students on scholarships who have had their academic period extended, inconveniences in terms of finance and time. This kind of inconvenience would have been easily managed by employing professional management of the University human resource as stipulated in the IUCEA guidelines and principles.

As an emphasis of effective university management, the role of university managers will become even more critical (Schiefelbein, 2002). University managers are responsible for all activities that occur within their university campuses. They are expected to be instructional leaders, supervisors, disciplinarians, facilitators, evaluators and conflict managers among other responsibilities (Browne, 2003).

**3.0 Materials and Methods**

The study employed the Convergent parallel mixed methods design. According to Teddie and Tashakkori (2009) mixed method approach is a procedure for collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting both quantitative and qualitative data in the research process within a single study, to understand a research problem more completely. Brayman (2001) states that when used in combination, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and allow for more complete analysis. Creswell (2003) postulates that quantitative and qualitative methods are compatible thus, both numerical and text data, collected sequentially or concurrently can help better understand the research problem.

The target population was the University of Nairobi, main campus while the target respondents comprised of nine deans, five quality assurance officers, 15 heads of departments, 95 lecturers and over 8000 students at the university main campus (University of Nairobi Records, 2018). The rationale behind the selection of deans, Heads of Departments and lecturers is that they possess knowledge about quality assurance guidelines implementation in their institution. For sampling size, both census method and Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size of a given population. The following instruments were developed, pilot-tested, revised and administered to collect data; Interview guides, Questionnaires, Document analysis guide and observation schedule

***3.1 Data Analysis***

The analysis of data was based on research questions. Data were analysed using both qualitative and quantitative procedures. Instruments were categorized into their homogenous groups, quantitative information coded and summarized into frequencies and percentages with the help of SPSS windows version 22.0. These were then presented using frequency tables. Data from observation guide and interview guides were obtained through transcription. Key words and phrases that were similar in meaning were categorized by topics. Responses from different groups were compared and trends and patterns in the responses established. This was then summarized into quantitative information of frequencies and percentages. Narrative and interpretive reports were written to depict the situation as it was on the ground.

**4.0 Results and Discussions**

### *4.1 Qualifications of the Academic Staff*

The study sought to establish the academic qualification of the academic staff at the University of Nairobi, the results indicated that the majority (76%) of the academic staff were qualified to teach in university according to the prerequisite of the Commission for University Education. The findings also indicate that 24% of the academic staff were master’s degree holders. According to the regulations of CUE first degree holders are not allowed to handle a course in university (CUE, 2016).

### *4.2 Teaching Staff Performance Appraisal*

The study sought to establish the mechanisms that were used by the Faculties at the University of Nairobi to evaluate the performance of their academic staff. Table 4.11 summarizes the responses of the lecturers on the mechanisms in use.

##### ***Table 4.2.1: Lecturers’ responses on mechanisms used to evaluate the performance of the academic staff***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Mechanism** | **F** | **%** |
| Evaluation by the Head of Department | 69 | 76.3 |
| Students’ course evaluation | 65 | 71.9 |
| Self-evaluation by individual staff members | 56 | 62.1 |
| Evaluation by the Dean of Faculty | 53 | 59.1 |
| Evaluation by faculty evaluation committee | 42 | 46.3 |

N = 90

The findings in Table 4.11 indicate that the majority of the lecturers (76.3%) maintained that the Faculties use the Head of the Departments to evaluate the teaching staff. Other mechanisms are students’ course evaluation (71.9%) and self -evaluation by individual members (62.1%). The least used mechanisms were evaluation by the Dean of Faculty (59.1%) and the evaluation by Faculty evaluation committee (46.3%).

### *4.2.3 Incentives for the Academic Staff*

Incentives are important aspects to boost morale and ensure adherence to the standards. However, the findings in this study indicate that majority of the lecturers (53.3%) maintained that there were no incentives given to them. In order to triangulate this information an interview was carried out with the Heads of Departments and Faculty Deans. Table 4.12 gives the summary of the responses of the lecturers on this aspect.

##### **Table 4.12: Lecturers’ Responses on types of Incentives given to the Teaching Staff**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Incentives** | **F** | **%** |
| Money rewards | 54 | 60.1 |
| Promotions | 37 | 41.1 |
| Certificate of appreciation | 19 | 21.3 |

N = 90

The findings in Table 4.12 indicate that 2 types of incentives are commonly used the university of Nairobi namely money rewards as shown by 60.1% of lecturers and promotion indicated by 41.1% of the lecturers. The findings also indicate that certification of appreciation is not very common. The findings indicate that the main criterion for promotion at the University of Nairobi is numbers of publications and presentations (83.30%). The other criterion is teaching experience as pointed out by 30% of the lecturers. Teaching load and age seem to be rarely used given that they were pointed out by only 3.30% of the lecturers.

**5.0. Conclusion**

The study revealed that a majority of the academic staff were qualified to teach in university according to the prerequisite of the Commission for University Education and the IUCEA guidelines. The findings also indicate that most of the academic staff was PhD holders. On incentives and staff remuneration, majority of the lecturers maintained that there were no incentives given and that the Government and the University management and a majority of the lecturers, deans and HoDs registered their dissatisfactions as far as the working conditions were concerned.

## 5.1. Recommendations

From the findings of the study, I make the following recommendations:-

This study recommends that in order to remain competitive in the region and to play their part in achieving the East African Community goals and objectives in academic integration; the University of Nairobi should place a high premium on staff development through sponsoring and/or granting study leave to staff, ensure that collective bargain agreements are met on time to avoid disruptions of academic calendar. Additionally, to support staff development, the University should make provision in its annual budget for staff development. Finally, the University Management should invest in proper and efficient revenue collections to enable the Institution operate optimally and offer quality of teaching facilities and infrastructure.

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