NCHE

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NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

First Namibia Quality Assurance in Higher Education Conference Report

The Role of Quality Assurance (QA) Systems in Enhancing Higher Education Outcomes in Namibia

27 - 29 August 2019

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Foreword

The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), in partnership with the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) and the three local universities, University of Namibia (UNAM), Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), and the International University of Management (IUM), was pleased to host a three-day conference on ***The Role of Quality Assurance Systems in Enhancing Higher Education Outcomes in Namibia***. The aim of the conference was to bring together practicing local and international quality assurance (QA) practitioners and researchers to share experiences and best best practices that promote the culture of quality in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The objectives of the conference were to:
- Review and analyse the current status of QA implementation in higher education in Namibia;
- Raise awareness on the benefits of and interrelationship between internal and external QA in higher education;
- Foster information and experience exchange amongst QA agencies, HEIs and the industry;
- Identify strengths, challenges and capacity development needs for different target groups and develop strategies to respond to these challenges.
- It was the expectation of the partner institutions that by the end of the conference, the participants would have:
- Deepened understanding of internal and external QA systems and approaches implemented in higher education in Namibia;
- Established networking opportunities for effective implementation of innovative methods of developing QA at institutional and national level; and
- Gained insight into innovative methods and best practices in QA in higher education in Africa.

Participants for the conference included:

- Government officials responsible for Education, Planning, Information and Communication Technology, and Labour Relations;
- Management teams of National QA Agencies;
- Vice-Chancellors, Rectors, Pro-Vice Chancellors, and Senior Officials of HEIs;
- Quality Assurance Practitioners in National Quality Assurance Agencies and HEIs;
- Academics and Researchers;
- Professional Bodies/Councils and Associations, Civil Society, Labour Unions, Captains of Industry, Employers and Employers' Associations; Students and Students' Associations; and Development Partners.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Conference Organising Committee and Sub-Committees for their unwavering commitment to this cause, as well as the presenters and participants for attending this conference.

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SYLVIA DEMAS

CHAIRPERSON: CONFERENCE ORGANISING COMMITTEE

ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

AfriQAN	African Quality Assurance Network
AAU	Association of African Universities
AQRM	African Quality Rating Mechanism
ASG-QA	African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
CA	Chartered Accountancy
COREVIP	Conference of Rectors, Vice-Chancellors and Presidents of African Universities
DUs	Disability Units
EQA	External Quality Assurance
4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
HAQAA	Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HTE	Higher and Tertiary Education
ICAN	Institute of Chartered Accountants in Namibia
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
IR	Industrial Revolution
IUM	International University of Management
MHETI	Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NANSO	Namibia National Students Organisation
NAQAHEC	Namibia Quality Assurance in Higher Education Conference
NCHE	National Council for Higher Education
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
NQA	Namibia Qualifications Authority
NSFAF	Namibia Students Financial Assistance Fund
NTA	Namibia Training Authority

NUST	Namibia University of Science and Technology
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
PAQAF	Pan-African Quality Assurance Framework
PDHE	Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education
QA	Quality Assurance
QAAs	Quality Assurance Agencies
RD	Regulative Discourse
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAQAN	Southern African Quality Assurance Network
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SMEs	Subject Matter Experts
TLU	Teaching and Learning Unit
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNAM	University of Namibia
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VC	Vice Chancellor
ZIMCHE	Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education

Overview of the Conference

The first Conference on Quality Assurance in higher education in Namibia took place from 27-29 August 2019 under the theme, *The Role of Quality Assurance Systems in Enhancing Higher Education Outcomes in Namibia*. It was the first of its kind in higher education history in Namibia. This historic event was well attended by role players across many sectors and the higher education landscape.

The Executive Director of the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation (MHETI), Dr Alfred van Kent, delivered a keynote address at the conference on behalf of the Minister, Hon. Itah Kandji-Murangi. The event was also blessed with the presence of H.E. Mr Djaffar Moussa-Elkadhum, the Director and United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Representative to Namibia; Prof Kuzvinetsa Dzvimbo, Chief Executive Officer of the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) and President of Southern African Quality Assurance Network (SAQAN); Dr Noel Biodun Saliu, Vice President of the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN); and Dr Violet Makuku, Quality Assurance Specialist from the Association of African Universities (AAU). They all delivered messages of goodwill during the opening ceremony of the conference. Prof Dzvimbo, Dr Saliu and Dr Makuku also made presentations during the conference sessions.

Over the three days of the conference, delegates had the opportunity to partake in thought-provoking presentations from experts, both external and internal to Namibia. The greater value of the conference, however, was the opportunity to engage with and gain an understanding of each other's perspectives and challenges, as partners, rather than competitors in the higher education sector.

The presentations delivered at the conference were based on the following sub-themes:

(i) Quality assurance practices in higher education
This sub-theme aimed to highlight the dynamics of the concept of quality; quality assurance systems; and structures and practices in higher education in Africa, the Southern African region, and Namibia, including Open and Distance Learning (ODL), the use of technology in quality assurance and E-learning.

(ii) Leadership and governance of HEIs as lever for quality assurance

Under this sub-theme, articles were invited from institutions for deliberation on the role of leadership and governance in creating and promoting a quality culture in HEIs. Institutional Administrators were afforded an opportunity to share lessons on strategies for ensuring quality in a financially constrained environment.

(iii) The impact of higher education quality and efficiencies on academic outcomes.

Papers under this sub-theme examined the internal and external efficiencies of higher education. On internal efficiency, papers examined the quality of internal measures aimed at enhancing quality outcome, including general student support and support for students with special needs. On external efficiency, papers focused on graduate output and employability.

(iv) Sustainable models and approaches for quality assurance in higher education

External quality assurance agencies, professional bodies, industry experts and academic researchers submitted papers on sustainable development models of quality assurance in higher education. Discourse included interrelationships and benefits of harmonisation at different levels of education, institutions, systems, units and operational quality within organisations.

Day 1

OPENING OF CONFERENCE

Welcoming Remarks

Guest speakers, presenters and participants were warmly welcomed to the conference by the Deputy Executive Director of NCHE, Ms Sylvia Demas. In her welcoming remarks, Ms Demas described the conference as a historic event in the history of higher education in Namibia.

Ms Demas further extended her gratitude to the co-hosting institutions, UNAM, NUST and IUM for their support towards the event; and the African Development Bank for providing the financial support which made the event possible. She also acknowledged the participation of students in the conference.

Ms Demas made reference to the theme and the objectives of the conference. According to Ms Demas, the theme indirectly posed a question that required reflection on the extent to which quality assurance systems in Namibia enhance the country's higher education outcomes. She finally urged the delegates to focus their attention and contributions on a system that would help in assuring quality of the type of higher education system they aspire to, for today and for the future.

Goodwill Messages

Messages of goodwill were delivered by H. E. Mr Djaffar Moussa-Elkadhum, Prof Kuzvinetsa Dzvimbo, Dr Noel Biodun Saliu, and Dr Violet Makuku.

H.E. Mr Moussa-Elkadhum indicated that quality assurance in higher education has been gaining significant momentum worldwide and highlighted the major drivers of the momentum, such as:

- the rising public demand for better performance of HEIs;
- the widening of access and a clear call from stakeholders for greater efficiency and accountability;
- the need for better quality graduates to drive national economies;
- the better use of public resources for higher education; and
- the increasing cross-border provision of higher education.

H.E. Mr Moussa-Elkadhum singled out some challenges faced by HE as the mismatch between skills acquired by graduates and those demanded by the labour market and industry. He noted that Africa is experiencing a growing trend in demand for cross-border higher education, therefore, urged Namibia to stand ready to respond to the growing demand and put mechanisms in place to build an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa.

He stressed that he was very confident that the conference will put Namibia on a trajectory of great achievements in the area of quality assurance in higher education to benefit the country and Africa in entirety.

In conclusion, H.E. Mr Moussa-Elkadhum stated that UNESCO pledges to continue its technical support of issues related to quality assurance in Namibia through ongoing engagements; and congratulated NCHE and the co-hosting institutions for creating an interrogative platform through this conference.

Dr Makuku extended her heartfelt congratulations to the entire Namibia, NCHE, NQA and the co-hosting HEIs. She further applauded the organisers of the conference for selecting

this contemporary, trending and highly relevant theme as it created an opportunity for reflection and future planning.

Dr Makuku pointed out massification, marketisation, internationalisation, access to quality and timely information as well as globalisation, as some of the challenges facing the higher education sector. She emphasised that the issue of quality in higher education is very close to the heart of the AAU, whose mission it is to raise the quality of higher education in Africa and strengthen HE's contribution to the development of the African Continent. Therefore, it stands in full support of the NCHE and all its HE stakeholders.

Dr Makuku stated that NCHE is one of AAU's greatest partners and has played an important role in advertising key AAU events such as the 14th General Conference and 50th Anniversary Celebrations of the AAU, held in June 2017 and the just ended Conference of Rectors, Vice-Chancellors and Presidents of African Universities (COREVIP). She further emphasised that NCHE plays a key role in sharing and disseminating AAU information among the African Higher Education community, particularly in Namibia.

In her concluding remarks, Dr Makuku wished the delegates a fruitful conference and successful deliberations as well as beneficial outcomes, resolutions and pragmatic action plans.

During his statement Prof Dzvimbo stressed that university students should be taught in way that would help them to become producers of knowledge and not just consumers of knowledge. He urged university academics to teach knowledge that they produced themselves through the production and publishing of textbooks. He stressed that the essence of SAQAN is the production of knowledge that is local, independent and original.

Keynote Address

During his keynote address the Executive Director of the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation, Dr Alfred van Kent, indicated that quality assurance in higher education is a fundamental responsibility of every education and training institution. He also pointed out that the first step in assuring quality is to establish strong internal quality assurance systems and capacity. He emphasised the importance of strong external quality assurance frameworks and institutions and the need to benchmark with the best in the world.

According to Dr van Kent, strong knowledge creation systems, innovation capabilities and high speed and accessible communication systems are critical for us to attain our aspirations. It takes a robust and relevant higher education system to produce highly skilled human resources, which is required to strengthen and manage economies.

Dr van Kent spoke at length on the following key issues:
- Leadership and Governance of HE as Lever for Quality Assurance.
- The Impact of Quality Higher Education Outcomes on the Economy and Society.
- Sustainable Models and Approaches for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

During his concluding remarks, Dr van Kent affirmed the Government's commitment to making higher education competitive and create an enabling environment for national development. He was, however, quick to underscore that the Government will only succeed in this endeavour if all stakeholders join hands and face the challenges as a team.

He closed by extending a sincere word of thanks to the hosting institutions and encouraged the conference participants to explore strategies that seek to resolve the challenges that threaten the quality of the Namibian HE system.

SESSIONS

Day 2

Session 1: Quality Assurance Practices in Higher Education

Session chair: Prof Frednard Gideon, University of Namibia (UNAM)

Topic: Systems, structures and practices of quality assurance in higher education in Africa

Presenter: Dr Noel Saliu, AfriQAN Vice President

Summary of the presentation:

In his introductory remarks, Dr Saliu expressed appreciation to the NCHE and the co-hosting institutions for proactively organising the first Namibia Quality Assurance in Higher Education Conference (NAQAHEC) under the theme, *The Role of Quality Assurance Systems in Enhancing Higher Education Outcomes in Namibia*.

He started off his presentation by highlighting the two main QA systems used in HE in Africa, namely IQA and EQA. With regards to QA structures in HE in Africa, he listed three levels: National – external QAAs or Ministries of Education/HE (where no external QAAs

exist) – Regional QA bodies and Continental initiatives such as the Pan-African QA Framework, Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) initiative under which the African Standards and Guidelines for QA in HE (ASG-QA) were developed. Programme accreditation and institutional audits or a mixture of the two in some countries were identified as QA practices in HE in Africa.

Top seven challenges that negatively impact HE quality:

- Depreciating quality of HE teachers

- Research capacity deficit

- Slow adoption of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) to deliver quality HE, including ODL

- Capacity deficit of QAAs

- Infrastructural deficit

- Management inefficiency

- Globalisation

Additional challenges were listed as emerging technology and new pedagogy, amongst others. He further emphasised the significance of cooperation and networking as he argued that no nation can solve all of its problems, and even the best universities do not have all the solutions. He reiterated the essence of networking and cooperation as HEIs are faced with limitless challenges. He suggested that networking and collaboration/cooperation among HEIs can be realised through inter-higher education, inter-quality assurance agency and inter-higher education/quality assurance agency collaborations.

Some benefits of networking and collaborations include:

- Sharing experiences and disseminating best practices

- Raising institutional profile

- Opportunities for staff and student exchange

- Joint degrees

Elements of networking and cooperation:

- Goals
- Support
- Team spirit
- Communication
- Exchange of ideas and infrastructure

Examples of networking and cooperation on continental level:

- African Union/European Union cooperation
- AfriQAN
- National Universities Commission (NUC)/NAQAAE
- NUC/CAMES
- HEIs

Conclusion

Dr Saliu stated that regional networking is critical to build trust on the continent. Moreover, QAAs and HEIs need to increase networks and collaborations to efficiently tackle challenges in HE in Africa.

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Topic: Southern African regional initiatives in quality assurance in HE
Presenter: Prof Kuzvinetsa P. Dzvimbo, SAQAN President

Summary of the presentation:

Prof Dzvimbo stated that IQA and EQA systems, processes and procedures are at the heart of improving higher and tertiary education in the Southern African region. He was of the view that IQA and EQA systems and procedures in higher and tertiary education on the African continent and the Southern African sub region are being pushed by the demand for a transformed, relevant and quality higher and tertiary education system that can respond fully and comprehensively to the demands of national strategic plans and visions, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) mandates and the 'Africa We Want' Strategy 2063.

He further stressed that Africa should take advantage of the World Economic Forum's six megatrends that shape our societies and higher education systems, in particular. These are:

- People and the internet;
- Computing, communications and storage everywhere;
- The sharing economy and distributed trust;
- The Internet of Things;
- Artificial intelligence; and
- The digitisation of matter.

The presenter continued by listing the major drivers pushing the development of robust IQA and EQA systems in Sub-Saharan Africa and the region:

- Demands for accountability of the Higher and Tertiary Education (HTE) system from students, parents, government and the civil society;
- Excessive demand for higher education has resulted in the increasing number of private and public institutions thereby increasing enrolment in tertiary education;
- The demand from the State and civil society for internal and external efficiency of the HTE system value for money;
- The scarcity of financial resources to support the HTE systems in the region;
- Demand from students for relevant program qualification mix;

- The increasing demand by employers and students for universities to offer programs that provide students with a skills mix relevant for rapidly changing societies and world of work;
- The demand for the development of minimum bodies of knowledge across the HTE sector in different countries;
- The demand for HTE systems to be part of national and global ranking;
- The rapidly growing demand for internationalisation of national higher education systems;
- The increasing call for systems that respond to the affordances of ICTs in post-secondary education and training; and
- The increasing demand for developing knowledge societies and the emergence of the fourth industrial revolution.

He highlighted the challenges that many countries face in managing IQA and EQA in the higher and tertiary education sector:
- Autonomy from the Ministry of Education or Higher Education;
- Authority of our mandates in relation to universities and the tertiary education sector in general;
- Lack of adequate funding from the parent ministries;
- Absence of a post graduate qualification on QA in higher education in the region.

Conclusion

Prof Dzvimbo remarked that HE is a "contested terrain" and that EQA should now start to address the issue of corruption and other malpractices in HE.

Recommendations

1. SAQAN needs to do a study of models in the region to see what is feasible and what works for SADC.
2. An electronic system for programme accreditation should be considered (Council on HE in South Africa to be visited to learn about this system). Visits could be organised to East and West African QAAs to learn best practices, and benchmarking can be done with Ghana and Senegal.
3. Develop a concept paper to design a qualification in IQA and EQA – SAQAN will spearhead this initiative.

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Topic: Quality Assurance System for Higher Education in Namibia

Presenter: Ms Sylvia Demas, NCHE, Deputy Executive Director

Summary of the presentation:

Ms Demas briefly sketched the Namibian education system ranging from Early Childhood Development to HE level. She also distinguished between the definition of HE as prescribed in the HE Act No. 26 of 2003 and HE at operational level. She further stated that the Namibian HE sector consists of public and private HEIs, and explained that the establishment of private HEIs is provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia and the HE Act.

Ms Demas gave an overview of the QA structures established to regulate and support the development of general education and HE in Namibia.

The following structures are in place:

Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA)

- Cuts across all levels of education

General Education

- Department of Formal Education in the Ministry of Education

- National Institute for Educational Development (NIED)

- Programmes and QA Directorate

- Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment

Vocational Education and Training

- Namibia Training Authority

Higher Education

- National Council for Higher Education

Professional Bodies:

- Established by respective statutes, participate in NCHE and NQA review panels.

IQA mechanisms:

- QA units in HEIs

Furthermore, Ms Demas outlined the QA systems and processes in HE in Namibia.

The challenges and recommendations pertaining to QA in HE were also highlighted:

Challenges	Recommendations
Overlaps in legislations that govern the QAAs	- Amend legislations - length of time taken to affect change poses a challenge; - Some administrative solutions within existing legislations were formalised through MoUs; - MHETI facilitates and oversees a technical committee, comprising representatives from NCHE, NQA and NTA, to investigate overlaps and benchmark processes.
Institutional and human capacity	- Dedicated initiatives to be spearheaded to strengthen institutional and human capacity in QA, ensure sustainability and reduce dependency on external (outside Namibia) peer reviewers for accreditation; - QA requirements to emphasise need for graduate tracer studies and management of information systems.
Partnerships and collaborations between accrediting bodies	- Disjointed approach of experts and separate accreditation processes may result in loss of credibility in the accreditation if the outcomes are different, thus QAAs and professional bodies should streamline and harmonise their QA processes, and do joint accreditation
Partnerships and collaborations between HEIs	- HEIs should form collaborative agreements for the purpose of maximum utilisation of resources in smarter ways, and innovative planning and management of HE facilities

Conclusion

Ms Demas stressed that the 4th Industrial Revolution demands enabling technology infrastructure, and HEIs should invest in it. She further identified the need to introduce detailed QA guidelines for Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and e-learning as the current higher education system does not explicitly cater for this.

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Topic: The Interrelationships and Benefits of Harmonisation in Higher Education Quality Assurance Systems and Structures

Presenter: Dr Violet Makuku, AAU, Quality Assurance Specialist

Summary of the presentation:

Right from the outset, Dr Makuku argued that "quality starts with oneself". Her presentation focused on the concept of 'harmonisation' in HE, and she defined it as "Achievement of the formalisation and implementation of a unified and aligned HE QA system at institutional, national, regional and continental levels". She opined that the concept was mooted during the 1981 Arusha Convention and the Addis Convention of 2014 that advocate the need for harmonisation. She stressed the need for harmonisation as IQA has to satisfy national, regional and international quality standards, as well as the quality standards of professional bodies.

Dr Makuku continued by stating that harmonisation involves cooperation and collaboration as opposed to the conflict and competition of institutions and HE quality assurance stakeholders, which include HEIs, Quality Assurance Agencies (QAAs), professional and accrediting bodies, Ministries of Education and Governments. She emphasised that harmonisation can only be achieved through teamwork. Harmonisation, she said, involves revisiting structures and terms of references to clarify roles, eliminate

duplication and overlaps to minimise conflict and competition, and enhance cooperation and collaboration between HE quality assurance stakeholders. She further stated that harmonisation becomes difficult because people fear change. She reiterated that teamwork is a key factor in achieving quality standards.

- On the question of what should be harmonised, the presenter listed the following:
- QA governance at institutional and national levels (i.e. Acts of Parliament, procedures, statues, and finances).
- Qualification frameworks at regional and continental levels –review and alignment of these were key.
- Standards and guidelines for programme accreditation and institutional audits (e.g. the ASG-QA that cater for IQA, EQA and QA for QAAs, and the AQRM that is a voluntary tool for institutional evaluation and improvement).
- Standards and guidelines for teaching, research, community engagement and internationalisation.
- Harmonisation of infrastructure
- Staff tenure and promotion tools

- Commencement of the academic year (January or September)
- Structure of the academic year (2 semesters or 3 terms)
- Duration of programmes (3 or 4 years) and their weight
- Harmonisation of credit systems
- Courses or modules that make up degree programmes in terms of the number of courses or course modules offered

- Dr Makuku shared some success stories pertaining to harmonisation initiatives, which include:
- RESAO Francophone agriculture degree programmes
- Zimbabwe – through minimum bodies of knowledge of a number of degree programmes and staff promotion tool
- East Africa – through the Inter University Council of Eastern Africa
- SADC – through student mobility with same fees
- West Africa – through the West African Examinations Council - Nigeria mobility

Conclusion

Dr Makuku presented NQA, MHETI, NCHE, NTA, private HEIs, public HEIs, professional bodies and the Ministry of Basic Education representatives with information packs that

included the following documents: ASG-QA, AQRM Survey Questionnaire, CESA 2016-2025, Agenda 2063, and the Declaration and Action Plan from the 1st African HE Summit on Revitalising HE for Africa's Future, March 10-12, 2015, Dakar, Senegal.

Discussions: Comments and Questions from the Participants

Comments:

- QA is very important, especially through the harmonisation concept and should therefore be the same in East Africa, West Africa and Southern Africa.
- Lack of funding in HE was pointed out as a serious issue.
- A concern was raised about the absence from this conference of policy makers in HE, especially the absence of the Minister of HE, Training and Innovation.
- Recommendations that emanate from NAQAHEC should be practical and tangible, and backed by research. Recommendations and solutions should have "teeth, legs and wings to bite, walk and fly" as stated by one participant.
- The NCHE should be an autonomous body, however, the HE Act places constraints on the Council's operations.
- Universities, locally and internationally, have changed because of the disjointedness of industry and graduates produced by HEIs.

Photo By: IUM

Questions:

- Harmonisation depends on the ratification of the Addis Convention (of 2014). What is Namibia's position on the Addis Convention?
- Who is to be blamed if students complete a programme, obtain a qualification and are subject to a professional exam, but do not pass the exam? Is the party to be punished the graduate, HEI, NQA, NCHE or the professional body?

Photo By: IUM

Responses to questions and comments:

- Bureaucracy and red tape should not stop any country or HEI from using the ASG-QA and the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) tool even if these are not ratified.

- Ratification of the Addis Convention of 2014 by Namibia is underway. A task team was constituted to spearhead the 11-step process to ratify the Addis Convention of 2014. The process is now at step three - Stakeholder consultations were concluded and recommendations made.

- In terms of the professional exam, an investigation should be carried out to determine who should be taken to task.

- Autonomy is not preventing QA, as long as there is no interference.

- There should be a direct link between programme development and industry involvement – HEIs should provide concrete evidence of industry stakeholder involvement in the development of programmes, and even involvement in (professional) exams.
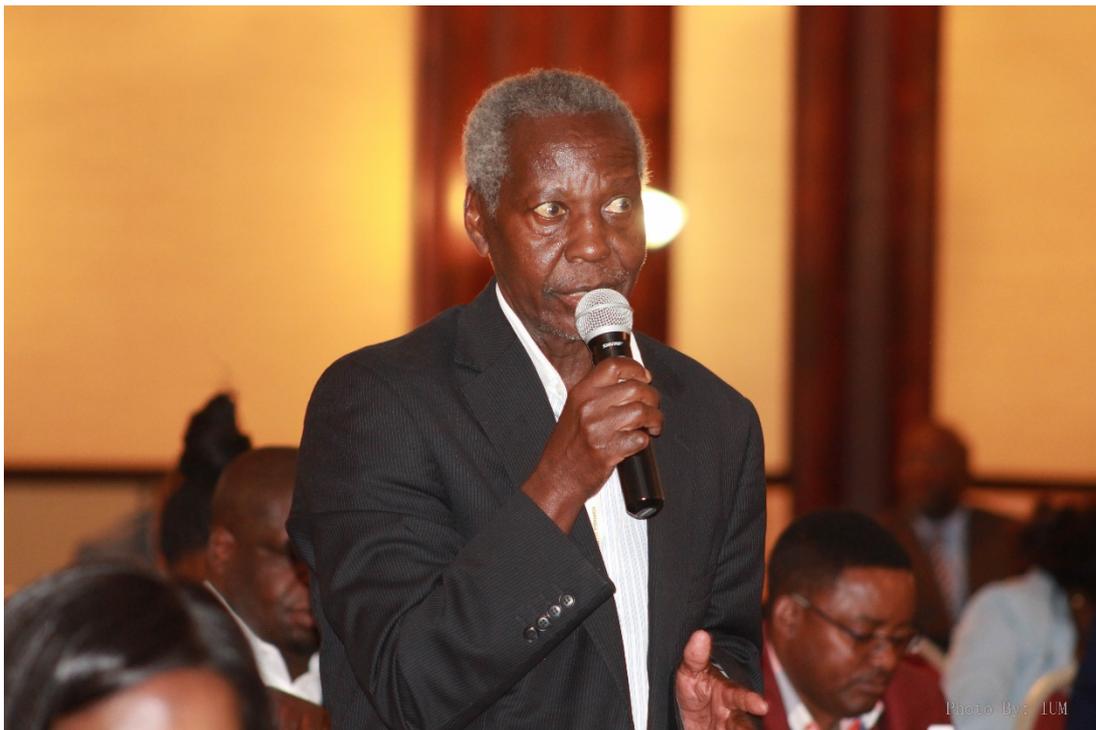
Session 2: **Leadership and Governance of HEIs as a Lever for Quality Assurance.**

Presenters: Prof. Kingo Mchombu, Prof. Erikka Maass and Mr Moss Garde (representing Vice Chancellor of NUST).

Session chair: Prof. Kuzvinetsa P. Dzvimbo

Summary of the presentation:

The discussion centered on the leadership and governance of HE, as an effective lever for quality assurance in higher education. The presenters from the three Universities discussed the higher education environment, which is found to be dynamic and therefore requires constant change to uphold quality, and ultimately to realise institutional visions and missions.   The panel unanimously agreed that above all else, higher education leadership should be aware of the social responsibility of HEI's, while respecting QA authorities and frameworks to continuously improve HEI's.

In HE endeavors, it is critical to prioritise context in order to have systems that are well in line with existing policies and procedures.

The leadership could not over-emphasise the scarcity of resources and how this hampers the development of; and ultimately dents the quality of HE. At the same time, the leadership highlighted the need to do more with less in order to ensure continuous improvement. The demand for HE in the country requires skillful leadership and governance, especially in this era of dwindling resources, thus leadership should strive to find means of doing more with less.

The panel and participants noted with great concern the cumbersome nature of the accreditation process. HEIs should embark on collaboration in order to find solutions that will work for the QA system.

Both internal and external quality assurance should be promoted within HEIs, to ensure a complementary relationship. The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is a reality that is facing the world and Namibia should ensure its participation is effective and fruitful, to remain on par with the rest of the world.

Conclusion

Quality should be driven through leadership and governance of HEIs. While quality is resource intensive, HEIs should attempt to do more with less at all times. Namibian HEIs should ensure participation and contribution to the global trends, i.e. the 4IR. HEIs should strive to learn from each other and create a stronger educated population.

Recommendations

HE leadership i.e. Vice-Chancellors should champion the course of QA.

IQA is core to leadership and governance of HEIs, and should receive dedication from leadership it deserves.

Harmonisation of Namibian QA frameworks

Capacity building for HEIs as well as Quality Assurance Agencies

The student perspective on QA matters is critical for consideration by HEIs leadership

Staff and programme sharing amongst HEIs, to maximise the available limited resources.

The need for leadership to promote a sense of ownership.

The need for leadership to steer QA in the frame of the 4IR (Fourth Industrial Revolution).

The need for alignment and coordination of QA systems of the different quality assurance agencies; harmonisation of the IQA and EQA; and synergy within the entire QA system.

Leadership should steer collaborations towards sharing of programmes and staff members to maximise available resources (especially human resources).

Ensure a strong aspect of monitoring that is embedded in the QA system, particularly IQA.

HEIs should operate in open system to create a culture of openness, trust and respect of each other to uphold QA systems.

Ensure that key performance indicators/outputs are aligned to QA in the strategic plan.

The need to develop a living document with high quality documented approaches to QA in all institutions.

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Session 3: The Impact of Higher Education Quality Efficiencies on   Academic Outcomes

Session Chair: Ms Sylvia Demas

Topic: The support and services rendered by HEIs to students in furthering access to quality education

Presenter: Mr Meliherius Haukambe, National Disability Council of Namiba

Summary of Presentation

It is noted that some HEIs among them UNAM have Disability Units (DUs) catering for students with disabilities. UNAM reserves hostel services and allows assistance for students with disabilities, provides sign language interpreters, brail, motivational speakers and counselling services. This is highly commendable.

It was further noted that student experience of services provided by HEIs are as follows:

- Lack of understanding of disability needs by the university community
- No courses on disability are taught at HEIs
- Limited transportation services
- Limited access to infrastructure
- Translators are not trained in all fields
- Understaffed and underfunded institutions

- Inhospitable attitude of staff members
- Unavailability and unaffordability of assistive devices

Conclusion

Education is a basic human right and students with disabilities are an integral part of the academic community. It was noted that persons with disabilities are under-represented within HEIs.

Recommendations

- Disability Units need to be made visible in all HEIs
- The focus should be on inclusive HE and not only disability.
- Disability Council policies are in place but are poorly implemented. The policies should be strengthened.
- Accreditation of HEIs should assess the inclusivity of HE

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Topic: Holistic Human Development through quality higher education in Namibia

Presenter: Mr Shaandre Cavin Finnies, Namibia National Students' Organisation

Photo By: IUM

Summary of the presentation:

NANSO's submission was that education in the Twenty-First Century is to uplift the entire nation and not necessarily a few selected individuals. In this instance, the role of NANSO is to advocate for the inclusion of the aspirations of students in the pursuit of Vision 2030 and going forward. It is noted that HE should be context and situation driven. HEIs were

called to re-think their innovation hubs and create a variety of sources for income generation. Performance management agreement for academics should be attached to value laden assignments and projects. It was emphasised that Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) should be prioritised because it serves as an engine for economic emancipation.

Conclusion

NANSO advocates for equitable quality higher education in Namibia and Africa, therefore it has a role to play in ensuring quality of higher education. NANSO is not in support of Eurocentric education, therefore calls for a tailor made Namibian higher education system to cater for the country's needs at both micro and macro levels.

Recommendations

- HEIs were urged not to measure the quality of their education outcomes on the success of individual alumni, but rather on the impact made to uplift the society they live in.
- Public HEIs should become creative and refrain from their sole dependency on the government.
- Academics should be encouraged to make monetary contributions to their institutions through research.

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Topic: The Role of ICT as a Catalyst for Tertiary Education

Presenter: Ms Nashilongo Gervasius-Nakale, Internet Society of Namibia

Summary of the presentation:

The Internet Society is a global organisation on ICT and internet. It was founded in 2012 by the wider Research African Leadership in ICT led by the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative. It was stated that ICT is an important part of our daily lives and the role it plays in facilitating learning. It has been observed that students who have been exposed to ICT have better knowledge, presentation skills and innovative capabilities. Namibia is commended for having well developed ICT policies and being ahead of other African countries in the use of ICT, however students from remote areas in Namibia are not ICT literate. In terms of infrastructure, Namibia is ranked 49 out of 140 countries by the Global Education Network.

Challenges on ICT initiatives and education includes among others; electricity, access to ICT infrastructure, expensive data, lack of computer literacy among students and lecturers. In this regard, the development of ICT infrastructure is ongoing.

Conclusion

ICT has a vital role to play in educational development and enhances effective learning. Furthermore, it increases flexibility in the delivery of education as is thus regarded a catalyst for change in the teaching and learning process.

Recommendations

- HEIs should make provision for ICT literacy development programmes for both students and academic staff.
- Bridging courses for computer skills should be introduced at HEIs.

General recommendations for the session

- Accreditation should assess on inclusivity of higher education on disability. Inclusive education should be able to take on board students with disability.
- DU in HEIs should be made visible.
- Inclusive education and services should be the way forward.
- Provide ICT programmes for both lecturers and students.
- It was also suggested that the engagement on ICT in education should start with the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture because it might be too late if we wait until students get to HEIs.
- Internet Society was urged to do more to raise awareness on ICT.
- HEI's should provide distance students with more online support services and make sure that they reach out to all students. HEIs were urged to consider this recommendation for their strategic plans.
- HEIs should link higher education performance agreements to income generating projects and consultancies.
- HEIs should measure the impact and outcome of their graduates in respect of their contribution to poverty alleviation in society.
- NANSO is urged to become a representative organisation as it was indicated that it seemingly excludes private HEIs.

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Parallel Sessions

Topic: Towards Sustainable Delivery of Quality Education: A Case Study of the Department of Communication at the NUST

Presenter: Prof. Rewai Makamani (NUST)

Summary of the presentation

The aim of the study was to measure the quality of the delivery of degree programmes in the Department of Communication at NUST. Data was collected using questionnaires that were distributed to lecturers in the Department. The study found that the department ensures quality through lecturer's qualifications, monitoring of course outlines, Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) sessions, teaching and assessment, quality examinations, community engagement, applied research, governance, and pass rate and number of graduates. The first mark of quality is measured by the qualifications of lecturers, and the study found that most lecturers have completed Master's degrees, whereas most have completed or are towards the completion of Doctorate degrees. The second measure of quality in the Department is determined by the monitoring of course outlines that students are presented with at the beginning of the course/module. Furthermore, the TLU sessions

contribute to and ensure quality, because staff present issues related to teaching and learning. Moreover, teaching and assessment is another marker of quality assurance because most participants (lecturers) agreed that teaching and learning does justice in

terms of quality delivery. Examinations are a mark of quality assurance because they are standardised and moderated thoroughly. Furthermore, the community is engaged through various activities, and staff members are involved in active research. In addition, lecturers have confidence in the governance of the university. Finally, quality is measured by the pass rate and number of graduates in the various courses in the Department. The performance of the department is good, except for English courses, which is a national problem for which it is found that efforts are made to arrive at aspirations.

Conclusion

- The Department is performing well in terms of delivery of quality education.
- The Department has highly qualified and experienced lecturers, robust peer evaluation systems, comprehensive induction and monitoring of lecturers on probation, Head of Department's monitoring of teaching and assessment activities, systematic recirculation processes, existence of partnerships, internationalisation,
- community engagement, sound research strategy, steadily rising student success rates and an effective governance system.
- Internationalisation is ensured through visiting lecturers who teach some courses.

Recommendations:

- The study recommends that staff who are lagging behind should be motivated in some aspects of quality delivery and necessary mental readiness through meetings, seminars, workshops and carefully planned peer support interventions, particularly how to leverage NUST's technological advantage.
- There should be more training in terms of governance.

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Topic: Student engagement in quality assurance practices in HE: the case of Namibia

Presenter: Ms Anneli Nghikembua (NUST)

Photo By: IUM

Summary of the presentation:

The aim of the paper was to review literature on the involvement of students in the internal QA matters of HEIs to gain in-depth knowledge about student involvement in internal quality assurance in Namibian HEIs. The study was of the notion that students are important stakeholders in enhancing quality assurance, as their involvement enhances and improves quality education. The study found that there are many challenges in student involvement in QA: lack of student-centred engagement in establishing course outlines no mechanisms in place to monitor student involvement in QA; students are not considered as part of the academic community; or students just simply do not participate in student evaluations.

Recommendations

- There is a need for transparency: develop feedback for both students and lecturers in order to incorporate all evaluations in quality enhancement.
- Information campaigns at local level, as well as training so that students become aware of and actively engage in quality assurance processes.

- The language of assessment should be the student's vernacular.

- The lecturer-to-student ratio should be fair to enable or allow for personalised learning, and the number of courses that an individual teaches should not compromise quality.

- There is a need for multi-stakeholder approach to drive the goal of quality assurance.

- There should be information campaigns for students regarding quality assurance.

- **Points from discussions**

- Concerns raised:

- There was a concern to whether studies are accurate measures of quality assurance.

- Whether questionnaires are an accurate measure of quality assurance

- Inclusivity of students in the study

- Validity and reliability of data, given the fact that lecturers might not have been truthful in their responses

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Topic: Employment status of new graduates: Analysing the influence of demographic and academic factors on graduate employability

Presenter: Ms Agnes Ulipamwe

Summary of the presentation

The presentation highlighted that graduate surveys are useful means for analysis of the relationship between higher education and work. It measured the higher education quality and efficient outcome focusing on graduate output and employment. The success of graduates in terms of smooth transition, low unemployment ratio, low ratio of non-regular or precarious employment might be valuable feedback to HEIs aiming to assess their outcomes and wishing to improve (Teichler, 1999). The aim of the study was to provide insight into the new graduates' employment status, and identify socio-demographic and academic factors that influence the employability of new graduates.

The study highlighted the following independent variables that were considered:

- Name of the institution
- Gender
- Marital status\
- Disability
- Age at the time of the survey 2017

- Work experience before enrollment
- NSFAF
- Bursary
- Level of education
- Field of Learning

Conclusion:
- This study is an attempt to explore some of the factors contributing to the employment status of new graduates
- Although female students show high degree of access to and success in higher education (NCHE, 2018), this does not seem to be impacting their success in the labour market.
- Graduates with and without disability had equal chances of securing employment.
- A high proportion of graduates securing employment is an indicator of the positive contribution of HE to individual and national economic goals.
- All the academic factors identified were found to be significant to employability of graduates.
- Further studies should be conducted to examine the extent to which all academic and demographic factors influence the chances of new graduates securing employment.

Comments
- A known fact that the graduation rate of female students is higher than male students, but the employment rate reveals that more males are employed.
- With the variables provided in the presentation one can deduce who will be employable and who not, thus recommendations can be made.
- Boy child and girl child mismatch is a serious concern in terms of those who graduate and not.
- Audit on programmes that are outdated and no longer need to run.

Recommendations:
- The tracer study is important and should be conducted on a large scale in Namibia.
- The need to undertake an employer survey was highlighted.

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Day 3

Session 4: Sustainable Models and Approaches for Quality Assurance:
Lessons from the Industry

Topic: Bridging the University-Industry nexus: Reflections on the Namibia
University of Science and Technology's contributions to quality higher education
through TVET

Presenter: Prof Alinah Segobye

Photo By: IUM

Summary of the Presentation

The presentation reflected on the TVET programme at NUST and its contribution to
quality improvement in Namibia's higher education sector. The study was benchmarked
with other institutions offering similar programmes in other countries taking into
consideration the needs of the country. The presentation further highlighted some of the
lessons learnt from industry partnerships and engagement which this programme offers
and concluded by highlighting some of the emerging opportunities for enhanced teaching,
learning and research which can add value to the TVET sector at national and regional
levels. Some of the issues to be assessed were:

• The role of the informal sector in creating job opportunities and skills development

• Facilitating a more responsive private sector.

- Technical and vocational education and training - skills development or a mirage?
- Finding common ground – educating for work and working for education.

Challenges

- It was stated that the TVET education in Namibia has not been enjoying the privileges enjoyed by others in the sector.
- Trainees resort to TVET as a last resort when they do not meet admission requirements of universities, hence the field of study is viewed as less prestigious.
- Another challenge identified was the lack of skills development for the educators.
- There is a challenge of funding for higher education and work-based learning programmes and hence the need for alternative funding models.

Recommendations

- There is a need for the Industry to come on board as they complain about the quality of graduates produced by the TVETs.
- There is need to address the issue of access by focusing on concentration challenges and diversification of services to other regions.
- There is a need to assess performance of Namibian HEIs in terms of global competition.

Conclusion

There is need:

- For improved engagement between Industry and HEIs by finding new models of university – industry partnerships.
- To reflect on Namibia's development pathways – lessons from the education sector.
- To revisit TVET education in light of the national development agenda.
- To revisit the HE curriculum – are we closer to fully transformed and decolonised curricula in Africa's HEIs?
- For innovating TVET education as the bridge between the University and Industry.
- To balance governance needs – rethinking the mandate of the university.
- To find the balance between innovation, quality and sustainability

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Topic: Joint Accreditation: A blended approach between the Regulator and the Professional Body

Presenter: Mr Koos du Toit

Summary of the presentation

The presentation focused on the experience of NCHE and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Namibia (ICAN) in accreditation through a blended approach. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two institutions was developed and the criteria of both institutions were harmonised to:

• Eliminate overlaps / create synergies

• Leverage the strength of both Systems

• Reduce burden on HEI

• Eliminate risk of two accreditation findings

• Benchmark to international best practice

• Combined Accreditation Team

The accreditation exercise was based on Self–Evaluation by the Institution supported by concrete evidence.

The Integrated Approach was used at UNAM for the accreditation of the Bachelor of Accounting (Chartered Accountancy Stream) in 2017.

Challenges

- Static momentum of established practices as the teams were accustomed to their own practices and way of doing things.
- There was a need for creation of an understanding of the Integrated Approach and that the accreditation is by both institutions.
- Accreditation Pass / Fail vs Health Check
- There is a need to create trust in the process
- The exercise was conducted during the UNAM Leadership transitioning process and that caused some delays.
- Resource Constraints

Conclusion

- The outcome of the joint accreditation is to ensure a streamlined and a strengthened system or model which identifies areas for development or improvement.
- The accreditation further provides assurance by all parties (NCHE, ICAN and HEI) that graduates that come out of the system are Fit for Purpose to enter the labour market or continue with further professional studies.

Recommendations

- There is need to set the tone by creating trust.
- Top leadership support from all institutions needed for the success of the exercise.
- Self-Evaluation is core in the joint accreditation and HEIs should understand the extend of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and accord due attention to the preparation of the report.
- A project team approach encouraged
- Communication and feedback throughout the process also encouraged.

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Discussions

- One of the participants commended NUST for the good work done in the articulation of TVETs to higher education and called upon other institutions to imitate. However, the platform provided is rather pedagogical and only focuses on training of trainers and not for specialisation. There is therefore a need for review of programmes at NUST.
- The Certificate programmes offered by NUST focused more on theory and lack practical component. There is a need to clarify how work integrated learning is done and whether benchmarking was conducted.
- Partnership with Industry could be improved.
- A comment was made that HEIs should produce graduates that contribute to the needs of the nation and not only be theoretical in approach to reduce dependability on other countries.
- There is a gap in NUST's TVET training programmes as there are no programmes for technicians.
- A question was raised as to why NQA as a regulatory body was not part of the NCHE/ICAN MoU.

Responses

- NUST certificate programmes have been reviewed to be more inclusive.
- The Faculty of Human Sciences at NUST is in consultation with the Faculty of Engineering to look at articulation issues.
- The Department of Education (NUST) is being transformed to take into consideration TVET programmes (beyond training of the instructors).
- There are also exchange programmes in place to allow students to gain skills not offered in their studies.

On the question of the exclusion of NQA in the NCHE/ICAN Accreditation, NQA has been part of the development of the MoU/manual and since the programme to be accredited was an ongoing programme already registered on the framework, the role of NQA was limited. However, there are other QA processes that are being considered between NCHE and NQA such as the joint institutional audit conducted in 2018 of which the results are being analysed and are not ready to be shared at this stage.

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Break Away Sessions

Topic: Power, control and quality assurance; towards a model for enhancing learning and teaching in higher education.

Presenter: Dr John Nyambe (UNAM)

Summary of Presentation:

The purpose of the paper was to examine the power and control structure underpinning the Namibian QA model for HE. While the paper acknowledges the great importance of the QA discourse, especially in the Namibian context where the concept is relatively new, the paper also highlights how the practice of QA in the Namibian context is underpinned by regulative discourse.

The findings of the paper are as follows:

- The Namibian QA model is underpinned in Regulative Discourse (RD) (accreditation criteria) framed externally – there are Control and judgement aspects that are framed externally.

- The external RD shapes the social conduct, manner and character of HEIs.

- The RD is embedded in the language by means of pass and fail, implying epitomized coerciveness.

- The EQA is found to be accountability-oriented, as opposed to improvement oriented.

- The external RD has resulted in academics finding coping mechanisms, such as mere compliance, conformity and adherence through Self-Review Reports. In other words, academics succumb to 'playing the quality game'.

- Academics regard accreditation as a hostile, unfriendly and tense exercise, and therefore, a futile exercise.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper is proposing a mixed model that is geared towards enhancing student learning, donating certain powers and control to HEIs.

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Topic: Enhancing quality in HE through functional partnerships
Presenter: Dino Rajah

Summary of Presentation: The paper was provided by an international HEI operating in Namibia . The paper focused on enhancing quality assurance of HE through partnerships. Emphasis was placed on the symbiotic relationship between partners, for the partnership to achieve noble objectives. In the process of partnership, the author

cautions the importance of doing needs analysis, especially for HE academic programme development, as well as other aspects forming part of the partnership. The needs assessment will ensure relevance and practicality of aspects.

Conclusion

HEIs cannot succeed in isolation. There is need to partner with other HEIs, as well as with the industry in order to meet the needs of the market, and ultimately the national needs.

Recommendations

Partnerships are essential to the success of HE endeavors, and should be based on government and national priorities. The partnership could focus on critical aspects such as co-design and development of curriculum, including assessment strategies; sharing of experts and expertise; industry collaboration and capacity building.

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Topic: Enhancing the quality of the learning programmes through accreditation by the NQA: The case of quality of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)
Presenter: Mr Fillemon Iyambo

Summary of Presentation

The purpose of the paper was to investigate the impact of the number of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) for evaluating learning programmes. The study found it critical to provide working definitions for programmes, accreditation, and programme accreditation.

The findings of the paper:

- The use of a single or one SME implied bias and subjectivity in judgement of a programme.

- One SME may not have specialised expertise in all courses constituting the programme/qualification.

- Non-Namibian SMEs may not have the requisite knowledge of the Namibian education system.

Conclusion

Accreditation is a means to enhance quality of academic programmes, only if practiced with the necessary requirements.

Recommendations

- NQA to benchmark with other countries, such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mauritius who make use of two to four SMEs per programme. This strategy is found to yield better results, compared to a single SME.

- A thorough study should be conducted to probe the phenomenon of SMEs.

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Topic: Exploring internal mechanisms for assuring the quality of open and distance learning in public HEIs in Namibia

Session chair: Prof. Katabaro Miti

Presenter: Dr Colen Tuaundu

Photo By: IUM

Summary of the Presentation

The study was conducted at four institutions which included the two public HEIs, namely, UNAM and NUST and two External Quality Assurance Agencies, the NCHE and the NQA. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is one of the most rapidly growing modes of higher education provision in recent times the world over and stimulated the need for the study.

The aim was to investigate how HEIs ensure quality; what mechanisms are in place and effectiveness of these mechanisms.

The findings were:

- Negative perception on quality of ODL graduates and their qualifications.
- Poor quality of material
- Unqualified tutors
- ODL programmes not entirely well administered
- High student dropout rates
- Delayed feedback on tutor evaluations

- Delayed feedback on assessments
- Quality assurance policies in place but not directly focused on quality ODL education.
- IT infrastructure not adequate to support ODL education.

Conclusion

- It is imperative to embrace quality assurance in ODL by having robust institutional quality assurance policies, implementation strategies, and consistent monitoring, evaluation and reporting in place
- There is need to create awareness through workshops or campaigns to all stakeholders about ODL education, its relevance and quality.
- There is a need to define criteria that address quality in ODL education.

Recommendations

- There is a need for improvement in the use of feedback collected from students on the quality of ODL programmes and their delivery to improve and close the quality loop; and the outcome of how their feedback was used to improve should be communicated to students.
- There is a need for both academic and administrative staff to enrol in ODL programmes to improve both their academic and administrative ODL skills.
- HEIs should develop and implement student retention strategies in an attempt to reduce ODL dropout rates, and improve success rate
- Universities should expand support to the ODL students through use of Teaching and Learning technologies

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Topic: The Match and Link of Study Programme and Work: A Comparative Study of Graduate Surveys at Universities in Namibia
Presenter: Mr Sem Shikongo

Summary of the presentation

The purpose of the study was to provide insight in the usefulness of the graduates, the skills acquired from higher education and the duties being performed in the industry.

Findings

- Overall the majority were working in areas, which they consider appropriate.
- All employed graduates were asked if their qualification is appropriate for their employment. Less than half of the employed graduates with Honours were working in areas which they consider appropriate for their level of education compared to more than 60 per cent of all other employed graduates with other qualification types.
- A close relationship between field of learning and nature of work indicates a match of acquired and required knowledge and skills. The existence and type of such a match provides feedback from graduates necessary for improving the study programmes.

Recommendation

Employer surveys should be conducted aimed at evaluating the appropriateness of graduates' level of education at workplaces so that both graduates and employers' viewpoints can be considered.

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Topic: Academic development for quality assurance: Lessons from UNAM Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education (PDHE) Academic
Presenter: Dr Wilfred April

Summary of the Presentation

The purpose of the study was to share experience and lessons learned from the PDHE at the University of Namibia. Challenges currently faced by HE were indicated as access to HE for more students, quality of employable graduates being questioned and an increased rate of unemployed graduates.

The following were the lessons learned:

- Feedback should be given to students on lecturer evaluation
- Students should be involved in quality assurance activities
- The curriculum should meet local and international industry needs.
- Blended learning should be implemented fully in HE

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CLOSURE

Remarks by Rapporteur General: Prof. Erika Maass

Prof Maass reiterated that the historic conference was very well attended by important role players across many sectors of the higher education landscape. She remarked that over the three days of the conference, delegates had the opportunity to partake in thought-provoking presentations from experts both external and internal to Namibia. The greater value of the conference was the opportunity to engage with and gain an understanding of each other's perspectives and challenges, as partners, and not as competitors.

Prof Maass presented the summary of the conference by highlighting the following pertinent issues that surfaced during the conference through presentations and discussions:

- **The importance of the voice of the students in quality assurance**

Various presentations pointed to the question whether students are indeed central to all activities in HEIs. Besides inviting students as part of accreditation panels, they seem to be left out when evaluating and implementing issues that have direct bearing on the quality of teaching and learning. There is thus a need to critically interrogate the role of students in the overall quality assurance process in higher education in the country.

- **Decolonisation of higher education**

Decolonisation was a recurrent topic throughout the entire conference that manifested in many forms. Reference was made to the need to decolonise the curricula, the assessment strategies, the thinking and approach to teaching and learning and indeed the quality assurance systems and processes.

With reference to the latter, the conference suggested that NCHE should undertake a study of all the different quality assurance models in the region to find a model fit for purpose for Namibia.

The role of the language of instruction and assessment as a powerful tool in the decolonisation agenda and in improving the quality of teaching and learning was touched upon in a number of presentations. While there was unfortunately not an opportunity to

critically explore this topic in full, it was agreed that there is a need for focused research in this area. In the interim, approaches such as the development of glossaries of technical terms in local languages covering a wide range of subject areas could facilitate deeper understanding and learning.

o **Coordination and streamlining of external quality assurance processes in Namibia**

While assurance was given that MoU's were signed between NQA, NTA and NCHE to coordinate and streamline their operations in the absence of legislative changes, there is still a high amount of confusion and uncertainty amongst HEIs on the roles and responsibilities of these governing bodies. There are also issues with the practical implementation of the provisions of these MoU's as experienced by individual HEIs.

Education service providers further expressed the need to speed up registration and accreditation processes as a matter of urgency. NCHE was requested to benchmark with South Africa as well as East and West Africa and consider the implementation of an electronic system for programme accreditation.

The conference agreed that joint accreditation of professional programmes by NCHE and the relevant professional body will avoid a lot of duplication. This must be formalised and procedures and guidelines need to be developed.

- **Developing quality assurance as a discipline**

The conference expressed support for the need to develop quality assurance as a discipline, not only in the country, but in the region and continent. Several aspects were discussed:

a. Quality assurance processes, whether executed by internal or external quality assurance agents should be evidence-based and informed by best practice.

b. An accredited regional quality assurance course for quality assurance practitioners is required to ensure a powerful, effective community of quality assurance practitioners.

c. The establishment of a regional Journal of Internal and External Quality Assurance is essential to establish Quality Assurance as a discipline in the region. Such a journal must not be theoretical, but founded on practice and action.

d. A set of common appointment criteria for quality assurance practitioners in the region must be developed and adopted.

- **Strengthening of quality assurance units at higher education institutions**

The role of internal quality assurance units as important levers of quality assurance was discussed at length. Their responsibilities and operations need to be standardised across institutions as they are at the heart of internal quality assurance, not as mere spectators or coordinators, but as the true captains of quality assurance in their institutions. It was suggested that this community of practitioners must develop best practice guidelines for internal quality assurance to be shared amongst all tertiary institutions in the country.

- **Harmonisation of processes across the continent**

The benefits of harmonising quality assurance processes and across the African continent were highlighted. This is an aspect that warrants further engagement.

- **Accreditation as a measure of quality**

Delegates were challenged to reconsider their inherent understanding of quality in an environment where quality is often equated to accreditation of a programme or institution. The return on investment from both internal and external quality assurance processes must be interrogated.

There was a call for a different power and control model that will shift certain powers and control from the external quality assurance bodies to the service providers. This is based on the fact that while external quality assurance processes seemed to be accountability orientated, it does not necessarily lead to an improvement in teaching and learning. Quality must be owned by every role player and be the driver for all actions and processes of internal and external quality assurance agents. The mere fact that a programme or institution is accredited does not automatically imply quality.

As alluded to earlier, there is an urgent need to develop a new quality assurance model for the country. In this process, there is a need to think new and different as the current system is clearly not optimal. The role of subject matter experts needs to be reconsidered especially when taking cognisance of the changing demands on higher education in the Fourth Industrial Revolution where content knowledge will become less important than

skills and competency development. Such a model further needs to take into consideration the nature of future-ready curricula with different programme mix demands, the role of e-learning and ODL and the increasing demand for flexible learning pathways.

- **Action Plan**

The delegates agreed that while Namibia is not lacking in policies and procedures, the provisions of such documents cannot be imposed – not internally and certainly not externally. Quality must be lived and inform all our actions on a day to day basis.

The meeting therefore agreed on an action list to be completed before or at the Second Conference on Quality Assurance in Namibia scheduled for 2021:

a. A larger number of conference papers based on critical, unbiased analysis of quality assurance issues, rather than sentiments. Such papers should include amongst others a well-researched presentation on a regional QA- model that will improve teaching and learning, rather than simply ticking a number of pre-defined boxes.

b. A progress report on the streamlining and coordination of external quality assurance processes in Namibia. In this regard, tangible improvements are expected.

c. Launch of an accredited Quality Assurance course for QA practitioners.

d. Launch of the regional IEQA journal with a respected and competent board of editors.

e. A set of criteria / requirements for QA practitioners in Namibia mutually agreed upon by all role players

f. A fit-for purpose ideal structure and responsibilities of QA Units in HEIs mutually agreed upon by all role players

Conclusion

Conference delegates were challenged to reflect critically on the conference and return to the next conference in 2021 with a completely different understanding of quality and quality assurance.

Closing Remarks

Photo By: IUM

The First Namibia Quality Assurance in Higher Education Conference was officially closed by the NCHE Council Chairperson, Prof Lischen Haoses-Gorases. In her closing remarks, Prof Haoses-Gorases reminded the participants of the statement made by the Executive Director, Dr van Kent during his keynote address that the future of every nation belongs to an enterprise of education system which makes quality assurance in HEIs a priority.

Prof Haoses-Gorases indicated that the conference reminded her of an old adage that, "education is a key to opportunities in life". She emphasised that education without quality is like a flower without fragrance. Further on, Prof Haoses-Gorases pointed out that the discussions which took place during the conference calls on the "Role of Quality Assurance in Enhancing Higher Education Outcomes", therefore, cautioned participants that all forms of HE offerings need to be quality assured and ascertain by robust quality assurance systems.

Prof Haoses-Gorases stressed that the conference should be viewed as the beginning of a quality culture, a culture of self-reflection. She assured the delegates that the

conference report will be shared once it has been finalised. In the same vein, suggestions and recommendations made during the conference will be forwarded to relevant authorities for action. Authors of the papers presented at the conference will be provided with deadlines to finalise their papers for publication. Prof Haoses-Gorases suggested that it would be ideal to hold NAQAHEC after every two (2) years in order to give ample time to implement the conference recommendations.

Prof Haoses-Gorases finally thanked the co-host institutions and the organising committees for having organised a fruitful conference. She also expressed her gratitude towards all delegates for their participation in the conference. She, therefore urged them to serve as ambassadors and messengers in sharing and implementing the lessons learned from the conference. Participants were awarded certificates of attendance.

Annexure 1: Programme

Day 1: Tuesday, 27 August 2019

Opening Ceremony **Safari Court Hotel, Windhoek** **17h00 – 20h00**

DAY 2: Wednesday, 28 August 2019

08h00 – 09h00	Registration
Session 1: Quality Assurance Practices in Higher Education **Session Chair: Mr Franz Gertze** **Rapporteurs: Ms Anneley Willemse** **Ms Raimi Shikulo**	
09h00 – 11h00	Systems, structures and practices of quality assurance in higher education in Africa: *Dr Noel Saliu, AfriQAN Vice President*
	Southern African regional initiatives in quality assurance in higher education: *Prof. Kuzvinetsa P. Dzvimbo, SAQAN President*
	Quality Assurance System for Higher Education in Namibia: *Ms Sylvia Demas, NCHE, Deputy Executive Director*
	The interrelationships and benefits of harmonisation of higher education quality assurance systems and structures: **Dr** *Violet Makuku, AAU, Quality Assurance Specialist*
	Discussions
11h00 – 11h30	Group Photo
	Health Break
Session 2: Leadership and Governance of HEIs as Lever for Quality Assurance **Session Chair: Prof. Kuzvinetsa P. Dzvimbo** **Rapporteurs: Ms Nangula Iipumbu** **Mr Joseph Amunyela**	
11h30 – 13h00	Leadership and governance as levers of quality assurance in higher education: *Dr Godfrey Tubaundule*
	Panel Discussion • *Prof Frednard Gideon, Acting VC - UNAM* • *Prof Kingo Mchombu, Acting VC - IUM* • *Mr Morné Du Toit, Acting VC - NUST*
	Discussions
13h00 - 14h00	**LUNCH & NETWORKING**

	Session 3: The Impact of Higher Education Quality and Efficiencies on Academic Outcomes **Session Chair: Mr Polli Andima** **Rapporteurs: Lucia Oarum** **Henry Kapalu**	
14h00-15h30	The support and services rendered by HEIs to students in furthering access to quality education: *Lydia David, National Disability Council of Namibia* *Chaandre Cavin Finnis, Namibia National Students' Organisation*	
	The role of ICT as catalyst for tertiary education: *Nashilongo Gervasius-Nakale, Internet Society of Namibia*	
	Discussions	
15h30-16h00	**Health Break**	
16h00-17h00	**Session Chair: Mr Polli Andima** **Rapporteurs: Linea Hamukwaya** **Simon Simon**	**Session Chair: Dr John Nyambe** **Rapporteurs: Victoria Verner** **Astrid Mughongora**
	The Match and Link (Vertical and Horizontal) of Study Programme and Work: A comparative study of graduates survey in 2017 and 2019 at universities in Namibia, *Sem Shikongo*	Student access, retention and success in higher education in Namibia: The case for quality improvement in teaching and learning, *Gilbert Likando*
	Student engagement in quality assurance practices in higher education: the case of Namibia, *Anneli Nghikembua*	Employment status of new graduates: Analysing the influence of demographic and academic factors on graduate employability, *Agnes Ulipamwe*
	Discussions	
19h00	**CONFERENCE RECEPTION: IUM MAIN CAMPUS, 21-31 HERCULES STREET, DORADO PARK**	

DAY 3: Thursday, 29 August 2019

<table>
<tr>
<td colspan="3">Session 4: Sustainable Models and Approaches for Quality Assurance: Lessons from the Industry

Session Chair: Prof Anicia Peters
Rapporteurs: Ms Bertha Njembo
Ms Reginald Iipinge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td rowspan="5">08h30 - 10h30</td>
<td colspan="2">Joint accreditation: A blended approach between the regulator and the profession: <i>Mr Koos du Toit, Institute for Chartered Accountants in Namibia</i></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">Bridging the university-industry nexus: Reflections on the Namibia University of Science and Technology's contributions to quality higher education through TVET, <i>Prof Alinah K. Segobye</i></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">Discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session Chair: Prof Anicia Peters
Rapporteurs: Ms Linea Hamukwaya
Ms Esther Nuuyoma</td>
<td>Session Chair: Prof Katabaro Miti
Rapporteurs: Dr Suama Hamunyela
Ms Eveline Shinana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power, control and quality assurance: Towards a model for enhancing learning and teaching in higher education, <i>Dr John Nyambe</i></td>
<td>Exploring internal mechanisms for assuring the quality of open and distance learning in public HEIs in Namibia, <i>Dr Colen Tuaundu</i></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10h30 – 11h00</td>
<td colspan="2">Health Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td rowspan="2">11h00 - 13h00</td>
<td>Enhancing quality in higher education through functional partnerships, <i>Mr Rajesh Subramanian</i></td>
<td>Towards sustainable delivery of quality education: A case of the Department of Communication at the Namibia University of Science and Technology, <i>Dr Rewai Makamani</i></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing the quality of learning programmes through accreditation by the Namibia Qualifications Authority: The case of subject matter experts, <i>Mr Fillemon Iyambo</i></td>
<td>Academic development for quality assurance: Lessons from UNAM PDHE Academic, <i>Dr Wilfred April</i></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td colspan="2">Discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13h00 - 14h00</td>
<td colspan="2">LUNCH & NETWORKING</td>
</tr>
</table>

Official Closing of the Conference Session Chair: Dr Rachel Shanyanana-Amaambo	
15h00	Conference Evaluation
	Remarks by Rapporteur General: ***Prof Erica Maass***
	Closing Remarks: NCHE
	Presentation of Certificates
END OF CONFERENCE	

Annexure 2: Attendance list

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