



Striving for Quality Higher Education: The Quandaries of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance Directorate at the University for Development Studies

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Quality, Higher Education, Assurance, Academic Planning, Quandaries

Received: 23 June

Revised: 24 July

Accepted: 25 August

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the quandaries of the Directorate of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance (DAPQA) of the University for Development Studies. The study adopted a mixed research approach using purposive sampling to select two staff members from the Directorate and fourteen DAPQA representatives from all the various schools and faculties in the university. The researchers personally administered the questionnaires and conducted the interviews. Descriptive statistics and frequencies were employed to analyze the quantitative data, while the qualitative data were transcribed and coded for easy identification. The study revealed that the directorate is faced with poor cooperation from the university's academic and non-academic staff. It also came to light that there were inadequate personnel and limited office space and funds to carry out their activities. The study, therefore, recommends recruiting qualified staff and continuing workshops for existing staff of the university to appreciate the role of DAPQA and the need to avail themselves whenever needed. Again, university management should organize in-service training for the staff of DAPQA and provide enough office space and funds to carry out its activities.

INTRODUCTION

Around the world, the maintenance of functional and robust quality assurance systems in the higher education sector for promoting quality academic programme development and delivery as well as HEI accountability to stakeholders is bedevilled with several challenges. This is especially so in the context of African countries, where systemic governmental support around policy and programming for quality in higher education delivery has only begun to take shape recently (Materu, 2007). The challenges that confront quality assurance in the higher education sector in Africa range from the poor expertise and capacity of staff who have responsibility for the management of quality assurance in both HEIs and agencies that serve as national and regional quality regulators to issues around the autonomy and integrity of these regulators, as well as difficulties that emanate from a lack of governmental support in terms of the financing of quality assurance agendas in individual African countries.

A study conducted by Holm-Nielsen et al. (2005) indicated that even though mechanisms are there to ensure the dissemination of best practices by the academic quality assurance agencies, which would lead to an overall improvement in the HEI system, higher education institutions are facing unprecedented challenges in the 21st century. This supports the study by Weir (2009), who indicated that the establishment of academic quality assurance directorates in universities is not evidence that standards and good practises in ensuring quality are internally consistent, and there is evidence that quality assurance mechanisms are applied without sufficient attention to context. These challenges reflect both national and regional efforts to promote quality assurance in higher learning institutions. In Ghana, over the years, there has been a tremendous effort towards access to education, especially at the tertiary level, with the number of universities and other tertiary institutions on the rise, but the key problem is quality (Adu-Oppong, 2014).

According to Baryeh (2009), in spite of many reforms in Ghanaian higher education to make it more responsive to citizens, the system is still not without serious problems and challenges. Baryeh (2009) identifies the high rate of population in tertiary institutions, poor financial conditions, and many others as some challenges to ensuring quality in higher institutions. The author again added that these have resulted in poor teaching and learning and inadequate infrastructure, which, as a result, make students sit in pairs or stand in windows during lectures and several others. This is evidence that the quality assurance agencies in Ghana face numerous challenges in the implementation of their mechanisms. It is important to highlight that most tertiary institutions in Ghana do not have the needed infrastructure, such as libraries and resources, to fuel the capacity building of learners. Also, the issue of low quality in Ghanaian higher learning institutions is partly attributed to the kind of mechanisms put in place to ensure that graduates come out well-prepared. Lornas (2002) presents that the aim of quality assurance in tertiary institutions is to guarantee the improvement of standards and quality in tertiary institutions in order to meet the needs of students as well as stakeholders in the country.

Despite the government of Ghana's efforts to improve academic quality through the establishment of the Ghana Tertiary Education Council (GTEC), the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) and Academic Quality Assurance Units in Ghanaian tertiary institutions, academic quality is still a problem to reckon with. It is still perceived that students face a lot of challenges in terms of quality examination results, student rewards, teaching and learning, infrastructure quality, and other services (Baryeh 2009). As a result, it is observed that the Directorate of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance of the University for Development Studies is faced with numerous challenges in executing its mandate. It is for this reason that this study seeks to examine the quandaries of the Academic Planning and Quality Assurance Directorate of UDS.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper reviewed the literature on the quandaries of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance in higher institutions of learning. The review started with the state of quality assurance in higher education across the globe and in Ghana. It also discussed the challenges that confront the development and maintenance of Quality Assurance from both regional to national levels as well as the "Copycat" Adoption of Quality Assurance Frameworks from Western Countries.

Quality Assurance in Higher Education

The impact of globalization has created a shift in the mode of operations of tertiary education systems in countries worldwide. This trend is reflected in job creation opportunities and knowledge acquisition. Knowledge is one of the key evaluation factors of development (Holm-Nielsen, Thorn, & Brunner, 2005). It increases the core of a country's competitive advantage and also determines the ability to be innovative in order to ensure economic growth. Research in Latin America and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) indicated that the best strategy to reach the border of new knowledge is to connect to the exchange of people and ideas rather than to turn inward. In relation to this, an assessment was done to check the extent to which Latin American countries prepare to meet the challenges and opportunities offered by the knowledge economy and the globalization of higher education (Holm-Nielsen, Thorn, & Brunner, 2005). This assessment was based on effective Quality Assurance mechanisms that enhance success.

In order to improve the quality of higher education at institutional, national and global levels, governments and accreditation agencies have always encouraged the establishment of Quality Assurance offices (Belawati & Zuhairi, 2007). These are to help in the systematic management and assessment of mechanisms adopted by tertiary institutions in order to monitor performance against objectives and to ensure the achievement of quality outputs and quality improvement. Quality Assurance helps in setting up standards and promoting public accountability, guiding students' choices, and contributing to improving teaching, learning and administrative purposes (Harman, 2000).

According to Akpan (2016), Quality Assurance activities in universities and other tertiary institutions serve as solid grounds for preparing graduates to compete and meet internationally accepted standards and excellence. In addition, Quality Assurance in higher institutions is multi-dimensional and depends on the quality of staff, programs, students, infrastructure and the academic environment to achieve its goal. This indicates that Quality Assurance deals with the appropriateness, validity and relevance of resources available for the achievement of educational goals and priorities.

In the early 1980s, the state policymakers in the USA, France and the UK, developed an interest in academic quality and began researching new policy instruments primarily designed to guarantee and improve the quality of teaching and learning in tertiary institutions. The interest in Academic Quality Assurance by these countries spread rapidly to other nations, and as a result, many countries have adopted new forms of Academic Quality Assurance and have implemented them (Dill, 2010).

According to the Commonwealth of Australia document, in the year 2000, a quality assurance framework was implemented in Australia which had five key elements. The framework was to ensure the effectiveness of Australian higher education practices (Shah & Jarzabkowski, 2013).

In East Africa, an Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) was set to introduce Quality Assurance into the universities in 1980. Out of this, the governing board brought out the mechanisms needed to establish a Quality Assurance framework in the year 2005 and started to carry out its activities in 2006 when a standard committee was created to carry out its functions (Nkunya, 2012).

In Ghana, the National Accreditation Board (NAB) and the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) are the two main bodies specifically charged with the responsibility of ensuring quality tertiary education service delivery in Ghana. According to Attiah (2014), NCTE was established based on the act of parliament (Act 454), of 1993, with the vision of leading tertiary education to greater heights. Also, the NAB came into being by the government of Ghana in 1993 with the passing of the NAB law 1993 (PNDC 317). The NAB was also established to contribute to the betterment of effective tertiary education. Apart from the establishment of these two main bodies, each tertiary institution in Ghana has internal policies and mechanisms that assist it in achieving its mandate as a credible institution, of which the University for Development Studies (UDS) is not an exception.

In the year 2003, a strategic plan was developed in the UDS. The plan was to bring to bear the strengths, weaknesses, goals, resource development and future opportunities of the university. Again, the strategic plan climaxed the development of effective and efficient higher education for the enhancement of performance and quality in the UDS. This brought about the importance of establishing an internal Quality Assurance in the maiden workshop held in 2008. Out of this, the Directorate of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance was developed in 2008. The establishment of the internal Quality Assurance directorate is to assist in improving the relevance,

effectiveness and efficiency of the teaching and learning, research and other developmental programmes in the UDS (DAPQA, 2015). With reference to this, a framework was developed in order to steer the affairs of the Directorate. The Directorate of Academic Planning of Quality Assurance has developed several mechanisms to put the framework into practice.

Even though, these mechanisms are put in place to ensure best practices which will lead to the overall improvement in the tertiary education system, Holm-Nielsen, et.al. (2005) indicated that, tertiary education is facing unprecedented challenges in this 21st century. Tertiary institutions are facing a multitude of quality problems. Inequalities are widespread, and there is a mismatch between many specialities offered and the needs of the labour market. For instance, Shah, Wilson, and Nair, (2011) have outlined some deficiencies that the current Academic Quality Assurance framework of Australian higher education is facing. They include quality results, the student's experience, rewarding quality, university complacency and many others.

In Ghana, Seniwoliba and Yakubu, (2015) made it known that physical and financial resources for effective and efficient quality assurance practices are challenges facing many universities. In the case of the University for Development Studies, the general office of the Directorate of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance is limited with office space and as a result, crowded with pile-ups of used papers. This is in line with the study of Okae-Adjei (2012) as cited in (Seniwoliba & Yakubu, 2015) who indicated that, Koforidua Polytechnic was not efficiently resourced to carry out its mandate. These indicate that the mechanisms put in place by Academic Quality Assurance may not always contribute to the growth and development of an academic institution. It is on this note that this research is being proposed to assess the impact of the Academic Quality Assurance mechanisms on the quality of students' examination results, teaching and learning and services in providing students with their certificates and transcripts.

The following discussions present some of the challenges that confront the development and maintenance of Quality Assurance from both regional to national levels:

The Challenge of Adequate Human Capacity in Implementing QA in HEIs

A notable challenge that national quality assurance agencies and higher education quality assurance systems in African countries are bedevilled with relates to a lack of the requisite human capacity to handle all issues related to quality assurance. This comes in different forms and dimensions. Reisberg (2010) indicated that the quality assurance agencies in the universities have no perfect systems due to the high increase in expectations of achieving quality education. The author affirms this by listing some challenges that Quality Assurance faces in administering its mechanism, which include a lack of institutional identity or mission concept, limited staff within a faculty to carry instructional commitment beyond classroom teaching, a lack of shared responsibility among staff, and the isolation of schools and campuses from the university as a whole.

Abebe (2014) found that capacity building for the quality assurance office staff of many Ghanaian universities, including UDS, was a challenge. Staff involved in quality assurance endeavors were not adequately trained. Most of the office staff also had disciplinary backgrounds that were unrelated to education and quality. The quality assurance office staff lacks appropriate training and qualifications. Kahsay (2012) found that in one of the universities, the quality assurance office was a one-staff office. It was not equipped with the required staff and resources to operate properly. Seniwoliba and Yakubu (2015) wrote that it was only the Director of the Directorate of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance (DAPQA) in the university who attended quality assurance workshops organized by external quality assurance agencies, while other members of staff in the Directorate stood aloof. Apart from that, there were no internally planned training programs to equip the other staff with the necessary skills to make them function adequately. A study conducted by Okae-Adjei (2012) revealed that there was inadequate staff at the Quality Assurance Unit of the Koforidua Polytechnic, and this affected the performance of the unit. He concluded that a few staff members in the unit have very little experience in quality assurance matters. Romina (2013) found that most institutions of higher learning in Ghana lack a staff development program for training and retraining staff. Materu (2007) maintains that weak human capacity is one of the main current constraints to the development of quality assurance in Ghana.

Effective quality assurance depends on the availability of highly qualified teachers and administrators. The success of accreditations, audits, and academic reviews places special demands on human performance because the success of the process depends largely on the quality, commitment, and integrity of the individuals who serve as peer reviewers, as well as the administrators and faculty members, who act as peer reviewers. Prepare the self-assessment and collect the necessary data from the verified institutions. These efforts are complicated by: the difficulty of finding a sufficient number of academics qualified and willing to serve as reviewers; the lack of adequate training of those involved in the process in accreditation agencies, institutions and as peer reviewers; and the difficulties some institutions face in collecting the data necessary for effective self-study. Peer reviewers are not only key to successful accreditations and audits, but also to the legitimacy of the process. In addition to being experts in their respective fields, peer reviewers must be accepted as neutral parties in the process and have the personal skills and diplomacy necessary to conduct effective site visits. Expertise and appropriate "hospital manners" don't always go together.

For institutions of Higher Learning to maintain functional and robust Quality Assurance systems, personnel/staff with requisite expertise to carry out evaluation processes within Higher Education Institutions are needed. According to Materu (2007, p. 49)

"The success of accreditation, audits, and academic reviews is particularly demanding of human capacity since the legitimacy and credibility of the results is so dependent on the quality, dedication, and integrity of the people who serve as peer reviewers, the administrators and faculty members who prepare the self-assessment and collect needed data at institutions being reviewed, and the

professional staff of the national QA agency who eventually review the panel reports and disseminate to stakeholders and the public"

The Challenge of a "Copy Cat" Adoption of Quality Assurance Frameworks from western Countries

Owing to globalisation and the drive towards internationalization, among other factors, most African higher education institutions are conforming to the systems of QA in the developed world, as seen in the adoption of the QA frameworks used by institutions in the developed world (Ansah et al., 2017). This conformity goes back into history when the first university colleges established in Africa were affiliated with western universities, through which process the African university colleges received mentorship from the Western ones but became autonomous over time in the post-independence era (Hayward 2006). The European metropolitan universities served as colonial mentors to African universities, and as a result, the European universities' quality standards were imposed on African universities, sometimes even being completely copied. This wholesale adoption has continued to this day, although with different motivations. This trend has led to a situation where the quality assurance systems in African higher education institutions do not focus on standards and elements that are lacking in the African context but prevalent in the context of Western universities, leading to the neglect of certain vital elements in the QA systems and practises pursued by African countries (ibid.). For example, Ansah (2017) and his associates conducted a study that discovered that QA processes in HEIs in developing African countries, adopted from Western countries, focus more on teaching and learning practises to neglect of the quality and quantity of infrastructure. The lack of emphasis on infrastructure in quality assurance systems in Europe is premised on the good infrastructure that already exists in these universities, whereas universities in Africa are only beginning to develop their infrastructure to acceptable standards (Hayward, 2006).

As a common human trait to resist change, some staff of Higher Institutions of Learning who usually are new to processes and practices of Quality Assurance often find such processes strenuous and overdemanding, and as a result meet Quality Assurance system with some level of resistance. The introduction of Quality Assurance systems and mechanisms into any higher education environment will necessarily entail the introduction of new procedures and practices, to which staff must adhere. Some staff often find these new Quality Assurance processes and procedures burdensome.

Additionally, rather than seeing QA practices as transformative strategies to support the development and delivery of high-quality academic programs, some staff members in higher education institutions treat them with suspicion (Seniwoliba and Yakubu, 2015; Okae-Ajei, 2016). Research done in 2016 by Obeng, Ofori, and Anane, P. 52) notes that "Most academic staff also perceived QA as a vehicle that could be used by university management for victimization or applying sanctions to

defaulting staff." This information relates to quality assurance at the University of Energy and Natural Resources in Ghana. In order to clarify such notions around Quality Assurance implementation in Higher Education in Ghana, it is important for the implementation of Quality Assurance standards to be preceded by sensitisation of staff to boost acceptance and familiarity with such processes.

Besides, ignorance among the young and inexperienced faculty staff especially, there is a lack of awareness and appreciation of the significance of Academic Quality Assurance (Obeng Ofori and Anane, 2016). This situation leads to non-compliance with existing Quality Assurance procedures and processes in Higher Education Institutions either consciously or unconsciously, and as a result, some staff may violate an institution's regulations on Quality Assurance out of ignorance of the significance of such regulations. A lack of commitment on the part of these staff to promote the agenda of Quality assurance may also be the result of such lack of appreciation of Quality Assurance processes and procedures.

The poor infrastructural situation and learning environment in most African Institutions of Higher Learning and the negative effect that this has on the teaching and learning that go on in Institutions of Higher Learning make it imperative for Quality Assurance in these institutions to focus on infrastructure as a quality indicator. This comes against the backdrop of the finding in a study by Ansah et al (2017), that Quality Assurance in Ghana's Higher Education Institutions focuses less on infrastructure.

In Ghana's Higher Education system, like many other systems in Africa, generally, a key challenge to effective implementation and promotion of internal quality assurance in tertiary institutions relates to inadequate infrastructure and learning facilities, which make achieving quality in academic program delivery very daunting (CHEA, 2009; Mensah, 2016; Okae-Adjei, 2016). This situation has a direct bearing on the quality of the teaching and learning that take place in Institutions of Higher Learning and therefore is an important indicator of quality in Higher Education. In a study conducted by Mensah (2016) on Quality Assurance in Ghanaian polytechnics, one of the study participants expressed the concern that:

The design of the lecture theatres is unsuitable for effective teaching and learning. They are long rooms and those who sit behind are expected to see the illustrations on the board in front of the lecture theatre. The lecture theatres are relatively small in size. None of them can comfortably accommodate 200 students. The students are always crowded in these lecture theatres. The situation is very bad. The growth of the infrastructure does not keep pace with the admission number of the polytechnics... (p.232).

These challenges are not reflected in only African countries though. For instance, in Australia, Shah, Wilson, and Nair, (2011) outline some deficiencies in the practices of Quality Assurance in the areas of results, students' experience with teaching and learning, issues of rewarding quality and university complacency to quality issues.

The need for adequate financial resources for effective and efficient actualisation of quality assurance activities is another challenge that confronts Quality Assurance Units across Ghanaian HIs. Without adequate funding and sufficient budgetary allocation, internal quality assurance standards cannot be met. Effective quality assurance depends largely on the availability of adequate funding. Materu (2007), reported that compared to more developed higher education systems in the world, quality assurance systems in Africa are still at an infant stage and thus confronted by many challenges including finance. Kahsay (2012) observed that instituting policies and structures for quality assurance may be considered an important step and can indicate commitment, but this by itself is not sufficient to effect change in the quality of education. The policies have to be translated into action and the quality assurance office should be empowered to properly undertake its duties and responsibilities.

There are a number of issues about the cost involved in the operations of QA units across HIs in Ghana beginning from accreditation through to audits, and other quality assurance processes that should be examined. Among the issues is who pays the cost of accreditation and audits, the government, the institutions being reviewed, donors, businesses and professions, or some combination of all of them? Regardless of who pays, however, the cost is a real issue (Bloom, 2006).

Looking at issues of finance in general, it is clear that the major challenge for the effective operation of quality assurance at all levels is finance. Although in Ghana, student fees cover approximately one-third of the cost of education, the question of who pays is complicated in systems where the state bears the majority of the cost of tertiary education.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted quantitative and qualitative research approaches to solicit information for the study. The interview was used to gather the qualitative data which was subjected to descriptions and narrations while the interview data was quantified and presented in figures and tables. The data collection was conducted personally by the researchers. The study was conducted at the Directorate of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance (DAPQA) of the University for Development Studies. The study adopted a census survey to collect data from the DAPQA representatives from all the Sixteen (16) Schools and faculties in the university. A purposive sampling was also used to select 2 senior members at the directorate. Maxwell (2005) explained that purposive sampling is a useful technique for soliciting information from specific people from whom information is needed to answer specific research questions. The quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 22 and the results were presented in tables whilst the qualitative data was subjected to description and narrations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 18 respondents sampled for this study.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

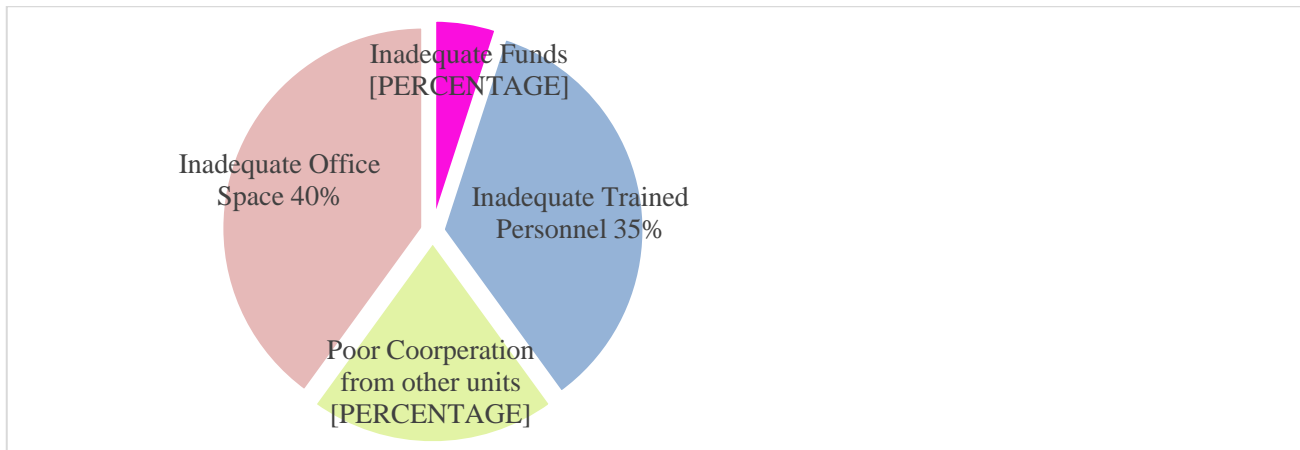
Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)	25 - 34	1	5.5
	35 - 44	12	66.7
	45 - 54	4	22.2
	55 & Above	1	5.5
Sex	Male	13	72.2
	Female	5	27.8
Years in UDS	5 years or less	2	11.1
	6 - 10 years	10	55.6
	11 - 15 years	5	27.8
	16 - 20 years	1	5.5
Rank in the University	Assistant Lecturer	1	5.5
	Lecturer	9	50.0
	Snr. Lecturer	7	38.9
	Asso. Professor	-	0.0
	Professor	1	5.5

The table shows that the majority of the lecturers possess considerable experience which means that they appreciate the challenges of the directorate. About 88% of the quality assurance officers have spent 6 years or more experience in the university and therefore their views are highly needed in every policy and program. The study also shows that the majority of the quality assurance officers are in the rank of lecturer and above and hence therefore exposed to a lot of information which was beneficial to the study. It is also important to note that, gender was not fairly represented in the appointment of quality assurance officers in the university.

Key Challenges Facing DAPQA

On the challenges confronting DAPQA, the following issues became eminent during the interview; inadequate of funds, inadequate trained personnel at the directorate of quality assurance, inadequate office space, and lack of cooperation from other units like registry, faculties and schools, examinations officers among others. Their various responses were summarised as shown below

Figure 2: Major challenges facing DAPQA



As shown in Figure 2 above, 40% of the respondents held the view that inadequate office space is the major challenge facing the directorate. One of the respondents has this to say;

We are congested in the offices. As you can see, I have to share my office with my other colleague which is not supposed to be so. We need an additional office in other to add more staff. As I talk to you now, we need two senior members to head the accreditation unit, affiliation unit and planning unit if we are to go strictly according to the policy document but it is not so. So, office space is a major challenge for us.

A study conducted by Seniwoliba and Yakubu (2015), revealed that the general office of the Directorate of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance in UDS is limited with office space and as a result, crowded with pile-ups of used papers. Another study conducted by Okae-Adjei (2012), also revealed that some of the quality assurance directorates in the tertiary institutions in Ghana with Koforidua Technical University as an example are not efficiently resourced to carry out their mandate. This is an indication that the issue of office space is not peculiar to the University for Development Studies but is a general issue that affects many tertiary institutions in Ghana.

In addition, the second most pressing challenge of the directorate is inadequately trained personnel to effectively manage quality assurance issues in the university. One of the quality assurance representatives in an interview indicated that;

Quality assurance is very key to the success of every university because we ensure the quality of every academic activity that happens in the university. However, many of us here didn't receive any special training on quality assurance. So sometimes we are constrained in a way due to a lack of adequate training. Besides we combined teaching, research and community service with administrative duties, making it difficult for us to plan and implement Quality Assurance processes.

This revelation conforms to a finding from a study conducted by Materu (2007), and Reisbeg (2010). Reigsbeg (2010), found out that, a lack of trained persons to implement quality assurance policies, institutional identity or

mission concept, limited staff within a faculty to carry instructional commitment beyond classroom teaching, lack of shared responsibility among staff and isolation of schools and campuses from the university as whole affected many universities across Africa. Materu (2010) observed that the success of accreditation, audits and academic reviews is particularly demanding of human capacity since the legitimacy and credibility of the results is so dependent on the quality, dedication, and integrity of the people who serve as peer reviewers, the administrators and faculty members who prepare the self-assessment and collect needed data at institutions being reviewed, and the professional staff of the national QA agency who eventually review the panel reports and distribute to stakeholders and the public. This simply means that, to ensure effective quality assurance in all facets of the university requires qualified and competent staff.

Again, it was also revealed that poor cooperation from lecturers, faculties and other administrative units poses another immense challenge for DAPQA in UDS. In an interview, one of the staff at the DAPQA has this to say;

You see our work is interwoven with various units in the University such as the examination office and the academic affairs registry. sometimes getting the needed cooperation from these people is difficult. Some people will love to do things in their own way and not as stipulated so when you insist on making people do the right thing then, they see you as a threat and start to call you names. When we are going for monitoring, we don't inform them and so we find it difficult to get information. They want to cover one another. We are aware of it but cannot substantiate it. So, when such things are happening in an institution like UDS, our work becomes very difficult. It is very good we have an online system to monitor all these things now. Again, some lecturers also view us with suspicion, they feel we are just there to victimise them or make work more difficult for them, so they find it difficult to cooperate with us. This at times makes monitoring and assessment of lecturers very difficult for us.

This revelation confirms the findings of Seniwoliba and Yakubu (2015) when they observed that some staff of higher institutions of learning who, usually, are new to the processes and practices of Quality Assurance often find such processes strenuous and over-demanding, and as a result meet Quality Assurance system with some level of resistance. The introduction of Quality Assurance systems and mechanisms into any higher education environment will necessarily entail the introduction of new procedures and practices, to which staff must adhere; however, some staff often find these new Quality Assurance processes and procedures burdensome. Okae-Adjei, (2016), also added that some staff in higher institutions view QA practices with suspicion, rather than see them as transformative practices meant to promote quality academic programme development. In a study conducted by Obeng Ofori and Anane (2016), on Quality Assurance at the University of Energy and Natural Resources in Ghana, it was noted that "Most academic staff perceived QA as a vehicle that could be used by university management for victimization or applying sanctions to defaulting staff".

Out of the total respondents, only five per cent (5%) indicated that inadequate fund is a challenge to the directorate. One of the key informants who is an examination officer indicated it this way

There are many challenges but I will say so far for the materials that we need generally the university is able to supply the answer booklets, toners and papers. But the major problem is the photocopier and the printer so far within this trimester I don't know the number of times I have repaired it. Is only one and very old. I think that is the most critical or the biggest issue. I have reported severally to the Dean and other people who are to spearhead the affairs of quality in examination to get us new ones but still, the photocopier and printer are a challenge for the office. But for the others, we are able to manage it.

This statement conforms to the study conducted by Materu (2007), who reported that as compared to more developed higher education systems in the world, quality assurance systems in Africa are still at an infant stage and thus confronted by many challenges including finance. The findings of Bloom (2006), augment that, there are a number of issues with the cost involved in the operations of QA units across Higher Institutions in Ghana beginning from accreditation through to audits, and other quality assurance processes that should be examined. Among the issues is who pays the cost of accreditation and audits, the government, the institutions being reviewed, donors, businesses and professions, or some combination of all of them? Regardless of who pays, however, the cost is a real issue in the QA processes.

Other challenges that came to light during the study include noncompliance of staff to basic quality assurance rules and regulations in the university. This was highly attributed to the fact that most of the staff in the university do not understand the work of the directorate of academic planning and quality Assurance and therefore mistaken them to be fault finders and witch hunters. A staff of the directorate confirm that in most cases, the staff may be doing the right thing but will be hiding it from the directorate because of the fear of the unknown.

Another challenge that became evident is that the staff of the directorate are not well motivated considering the complex nature of their job schedules. It revealed that, in some cases, the staff come to work at the weekend to vet marked scripts. The staff revealed that need to be highly motivated to continue doing extra hours to assure quality at the university.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, it was revealed that the Directorate of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance faces numerous challenges such as inadequate funds to run their activities, inadequate trained personnel, resistance from lecturers, inadequate office space for their operations and inadequate cooperation from related bodies like the Examinations Office and the Academic registry. It also came to light that there is noncompliance to basic quality assurance rules and regulations in the university whilst others also misconstrued the work of the Directorate of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance to be witch-hunting

and fault-finding. The issue of motivation of staff became eminent during the study where the staff of the directorate felt demotivated and appealed to the university to motivate them to carry out their duties.

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations are made for policy consideration and future studies:

- ✓ The Finance directorate should provide adequate budget support for the Quality assurance directorate to ensure the smooth operation of activities.
- ✓ University Management should design a motivation package for the staff of the directorate and exam.
- ✓ The university management, in collaboration with the Director of DAPQA, should organize frequent in-service training for the staff of DAPQA, Exams Officers and the Academic Affairs staff to equip them with the needed skills to carry out their functions effectively.
- ✓ The university management should make provisions for a large and more equipped office space for the staff of DAPQA for them to work effectively.
- ✓ The directorate should organise a sensitisation programme to expose the staff of the university to the roles and duties of the Quality assurance directorate. This can also be done by making the quality assurance policies readily available to all staff of the university.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Future study can expand the scope to involve all universities in Ghana

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge and appreciate the time of our respondents to make this study a success.

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