

MANAGING QUALITY MATTERS FOR QUALITY LEARNING: A UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA AND UNIVERSITY OF WÜRZBURG COMPARATIVE GAZE

Matthias Erhardt
University of Bath



ABSTRACT

Quality is a slippery and elusive concept to define in a higher education setting. It is like justice and love, thus; it lies in the eyes of the beholder. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to discuss the concept the contrast and similarities of quality in the University of Namibia, Namibia and University of Würzburg, Germany. The chapter revealed that quality can be defined from different perspectives depending on where it is viewed from. However, the seminars on quality as a transformation are found in tow universities, were quality aims at seeing transformation for better while in Germany that transformation is viewed from the lens of transformative research.

Keywords: Quality, teaching and learning, University of Würzburg, University of Namibia, transformation.

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1. Introduction

Quality plays a crucial role in the context of teaching and learning. Academic staff and developer value quality teaching and learning and aspire to assess the process of teaching and learning using assessment tools of high quality. However, this is only possible if what is being taught and learnt is a curriculum of quality therefore quality should have underlined all the

teaching and learning process. Quality can never be over emphasized!

The chapter examines the assessment of teaching and learning at University of Namibia (UNAM) and practices used to enhance the quality of the core business of the university. The chapter now turn to issues of quality and define some of the key concepts in the discourse of quality in higher education. Quality is a crucial in Higher Education (HE) and is the responsibility of all

university stakeholders. Fundamental concepts in the discourse of quality are, exceptional, perfection or consistency, fitness for purpose, value for money and transformation (Harvey & Green, 1993). Furthermore, the chapter presents an analysis of conceptualization and function of quality assurance, enhancement and development at various

levels. Lastly, a reflection on dual role as an academic staff with the agency to propel the change for improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment at UNAM.

2. Conceptualization of quality from varied perspectives

There are different ways of thinking about quality this is mainly due to its slippery and elusive nature as a concept. According to Harvey and Green (1993) quality is referred to as a relative concept based on two aspects one, it means different things to different people. Two, quality is dependent on processes and outcomes. In other words, quality is relative to the person using the term and their circumstances, thus it is context specific and institution bound.

Although quality is a multidimensional concept with varied definitions, drawing from the work of Harvey and Green (1993) the chapter will present five categories of conceptualizing quality. An understanding of these vital concepts will go a long way to answering the question posed approximately half a decade ago yet still significant “What the hell is quality?” Ball (as cited in Harvey & Green, 1993 p. 10).

2.1 Quality as exceptional

In this notion ‘quality’ is perceived as something special which is often not attainable by most of the people. This notion is not useful to higher education anymore because universities are no longer for elite students. However, student massification and democratisation have widened access to HE. This take on quality may be suitable for a luxury car manufacturer but has no place in higher education. Furthermore, it is useless

because it does not provide definable means of determining quality.

2.2 Quality as perfection or consistency

From this notion, ‘quality’ may be viewed as doing the correct things well. In this case, quality is perceived as being linked to the input and output, i.e. quality input leads to quality output. This is a dominant idea at UNAM as our university strives to become a beacon of excellence. This notion may be well expressed in policy, however; it is difficult to achieve in practice for example though the number of students has increased, the resources and human capital often lag behind, leaving academics to struggle to meet the needs of diverse students with limited resources. In fact, universities like UNAM which adopts the notion of excellence might have placed themselves up for failure because ‘excellence’ is an empty word with a relative meaning to the person using it. It is important therefore to reflect and inquire: What does excellence mean?

“Excellence” at German universities usually refers to excellence in research (not teaching). There is a highly competitive national programme for excellence, the Excellence Strategy of the German federal and state governments, which aims “to strengthen Germany’s position as an outstanding research hub in the long term and further improve its international competitiveness. It continues the development of German universities successfully begun with the Excellence Initiative by supporting research of the highest standard, enhancing research profiles, and facilitating cooperation in the research system.” (DFG Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, 2023). The strategy mentioned is a good example of the interpretation of excellence at university level and conveys the “old” idea of quality as exceptional (see 2.1). So far, there are only 11 “excellent” universities and another 21 universities, which are part of excellence clusters, among them the JMU (there are 108 universities in Germany). The competition is hard and numerous efforts is put into to be successful because it means high reputation and huge sums of money. Traditional German universities up to the 60’s of the 20th century was seen as excellent institutions by their

nature. With newly founded universities in the following years and the development of student as well as research massification politicians changed the strategy of funding universities. US universities like the ivy league universities served as role models and this change of perspective meant to provide a greater amount of money to only some universities which meet the high standards of the excellence programme. The question is whether it is fair to have elite universities which receive more funds and are better equipped compared to non-excellent universities which receive no additional money and must do research as well as teaching at a university level. And still, it does not fully answer the question what excellence means for a university because even at “excellent” universities only few subjects and researchers are responsible for the denotation “excellence”. Most students and members of staff at these universities do not profit from that labelling.

2.3 Quality as fitness for purpose

This approach to quality aligns with the purpose of a product or service. This is a functional definition of quality and appear to be inclusive of both weak standard and high standard products so long as it fits its purpose then it is a quality product. Moodie (1986) cautions that this notion can be deceptive because it gives rise to issues such as whose purpose and how is fitness assessed?

The implication here being that the university must provide services that meet the specific standards or requirements of the student. Ideally this means that first, the students set their standards and the university will then formulate a curriculum based on these standards. This will be difficult to achieve, as the students’ requirements will change over the years. Thus, in practice the university does a need analysis and formulates programmes of studies that are designed with the student in mind, in most cases the student is not in a capacity to set their standards. Thus, at UNAM the most dominant idea is that of ‘fitness of purpose’, which operates at the programme level as guided by the mission of the university. In this case, the university measures quality based on the

extent to which it is achieving its vision and mission that it set for itself.

Furthermore, universities cannot only follow their own strategies or visions, even if they do so, they are part of the global university community. Research especially at university level is international and there is an international competition concerning rankings and reputation. So additionally, a university will always consider the research in the different academic subjects if it defines the “fitness of purpose”. And in Germany the ministries of the federal government which are responsible for the funding of the universities in a federal state like Bavaria have still their own policy what universities should do, for example which new programmes of studies should be designed. The latest example is the initiative to boost research and teaching about artificial intelligence in Bavaria, which meant that new posts for this field were established and funds were directed towards this topic and also taken away from other subjects.

2.4 Quality as value for money

This conviction equates quality to value. This is important indeed, as long as the values that underpin how money is spent are educational. Students should gain return on their investment in HE. The university is accountable to the funders and the students. It makes use of performance indicators to judge quality. The use of customer charters, which were developed for but not by students, is a weakness of this approach to quality they have little impact on improving or maintaining quality.

HE is expensive and this means that the university is accountable to the students to ensure that they receive the services that they deserve because they paid for it. This means that students expect to be taught a quality curriculum, through quality teaching and learning processes and which are eventually assessed with quality assessment tools. This is crucial for student satisfaction, which in turn markets the university to potential students.

In addition, there is this service idea at German universities, however; students must only pay small registration fees, so they cannot expect a

full-service university. On the other hand, universities get to some extent their funds from the government according to the number of students they attract and the quality of their study programmes (the simple measurement is the length of an average BA or MA course of studies, how many semesters does a student require

on average to get a Bachelor or Master degree. It is value for money for the government the individual student can profit from.

2.4 Quality as transformation

This idea of quality involves enhancing the performance of students regardless of their initial level of competence. It is most useful to HE when viewed from the notion of student empowerment as opposed to student enhancement. Thus, effective learning means giving students a voice and opportunity to become part of a knowledge society by gaining intellectual and social power. Thus, students should be given power to transform their learning and through this to transform themselves. This translates into involving students in decision-making and enabling students to take responsibility for their own learning. Thus, highlighting the core purpose of HE which is participatory assessment. Another purpose of HE which is crucial is the transformation of the society through education more specifically for the African continent.

Education as a process is intentional and outcome based. Thus, quality education should change or influence the student's view and skills because of an encounter with the teaching and learning activities. Education should therefore be responsive to the needs of the student and should be able to transform the student into a self-regulated independent life-long learner. This requires the use of transformative and authentic assessment activities, which enhance the student's skills that they will later use in their world of work.

The idea to support the individual development of a person by teaching and learning with respect to the individual and societal needs has a long tradition in German pedagogy and goes back to one of the greatest reformers of the school system of the 19th century in Germany: Wilhelm von

Humboldt. Additionally, he established a vision of a university which unites research and teaching. This model of a university implies that teaching and learning continue

to take place at the university. However, teaching and learning are based on a commonality of action that is required by the concept of science. The scientific researcher, the researcher as teacher, takes the place of the former teacher (as instructor) at school, and the student, who now participates in the process of finding knowledge, takes the place of the former learner through mere instruction (Riedel 1977 p. 240). Humboldt's understanding of the character of learning and education on the entire relates closely to the modern purpose of HE mentioned above.

To understand Humboldt's theory of education, some explanations are added. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP) which offers the best translation of Humboldt's thoughts in English: "For the "true end of man", Humboldt wrote, was "the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole". To reach that goal, freedom was the indispensable condition (GS Vol 1: 107). Yet the free development of the individuals, their self-realization, or *Bildung*, their "self-culture", as the American Transcendentalists would translate the term, for Humboldt necessarily implied a social and political dimension. Self-culture demanded "a manifold of situations" (*eine Mannigfaltigkeit der Situationen*) for the individual citizens, so that they would be able to enter freely into relationships of association and cooperation with one another, because, Humboldt argued, humans can realize their potential as individuals only in society. For this reason, Humboldt maintained that a government should not be evaluated solely by its legal system that granted freedom and liberty to its citizens but equally by how much and to what degree it helped assure the creation of such a manifold of situations and opportunities for the individual citizens to develop their human capacities in actual reality" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Wilhelm von Humboldt, 2022).

3. Quality assurance, enhancement and development

To start with this section will give the meaning of key concepts in the discourse of quality these are: quality assurance, quality enhancement and quality development. These key terms are perceived differently in literature, quality assurance is often perceived as a process and quality enhancement as an activity (Williams, 2016).

a. Quality assurance

According to the Analytic Quality Glossary quality assurance is “the collections of policies, procedures, systems and practices internal or external to the organization designed to achieve, maintain and enhance quality” (Williams, 2016, p.97). Like the term quality, quality assurance has ‘no single common definition of the phrase and “therefore, it has become a catch-all phrase; it is asked to do too many different things and as a result it can do few of them to anyone’s satisfaction” (Williams, 2016, p. 87). The purpose of quality assurance is to ensure that higher education reaches stated standards. Quality assurance in some instances is used interchangeably with accountability (Collini, 2012). For some institutions HE quality assurance aims to ensure the quality of teaching while UNAM and other HEIs focus more on “the processes to achieve quality: quality assurance is, in fact, a meta-process” (Williams, 2016, p. 98). According to UNAM quality assurance “refers to an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating the quality of a higher education system, institutions, or programs” (<https://www.unam.edu.na/cequam/downloadable-documents> p.7). Quality assurance has to do with “ensuring that mechanisms, procedures and processes are in place to ensure that the desired quality, however defined and measured, is delivered” (Harvey & Green, 1993, p. 19).

b. Quality enhancement

Drawing from the work of Harvey (2004) in the Analytic Quality Glossary, quality enhancement is

a process of augmentation or improvement. It has two main components one on individual learner enhancement and the other is the quality improvement of the institution or programme of study. Some definitions of quality enhancement focus on students’ learning. For example, in the UK, quality refers to institutional quality management intended to ensure quality in the context and bring about improvements in the quality of learning (Williams, 2016). Scotland on the other hand, defines it as intentional steps focused on continual improvement on the learning experiences of the students (Williams, 2016). Other authors argue that enhancement can be seen as a definition of quality and this is the case at UNAM (Campbell and Rosznyai, 2002; Williams, 2016). However, Harvey (2004) critiqued this view because he is of the opinion that quality goes beyond the continuous search for permanent improvement and Collini (2012) further argues that there is a limit to improving what has been considered excellent in practice.

c. Quality development

According to Gordon (2002) quality development is inclusive of all the strategic approaches which have the greater potential to promote quality enhancement and transformation to evade the culture of passing a specific test. The assumption is that if the mechanism for quality assurance are in place then quality can be assured. However, Harvey and Green (1993) suggests that developing a quality culture is an essential process in quality development. A quality culture is one where everybody in the organization is responsible for quality (Crosby, 1986). The advantage of the quality culture is that there is no need to check out the final output because quality has been assured throughout the process Harvey and Green (1993) termed it democratizing quality. The concept of quality culture is quite new to me. This means that quality is the responsibility of every UNAM staff member. However, this is not the practice at UNAM. Quality is the responsibility of the head of the department, the dean and the PVC for academic at UNAM. The main challenge to the quality culture though is that of zero-defect notion which is not useful in HE because student

development involves constant re-working on the specifications.

From a German point of view a real quality culture at a university is also quite new. As mentioned in 2.2 universities have been regarded as institutions of high quality in HE for a long time. There was no need to control the quality of research and teaching or evaluate the curriculum because scientists who carry out their research and teach the students were seen as proven experts. For a long time (from the 1960's to the 1990's) the prevalent policy for a quality culture in Germany was that sufficient resources (e.g. staff, buildings, media) will guarantee the quality in HE.

With the first PISA results in 2001 the policy changed rapidly because politicians realized that it does not work automatically like that. Standards for school certificates as well as national tests were introduced. The school curricula in Germany were standardized and rewritten. At university level Bachelor and Master degrees were introduced within the framework of the Bologna Process (starting with the Sorbonne Declaration 1998) and "a system of quality assurance, to strengthen the quality and relevance of learning and teaching" was implemented (European Commission, The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area, 2023). In Germany numerous agencies for quality management and accreditation to monitor the study programmes were founded. Universities must receive their study programmes accredited otherwise they cannot offer them. They can also establish an internal quality assurance system which is responsible for the accreditation (German Accreditation Council, 2023).

3.1 Quality assurance, enhancement and development at global level

The phenomena of globalization have fuelled the emergence of concepts and models for quality assurance. According to Lemaitre (2002) globalization has impacted the definition of quality and the methods utilised for determining it, in the universities throughout the world. This is an oversight because quality is context relative, thus the diverse contexts of the universities should not be ignored in defining and measuring quality.

Lemaitre (2002) insists that globalization and colonialism are not the same but they have some similarities. She highlights that the two concepts have common features such as they both have imposition of culture, politics and economic priorities but differ in the sense that in globalization there is no explicit will to conquer.

Lemaitre (2002) further argues that globalization has resulted in two contradictory views of HE, which she termed the traditional view and the operational or entrepreneurial view. The traditional view is described to be vested in high sovereignty of states, cultural autonomy, stability of HEIs and academic identity. The change was well captured by Wallerstein (cited in Lemaitre, 2002< p.30) "sovereignty of states declined, everyone's ability to resist rules of the market has disappeared, possibility of cultural autonomy has been virtually annulled and the stability of academics and identities are now into serious question." Thus, the traditional view of HE changed from an international perspective (focused and defined at the level of nation states) into a global or transitional one, built on transnational cooperation at the economic level, capitalist class of the political level and the culture ideology of consumerism at the cultural level (Sklair cited in Lemaitre, 2002, p. 31). These views brought about feelings of uncertainty and doubt of staff at university's identities as they grapple with the task of responding to demands of the new context under the global ideology of consumerism. Specifically, to HE, the traditional view was that universities were concerned with the mastery of discipline content, enhancement of qualified and selected few students and the development research based on the disciplinary priorities. Under the operational view of HE, knowledge is defined mainly as information to solve problems, students are considered as products or customers, academics became facilitators rather than educators and research is now a development project funded by corporations wishing to improve their position in the market place.

Historically, the period after the Word War II the public sector underwent a major shift to concepts and models of management science (Lockett, 2007). In brief, management science

operated on beliefs and assumptions such as: the goals and objectives are to be determined in advance, top-down monitoring and control approaches, the use of scientific methods to measure efficiency, evaluation by standardized instruments, conditions for implementation are fixed (Parsons, 1995). However, the assumption that the conditions of implementation are fixed is not practical as the context has some elements of structure, culture and agency that vary and may serve as constraints or enablement in the implementation process. At UNAM the quality policy is developed on the bases of its internal and external context as well as its historical context and development (<https://www.unam.edu.na/cequam/downloadable-documents>).

Furthermore, neo-liberal reforms in the 1980's led to a structural adjustment for better economic performance that included cuts in the public funding (Lockett, 2007). These structural adjustments included importing new management ideas and technologies from the private sector such as: public organisations should be governed by a sense of mission... government should monitor and improve the performance of public service via quality assurance. In Namibia these adjustments led to a change in status of UNAM from being the only national university to having to compete with two more universities for financial resources from the government and for students. Following these developments Namibia established quality assurance agencies (Namibia Council for Higher Education for tertiary institutions, Namibia Training Authorities for vocational training centres, Namibia Quality Framework- to regulate qualification and accredit programmes, Namibia Quality Authority) due to what Parsons (1995) and Neave (1998) term the emergence of an evaluative state. Therefore, the first national quality assurance agencies were established in the early 1990's in the UK, Europe and Australasia (Lockett, 2007).

Brennan and Shah (2000, p. 11) describe a generic pragmatic model for conducting quality assurance in higher education. The model has the following features:

- ☐ A national body with legal status but independent from the government to outline the quality assurance methods and procedures.
- ☐ Self-evaluation by institutions of higher education by academic themselves.
- ☐ External evaluation by peers that include a site-visit and face-to-face interaction
- ☐ Published reports with recommendations for improvement.

The emergence of quality assurance, enhancement and development has received some critique from some authors. The uncertainties and tensions left in the wake of globalisation in HE has been viewed as colonisation of universities by a foreign ideology, imposed by a globalised economy on higher education throughout the world (Lemaitre, 2002). The commercial and industrial models of quality promoted by globalization are not suitable for multipurpose higher education institutions (Vroeijenstijn, 2000). For example, it is indeed true that for a university it is not clear whether the product is the graduate, the programme or the research output (Vroeijenstijn, 2000). Lockett (2007) argues that the absolute value of academic level or quality of a graduate does not exist. In fact, what is generally accepted as quality is simply a mere opinion (Vroeijenstijn, 2000). Barnett (1999) goes further to say quality is an empty concept linked to the idea of what education should be for (quality as fit for purpose). Clearly the definitions of quality are never neutral nor innocent but they are about power balances within higher education and between higher education and other social actors. Despite all these varied definitions of quality, quality assurance is crucial in HE and there is an urgent need to contextualise and redefine quality considering traditions of HE that should be preserved and integrated some aspects of globalisation as well.

3.2 Quality assurance, enhancement and development at national level

In Namibia at the national level the quality assurance agency is called the Namibian Council of Higher Education (NCHE). Its function is dual in nature, it responsible for programme accreditation and for national audits of HEIs. It was established

by the Higher Education Act 2003 and was launched in November 2005. Fifteen years ago, NCHE was established in response to global trends in higher education such as amongst others: demand for greater accountability and efficiency in the use of public funds, mass participation (student massification) in education vs shrinking resources, greater stakeholder scrutiny of education and training processes, mobility of students and cross border education due to internationalisation of higher education and the changes brought about by information and technology. This change was designed to bring about tighter financial discipline and enforce accountability on those who spend taxpayers' money. Again Lemaitre (2002) argues that society and its members are demanding that someone provides a measure of quality assurance, in the face of massification and to provide a measure of value-for-money.

Therefore, the objectives of NCHE are:

☐ To promote:

- The establishment of a coordinated higher education system.
- Access of students to higher education institutions.
- Quality assurance in higher education

☐ To advise on the allocation of money to public higher education institutions.

☐ To accredit study programs offered at institutions of higher education.

☐ Monitor the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions.

In Namibia, at national level quality assurance is defined as an umbrella term which includes various models for ensuring quality, including programme accreditation, institutional audit and institutional accreditation. Programme accreditation focuses on the quality of higher education academic programmes. It is accountability oriented with an aspect of improvement. The accreditation programme is informed by key principles, values and ideas and beliefs some of which are listed below:

☐ Higher education institutions are the main custodians of quality and have the primary responsibility for the quality of their programs and assurance thereof.

☐ The programme accreditation system should be internationally aligned in order to ensure academic programs of good quality for the benefits of the students and other beneficiaries of higher education.

☐ The program accreditation system should be fully contextualized within Namibia's specific circumstances and needs.

☐ The program accreditation system should be transparent, user-friendly and adaptable and should not stifle diversity and innovation through its policies and processes.

The NCHE institutional audit system focuses on an institution's policies, systems, strategies and resources for quality assurance of its academic activities. Audit panels comprising of experts in higher education issues, conduct evaluations using the NCHE's audit requirement benchmarks. Unlike programme accreditation system the audit system is improvement oriented with integrated parts of accountability. Its underlying principles are:

☐ It complements the institutional quality assurance mechanisms by setting and monitoring national benchmarks.

☐ It should improve the quality of higher education institutions by evaluating institutional quality assurance systems against national requirements.

☐ The institutional audit system is applicable to public and private higher education institutions and all sites of delivery, as part of a coordinated higher education system.

☐ The institutional audit system should be fit for its purpose: it should entail appropriate and necessary mechanisms for achieving its objectives.

Overall the task of NCHE is to ensure accountability and quality service to the beneficiaries of higher education. Through the audit system the set national requirements for institutional mechanisms for assuring quality and to validate whether the requirements are met, and to make recommend appropriate improvement measures when necessary. This enable student and other beneficiaries of higher education to have confidence in the quality of learning opportunities offered by higher education institutions. The process also provides to the public independently verified information about institutions and their mechanisms to secure and

promote quality. As opposed to the situation prior to the establishment of NCHE, the higher education institutions were responsible for its own internal quality audits and there was no uniformity in the process for all higher education institutions. Governments may argue that the audit culture enhanced quality of teaching and learning at higher education institutions but critics in education are of the opinion that it has rather created a culture of compliance and a climate of fear (Shore & Wright, 1999) and this might be more evident at the institutional level.

3.3 Quality assurance, enhancement and development at UNAM

To begin with, a short overview of the institutional context. UNAM has a well-established quality assurance through the Center for Quality Assurance and Management (CEQUAM). There is a clear policy on quality assurance activities that are to be carried out by CEQUAM staff, UNAM academic staff and various UNAM stakeholders. CEQUAM coordinates all activities starting from the need assessment, program development, program registration on National Qualification Framework (NQF) through the National Qualification Authority (NQA), Program accreditation and all evaluations. CEQUAM as a quality assurance body coordinates all activities with relevant stake-holders and the National Council of Higher Education (NCHE). Most of the key aspects of academic activities such as teaching and research are quality assured. Each faculty in the UNAM has external stakeholders who are industry experts in that field. Review of programs occurs every after five years, where self-evaluation reports by every department are conducted and further evaluations by external experts in the discipline. During programme development, those stakeholders' consultations and their critics and contributions are valued. There are moderators for the modules offered (internal and external). There student-lecturer evaluation is done to ensure quality teaching (but can be bias). Issues related to academic are discussed through various management committee

/faculty boards/senate before a decision is taken.

However, despite stipulations by the policy and CEQUAM activities and commitments there are shortcomings. An increase in access to high education by have increased student diversity (more students with diverse needs and varied backgrounds) this contributes to structural constraints such as (institutional facilities, prevailing academic staff and their attitudes, national and institutional policies and resources). There is a need to offer psycho-social support to academic staff and students to promote student epistemological access to education.

Conversations with academics has revealed that, there is no regulated mentoring and peer coaching among academics. The university has a mentoring policy but it is not implemented. The role of academic developers should be to work together with the teaching and learning unit to change this sad reality. Professional development is encouraged but not fully supported by the university management. Furthermore, there is a need for regulated mentoring and peer coaching among students, despite the inequalities brought about by students' diverse backgrounds. High academic workloads hinder professional development opportunities. There is an absence of or less close involvement of CEQUAM and university management in quality standards of academic activities this may be because of the fact that CEQUAM is only located at the main campuses and are not represented at the satellite campuses. There is a minimum or no desire among academics and students to confront existing norms and hierarchies and ideologies because they work in silos. The university offers some programmes that are not relevant and or suitable for the job market in Namibia such as the Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Arts (Languages), students who study these programmes end up as teachers. The university also over-produces graduate in some fields that the country requires, such as Agriculture, Science, Education, Library Science, etc. The number of unemployed graduates in the afore-mentioned fields evidences this. This talks to a conflict between quality as fitness of purpose or as fitness for purpose.

Although policies are forms of structural enablement, some are not reviewed to cater to the contemporary complex educational demands,

especially for some groups of students; the dissemination and implementation of policies remain a constraint to respond to the diverse needs of the students. To inspire and influence staff to implement policies require constant improvement of existing policies.

The implementation of some quality assurance activities as stipulated in the policy are overlooked/compromised by some departments and faculty members. Although there are moderators, some exam papers or exam scripts are not moderated. Most Continuous assessments are not moderated. Students' assessment scripts are getting missing. Most assignments/tests are compromised either by cheating/coping and are poorly set. Deficiency of large venue for assessment compromise the value of such assessments as students share answers amongst themselves. No lecturer monitoring or peer tutoring or academic collaboration (academics are free to and take charge of their modules more independently) which may compromise the quality of teaching. Shortage of external experts in some modules/fields also compromise quality teaching and assessment on those modules.

3.4 Quality assurance, enhancement and development at JMU

The quality management department of the JMU explain the function of quality assurance like this: "Quality in teaching and learning depends first and foremost on the daily commitment of teachers, students and staff at the University of Würzburg. As an overarching organisation, it has supportively agreed on comprehensive participation, regulated processes and standards. In the resulting quality management system, quality cycles of the faculties intertwine with those at the central level. The common goal is to create the best possible conditions for good teaching and the organisation of studies" (JMU Quality Management, 2023). In detail it means that the University of Würzburg has a "quality culture" expressed as an understanding of quality which demonstrates the principles on which the QM system is based. Therefore, guidelines for action for the actors are provided and used in particular in the construction and further development of

central and decentralized components of the system. The idea is that the University of Würzburg achieves a concrete understanding of quality through a multi-perspective view of the area of study and teaching: "Broad participation in its design and ongoing operation is also crucial for the acceptance of a binding QM system. Therefore, care is taken to ensure that both the relevant status groups and all faculties are involved in all central processes" (<https://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/qm/qualitaetsmanagement-fuer-studium-und-lehre/qualitaetsverstaendnis-des-qm-systems>). In the QM system, central and faculty-level elements intertwine. In particular, the central elements ensure the framework of the QM system, which is binding due to external specifications and also demonstrate the individual design freedom of the faculties. The system itself is reviewed annually and adjusted if necessary, so change is supposed to be inherent in the system. Target group-specific information is provided on the objectives, functionality and responsibilities of the QM system and its components. With the QM system, the University of Würzburg has established continuous improvement processes based on the Deming Principle Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA cycle). That means with each run, improvements are made that raise the processes to a higher level of quality. Particular attention is paid to deriving binding measures for the further development of studies and teaching and to checking their implementation (<https://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/qm/qualitaetsmanagement-fuer-studium-und-lehre/qualitaetsverstaendnis-des-qm-systems/>).

It really is a complex quality management system with the main focus on the study programmes. There are different quality cycles at the programme level from annual monitoring to 8-year-cycle of accreditation as quality management. The different instruments in the quality management system are the survey system itself, the annual review and the programme audits (for details see the following document in English: https://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/fileadmin/ext00267/A3-QM_und_OE/QM-Seite/230509_QM_Abstract_EN.pdf). All study programmes at the JMU must be accredited and

especially when a new study programme is introduced, it must be carefully examined by the quality management. Although hearings are held and external experts are also consulted, degree programmes are approved for which there is no explicit labour market. Actually, additionally introduced study programmes (bachelor's or master's programmes) must be "resource-neutral", but sometimes they are an additional burden for the existing staff. Thus, there is a similar development like in Namibia that is mentioned in 3.3.

4. Academic developers' role to quality assurance and enhancement of teaching and learning

Context plays a crucial role to the quality of teaching and learning. In other words, while it is all good to widen access to higher education for the students, the institution additionally needs to be prepared to accommodate the diverse student body in terms of human and infrastructure resources. This is because the input (resources) influences the output (graduates) and ultimately the quality of the both the process and the product.

More attention has not been given to the performance appraisal system at UNAM. When the time for completing it came, some academics treated it as a chore that they had to do as soon as possible and once submitted that is the end of it. For one this compulsory act is never viewed as a quality assurance process rather it is thought as a system that allowed academics to report themselves to their bosses with regard to how well academic staff are performing their academic duties. The system is a good initiative but its implementation is not effective. This appraisal form has never been discussed with the new academic staff yet they will be expected to complete one. All these years some complete the forms out of compliance to ensure that their name will be listed amongst those who have submitted their appraisal form. Because many of the academic staff do not understand the purpose or rationale for this performance appraisal form, it is always, a struggle to get them to complete it, let alone complete it truthfully. The poor

understanding of the staff appraisal form could have arisen from the fact that there is no feedback or discussion after submitting it. Discussion is crucial if academic staff are to understand and appreciate the process. The appraisal system at UNAM focuses on the values for academics e.g. teaching, research and community engagement. However, one wish that the agents hold dialogues on this system then its implementation once understood will improve and will initiate the change they desire to see in their universities.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, quality is a crucial issue in HE context. It is not the responsibility of the university management or the quality assurance unit only but rather a collective responsibility. Thus, quality is stakeholder relative and context bound. The assessment of quality should rely on a clearly defined criterion. All the stakeholders of the university are responsible for quality thus critical self-evaluation by academics and student evaluation provide crucial feedback for enhancing and improving quality of teaching and learning. Academics and academic developers have a greater responsibility to promote quality enhancement amongst the staff members and facilitate a common understanding of quality, based on the quality assurance policy of the university by engaging colleagues in conversations concerning quality of teaching and learning activities. This means that quality is more than just policing on the own work and it should not merely be a matter of compliance with the public audit. Rather academics should strive towards a quality culture that values development and improvement in a system that is not deficit of efficiency but always striving to find room for improvement on the good practices. There was a mental shift regarding the meaning of fitness of purpose (HE national goals) and fitness for purpose (mission and vision of the university). Quality therefor is context based at both the level of global, national, institutional, and departmental. Formative quality assessment should be encouraged as opposed to evaluative, for example academic staff often only evaluate the

teaching and learning at the end offering a certain module (summative) instead of during the process of teaching the module to provide us an opportunity to change and improve where necessary. Furthermore, only the examinations are moderated (summative assessment) to ensure the quality of assessment but equally important is the tests, assignments and projects given during the process of teaching and learning. Evaluation during and after a programme is crucial in the improvement and maintaining of quality. Certainly, this module has equipped me with a different lens of looking at quality assurance approaches.

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