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Quality and Quality Management in Higher Educational Institutions in Ghana

Dr. Yamima Dauda
Research Coordinator, Department of Research and Consultancy Unit,
Ghana Communication Technology University, Ghana

Abstract:
Intellectual discourse on the meaning of quality is varied, making the paradigm appear inexplicable. Some who have attempted to define quality have done so by considering the context in which it is used, while some others choose to define it in absolute terms. Quality in education has become highly desirous in Ghana, and stakeholders are demanding higher standards of training. The quality of education, as well as offerings of products and services in education, have now come to be decided by both the institutes and their clients, with the expectation of achieving customer satisfaction and maintaining client loyalty.Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) assure their patrons of being in good standing by undergoing rigorous internal and external assessments of their curricula, staff and infrastructure. This offers them the opportunity of gaining accreditation from theNational Accreditations Board (NAB),the government's Quality Assurance Agency on education in Ghana. This paper recalls the era when early industries took to modelling various sorts of quality as they tried to make standard products with minimal differences. Going forward, it discusses, the approaches adopted by universities and colleges, as well as regulatory agencies, to verify the reputation of these tertiary academies, based on each establishment's particular model of quality. Legislation establishing the NAB and similar such agencies are quoted, along with their establishment purposes.

Keywords: Quality, quality assurance, accreditation, HEIs

1. Introduction

The resilience of higher educational institutions (HEIs) isgetting tested as time goes by, as higher standards of teaching and learning are now taking center stage in the academic space. Patrons of higher education (HE)are calling for superior benchmarks in the system via quality education. Characteristically, tertiary educational institutions have assessed performance through long-established academic schemes rather than monetary considerations. Their rationale appears to be derived from matters of external concern and assessment, and centered on essentials of education that are measurable without difficulty.

Mishra (2007) states that institutions of teaching and learning are very much preoccupied with quality as a habit though each holds onto its specific opinions about the paradigm. Many schools of thought hold their own opinions about the concept of quality owing to the fact that it has several perspectives, appearing differently to each interest group.

2. The Concept of Quality in Higher Education

To define quality in higher education appears demanding since it is multidimensional. Harvey et. al., (1992) observe that one difficulty in defining quality is that quality training in advanced academia is stakeholder-relative; stakeholders are made up of students, employers, lecturers and administrators, government, evaluators, trustees, sponsors and the general public. This is in accord with Tam (2001) who holds that stakeholders have their own impressions about what represents quality in teaching and learning, just as learners have their own, and these have earned a certain amount of acceptance. As stated by Dickson et. al., (1995), it is tenuous for patrons to appraise the standard and reputation of the service because of its distinctiveness, as it might be realized only years later. On their part, Telford and Masson (2005) could also not find any conformity in the views of main stake holders. Appearing to concur with the above points of view, Mishra (2007) states that the definition of quality is difficult particularly in higher teaching and learning, and suggests that quality possesses certain important premises that describe it; thus:

- Quality as out-and-out; is assigned the highest criterion.
- Quality as comparative; is categorized in a proportional manner.
- Quality as a procedure; is the product of schemes and systematic requirements, while
- Quality as tradition, recognizes the importance of tactical smartness as a technique for transformation, in which elements involved value the importance of quality.

Biggs (2001) sees quality in higher education as a product, a possession, or a procedure, while Harvey and Green (1993) propose four definitions of quality in higher education. They considered the traditional view of quality by erstwhile leaders in academia as 'excellence'. They further defined quality as 'value for money', despite possible disagreement from some scholars. External regulatory bureaus mostly consider quality as 'value for money', since they are too concerned

about financial matters in the system, rather than the core mandate of imparting knowledge, leaving most professors frustrated (Cartwright 2007). They also consider quality as 'fitness for purpose', this being in agreement with the goals of establishments (Murad and Rajesh 2010). Franklin (1992) and Scott (1998) challenge this definition as it can undermine the quality of teaching in higher educational institutions. Thus, Harvey and Green (1993) finally defined quality as 'transforming'. By this definition, quality is seen in teaching as students' perceptions about how they can transform knowledge to manage real life problems (Murad and Rajesh 2010).Hence, the meaningaccords with the definition of quality by Green (1994) as conformity to required standards of any institute.

The concept of quality assurance came from the industrial regions of the past (OECD, 2006). In such areas, quality meant lessening inconsistency (Hau, 1996) while making sure that products were true to type. This was aimed at satisfying the expectations of customers. Thus, quality indicates 'zero defects' (Crosby, 1969). Whereas manufacturers endeavour to come out with goods that have no defects, supervisors have a bigger overall viewpoint in maintaining quality and dealing with the feelings, expectations and opinions of the employees.

Currently, management companies are redirecting their focus from 'zero defects' in products to 'zero defections' incustomers. To managements, businesses must recognise that the quality of produce is not to be decided by manufacturers alone. Rather, clients may also participate in establishing the condition of goods. In this situation, quality points to 'consumer satisfaction'(Dean, 1999).

Anderson (2006) observes that quality is a relative concept that has been defined multifariously by scholars. He posits that owing to this, when matters concerning the quality of a university or college arises, learners may consider the equipment, buildings and services at hand and evidence of training for the job market.He states that lecturers, on the other hand, may pay attention to the curriculum in use. The administration may highlight the achievements of the institute, while stakeholders will probably be more interested in the achievements of their wards. In the end, proprietors will likely pay more attention to the capability of the former students of the university or college. Stakeholders maintain their individual views of what quality is (Shanahan and Gelber, 2004).Thus, quality displays different characteristics, and its connotation therefore hinges on the pertaining situations. Accordingly, in high level academic matters, it must be pointed out that a college may display features of higher standard in a certain discipline, but of least standing in another. An extensively cited work by Green (1994: 13), lists five paths to the description of quality in HEIs as;

- In terms of the exceptional (highest standards).
- In terms of conformity to standards.
- As fitness for purpose.
- As effectiveness in achieving institutional goals, and
- as meeting customers stated or implied needs.

2.1. Quality as Exceptionality

This appears to be the most widely held impression of what quality is. It is related to the idea of offering products or conveniences that are exclusive (Green, 1994), and confers esteem on the owner. In HEIs, a college that exhibits a good academic achievement is considered a quality institute. This is the approach adopted during 'excellence awards', and is also used to identify high standard colleges (Chalmer 2007). Nevertheless, it poses a significant obstacle to quality assurance (QA) companies. These companies may praise institutions that show outstanding performance. On the contrary, they lack the licence to malign other colleges. Conscientiousness would be missing in that circumstance, as within dividual advancement. 'Quality as exceptionality' therefore, does not seem to be the preferred technique among QA firms. However, specific sorts of higher education may still rely on the procedure. This may comprise valuating doctoral curricular or high-level academic enquiry. Some colleges may even choose to be assessed on benchmarks of quality (for example, leading universities). Therefore, though it cannot be applied universally in higher education, excellence continues to be an essential defining factor of quality.

2.2. Quality as Conformance to Standards

This view point emanates from the standardisation policies of the industrial revolution period. In this setting, the phrase 'standard' stands for confirmed designs or necessities. Fame is achieved by colleges that have reached specific recognized bench marks (Cheng, 2011). These are held as institutes of superior quality. Many governing councils apply this scheme to determine whether schools or syllabuses have attained particular established canons (Green, 1994). Conformity to established yardsticks could secure authorization to start operations, or attainment of status, or scholarship depending on the situation. Undoubtedly, standardisation is imperative in these circumstances. At times, they are labelled in a specific manner. For instance, it could be in the form of the number of permanently employed lecturers in the institution, the number of them holding terminal qualifications, or the number of papers published per full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty member. While this allows easy assessment, it could also make it inconsequential.

2.3. Quality as Fitness for Purpose

This paradigm stems from the perception that an appreciation of quality can be gotten only through the situation under which it is used, or the intent to which it is put. 'What are appropriate purposes?' The answers to these questions are determined by the existing conditions under which quality is considered. The school could itself decide the purposes, or it could be determined by the political authorities, or by stakeholders.

2.4. Quality as Effectiveness in Achieving Institutional Goals

This is another kind of the 'fitness-for–purpose' procedures mentioned above, in which the purposes are determined by the institute. In this approach, a first-rate institute is one that clearly declares its mission (purpose) and is capable of attaining it. This method may be faulty in the way by which the institute establishes its targets (high, moderate or low), and how appropriate those targets are (Green, 1994).

2.5. Quality as Meeting Customers Stated or Implied Needs

This is one more type of the 'fitness-for-purpose' methods. In this setting, the intention is to get the satisfaction of the client. Yet, is client contentment the same as offering what is good for them? Can we equate 'needs' to 'wants'? In HEIs, the import would be that what learners wish for may perhaps not actually be the best for them. Rather than putting all kinds of clients together in dealing with 'customer needs' and 'customer satisfaction', it is better to sort them into administration, trainees and relations.

Ideas such as 'value for money', 'added value' and 'transformative processes' are also referred to in describing quality in HEIs. In discussing 'value for money', a product has quality when customers are content with its price. Thus, quality conforms to the satisfaction of clients. End users could be students (who are clearly customers, and spend a lot of time under teaching), relations (who support the training of their dependants), or the government (that makes laws and pays for teaching and learning). On the issue of 'added value', an institute that develops the talents and capability of a student to get employment is regarded as doing well and prompting quality. The 'transformative process' considers the means through which HE contributes to create many wide-ranging competences in students, and further, to arming them with academic expertise.

3. Quality in Higher Education in Ghana

Quality education in universities and colleges is deemed to be critical in the advancement of a nation. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) recognizes higher education as playing an essential part in national development, and urges developing nations to pay much attention to it if they plan to progress in a global milieu that flourishes on responsiveness and competition (Jonathan, 2000).

3.1. Quality Assurance (QA) in Higher Education

The quality assurance process in higher education, deals with the procedures through which schools of higher learning provide surety to internal (employees, students) and external stakeholders that all the prerequisites are at hand to reach established standards. It could be defined as a collection of values and systems directed at the maintenance and enhancement of quality education. It depends on constant appraisal and comparison between pre-agreed objectives and real results, aiming at finding reasons for any underachievement. QA is a planned and methodical investigation of an institute, or an activity to find out if suitable standards of training, expertise, and infrastructure are in place, maintained and enhanced (Hayward, 2001). The standing of a HEI rests on the ranking of its teachers. They are the essences of the institutions, and they instruct the students, support their progress, and uphold responsibility to their institutions, society, and the state. In Ghana, QA in tertiary institutions is the responsibility of the National Accreditations Board (NAB)NAB Act 744, 2007. It comprises a group of institutions that have the mandate of accreditation and auditing.

Accreditation is a procedure for internal examination of an institute and/or its curricula by outside agencies to determine its status and recommend the improvement of benchmarks if necessary. A scheme is drawn up to find out whether an institute has attained or surpassed the issued canons (determined by an outside agency like the NAB, National Council for Tertiary Education(NCTE). or other expert agencies) for approval, and whether it is realizing its objectives and indicated occupation. The procedure occasionally involves an internal examination, assessment by associate institutes and a call on the institute. A satisfactory report confers accreditation on a curriculum or the institute(NAB Act 744, 2007).

3.3. Establishment of the National Accreditation Board

The NAB Law 1993 (PNDCL 317) created the National Accreditations Board as a Quality Assurance Agency in Ghana to shore up management of HEIs. It comes under the authority of the Ministry of Education (MoE), and is a public service organization that carries out the accreditation of public and private colleges with regards to the quality of their programmes (PNDC Law 317, 1993).

To add to that, it decides the values of certificates presented locally and internationally. Yet, the discussion is still on-going about the achievements or otherwise of the Agency in fulfilling its established aims in the light of existing impediments in HEIs in Ghana.

3.4. Quality Assurance in Ghana

Conservation of quality in HE is employed to show the actions of good education- this shows the level of educational attainment of top scholars. Intellectual standard is about the same as intellectual benchmark in teaching and learning; this is in line with the emerging attention on upper-level academic guidelines on intellectual results - the exact stage of awareness and the abilities that scholars attain because of their occupation in a specific academic curriculum (Brennan and Shah, 2000). Higher education with the assurance of quality structures, advances further than the colleges themselves, and to realize this, certain universities and colleges have introduced internal and external procedures and rules to ensure qualitative standards. Many countries have founded organizations that impose overall criteria. At this point, it is necessary to appreciate what internal and external quality assurances are. Internal quality assurance means rules and activities through which universities and colleges by themselves, evaluate and improve the quality of their

teaching, while external quality assurance concerns rules and activities originatingfroma higher authority and assuring the overall quality of programmes of universities and colleges (Seniwoliba and Yakubu, 2015).Nevertheless, these HEIs are already constantly controlled by guidelines of the state in order to maintain academic standards.

The external quality assurance has secured up-to-datere form in nationwide regulations alongside directing attention on tertiary education. The National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) was set up by Act 454 of 1993 and directed to take tertiary education to a higher stage. The NCTE strives to promote quality, fair access, feasible financing, good administration and quality in tertiary education that maintain the advancement of the nation. The Council also publishes information on tertiary education. The subsequent establishment of the National Accreditation   Board (NAB) as a quality control organization by the government of Ghana in 1993 with the promulgation of the NAB Law 1993 (PNDCL 317), was to push the management of tertiary education to a greater height in Ghana. Notwithstanding the standard set by regulatory agencies to ensure distinction in tertiary education, different institutes have their specific guidelines to direct them towards their chosen goals.

3.5. The National Accreditation System in Ghana

Official recognition of tertiary institutes is usually given by the National Accreditation Board (NAB) as directed by the Ghana government. The main purposes of the NAB mentioned in part 2 of the NAB Act,2007, Act 744are to:

- Certify the curricula and value of government and non-government advanced schools and colleges.
- Establish, in conference with chosen institutes, the syllabuses and the prerequisites for the fitting administration and upholding of good intellectual values of those institutes.
- Make public the roll of recognized government and non-government academies and curricula annually. Recommend advanced non-government academies to the Head of State to be given accreditation.
- Establish the corresponding value of various certificates granted by institutes within Ghana and abroad.
- Undertake some other assignments identified by the Minister of Education (National Accreditation Board Act, 2007. Sect. 2)

In subsection 18 of the PNDCL317 1993, accreditation refers to the grade ascribed to a tertiary institute or programme when it attains established quality targets.

Accreditation bestows mandates on tertiary institutions to design new programmes and to maintain the reliability of current certificates; however, these new programmes must satisfy current academic quality.

Accreditation in Ghana is a two-fold standardization process; firstly, standards for assessing marks are put in place, then follows examination of programmes of colleges to make certain that quality accreditation is attained.

Institutions therefore have the opportunity to correct any faults in their programmes. An important goal of the accreditation process is to make certain that students are presented model curricula. This is aimed to boost the trust of the public in tertiary educational programs and certificates presented by the institutions. This is meant to assure the public that the institute possesses enough material and monetary wealth to engage in quality education.

A further goal is to support the idea of continuous improvement of tertiary education. Furthermore, accreditation offers a universal guarantee that, education in Ghana is superior, and that graduates are satisfactorily tooled for higher education and for industry.

Further accreditation is to provide comfort to businesspersons and the populace that Ghanaian graduates have received top-quality education.

3.6. Educational Management Structure in Ghana

The legislative organizations mandated to effect the realization of Ghana's educational plan are named below. These organizations cooperate with each other to make certain that admittance to quality education in Ghana is sustained.

Statutory Body	Structure and Functions
Ministry of Education (MoE).	The MoE directs and controls education from the basic to the tertiary levels in Ghana. It is headed by a minister and two Deputies i.e. One each for basic and tertiary respectively. Like all ministers, they are appointed by the President subject to Parliamentary approval. (National Accreditation Board Act, 2007. Sect. 2)
National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE)	The NCTE Act 454 1993 established the NCTE as the body that oversees tertiary education in Ghana. The Council's members are appointed by the President in accordance with article 70 of the1992 Constitution.
National Accreditation Board (NAB)	PNDC Law 317 established the NAB in 1993 with the goal to promoting the realization of Ghana's manpower needs. The Board is drawn from selected academic and professional bodies. The President appoints the Chairman and other members in accordance with Article 70 of the Constitution
National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations(NABPTEX)	Parliamentary Act 492, 1994 established NABPTEX as a corporate entity with perpetual succession. The object of NABPTEX is to formulate and administer schemes of examinations, evaluation, assessments certification and standards for skills competence and syllabus competence for non-university tertiary institutions, professional bodies and private institutions accredited by NAB under PNDC Law 317, 1993.

Statutory Body	Structure and Functions
Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET*)*	Act 718 of the Ghanaian Parliament established the Council for Technical and Vocational Education Training (COTVET). COTVET is mainly to co-ordinate and oversee Technical and Vocational Education and Training(TVET)in the country and to provide for related matters. Other objects and functions of COTVET include: formulate national policies for skills development across the broad spectrum of pre-tertiary and tertiary education, formal, informal and non-formal education; co-ordinate, harmonize and supervise the activities of private and public providers of TVET including the informal sector.
Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund)	The GET Fund is a major stakeholder in Ghana's educational sub-sector. It was established by an Act of parliament in 2000, Act 581. Its birth arose out of the direct need for alternate sustainable ways of funding education in Ghana.

Table 1: Advanced Educational Management Structure in Ghana
Source: Author's Construct, Adapted from the Ministry of Education (2018)

3.7. Best Practices for Advanced Academic Establishments

Tertiary educational institutes are ensnared in high-spirited contests as they strive to deliver quality teaching and learning, and this has pushed the skills of their administrations to higher levels. Administrative transformation, particularly social change, in addition to the partisan undercurrents in schools and colleges, demand high proficient capabilities. These have to be expanded with theoretical as well as human aptitudes that are linked to management. For educational institutes to achieve this, it is necessary for them to teach as well as improve skills put together and spearhead a diverse team. They must also exercise control independently, resolve disputes, foresee and effect transformation and be able to understand and deal with modern academic challenges. Due to these important qualities, principals of education have to reconsider their selection and promotion processes. They must pay attention to the uprightness, comportment, sensitivity and talent of candidates.

Therefore, schools must move towards innovations to increase efficiency and lower cost. This is achievable by drawing from good industry standards in academic papers and in face-to-face teaching approaches. CHERI's (2010) paper on Higher Education and Society establishes that the malleability and affordability of combined education, together with low entry barriers, and the combination of urbane multimedia and technologies are now what is cherished. The article also brings to light that universities and colleges are increasing financing for modernization in spaces such as computerized environments, which are mostly considered to be apt for modern concepts, amenities, and creations. The report asserts that the mixed approach has the likelihood of promoting individual studying and teamwork, together with affording additional paths of interaction among students and lecturers. The research paper determines that the combined technique culminated in improved contact with the syllabus, which boosted dynamic learning in class and in the endenhanced student achievement.

4. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to illustrate the concept of quality and its application in universities and colleges in Ghana. It has taken into account the diverse designations of quality by different scholars. The term holds certain important constructs. Quality as absolute is accorded the highest ranking; as relative, it is described in comparative terms; labelled as a process, it is the product of policies and general requirements; and as culture, its importance as a process for transformation is realized. The study has paid much attention to quality management structures, surety and accreditation in Ghana.

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