

**Quality Audit in Higher Education in Ethiopia: Lesson Learned From
Piloting Work in a Public University.
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Abstract

Ethiopia is currently engaged in higher education reform. The reforms introduce new elements as clearly stated in the Higher Education Proclamation, 2003. Some of the reforms introduced are: university students are to share the costs of higher education; the expansion of private higher education; two key agencies have been set up to guide and oversee the sector: Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) and Higher Education Strategic Center (HESC) and institutions are highly encouraged to income generation rather than depending on public funding and would be moving from extreme centralization towards institutional autonomy. The number of both public and private higher education institutions has also dramatically increased in the last five years. The effort put so far by the government in expanding higher education in the country is encouraging, however, as the sector expands and more private HEIs become established there is a necessity to set standards and to assure the quality of the provision of education on offer to students in Ethiopia. To accomplish the provision of quality assurance, the Government of Ethiopia established Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) in 2003. HERQA is mandated to promote public confidence that the quality of provision and standards of awards in higher education are being safeguarded and enhanced. To this end, the agency is required to carry out external audits of the academic performance of institutions. One of the mandates of the agency is to develop methods and procedures for undertaking audits of higher education institutions. HERQA intends this to be a collaborative process. An attempt is made to look into standard procedures and experiences employed in other countries in the area of internal and external quality audit and piloting works have been done in Debu university, Ethiopia, to learn how such auditing methods and procedures could be developed specific to Ethiopian higher education institutions. Important lessons and clear in-sight on process of audit, data collection methods, and the content of the audit report were learned from such piloting work.

1. Introduction

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According to quality assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAAHE, 2004) academic standards are ways of describing the level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain an academic award (for example, a degree) while academic quality is a way that describes how well the learning opportunities available to students in higher education help them to achieve their award. Quality assurance is about making sure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are provided for students in an institution that they join for further study. In many countries such as UK, Netherlands, Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities (QANU, 2004) and South Africa, Council on Higher Education (CHE, 2004), the quality assurance process involves different stages:

1. Internal audit conducted by the institution itself
2. External audit undertaken by an independent non-partisan quality assurance agency.

Such quality audits are designed to provide an assessment of an institution's system of accountability, internal review mechanisms, and effectiveness with an external body confirming that the institution's quality assurance process complies with accepted standards.

Ethiopia is currently engaged in higher education reform. The reforms introduce new elements as clearly stated in the Higher Education Proclamation, 2003. Some of the reforms introduced are: university students are to share the costs of higher education; the expansion of private higher education; two key agencies have been set up to guide and oversee the sector: Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) and

Higher Education Strategic Center (HESC) and institutions are highly encouraged to income generation rather than depending on public funding and would be moving from extreme centralization towards institutional autonomy. As reported by Higher Education System Overhaul (HESO, 2004) such autonomy and the freedom it implies, however, require a system of good governance, management and leadership, with governors and managers at all levels exercising competence and skill in enhancing quality in education, research and outreach and being accountable for their actions.

The effort put so far by the government in expanding higher education in the country is encouraging, however, as the sector expands and more private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) become established there is a necessity to set standards and to assure the quality of the provision of education on offer to students in Ethiopia. To accomplish the provision of quality assurance HERQA is mandated to promote public confidence that the quality of provision and standards of awards in higher education are being safeguarded and enhanced. To this end, the Agency is required to carry out external audits of the academic performance of institutions. One of the mandates of the agency is to develop methods and procedures for undertaking audits of higher education institutions. HERQA intends this to be a collaborative process and this paper represents the beginnings of a debate on what should be audited to judge the quality (or otherwise) of higher education institutions, both public and private, and how these audits should be conducted.

Higher education institutions are expected to evaluate programs they offer using agreed criteria. For this to materialize the concept of ‘Internal Quality Assurance Cell’ with

guidelines on setting up internal structures to review quality as an on-going process is fundamental concept to be promoted (Antony, 2004). HERQA has the intention to use the HEI's own self-assessment unit to check its processes, implementation of action plans and produced report as part of the evidence that the institution is assuring the quality of its academic provision adequately and consistently. Such self-assessment benefits institutions to answer a number of questions; how good are we at the job we are supposed to do? Do we do the right things? Do we do the right things in the right way? and facilitates the external assessment to be carried out by HERQA. It also strengthens the ownership of quality assurance among institutions and builds confidence between HERQA and the institutions. Once such an internal quality auditing is enhanced and put in place in HEIs as built-in system, an external evaluation by HERQA takes place and a report produced with detailed recommendations that should be taken by the institutions to enhance quality provision.

The purpose of this paper is thus to look into standard procedures and experiences employed in other countries in the area of internal and external quality audit and learns how such auditing methods and procedures could be developed specific to Ethiopian higher education institutions. To that end piloting work has been done in Debu University.

2. The HERQA's Operational Principles and Service Standards As Adapted From UK

The process of external institutional audit will require a high degree of openness, transparency and trust in the partnership between the quality assurance agencies and each

HEIs (Woodhouse, 2004). To ensure that the process should be robust, impartial and deserving of that trust, the Agency's work should also be underpinned by a set of general principles and the adoption of explicit service standards. HERQA as newly established quality assurance agency should commit itself from the out set to instill high degree of openness, transparency and develop trust with HEIs as it can be learned from UK and others. Additional effort would also be made to look into the experiences of others to lay down foundation for robust external institutional audit. To this end HERQA has recently joined the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and is attempting to establish itself in line with international standards agreed for educational quality agencies. HERQA should therefore demonstrate the following 'desirable' characteristics as they are pertinent to the Ethiopian situations too:

- has an explicit and relevant mission;
- has an independent, impartial, rigorous, thorough, fair and consistent decision-making;
- carries out its assessments in relation both to the institution's own self-analysis and to external references;
- respects institutional integrity (and autonomy), while being supportive of the institutions;
- includes, informs and responds to the public;
- demonstrates public accountability by reporting openly on its institutional review decisions;
- has explicit minimum standards, and distinguishes between accreditation(threshold) and extension (improvement);

- makes public and explicit its policies, procedures and criteria;
- has adequate and credible resources, both human and financial, with appropriate provision for development;
- is economical and efficient;
- carries out self-review, based on data collection and analysis, including consideration of its own effects and value;
- has its own quality system that emphasizes flexibility and quality improvement;
- collaborates with other QAs;
- provides for appeals against its decisions.

In return HERQA expects institutions to:

- make plans that are derived from their mission
- have indicators relating to the plans
- assess standards
- provide public information
- carry out self-review and quality improvement

2.1. The Main Objectives of HERQA as Quality Assurance Agency

The objectives of HERQA are:

- ✓ to contribute, in conjunction with other mechanisms, to the promotion and enhancement of high quality in teaching and learning;
- ✓ to ensure that students, employers and others can have ready access to easily understood, reliable and meaningful public information about the extent to which institutions are individually offering programs of study,

awards and qualifications that meet general national expectations in respect of academic standards and quality;

- ✓ to ensure that where the quality of higher education programs or the standards of awards are found to be weak or seriously deficient, the process forms a basis for ensuring rapid action to improve them; and
- ✓ to provide a means of securing accountability for the use of public funds received by institutions.

3. Quality Audit

Quality audit in HEIs could be done at two levels: Institutional and program. The basis for the institutional and program level audits is the self-evaluation reports or internal quality audit reports institutions submit to the agency having undertaken continuous assessment to assure quality provision. External audit by quality assurance agency uses the report of the institutions and examine the following at institutional level: the effectiveness of an institution's internal quality assurance structures and mechanisms, in the light of, for instance, the HERQA's Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, the aims and objectives of the institutions whether they are clearly defined and communicated, the ways how the human resource management supported and developed, the learning opportunities available for the students how they help them to achieve their award, and critical review of strengths and weakness and plan of operation for improvement. Program level quality audit generally raise a number of questions and focus on educational aims and learning outcomes, program contents/curriculum, teaching learning strategies, student support mechanism,

student assessment, teaching staff evaluation, appropriate learning outcomes and structures for quality assessment.

3.1. The Aims of Institutional Audit

The aims of institutional audit are to meet the public interest in knowing that higher learning institutions (both government and private) in Ethiopia are: providing higher education awards and qualifications of both an acceptable quality, to an appropriate academic standard and in an effective and efficient manner as well as exercising their legal powers in a proper manner to award degrees. To do this, however, HEIs must be autonomous and accountable for public investment. Hence, HEIs have dual role to play and they have to define autonomy and accountability in Ethiopian context as these terms are new within the Ethiopian higher education system. The roles of the Government, Ministry of Education, board, university management, HESC & HERQA have to make the necessary adjustments to the new system of autonomy and accountability to maintain quality provision and assure value for money invested (HESO, 2004).

3.1.1. Process of Institutional Audit

Institutional audit is a new process that pays due attention to the quality of programs and the standards of awards at the point of delivery, as well as to institutions' ultimate responsibility for what is done in their names and through the exercise of their formal powers (QAAHE, 2004). It is an evidence-based process carried out through peer review, and balances the need for publicly credible, independent and rigorous scrutiny of institutions with the recognition that the institutions themselves are best placed to provide

stakeholders with valid, reliable and up-to-date information about the quality of their programs and the standards of their awards. At the centre of the process is an emphasis on students - in terms of the quality of the information they receive about their programs of study, the ways in which their learning is facilitated and supported, and the academic standards they are expected to achieve, and do achieve in practice.

As part of the development of the institutional audit process based on the experience of UK, Netherlands and South Africa, a HERQA task group was established to identify the categories of data, information and judgments about quality and standards that should be available in a university and that should be taken as a lesson for further scrutiny and development of the internal quality audit procedure. The lesson learnt shows that HEIs are responsible for maintaining and publishing a range of regular, up-to-date information on their evaluation of their quality and standards, and should undertake their own internal reviews, in the context of their strategies for teaching and learning. As it can be witnessed from the experiences of other countries, external institutional audit is the responsibility of quality agency such as HERQA. The outcome of such audit is usually published by the same and made available to the public. However, HERQA as yet has no intention of making such reports official until, through consultation, such criteria and procedures are well developed and agreed upon by all stakeholders as it can damage the credibility of institutions if judgments are not based on solid evidence.

3.1.2. Advantages and Disadvantages of Institutional Audit

Every quality audit assessment has its own advantages and disadvantages. The following are the most important ones to note.

Advantages of institutional review

- ✓ Clear sense of HEIs management
- ✓ Less costly and less experts incurred
- ✓ Assures minimum standards only?
- ✓ Provides information regarding a good or bad HEI

Disadvantages of institutional review

- ✓ Reliant on a 'mature' system with good internal quality assurance
- ✓ May be too input-focused
- ✓ May seem to be a top down approach that is seen not to involve individual instructors who will then not be so committed to improvements
- ✓ Lack of grassroots information on curriculum relevance, teaching and learning.
- ✓ Innovation, excellence and good practice in teaching and learning less obvious, harder to identify
- ✓ Does not provide public with information regarding good courses

3.2. Program Level Audit

External quality audit at program level depends on institutional internal assessment reports and examine whether the program meets the basic quality criteria on the basis of its subject specialists' knowledge. These include: Are there well-established mechanisms for quality assurance? Are the aims and objectives of a program clearly defined and communicated to the stakeholders? Are the teaching and learning processes appropriate for the intended objectives? Are the assessment procedures appropriate to measure students' performance? Such quality audits provide information on the trust that can be placed in an institution's own published descriptions of the quality of its provision.

A number of models have been developed to facilitate self-evaluation at program level. A quality model for higher education used in the Netherlands for self-evaluation at program level is cited as an example for further adoption and use in Ethiopia (Vroeijenstijn, 2001).

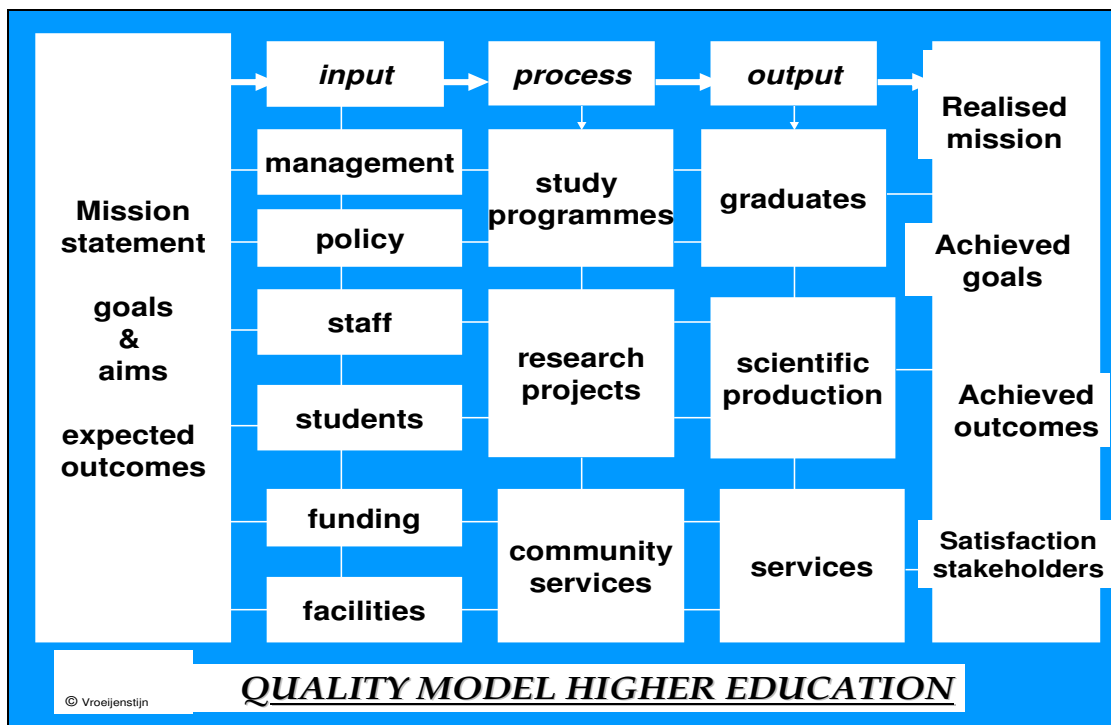


Figure 1. Quality model for self-assessment at program level (Vroeijenstijn)

3.2.1. The Aims of Program Level Audit

The aims of program level audit could be summarized as follows:

- ✓ helps to evaluate the quality of a program and its relevance
- ✓ assists to evaluate how efficiently is a program achieving its education aims
- ✓ serves to identify the program's strengths and weakness

- ✓ enhances quality education provision and improve services
- ✓ services as basic tool to develop strategic plans and priorities for future directions of the program/department

3.2.2. Advantages and disadvantages of program level audit

Program level of quality audits in HEIs has its own advantages and disadvantages and they are presented below for reviewers and institutions.

Advantages of program level audit

- ✓ Penetrates deep into HEI
- ✓ Can easily focus on outputs
- ✓ HEI and programs assess their own strengths and weaknesses therefore have ownership of process
- ✓ Prioritizes grassroots instructor involvement in their programs and therefore perhaps more likely to support change/improvement
- ✓ Provides feedback on curriculum, Teaching and Learning etc...
- ✓ May be easier to identify good practice, innovation etc...
- ✓ Provides public with information regarding good courses 'agriculture' etc..

Disadvantages of Program audit

- ✓ May not provide overall information regarding HEI management
- ✓ Gives fragmented picture
- ✓ Accountability burden for HEIs, may be visited every year.
- ✓ Does not provide information regarding a good or bad HEI

3.3. The audit cycle and transitional arrangements

Institutional audits in UK take place every six years (QAAHE, 2004). HERQA will be introducing institutional audits progressively from 2005/06 on wards. This being the experience in UK, institutional audit in Ethiopia would be undertaken every five-year so that it acts in accordance with the Government five-year development plan. It is planned

by the HERQA that at least 19 HEIs (9 public and 10 private) will have participated in an external audit by the end of the next academic year (1998 E.C). HEIs will therefore have to ensure that HEIs have previously undertaken their own internal quality audits which will be the focus of the external quality by the HERQA team. Through MOE/NUFFIC project an Academic Development Resources Centers (ADRCs) have been established in all public HEIs to undertake quality care and support quality audits. It is assumed that, throughout the cycle, institutions will continue to meet the expectations set out by HERQA. As a matter of check up, HERQA would like to do intermediate visits to institutions to review progress since the previous audit and to discuss the institution's intentions in respect of managing quality and standards until the next audit as it is a standard procedure adopted by most developed countries. This procedure would also apply to Private-owned Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs). The PHEIs apply for pre-accreditation and accreditation and a team of experts assess the programs using a peer group of specialists and the facilities put in place to offer quality education as per the procedures outlined by the HERQA. A continuous check up will be undertaken in PHEIs to see whether the expectations are met as opposed to the current practice where continuous surveillance is not done due to shortage of staff. HERQA planned to create a data base of all PHEIs, which puts it in a better position to plan and act timely and proactively for pre-accreditation, accreditation and renewal requests.

3.4. Essential issues worth considering for quality audit

3.4.1. Information

To enable them to form their judgments, audit teams have to have available to them a variety of information sources about an institution: the institution's self-evaluation documents specific to the discipline audit trails, and supporting documentation; information submitted by representatives of students of the institution; information from the institution and other sources (such as professional, statutory and regulatory bodies) about the discipline areas selected for trailing, including evidence of student achievement; previous reports, if exist, on the institution by the HERQA and other relevant bodies; information (written or oral) acquired during and after the briefing visit, and during the audit visit.

3.4.2. Judgments and Reports

Each external institutional audit results in a report published by the HERQA. The report sets out the audit team's judgments on: the confidence that can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of its programs and the academic standards of its awards (a judgment based, in part, on the direct scrutiny of academic standards through primary evidence); and the reliance that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of the information that an institution publishes about the quality of its programs and the standards of its awards.

In making these judgments audit teams will give particular attention to the HERQA's expectations in two key areas. The first expectation is that institutions are making strong and meticulous use of independent external examiners in summative assessment procedures. The second is that a similar use is made of independent external persons in

the internal periodic review of disciplines or programs. Teams are unable to make a judgment of broad confidence in an institution if either of these elements is deficient.

Institutional audit reports also provide comment on other matters, including the characteristics, strengths and limitations of the institution's internal quality assurance methods, and the quality of programs and standards of awards achieved in practice, drawing upon the findings of the discipline audit trails. The reports highlight good practice, make recommendations for further consideration by the institution, and identify any area where the audit team considers there is good reason for a full review at the discipline level to be carried out, or where it considers that an action plan at either the discipline or institutional level should be implemented by the institution.

3.4.3. Students

Students are central both to the principal focuses of both external and internal institutional audit and to the audit process itself. Audit teams scrutinize a range of matters directly relevant to students, including the quality of the information provided for them, the ways in which their learning is facilitated and supported, the academic standards they are expected to achieve, and what they actually achieve in practice. In each audit, students are invited to participate in the key stages of the process and their involvement as major stakeholders should be taken as a serious matter. Students' evaluation on courses and provision of learning facilities has proved to be reliable and could be a tool for quality enhancement if implemented as per the evaluations made in all HEIs in Ethiopia. The experience from UK shows also that student involvement in both internal

and external quality audit is essential and HERQA will give it at most attention in quality audit.

3.4.4. Audit Personnel

In most cases audit teams generally comprise a minimum of four and a maximum of seven auditors, and an audit secretary (QAAHE, 2004). The size of the team is determined by the HERQA on the basis of the size and complexity of an institution's provision and available staff. Each team includes at least one 'core' auditor who focuses wholly on institutional level matters and has a particular role in ensuring that the work of the team provides the evidence necessary for the overall judgments to be made; the other auditors participate in both institutional level enquiries and discipline audit trails. All auditors have expertise and recent experience relevant to their roles. Auditors, audit secretaries and specialist advisers are selected by the Agency, generally from nominations made by institutions, on the basis of published selection criteria. All are provided with training to ensure that they are familiar with the aims, objectives and procedures of the audit process, and their own roles and tasks within it.

Each audit is co-coordinated by an assistant director of the Agency or the team leader of the quality audit. In the period preceding the audit visit, the assistant director provides advice to the institution on its preparations for the audit, and works with the Agency's Information Unit and the audit team on the initial analysis of documentation. He or she accompanies the team during the briefing visit and for part of the audit visit, providing advice as appropriate. It is the responsibility of the assistant director to test that the team's

findings are supported by adequate and identifiable evidence, and that the audit report provides information in a concise and readily accessible form.

4. Piloting an Internal Quality Audit in a Public University

4.1. Pilot Quality Audit In Dehub University

The university that volunteered to be the focus of the pilot, Dehub University, is a public higher education institute (HEI) formed in 2000 as a result of the merger of three colleges: Awassa College of Agriculture, Wondo Genet College of Forestry and Dilla College of Teachers' Education and Health Sciences. In 2003/4 the University had approximately 8300 regular students and over 6000 extension and Kiremt students in the three Colleges.

In December 2004 Dehub University offered to act as a pilot for the first quality audit undertaken by a public university in Ethiopia carried out under the auspices of the Higher Education Relevance & Quality Agency (HERQA). This quality audit was arranged for the first week in April 2005 when two consultants from the Netherlands working with HERQA would be in Ethiopia and able to contribute a European dimension to the exercise.

The external team that visited Dehub University consisted of four experts and was chaired by the Deputy Director of HERQA. Dehub University established a team of senior staff from the university to work with the external team on the format, focus and conduct of the quality audit.

These two groups combined to form the audit team that during the course of one week undertook the quality audit. Because of the pilot nature of the audit exercise and the time allocated it was only possible therefore to capture a ‘snapshot’ of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision at Debu University.

The intended outcomes of the quality audit were threefold:

1. For Debu University to have a written and verbal report outlining key examples of good practice and areas for further development.
2. To be able to share experience and process of a quality audit from Debu University with other public universities
3. For members of HERQA to experience a quality evaluation visits.

4.1.1. Process of Audit

The first day was spent conducting a general introduction to quality issues and highlighting the different perceptions of quality that the various stakeholders in higher education might have: for example, students, staff, government and employers. There was a general discussion on what ‘quality’ might mean in these circumstances and how these different criteria might apply in the Debu University context. Using the Quality Model of Higher Education developed by Ton Vroeijsstijn (Figure 1) the team identified key domains that might be investigated to gain a ‘snap shot’ of the quality of Debu University’s current provision.

The team agreed to analyze the extent to which Debus University was currently meeting its mission statement as set out in Debus University's newly completed Ten Year Strategic Plan (2004/5 – 2013/4) published in July 2004:

The mission of Debus University is to advance knowledge, enhance technology creation and transfer; promote skill development and effective entrepreneurship, and inculcate a responsible and democratic attitude thereby contributing towards the development of the country at regional and national levels. This will be achieved through student-centered practical-orientated teaching, research, extension, consultancy and other public services.

The team agreed to focus on process rather than inputs or outcome as it was felt that it was in this area that the university could have most control and that this is where any quality evaluations of Debus University should focus. In terms of the process to be looked at the team agreed to focus on study programmes by looking primarily at three domains: staff, students and management although the team recognised that the domains of both policy and facilities would also be considered although more indirectly. It was felt that the other domain in the model, funding, whilst of high importance was beyond the immediate control of the institution.

The team then split into three groups, staff, students and management, to look at the three domains and to identify what and who needed to be examined within these three fields to check the validity or otherwise of Debus University's study programs in relation to its

mission. The team decided, because of time limitations, to focus on two programs from two different colleges within the University.

Working together the three teams then drew up questions to be asked of staff, students and other members of the University, what facilities needed to be looked at and what management systems and documentation they would like to see.

4.1.2. Data Collection Methods

It was agreed that the scope of the audit should include aspects of each of the following: teaching, course and programme documentation, assessment procedures, evaluation processes, departmental operation and structures and management.

4.1.3. Methods To Collect Data Would Include:

The method of data collection focused on group and individual interview with staff, students and managers, observation of teaching, analysis of documentation and survey of facilities.

As a consequence the Management Group identified the following people to be interviewed: Heads of Department, Vice Deans, Registrars, Vice Presidents and Administration.

They also produced a list of documents to be looked at departmental level: Curriculum documents, Course outlines, Internal curriculum review documents, Proceedings of

external reviews, Questionnaires to employers, Tracer studies, Staff assessment forms, Staff development policy documents, Staff workload documents, Documents on career guidance, Documents on student counseling and at central university level: University statistics, University calendar, Academic rules and regulations, Staff recruitment procedures, University legislation, Code of conduct for staff and for students, Procedures for budget preparation, Purchasing procedures, Auditing procedures, Election procedures for Deans and student representatives, Minutes of meetings at departmental, faculty and central level.

The staff group agreed to observe some classroom activities and, in addition, identified the following people they wished to interview: A sample of instructors, both new and senior Research officers. They also decided to look at course outlines and past examination papers.

The student group agreed that they would look at dormitories and libraries and interviewed the following people: Groups of students representing different years, Student Services Officers, Student counselors and the Academic Program Officer.

4.1.4. Findings and Recommendations

On the last day of the audit visit the three groups attempted to summarise their findings as follows:

4.1.4.1. Staff Group

Testing and assessment: The design of tests needs improvement. There needs to be training on assessment that includes double marking. Measures need to be taken to ensure that feedback to students is timely. Coding of exam papers is recommended.

Pedagogical training: Training is required for staff in student centred teaching/learning processes and in the management of large classes.

Implementation of university policies: On paper, and according to management, everything is satisfactory however not all the regulations are put into practice by instructors.

Evaluation of staff by students: Research should be done to find out how this evaluation process can be made more effective and reliable. Staff evaluation should not be used for its negative (punitive) aspects, but for its positive aspects and the improvement of performance.

Research: Research should not be left to senior staff, young staff should also be engaged in research activities perhaps in collaboration with senior staff.

4.1.4.2. Management Group

Curriculum: There is a need to strengthen feedback from the world of work through tracer studies. Objectives of courses should be reflected in examinations and tests. Curriculum review should be structured as a regular feature.

Staff management: Staff activity forms are satisfactory and can be used as prototype job descriptions. It is recommended that staff development be structured in a plan and a budget allocated. Staff development in educational and didactical aspects is a matter of priority.

Student management: The high attrition rate is partly caused by the intake and allocation policy of the Ministry of Education. More attention should be given to the need for remedial teaching in deficient areas. Participation of students at all levels of the University (Senate and Departmental Councils) is positive.

Resource management: University legislation is quite specific and regulates most of the daily operations. The degree of autonomy of departments versus centrally controlled procedures needs to be clarified. Income generating activities need to be encouraged; revenues should be kept in a separate account and be used to enhance quality education provision.

4.1.4.3. Student Group

Induction period for students: The Induction period is satisfactory, but only a small part of the 2 weeks available are actually being used for activities. This should be improved.

Instructors: Students find that generally teaching is satisfactory.

Curriculum: Students report that curriculum is satisfactory.

Facilities: Attention should be given to upgrading laboratories.

Teaching: Teaching is not student-centred. There is often a rush of topics towards the end of the lesson. Students report spoon-feeding teaching methods and that these are not conducive for independent thinking. No “deep-type” questions are asked.

Grading system: This needs improvement to make it fair and transparent.

Instructors: Students report that staffs are overloaded, often do not turn up, particularly senior staff and then arrange for “make up” classes.

Practical sessions: The qualities of practicals are adversely affected by the low quality of assistants running the labs who are often ill prepared and avoid questions.

Code of Conduct: On paper the Code of Conduct is satisfactory but in practice complaints may take months to be resolved.

Counselling: The opportunities provided by having access to counsellors are not well used or understood by students.

4.1.5. Key Recommendations

As a result of the pilot audit of Debu University, the team identified the following possible key items for action:

1. There should be an on-going programme of pedagogic training for all instructors to enable them to develop a student centred methodology. The Higher Diploma for teacher educators would be a good model and the Pedagogic Resource Centre (PRC), when in operation, could be a suitable mechanism by which this training could be conducted.
2. Training, policy development and monitoring need to occur to ensure that examinations are clear, valid, and reliable as well as meeting the objectives of courses. Assessment procedures need to be examined and strengthened to ensure quality control in the process through such mechanisms as scrutiny of examination papers, clear marking criteria, anonymous marking, a process of double marking and a complaints system that is speedy and independent. The process of offering feedback to students also needs to be improved and applied consistently across the university.

3. There needs to be a structured programme of regular teacher/peer observation that is supportive of instructors and is seen as part of the instructor's opportunity to improve his or her own performance rather than as a punitive measure.
4. All courses should produce study guides that are made available to all students at the beginning of their programme. These study guides should contain details of course objectives and outlines, what students should be able to do at the end of the course, what and how to study, questions for checking progress, assessment details and mock exam questions.
5. The Induction Period for students should be used more effectively, for example by undertaking diagnostic testing or to identify level (and gaps) in relation to pre-requisite knowledge as well as providing pastoral support. It could also be used as an opportunity to prepare students for the independent learning and study skills that they will need in an increasingly massified higher education system.
6. There is a recognition by both instructors and students that school-leavers are not adequately prepared for the transition to higher education and that there should be closer interaction between secondary schools and HEIs. Although this is a sector wide problem Debu University could seek funding (possibly through Development Innovative Fund, DIF?) to work with local secondary schools in piloting activities and workshops that better prepare students, especially female students, for higher education.

4.1.5.1. Next Steps

For the team from HERQA:

1. Disseminate details of the process to other public HEIs.

2. Reflect on the process in terms of lessons to be learnt for establishing HERQA procedures and criteria.
3. Use the Dehub experience to draft a protocol for HEI's to undertake their-own internal quality audit.

For the team from Dehub University:

1. Consider how representative these findings are in relation to Dehub University as a whole.
2. Consider dissemination of the report and/or key findings
3. Consider how the quality assurance processes at Dehub University can be improved
4. Consider prioritizing recommendations, developing an action plan and identifying appropriate responsibilities for its implementation.

4.1.6. Conclusion

Ethiopia embarked on huge higher education reform at all levels: Institutional, program and system. The number of universities increased from two to eight whose enrollment rate has also increased dramatically. Such massified higher education expansion would be successful if institutional quality care is embedded in the system to ensure quality education provision. Institution quality assessment is done internally and externally. Internal quality care must be the sole responsibility of the institutions and should be done continuously. HERQA as quality assurance agency is mandated to do external audit at program and institutional levels. As part of its quality audit work, HERQA has studied

the experiences of other countries and would like to adopt some of the procedures for institutional audit that suit Ethiopian conditions after being tested. To that end a pilot work of external quality audit at institutional level was undertaken in public and private higher learning institutions using experiences learned from UK, Netherlands and South Africa. HERQA learned that such audits must be undertaken systematically and structured to enhance quality improvement in perpetuity. Moreover, during the pilot external quality audit at institutional level, HERQA identified the qualitative and quantitative data needed, the methodology to follow, responsible bodies for quality care, relevant information needed and the nature and content of the audit report have also been well recognized and understood for further application.

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