

# Implementation of Quality Assurance Systems in East African Public Universities: A Preliminary Assessment

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## Abstract:

Worldwide, it is acknowledged that education is the engine of national development as it empowers individuals to improve their skills and reduce inequality on various fronts. Higher education plays a significant role as agents in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The drive for quality assurance in higher educational institutions has recently become key, especially when evaluating their performance. The establishment of quality assurance offices and setting regional, national and university policy frameworks are some of the key strategies to improve quality of education. Despite the quality assurance institutionalization and the policy frameworks in place, the general performance of universities remains problematic. Using documentary review of literature, focus group discussions and interviews of academic staff in two East Africa Universities, this paper documents and examines the difficulties in implementing quality assurance systems in African Public Universities. The study discovered that scarce financial resources, inadequate human resources, negative perceptions, lack of better understanding about what the Office of Quality Assurance does and doesn't do and poor physical infrastructure are the major difficulties hindering the implementation of effective quality assurance systems in higher institutions of learning. Ideas for improvement include availing more funds to the quality assurance units and granting them more autonomy.

**Keywords:** Quality Assurance Systems; Implementation; Public Universities

## Introduction:

Higher education in Africa is taken as an engine of national development. Post-independent Africa higher education policies were defined within the framework of the strategies for national development. The education institutions of the time were widely seen as tools to train professionals. They were also perceived as institutions to extend the frontiers of knowledge, and also as engines of economic growth and development [1]. Before independence, the colonial higher education institutions were meant majorly to serve colonial masters by enabling the effective running of the colonial administration. Today, universities are recognized as major players in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Universities can only play a big role if they are providing quality education [2]. A good quality education is one that leads to economically productive, developing sustainable livelihoods and enhancing individual well-being [3].

Before the 1980s, universities and other higher learning institutions in Africa and the world were perceived to be centers of excellence exhibiting quality in all aspects [4]. With the introduction of liberalisation policy on education, there was a gradual shift towards regulation including establishment of organs for quality assurance in universities in different parts of the world [5]; [4]; [6]; [7].

In the last few decades or so, the East African University structure and functions have undergone major changes. During the 1980s and 1990s, there were very few universities in East Africa with Makerere University in Uganda, the University of Nairobi and University of Dar es salaam in Tanzania dominating. The neo-liberal changes inspired by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) meant reducing state funding. Policies and regulatory frameworks were established to ensure order and protection in the competition created by allowing other private players in the higher education industry [7]. Currently, there are so many universities in East Africa including public and private. Most of these universities have established and institutionalized offices related to enhancing quality education.

In East Africa, the practice of quality assurance in universities is derived from the acts of the National Commissions or Councils for Higher Education (NCHE) in their respective countries and the Inter-University Council for East Africa. They borrowed a leaf from the Bologna process that fundamentally changed the European Higher Education System [8].

For the purpose of this study, quality is defined as quality assurance which means the mechanisms put in place to guarantee that the education provided in universities is good and meet expected standards. In East Africa, the Quality Assurance Handbook for East Africa, titled “Roadmap to Quality” which is composed of 4 volumes, is in place. Countries have their own documents of quality assurance. Individual universities and other higher institutions of higher learning have come up with their own policies approved by the governance organs [9]. Despite commendable efforts made to ensure the quality of education and other services provided at higher education institutions in East Africa, there are still doubts regarding the general performance of the quality assurance systems in East African universities [10]. There are two types of universities – public and private universities. The focus of mostly education regulatory institutions is on private universities yet, the quality of education in both public and private universities remains a primary concern, regardless of whether it is acknowledged or not [10]. Many public universities still have learning systems that do not fulfill national and international education standards. The recent debate in Uganda over the universities running ‘expired’ academic programs is a case in point. It is against this background that the study examines that factors that affect the implementation of quality assurance systems in East African Public Universities.

## Literature review

### Studies on Enhancing Quality Assurance in Higher Institutions of Learning

Quality assurance in higher learning institutions has attracted commendable attention from policymakers and other education stakeholders around the globe. Different strategies have been introduced to ensure quality education that reflects the intended educational goals [5]. These strategies include: employee satisfaction surveys to seek views and ideas from academic staff on the relevance of a particular course or program of study and the alumni satisfaction that focuses on collecting opinions from recent graduates on teaching and learning issues [4]; [11]. Other measures include monitoring all academic and administrative departments, monitoring of teaching and learning and returning feedback to the management and academic staff, the use of student course

evaluation as the way of getting students' feedback on their experiences with the individual module, courses, and teaching programs and monitoring of university examinations [12]

## 2.2 Factors Affecting the Implementation of Quality Assurance Measures

The implementation of the intended outcomes of introducing quality assurance measures depends on the active involvement of the students [5]. Underlined those students should be involved in quality assurance matters because they can see the situation from the learner's perspective. Students participate in quality assurance matters through diverse methods such as responding to focus group interviews and questionnaires, participating in QA- related working groups, being members of QA committees and involving themselves in QA processes [5]; [12]. However, some challenges have affected students' active involvement in quality assurance. The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) indicated in the 2000s that it is sometimes difficult to get qualified students to participate in QA processes. For instance, students not participating in faculty or institutional boards may lack the necessary tacit competencies to participate in quality assurance evaluations. In addition, language and cultural issues present challenges to the involvement of students in QA initiatives [13]. This implies that the failure of students to participate effectively in quality assurance processes represents one of the challenges of maintaining quality issues in universities in different parts of the world.

Apart from the low participation of university students in QA, the implementation of QA guidelines in higher learning institutions in Africa particularly is hindered by several challenges. These include the increasing number of students in African universities while the number of education infrastructure and manpower remains constant. Inadequate funding, lack of academic freedom, corruption among leaders and other members, and failure of some private universities to comply with the national guidelines [8]; [14]

Studies from Tanzania shows that the failure of private universities to abide by national standards has posed a great problem in the implementation of quality assurance guidelines. [15] Underlined institutional constraints like inadequate financing, inadequate personnel etc. which restrain the effective implementation of quality assurance guidelines in private universities in Tanzania [15]. Similarly, [16] asserted that the expansion of private universities in Africa was accompanied by employing junior staff who lack the required academic qualifications and working experience in teaching university students.

In sum, quality assurance systems in higher education remain under-researched and to an extent biased towards private universities. However, public universities also face challenges. Consequently, there is a dearth of knowledge on the implementation of quality assurance systems in East African public universities. This study will provide insights on challenges faced by public universities in implementing quality management standards. We also suggest solutions which may be of help to other public universities in a similar setting to improve the quality and standards of their quality of education provisioning.

### Methodology :

The study was undertaken in Tanzania and Uganda. One university from each country was selected for study - the University of Dar es Salaam, specifically Mkwawa University College of Education (MUCE) and Kabale University in Uganda. Mkwawa University College of Education (MUCE) was established in 2005 as a Constituent College of the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM). Kabale University was established in 2002 as a private university. It was transformed into a public university in 2015. Both universities are owned by their respective governments. Both institutions offer undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes. Like other higher education institutions, they play important roles in national development mainly through personnel capacity building and creation of knowledge, sharing research

results and provision of quality public services to the community.

The study used a qualitative approach and purposive and convenience sampling methods. The researchers are employees of MUCE and Kabale University and the convenience sampling method helped in getting information from participants (the sample) who are 'convenient' for the researchers to access because of budgetary constraints. According to <sup>[17]</sup>, a convenient sampling method is relevant to be used when the target population is defined in terms of a very broad category. Our research fits to that purpose. Likewise, purposive sampling technique focuses on using participants who meet criteria. Academic staff members selected were included as they were found relevant and met such criteria. In total 28 females and 42 males were interviewed. In total, 70 participants were interviewed.

The study used document analysis, observation, interviews with key informants and focus group discussion as sources of data. We also extensively searched for available literature on quality assurance systems from websites and physical libraries of the universities. Collected data was analysed qualitatively based on identified themes linked with the study's specific objectives. The coding process was based on the inductive analytical approach that relies on the meaning that respondents attach to their given context. NVivo12 software was used to transcribe and analyse the data

### **Study results and discussion:**

#### Meaning of Quality Assurance

It is widely acknowledged that stakeholders' clarity of understanding on any issue of their concern and their active engagement and implementation can influence the expected performance. Hence, this part was considered essential to be examined for better analysis of the status of the challenges faced in implementation of quality assurance systems. From interviews and FGD, various conceptions of quality assurance emerged. Mainly the respondents conceived quality assurance as diverse processes and activities done by the university geared towards attaining the standards of process and products.

Below are the responses from MUCE.

The way I understand it is that quality assurance is a supervision of various university activities to ensure that they are undertaken at a required and expected standard and quality.

I view quality assurance as all activities undertaken by the institution and members of the respective institution, in our case, the College, which aims to ensure the quality of services provided to the customers. If it is about ensuring the products reach the standards required. This includes how instructors lecture in the class and how one prepares the lesson to the standard required so that better services can be provided to the customers. We have, for instance, our colleagues who are engaging in strengthening infrastructures. So at our College, although QA is each person's activity, we still have a Unit that gives us a guideline for Quality Assurance.

When you are talking about quality or something of quality, there must be guidelines or laws in institutions which provide a guideline that is quality and this is not of quality. Thus, the function of this QA Unit is to make sure that various activities are undertaken in a standard way based on the available laws.

The quotation below narrates further a better understanding of the link between institutional quality assurance practices and global agenda to ensure better provision of quality education in universities.

In East Africa, we know that these East African countries have entered global agreements on various fronts. In the 2000s there were millennium development goals (MDGs) but now we have sustainable development goals (SDGs). For instance, Goal No. 4 touches on education. And when we are talking about quality assurance now, we are not just looking at the teaching and learning process, but we are also checking about the strategies used in teaching, the service provided but also the quality of the environment where that education is provided.

Among many interviewed members of the academic staff, one respondent had a unique conception of quality assurance. To him quality assurance was all about finding solutions to various challenges hindering the teaching and learning process. He stated: Quality assurance means to check the challenges that can happen during teaching and learning and find solutions before the end of process of teaching and learning.

The findings from Kabale University are almost similar.

Below are the responses.

Quality assurance is about establishing standards, guidelines and procedures to avoid quality problems and keep the authenticity of the good or service being provided throughout its development. Quality assurance is one of the ways in which we can ascertain that there is quality in service delivery and also how work is being done for instance in teaching to ensure that everything done in the university is effective. It is the way of maintaining standards in an organisation and how the standards are maintained. It is the way of maintaining the degree of excellence of the activities that take place in some organisations. Quality assurance is a way of maintaining the degree of excellence of the activities that take place in some organisations. These findings are in a way similar to those of <sup>[18]</sup> in a study of quality assurance carried out at Makerere University. The study found that academics have diverse conceptions of what it entails as quality in higher education but generally agree on its role as a transformative, fit for purpose, and exceptional. Therefore, quality assurance in higher education is critical to ensure students gets what is expected. Another previous comparative study among Turkish and Australian business men by <sup>[19]</sup> found related results regarding the quality assurance on higher education is supposed to be fitting for purpose and transformational in terms of what is ought to be. Status of Performance of Quality Assurance Practices at MUCE and Kabale University Measuring academic staff perceptions of quality assurance lends to multiple models depending on institutional focus and aspects to measure <sup>[20]</sup>. Interviews and focus group discussions sought to examine academic staff perception regarding the status of quality assurance practices in the study area. It was apparent that the performance of the quality assurance unit at MUCE and Kabale University was satisfactory. The following voices at MUCE are evidence to that: In general, the performance is good, because for now quality assurance does not deal with only the output it also deals with the process. For example, issues like the cleanliness of the learning environment, supply of various teaching and learning resources, staff welfare, quality of the health services at our health center and many other areas are part and parcel of the quality assurance process. I think the quality assurance unit is doing well - they listen to stakeholders, especially when considering their number and the areas they should work. They have a very tedious job of making sure that teaching and learning is going on well. Therefore, we should not ignore

what they are doing. Quality assurance unit has made teaching effective. From day one, when we open the college, we start to teach. They go around to ensure teaching is being done. So, in terms of supervising teaching, the Unit is doing great.

#### **Respondents at Kabale University had almost similar views:**

The university has taken huge strides in service provision due to close monitoring and attention at every stage of the quality assurance process. There has been improvement on examinations management and regulations on lecturer's student relationship. The quality assurance unit has ensured all academic programs are accredited. There is smoothness in running academic programs and better service delivery generally unlike before when the quality assurance unit had not been established. The class timetables, monitoring and evaluation of lecturers are now done better. On the other hand, other respondents showed some dissatisfaction at the methods of work used by the quality assurance staff when doing their work which demoralises and demotivates staff. At MUCE, several voices were recorded in this respect:

When it comes to performance, I think so many things are good, except there should be improvement in some areas. There should be a wise way of dealing with some issues. For example, when a member from the quality assurance opposes your decisions in front of the students, I think that is not right. I also think there are some issues in which quality assurance office over reacts. For example, when they decide to stop the undertaking of the test yet all the preparations have already been done.

#### **Similarly, another member of the academic staff added that:**

Most of the time members of the quality assurance unit can rush in implementing a decision without consultations. This can demotivate some members of academic staff. For example, the idea of invigilator not going with the phone in the examination room. The idea itself is not bad, but implementation came very abruptly. For example, when you want to communicate on important matter, how do you do it? The dissatisfaction at Kabale University on the performance of the quality assurance systems are as below: The quality assurance staff seem not to operate full time. They appear at the end of the semester to check on examinations handling but the rest of the time they are absent. Some people don't recognise their presence at all. I don't know what they do. Their visibility is close

to zero may be because they have few personnel working in that office and possibly, they are not financially facilitated very well. The responses above indicate that there is a misunderstanding on the part of academic staff about what the office of quality assurance does and doesn't do. The methods of work of the office of quality assurance are also in question indicating there is a little or no engagement with academic staff before implementing decisions and policies.

### **Implementation Challenges of quality assurance processes at MUCE and Kabale University**

Notwithstanding the various initiatives undertaken by the government of Tanzania and Uganda and its various responsible institutions to ensure better quality assurance practices, several challenges are hindering the achievement of the target. Focus group discussions and interviews revealed several challenges that hinder quality assurance implementation.

#### **Negative Perceptions**

One of the challenges which were frequently cited was negative perceptions among some members of academic staff towards the QA process. People seemed not to understand the general purpose of the QA; hence they tended to resist or hate to be monitored. There is a notion that QA works like a police department. Others think that QA is there just to search for problems and report them. Others went further and revealed that in some cases, QA reports some minor issues without the initial negotiation with the member in question, creating a sense of misunderstanding between the two sides. The following quotations provide some evidence of these findings. See below the perceptions from MUCE.

Staff members perceive QA officers to be operating like police.

There are challenges like perception. There are those who view the QA unit negatively.

They think the QA unit is there to look for people's mistakes in order to punish them.

Similarly, at Kabale University, similar voices were recorded:

Our staff misunderstand the office of quality assurance. We are here to help improve the systems but not to punish or report anyone.

There is lack of cooperation with academic units. Quality assurance is just a coordinating unit but most of the work is done by

academic departments. But at times you have to push certain things for implementation.

Such stated negative perceptions among academic staff on quality assurance systems and processes underlines some problems facing higher learning institutions towards effective implementation of quality assurance systems. A study by <sup>[21]</sup> in Vietnam that focused on examining factors affecting how academics view external and internal quality monitoring systems had shown somehow a related result. The study found that with regard to quality assurance and quality monitoring exercises undertaken academics had some doubts about the results that make no differences in terms of improving quality services. Hence, proposed effective engagement of academics in analysing, interpreting quality assurance policy issues as well active implementation of the practices in their given context and working environment. Indeed, the academics are regarded as important stakeholders of quality assurance practices whose views are to be taken on board to improve better implementation of quality assurance systems in higher learning institutions <sup>[22]; [23]</sup>.

#### **Poor Infrastructure**

To reach the requirements of the nation through Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs), better infrastructure is needed. But, due to the increased number of student's poor infrastructures are experienced by a number of universities in East Africa and Tanzania and Uganda in particular to support various academic activities. For instance, most of the infrastructure used at MUCE were constructed in 1950s and used as St. Michael's and St. Georges School (1959-1964), Mkwawa High School (1964-1977), Mkwawa College of National Education (1977-1992), Mkwawa High School (1992-2005) and Mkwawa University College of Education (2006....) (MUCE, 2014). The buildings are old. One respondent from MUCE had this to say .Insufficient infrastructures such as classrooms, furniture, internet connectivity and books are challenges to us. For example, think of classes used by postgraduates. Some of you got the opportunity to study in the developed world. If it is true that our institution wants to be international by the year 2061, then something needs to be done on part of infrastructure.

Similar challenges of infrastructure are highlighted at Kabale University. In 2016, Yoweri Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda who had visited Kabale University acknowledged the inadequate infrastructure at the public university and pledged UGX 47 billion to help in the construction of modern facilities. However, the President's pledge has yet to be honored (The New Vision Tuesday, May 14, 2019 page 6). According to the Auditor General's report for the 2016/17 financial year, an audit inspection of the university noted that the physical infrastructure, specifically lecture halls, laboratories, library and staff common rooms were inadequate. He noted that the lack of adequate physical infrastructure contravenes the universities and other tertiary standards. At Kabale University, these infrastructural challenges are captured in the voices of one respondent

We have long been faced with serious infrastructural challenges. Lecture rooms are not enough. Government has recruited many staff but have no office space. Lecturers end up teaching under tents or under trees sometimes. Personal cars at times operate as offices.

It was further uncovered both at MUCE and Kabale University that insufficient infrastructure is not only a problem for students' learning but also for academic staff performance. For example, there were some offices without computers, tables or chairs, insufficient projectors in the lecture rooms, and Internet connectivity was reported to be always the challenge which contributed to academic staff inefficiency in preparation for teaching. One respondent in a focus group discussion said:

Computers are lacking in almost all the rooms so even when the projectors are there, they mean nothing without a computer. Also, Science students lack equipment's in the laboratories and the quality assurance unit should report such to management.

The same challenges were revealed at Kabale University:

The university is struggling hard to put in place modern laboratories. It is up to the office of quality assurance to make the necessary 'noise' but unfortunately, they

may not be aware that that is their job to raise such issues to the attention of management.

The above statement demonstrates the challenges faced by some public universities in fulfilling their objectives. In Africa, south of Sahara similar challenges have been reported. One of the examples is in Nigeria, where although higher education systems was established almost a century ago in 1932 till now many of its higher learning institutions are faced with multiple challenges hindering effective implementations of quality assurance systems such as lack of better infrastructures to support effective teaching and learning activities <sup>[24]; [25]</sup> Indeed, if universities are not keen and work seriously to address such challenges, quality assurance in higher education cannot be attained as intended.

### **Financial Constraints**

Another challenge revealed was bureaucracy and financial constraints. A lot of issues that are being reported to the office of QA need actions that are cost-related. For example, internet connectivity issues need some technical maintenance, buying new projectors and computers, broken chairs and tables, broken classrooms' windows and the like. All these issues will need the involvement of the management and the other concerned offices such as the planning office, estate department, procurement, and accountancy office to make firm decisions on the reported matter. The bureaucratic nature of working and decision making along these offices and the always reported insufficiency hinder timely supply of resources and consequently contribute to attaining standards in teaching and learning in HLIs. One participant said:

You see, many problems reported to the QA office remain in the QA reports because the QAU itself does not have funds and it depends on the management. When the QA reports the matter to the management, there are a lot of procedures to be accomplished, particularly when money is involved in solving particular problems. For example, the issues of buying and replacing broken chairs, glass windows, internet bundles, computers and projectors. In most cases there is a

delay in solving the problems sometimes, the solution is sought forever.

Another respondent at Kabale University had this to say:

The Quality Assurance Directorate is grossly understaffed with little or no resources. In any case, it is not a fully-fledged directorate. There is need for its independence and having own budget.

Public universities are not funded sufficiently to cover the cost of inputs in order to offer quality education. In most cases, actual financial releases have been lower than approved budgets. Physical infrastructure in public universities has also not grown in tandem with enrollments. Gross under recruitment is also a result of underfunding. The recruitment plans for all public universities remain largely unimplemented. Consequently, it is not uncommon for universities to ignore the workload or teaching that is prescribed by the national regulatory institutions which compromises the quality-of-service delivery. Universities also tend to ignore the other two major functions of the university teaching staff research and community service.

Under funding also means that the facilities and equipment desired to offer effective teaching and learning at the university are lacking. In a few universities where facilities and equipment found are available, they are always in inadequate amounts to serve the surging student numbers in the university lecture rooms <sup>[26]</sup> This undoubtedly has negative ramifications for the quality of the student who eventually graduates from these universities <sup>[27]; [28]</sup>

### **Delay in Monitoring Feedback**

Another challenge was the delay in monitoring feedback reports from QAU to the academic staff. It was found the monitoring of teaching is done in the first two weeks of the semester. But the reports are produced at the end of the semester. This makes it difficult to immediately adjust if any mistake was made at the beginning of the semester.

Some lecturer at MUCE had this to say:

The key challenge I see is the extreme delay in releasing reports, and these reports not reaching the target population.

Another voice at Kabale University has a similar view:

At Kabale University, the quality assurance reports are not usually discussed. Feedback is extremely important if there has to be improvements in service delivery. No formal meetings are held between staff and the quality assurance directorate.

The above statements show that the quality assurance process delays have a negative impact in ensuring better quality services. One of the reasons behind can be due to poor working facilities and systems available. For instance, instant data entry and processing, preferably online, is critical to reduce days to work on the data collected. This is in line with <sup>[29]</sup> who insists on the importance of higher education quality assessment model that help to improve quality service delivery at university level.

### **Inadequate Knowledge about Quality Assurance Mechanisms**

Inadequate knowledge among members of the QAU on the overall issue of quality assurance and standards monitoring was also reported. Respondents said that, professionalism matters a lot when it comes to quality monitoring issues. In most cases the quality assurance team is composed of few people from given academic backgrounds and may not be qualified to represent all other many professions and specialties in universities.

One respondent from MUCE had this to say: Quality assurance is a profession. Not everyone can be able to assure quality. There are people who are extensively trained in quality assurance. But most of those we have are not well trained. In my opinion the members of the QAU in our college are from fields different from quality assurance and that could hinder their job performance. For example, as far as I know the members are from History, Development studies, Curriculum and Teaching and Physics. These people beyond guidelines they use, they may have insufficient exposure to issues of quality assurance.



At Kabale University, almost similar sentiments were raised:

The quality assurance directorate has come up with the structure at departmental and faculty levels however, it has never been actualised and implemented. The quality assurance units at faculty and department levels are not well facilitated. Most times in departments and faculties, the coordinators of quality assurance don't make formal reports. The linkage between the Directorate of Quality Assurance and the academic departments is lacking.

The statements above show that for quality assurance systems to work effectively there must be a proper understanding about what it takes among all stakeholders. Presence of professional quality assurance personnel assisted by other trained academic staff can help to meet goals better<sup>[30]</sup> Stressed the importance of training and effective systems in designing and implementing quality assurance systems among multiple stakeholders such as academics for improvement of teaching and research activities in universities.

Respondent's suggestions to strengthen the quality assurance performance at MUCE and Kabale University.

Ensuring quality in universities requires the QA unit to work with the University management to ensure that processes are defined in such a way that they will result in the success of the University. This perspective of a QA unit's responsibilities goes beyond defining the responsibilities of the QA unit to be just designing policies and conducting assessments. Management made sure that quality academic standards required QA staff to work more closely with management. This meant that the QA unit was to take responsibility for the success of the university's quality control processes and procedures.

It was suggested that, to assure quality, other departments of the university, which in one way or another contribute to teaching and learning should be checked for quality.

Quality assurance shouldn't just be for teaching. There are other departments that affect teaching that must be given priority.

The general external environment, in one way or another, affects teaching.

If you think QA is all about teaching and learning, then it becomes all misleading. For example, we have the health center and there are so many questions to ask ourselves, how long it takes for a student/ lecturer to get a service at our health center. Remember, he/she only got a chance he/she needs to be immediately serviced and go back to schooling/work... Who is checking on that?

Another recommendation that the respondents put forward was the need to train all the staff at universities in order to create awareness among them on the purpose and the need of QA and their responsibilities as part of the QA process.

We need to deal with people's attitude towards quality assurance and also, members of the QA should be exposed to short training. Members should be trained to know their responsibilities and how to help others who undertake everything based on quality. I think if we change the attitude, everything will be okey.

#### **Similarly, other respondents had similar recommendations:**

The way other members of the staff perceive the QA as police and therefore, there should be awareness creation among members of the QA and the staff. The staff should understand that, QA are not there to sue anyone except for assurance of the quality

All staff should know they are part and parcel of ensuring quality. Quality assurance cuts across all departments including non-academic. It is therefore key to promote awareness on key issues of quality assurance amongst all staff. It was further suggested that to ensure quality in universities there should be external organ to check instead of self-check.

I think is not easy for people inside the institution to take care of QA. I think there should be an external quality assurance to check, for example, TCU or an organ within to check the implementation of QA activities in every university. They should also hold responsible all the universities that do

not take care of the recommendations of the QAU.

### **Similar views were echoed at Kabale University**

The National Council of Higher Education (NCHE) should constantly train the quality assurance directorate staff. They should just not train the quality assurance staff but also the academic heads of departments and deans who do the core work of quality assurance.

The above statements demonstrate that a better understanding of quality assurance systems among staff who manage QA units at college is critical. The idea is supported by [21] who proposes the need of institution arrangements to provide regular and professional development opportunities for faculty members, scholars and practitioners. This will ensure that all quality assurance stakeholders improve quality assurance performances.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

In improving academic quality at universities, quality assurance is a critical success factor. This is to ensure they provide accountability for the quality and relevance of their academic awards. This has had serious implications for all institutions to effectively put in place adequate measures to carry out the mandate of quality assurance. The evidence in the two universities in East Africa indicate the zeal to implement quality assurance systems amidst the challenges they face.

The views of academics on factors that affect the implementation of quality assurance systems in public universities are many and varied. It is clear from the findings that public universities are hounded by multiple challenges.

Despite the numerous challenges, there are prospects for improved achievement in quality assurance coming from the angle that quality assurance has become an important aspect of university administration. There should be continuous emphasis by the regulators of higher institutions of learning on the need to design, maintain and enhance quality assurance processes and procedures in all universities and higher institutions of

learning. Universities should not only ensure the quality assurance units are in place but they should also be given adequate resources to conduct their activities. The quality assurance offices should be granted more autonomy so they can effectively and efficiently discharge their work without fear or favor. Finally, we recommend that an extensive study involving a bigger study population and sample be undertaken to explore the effect of quality assurance processes and practices on teaching and learning and other university aspects in general.

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# تطبيق أنظمة ضمان الجودة في الجامعات العامة في شرق أفريقيا: تقييم أولي

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## الملخص:

يعد التعليم، من المسلم به في جميع أنحاء العالم، محرّك التنمية الوطنية؛ لأنه يحسّن مهارات الأفراد، ويحد من عدم المساواة بينهم على مختلف النواحي. ويعد التعليم العالي عاملاً مهماً في تحقيق أهداف التنمية المستدامة. لقد أصبح ضمان الجودة في مؤسسات التعليم العالي مؤخراً أمراً أساسياً، ويبرز بشكل خاص عند تقييم أدائها، كما يعد إنشاء مكاتب ضمان الجودة ووضع أطر السياسات الإقليمية والوطنية والجامعية من بين الإستراتيجيات الرئيسة لتحسين جودة التعليم. إن الأداء العام للجامعات لا يزال يمثل مشكلة، رغم إضفاء الطابع المؤسسي على ضمان الجودة وأطر السياسات المعمول بها. توثق هذه الورقة وتخصص، باستخدام المراجعة الوثائقية للأدبيات ومناقشات المجموعات المستهدفة من خلال المقابلات مع أعضاء هيئة التدريس في جامعتين بشرق إفريقيا، الصعوبات في تنفيذ أنظمة ضمان الجودة في الجامعات الحكومية الإفريقية، وتوصلت الدراسة الى أن الصعوبات الرئيسة التي تعيق تنفيذ أنظمة فعّالة لضمان الجودة في التعليم العالي هي ندرة الموارد المالية، وعدم كفاية الموارد البشرية، والتصورات السلبية، والافتقار إلى فهم أفضل لما يفعله مكتب ضمان الجودة، وضعف البنية التحتية المادية في مؤسسات التعلم. ويعد توفير المزيد من الأموال لوحدات ضمان الجودة ومنحها المزيد من الاستقلالية من ضمن أفكار التحسين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أنظمة ضمان الجودة؛ تطبيق؛ الجامعات الحكومية.