

OVERVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM IN EAST AFRICA

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Historical perspectives on university education in East Africa

- Before 1963 Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda had a separate university level college
- In 1963 the University of East Africa established, comprising one constituent colleges in each country
- 1970: University of East Africa breaks up and one independent university established in each country
- 1980s: Beginning of expansion of university education in each country
- Present situation: Establishment of many universities (public and private)

Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA): History and perspectives

- **1970: Establishment of Inter-University Committee to foster and facilitate collaboration among the newly established universities in East Africa**
- **1980: Establishment of IUCEA to replace IU Committee, as a regional inter-governmental organization facilitating contacts between East African universities**
- **Currently there are around 56 member universities**
- **IUCEA is an organ of the East African Community**

Current main activities of IUCEA and higher education regulatory agencies ...

- **Coordinating collaborative research (VicRes, BioEarn, etc)**
- **Coordination of inter-university student exchange between member countries**
- **Coordination of academic staff exchange between member countries as short-term lecturers, external examiners and research collaborators**
- **Introduction of a common quality assurance system for East African universities**
- **Introduction of a credit accumulation and transfer system among universities in East Africa**

Quality assurance (QA) in higher education

- A component of quality management verifying conformity with standard requirements of inputs, procedures, processes, products
- Quality assessor scrutinizes performance of the quality control framework of the provider
- The structure of quality system considers responsiveness and stakeholders satisfaction

Quality assurance in higher education

- **No single (simple) definition for QUALITY**
- **In higher education QUALITY is determined by:**
 - ❑ Views by students and parents on expected achievement
 - ❑ Institutional commitment to satisfy political and stakeholder expectations
 - ❑ Achievement of institutional missions
 - ❑ Adherence to internal policy
 - ❑ Accountability to stakeholders

A quality assurance system should help universities to answer the following questions

- **Do we have the right programs for our society?**
- **Do we have qualified academic staff to deliver those programs?**
- **Do we achieve what we want to do in quality education delivery?**
- **Do our students graduate and fit into the job market?**

Quality assurance in East African universities

- **Quality assurance is part of any university system**
- **Each university in East Africa has quality assurance mechanism in the form of:**
 - ❑ **Rules and regulation on conduct of academic activities (course delivery, assessment, examinations etc)**
 - ❑ **Rules and criteria on academic staff appointments and appraisal systems**
 - ❑ **Student evaluation of course delivery**
 - ❑ **External examination system**
 - ❑ **Stakeholder participation in curriculum review**
 - ❑ **Regularized curriculum reviews in some universities**
 - ❑ **Academic audits in some universities**
 - ❑ **Tracer studies in some universities**

Why regional/international quality assurance systems?

- **Promote regional/international comparability and compatibility of higher education**
- **Promote regional/international student and staff mobility**
- **Promote internationally credible higher education area**
- **Promote credibility and academic excellence within regional/international socio-economic block set up**
- **Promote employability of graduates and labour mobility across borders**
- **Promote institutional accountability to national/international stakeholders**

Current regional quality assurance systems

- Bologna Process with 46 European member countries, both EU and non-EU members
- Latin American system
- Central American system
- South East Asian system
- The Arab world system (being introduced)
- North American systems (established long ago)

Initial process for East African system ...

- ❑ IUCEA Governing Board decides in September 2005 to introduce the system
- ❑ Committee formed to initiate the process
- ❑ March 2006 Committee recommends the process to IUCEA Governing Board
- ❑ IUCEA Governing Board forms Standing Committee - March 2006
- ❑ January 2006 East African delegation visits German universities and other institutions
- ❑ June 2006 and December 2006: Regional and national brainstorming workshops concretize the process
- ❑ March 2007: Quality assurance Handbook is prepared

Recommendations of consultative workshops (2006)

- **Harmonize university quality assurance systems by establishing common East African quality assurance framework**
- **Establish regional quality assurance office, preferably within IUCEA**
- **Set uniform regional higher education benchmark quality standards with voluntary adoption, based on internationally recognized standards**
- **Prepare use-friendly quality assurance Handbook based on existing national benchmark standards and systems**
- **National and institutional quality assurance systems be streamlined according to local situations**

The Quality Assurance Handbook “A Road Map to Quality”

- **Instrument for the East African quality assurance system**
- **Based on worldwide experiences and good practices, and East African regulatory agencies guidelines**
- **Has already been prepared and distributed to universities**
- **Piloted for program self assessment in evaluation**
- **Second edition prepared in five volumes**

Accomplished training activities or in progress (in collaboration with regulatory agencies)

- ❑ **Training of quality assurance coordinators from first cohort of 22 universities**
- **Training of quality assurance coordinators from second cohort of 25 universities including Rwanda and Burundi (Started in September 2008)**
- **Sensitizing top university management (VCs, DVCs, Deans) at national and regional levels**
- **Sensitization of universities on the regional system**
- **Pilot internal self assessment of programs**

Objectives of training/sensitization workshops

- **Know how to use the Handbook**
- **Prepare to institutionalize the Handbook in the universities**
- **Popularize quality assurance values at the universities**
- **Development of vision towards establishment of institutional quality assurance systems and structures**
- **Sensitize universities to establish quality assurance units, systems and culture**

Status of Quality assurance systems at universities

- **Universities aware and support the IUCEA quality assurance system**
- **IUCEA collaborating with regulatory agencies in the quality assurance processes**
- **Universities at different stages of establishing QA systems**
- **Some universities have established QA policies and units**
- **Some Universities already integrated Handbook instruments into their quality assurance systems**
- **Some universities using the Handbook in university level curriculum reviews**
- **A QA forum emerging in East Africa**

Challenges in universities, to the IUCEA and regulatory agencies...

- Resistance/inertia among some staff, students and management
- Quality assurance personnel assigned other responsibilities
- Inadequate university funding
- Heavy teaching and administrative workload
- Quick turn over among students (and staff)
- Quality assurance policy and units not established in most universities

Other activities in progress...

- Training of the peers for external evaluation
- Pilot external evaluation at program level
- Establishing an IUCEA QA unit and IUCEA quality assurance system
- Helping universities to establish institutional quality assurance units
- Training of critical mass of quality assurance officers

Recommendations from Quality Assurance Standing Committee Meeting (January 31st 2008) for Governing Board

- **There is need for universities to recognize the quality assurance officers and their roles, and to explore possibility of rewarding them for the extra responsibility**
- **Universities should give appropriate titles for the quality assurance officers**
- **IUCEA should continue to support the process by encouraging member universities to develop and establish quality assurance units with well-defined structures**
- **A University of Dar es Salaam top management person be appointed to the Standing Committee to replace Prof Nkunya**
- **Quality assurance structure at the IUCEA Secretariat be strengthened by creating a coordinating unit and appointing appropriate personnel**
- **Current coordinator continue chairing Standing Committee**

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Thank you for
your attention