

Assessment of Monitoring and Evaluation Instruments for Quality Assurance at The Gambia College

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Abstract

The paper assessed the monitoring and evaluation instruments for quality assurance at The Gambia College. The objectives of the research were to assess the monitoring and evaluation instruments used to measure the quality of performance at The Gambia College. A cross-sectional qualitative study design with a non-random purposive sampling technique was used to collect data from the respondents. The data collection tool employed in this research was an open-ended questionnaire which was administered to respondents. Also, an interview guide was used to collect more in-depth information from respondents while a checklist was used to collect information on the existence of policy documents outlined in The Gambia College Quality Assurance Policy (2018) that was administered at the offices of the Registry, Internal Quality Assurance Unit and the Human Resources Directorate. The findings were that a quality assurance policy exists, but the procedures and manuals to guide its implementation did not exist at the time of conducting this study. The study herein recommended that more courage and determination are required to resuscitate the quality assurance system at The Gambia College, without which the integrity and quality profile of the institution will not likely reach its peak.

Keywords: Assessment, Monitoring, Evaluation, Quality Assurance, policy, challenges

Introduction

Quality assurance is geared towards the satisfaction of the expectations of the people through the maintenance of standards and the utilisation and management of resources. It is a measure that determines how efficiently educational tasks are performed (Etim, Basil, Akuegwu, Chika, & Uchendu, 2019). For optimum output, it requires the motivation of both teachers and students alike. Zaki (2020) adduces that the quality of education can be measured from three dimensions of competence, accountability and accreditations. The author posits that graduates in a particular programme must meet the minimum entry requirements of the institution as good competence, accreditation and accountability will also reflect on their certificates. Professional lecturers or tutors would always meet the required academic goals which may ultimately give rise to professional graduates. Pakhapan (2017), cited in Zaki (2020) acknowledges that professional human resources may be trained when special attention is being paid to the recruitment process, capacity training and staff development in the form of quality assurance.

The Gambia College is the centre for training professional human resources for the Government of The Gambia in the areas of agriculture, education, nursing and public health. The College trains teachers for the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) in the country. However, in spite of its significant role in national human resource development, the College has recently been the subject of widespread complaints and criticism on poor quality of graduates. While the poor quality of graduates may be the result of the absence of the form of quality assurance cited above, the significance of Pakhapan's (2017) opinion is recognised in the establishment of the Internal Quality Assurance Unit by the College as a corrective move to overcome this challenge.

In order to operationalise this unit, however, essential tools of monitoring and evaluation are required to achieve the desired objectives and outcomes. Monitoring is a systematic process through which stakeholders obtain information with respect to the stated goals and objectives, while evaluation entails the systematic collection of information to make a decision, improve programme effectiveness, or generate knowledge for future decision making (Clark, 2014). It is therefore imperative to assess monitoring and evaluation instruments that will guide the quality assurance process in The Gambia College. The instruments will serve as benchmarks for quality assessment and maintenance. It is against this background that this study attempts to assess monitoring and evaluation instruments for quality assurance at The Gambia College. The paper aims to assess monitoring and evaluation tools as benchmarks for the quality management systems with a view to measuring the quality of performance at The Gambia College.

Literature Review

Monitoring

Osman (2002) defined monitoring as the daily managerial procedure that involves collecting and reviewing information to determine what aspects of the operation needs correction. Monitoring is thus a guiding tool to share relevant information among stakeholders of a given programme. It ensures that effective management decisions are made at the right time. Monitoring is executed by the internal staff of an institution or organisation as an ongoing process, rather than a periodic activity.

There are different types of monitoring, but the most notable are process or performance monitoring, which focuses more on the effective implementation of a programme; results or impact monitoring, which determines the impact of a programme or intervention; and situation monitoring, sometimes referred to as scanning, which is concerned with monitoring the external environment (International NGO Training and Research Centre, 2017).

Evaluation

In the context of education, evaluation is to measure something in order to make a decision with reference to the acceptable standard or benchmark (Weir & Roberts, 1994 as cited in Yambi, 2018). Howard and Donaghue (2015) identify evaluation to be a comparison of a student's achievement against a set standard or other students' performance. However, in the context of this study, evaluation describes a thorough concept of measurement than applies in a test or examination. As According to Kizlik (2010), evaluation consists five basic components. First, evaluation must always reflect the overall objective of the educational system; second, it must seek to collect relevant information; third, there must be meaningful transfer of relevant ideas that will benefit the learners in both their learning and professional capacity; fourth, there must be a thorough explanation of the information given to the learners; and fifth, it must express a reasonable control over the classroom for effective decision making. Howard and Donaghue (2015) also assert that evaluation must be a continuous management and learning tool to improve learning and the learning process itself. The authors argue that internal evaluation is a particularly continuous process at every level of the institution in all programme areas with the participatory efforts of managers, staff and beneficiaries in their various capacities. The commitment of all in this participatory activity allows easy access to the results for appropriate programme improvement (Howard & Donaghue, 2015; Yambi, 2018).

Quality Assurance

The concepts of quality and quality assurance have recently become key issues internationally, and managers of education systems and institutions have become equally concerned about quality and how to put in place appropriate quality assurance mechanisms. Quality assurance is a generic term used for all forms of external quality monitoring, evaluation or reviews. It may be defined as a process of establishing stakeholder confidence that provision (inputs, processes and outcomes)

fulfils expectations or measures up to the minimum requirements. (Harvey, 2004-2012). This definition contains the various aspects of quality assurance which relate to the inputs, processes and outcomes of higher education. However, the process and nature of quality assurance also bears a dynamic dimension, whereby quality assurance not only seeks to ensure that the minimum quality thresholds are reached at a certain point in time, but also aims to improve the quality of higher education provision over time (Geda, 2014). Other scholars have also proposed definitions of the concept of quality assurance. According to Vlăsceanu, Grünberg and Pârlea (2007: 47) as cited in Geleta Geda (2014), quality assurance is "... an all-embracing term referring to an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining, and improving) the quality of a higher education system, institution, or programme." The authors highlight a sort of wholesale approach that draws attention, not only to the different aspects of the quality assurance process, but also underlines a total consideration of institutions themselves, their programmes and the systems via which those programmes are run.

Key Performance Indicators

A performance indicator can generally be defined as "... an item of information collected at regular intervals to track the performance of a system" (Fitz-Gibbon, 1996 cited in Geda, 2014). Amid the education reforms around the world, performance indicators have gradually become standard components of the language of educational quality (Dennis, 2010). From a theoretical point of view, the development of performance indicators in the educational context is affected by the idea that quality cannot be improved unless measured (Dill, 1995) and that education is a highly complex system, and to get quality into it "... the best strategy lies in improving the information in the system, particularly by defining and measuring the many outcomes that we care about and feeding back the measurements to the units of responsibility" (Fitz-Gibbon, cited in Geleta Geda, 2014: 57).

Empirical Review

There are numerous authors who have conducted research and written extensively about quality assurance. One such research was conducted by Lukito and Rivai (2020) who explored the implementation of accreditation activities as important elements of quality assurance. The purpose of the research was to investigate the role and function of quality assurance in university academic programmes. The research adopted a descriptive study design to collect data, while a qualitative approach was used to review the relevant literature. The research concluded that quality assurance is an important process in the higher education system and the identification of the job description of the quality assurance team makes achievement of quality goals and objectives very easy.

Furthermore, Tutko (2019) conducted a research in Krakow with respect to quality culture research in higher education –literature review. The research looked exclusively at the quality culture in higher education institutions particularly the manner in which it is being adopted. In this research, quality culture is seen as entailing two distinctive elements. One of the elements was characterised by psychological elements of shared values, beliefs and expectations in a drive to attain permanent quality goals and objectives, while the other element was a managerial element characterised by coordinating individual efforts in the quality process. The research revealed that the quality policies that are found on the university website do not exist at faculty levels. It established a significant correlation between quality culture and workforce performance. Furthermore, the research revealed that leadership and communication were identified as being important in binding structural/managerial and cultural/psychological elements. Quality culture can be a tool for asking questions about how things work, how institutions function, who they relate, and how they see themselves. The author finally revealed that quality development in higher education is often limited to bureaucratic documentation and disregards the development of quality culture. He concluded that more research is required in this field of study and a methodological change is required in conducting a meaningful research in this area.

Similarly, Varouchas, Sicilia, and Alonso (2018) conducted a research titled with the primary aim to fill the gap created by the missing key performance indicator (KPI) measurements of quality teaching and curriculum design. The formulation of this aim came as a result of the intensive review of the relevant literature regarding measuring quality dimension in teaching and curriculum design, the need for quality improvement as well as a professional experience following years of academic work which made this research appealing and intriguing work. To this effect, four objectives became the focal discourse of the research: the lack of applied methodologies focusing on the integration of curriculum design, delivery and outcome assessment; the need for transparent mechanisms for the measurement and control of quality in curricula; the need to inform the curriculum design process with quality perceptions for a learner-centric focus; and the need to investigate effective knowledge dissemination methods of tacit knowledge with the support of innovative learning management systems. Varouchas et al. (2018) obtained information through a structured interview with 10 higher education administrators and professors in Greece. Other interviewees involved academic department heads from the School of Business and the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Degree — The American College of Greece, all professors in various disciplines such as Information Management, International Business, Finance, Tourism and Hospitality, Psychology, and English. The outcome of these interviews were enough to form relevant literature which fostered the design of the questionnaire as a data collection instrument for the study. Consequently, the second stage of the data collection consisted of a structured interview of 13 participants of higher education administrators and professors from Greece and abroad. The objective of this interview was to generate a proper understanding of the perception of the quality component of higher education as well as the formulation of key performance indicators. The constant comparison method was used to analyse the qualitative data and consists of identifying, coding and categorising patterns found in the respondents' statements.

Consequently, the study found that instructors require a requisite qualification to effectively teach and conduct a meaningful research. The teaching content should be such that it may provide the desired learning outcome with modified teaching styles to encourage more student centered learning and participation. The research also maintained that an automated procedure will significantly improve the quality assurance system with better quality outcomes. It identified time spent to prepare lectures as a key performance indicator; the use of technological instruments such as LCDs, laptops and other ICT devices are key performance indicators that improve quality; the incorporation of a practical placement programme is an essential key performance indicator to promote transferable skills such as professionalism, teamwork and leadership; student research outcome and quality is an important key performance indicator; student interactions and engagements during class is a key performance indicator; and competency skills, particularly of language, is a key performance indicator. The research finally concluded that the importance of quality in higher education has been acknowledged, but that the concept has not been properly understood.

Moreover, Badawy, Abd El-Aziz & Hefny (2018) conducted a research in Cairo University, Egypt entitled “Exploring and Measuring the Key Performance Indicators in Higher Education Institutions”. Text mining was used to collect relevant information for the research. Preprocessing technique and key word extraction with the aid of (Rapid Miner) text mining software tool was used. In so doing, the researcher paid more attention on the following research questions to shape the direction of the investigation: 1) What are the processes used in exploring KPIs for academic programmes and students? 2) How can institutions measure KPIs to ensure their growth and competitive advantage? The research revealed that knowledge and understanding are key performance indicators generated in the domain of the learning objective from each chapter of the textbook. Intellectual skills referred to as the capacity to absorb new knowledge and skill became

another key performance indicator. The frequency of this domain appeared in the learning objectives from each chapter of the textbook. Professional and practical skills which involve the students' ability to adopt and apply professional knowledge are also a key performance indicator, and the frequency of this domain appeared multiple times in the learning objectives from each chapter of the textbook. Academic programme assessment and students' success rates are also key performance indicators that are assessed in this research. This method of data processing is easier and faster than the manual method because it detects performance indicators by automatic processing for documents. This research suggested a new model for measuring performance indicators in higher education institutions through keyword extraction. A special technique was developed for this purpose and was tested to be convenient for all courses.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Transformative Learning

The study adopts Mezirow (1996) theory of Transformative Learning as its theoretical framework.

Jack Mezirow's theory of transformative learning has over the past three decades changed the way we understand adult learning and, by consequence, how we do pedagogy for adults, often referred to as andragogy (Knowles, 1998 **as cited in** *Calleja, 2014*). Mezirow has led this movement of transformative learning with almost every article, journal, or book published on transformation and adult learning citing him. He has restated the position transformative learning holds within the learning process (Caswell, 2007; Taylor, 2000; *Calleja, 2014*). Mezirow's original study which focused on the change in perspective experienced by women returning to formal education after a long break from school, made some revealing insights on how we understand learning in adulthood and the role of prior learning. Learning, according to Mezirow (1996 as cited in *Calleja, 2014*) was understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action. We accomplish this meaning making by projecting images and symbolic models (meaning schemes based upon prior learning) onto our sensory experiences and imaginatively use analogies to interpret new experiences (Mezirow, 1996). As can be appreciated, such insight has particular relevance to teacher education.

Acculturation of teachers within the profession can only take place when they become aware of the knowledge influences and hidden theories accrued over the years. Transformative learning theory is about becoming aware of one's own and others' tacit assumptions and expectations, and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation (Mezirow, 2000; *Calleja, 2014*). Mezirow (1989) explains that while social action is crucial and desirable, the decision regarding such involvement is that of the learner, not the educator. The role of the educator, if it is agreeable with one's values, is to support and help learners in their quest through helping them “research, plan tactics and develop the skills required for appropriate action to overcome constraints in these areas” (Mezirow, 1989 as cited in *Calleja, 2014: 119*). Thus Mezirow emphasises the learner's free will in closing the cycle of transformation by reintegrating the new perspective into life and acting on it in the social dimension

Methodology

The study used qualitative research design which is a single descriptive case study and cross-sectional in nature. The study used an open-ended questionnaire in a face-to-face interview with the respondents. Relevant policy documents with respect to quality assurance at The Gambia College were also reviewed to assess the existence of the procedures to overhaul the compliance mechanism. As the college consists of four schools, the questionnaire was administered to the Heads of Schools, Principal, and Senior lecturers in each of the Schools. The Registrar, Deputy Registrar, and Officers at Internal Quality Assurance Department and the Human Resource

Directorate were also eligible respondents in this study. The administration of the institution has an immense role in quality assurance in the organisation. For this reason, it was deemed appropriate to administer the questionnaire to the administrative officials of The Gambia College. The data obtained were analysed using content analysis and direct quotations from the respondents. and responses were categorised and analysed thematically, while documentary review was used for policy documents and secondary data.

The population (12) of the study comprised four Schools of the Gambia College. A purposive sampling technique was applied to select all the Heads of School, Principals and senior lecturers for the study. The Vice Principal, Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Human Resource Director and Internal Quality Assurance Officer were effectual respondents who participated in the research. The use of the purposive sampling method was informed by the fact that quality assurance is everybody's business and requires the voluntary participation of all parties and stakeholders involved in higher education.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 provides demographic information on the number of respondents who were selected and

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

	No. of Respondent	Gender				Educational Level			
		Male	%	Female	%	Bachelors	%	Masters	%
Position									
Lecturer	1			1	8.4%	1	8.3%		8.3%
Senior Lecturer	1	1	8.3%					1	
Principal Lecturer	3	3	25%					3	
Acting Head of School	1			1	8.3%			1	8.3%
Head of School	2	2	16.7%					2	16.7%
Deputy Registrar	1	1	8.3%					1	8.3%
Registrar	1	1	8.3%					1	8.3%
Quality Assurance Practitioner	1	1	8.3%					1	8.3%
Director of HR	1	1	8.3%					1	8.3%
Total	12	10	83.3%	2	16.7	1	8.3%	11	91.7%

Source: Fieldwork (2022).

Twenty-five percent (25%) (n=3) of the respondents are Principal Lecturers, 16.7 % (n=2) of the respondents are Heads of School, while the remaining 8.3% (n=1) are made up of the respective positions of the Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Quality Assurance Practitioner, and Human Resource Director. 83.3 % (n=10) of the respondents are males while the remaining 16.7% (n=2) of the respondents are females. 91.7% (n=11) of the respondents have a Master's degree while the remaining 8.3% (n=1) of the respondents have a Bachelor's degree.

Assessment of the Monitoring and Evaluation Instruments used to Measure the Quality of Performance at the Gambia College.

The results of the findings on the study objective revealed that the commitment to quality practices triggered The Gambia College to develop a quality assurance policy intended to provide the framework for implementation and enforcement of quality standards in the institution. The policy clearly defined principles, guidelines and procedures for the implementation and maintenance of quality at the College. The policy further outlines the need for a quality assurance management structure that will coordinate the implementation of the quality assurance policy. While such efforts and commitment are made to develop a policy for the College, not much regard or concern is raised or practiced to improve quality in practical terms. This lack of regard is heightened by the fact that the quality assurance policy has not even been approved by the College Council, which is the highest decision-making body of the institution. Although the quality assurance policy is not a legally binding instrument, the College must comply with its directives to guide and achieve the purposes and the objectives of its formulation.

Another major consideration that requires attention is the lack of monitoring and evaluation instruments to assess and evaluate the level of compliance and conformance to the policy document. The policy itself fails to direct the provision of these instruments and as a mere policy without monitoring and evaluation, it becomes largely meaningless. Monitoring and evaluation without tools yield no results. Monitoring is defined as a process to observe the implementation of policies and their outcomes while evaluation consists of a systematic activity to measure and assess an object based on existing guidelines. For these reasons, the practice in measuring performance at The Gambia College is only on paper, but not in reality on the ground.

There are no tools or instruments to ensure quality monitoring and evaluation at The Gambia College. Although the Policy requires the establishment of quality assurance committees in each of the four satellite schools, this does not actually exist. What exists is similar to the quality assurance committee and the examination committees which have slightly different functions.

The Examination Committee, Assessment Moderation Committee, and School Senior Management are all names used in different schools but execute the same function. It is the Examination Committee that is assigned to coordinate examination activities in the various schools. The composition of the members varies from one school to another. In the School of Education, the Assessment and Moderation Committee consists the Head of School, principal lecturers, senior lecturers, and all Heads of Department. Members of this committee are selected by virtue of their individual positions and tenure and they continue as long as members remain in their respective positions. The role and function of this committee is to coordinate examination logistics, moderate examination questions, conduct the process of the whole examination, and distribute the scripts to the various lecturers. The committee meets twice in each term. The first is held at the beginning of the term mainly to discuss the results of the previous examination and also schedule re-sit examinations for those students with 'F' grades. The second meeting is held at the end of the term to discuss and arrange examination logistics and moderate questions. However, emergency meetings may be scheduled between these usual meeting periods when there is an issue that needs to be urgently resolved.

A distinct approach exists with a slightly different function at the School of Public Health. The School Senior Management is the body used to execute the functions of the examination committee. Members of this body consist of the Head of School, principal and senior lecturers,

who are selected by virtue of their positions. The tenure of the members of this body is three (3) years which is liable to an extension for another term. Unlike the Assessment Moderation Committee of the School of Education, the functions of this body are to monitor the quality of all academic processes, teaching materials, and assessment of processes. Below is an excerpt from a respondent to substantiate this assertion:

“For teaching materials, assessment is done daily, and the SMT observes the lecture of staff”
(Respondent 3).

What remains a big question are the tools that facilitate their monitoring tasks, and who is specifically assigned to execute these tasks. No documentation was available to substantiate this. Where such a daily routine assessment is executed, a possible improvement must be evident and a gradual change may be seen. As claimed by the respondents, quality monitoring is not limited to the teaching materials, but also covers other areas such as teaching and learning which are overlooked by daily monitoring of the school management committee. An excerpt from a respondent confirmed this assertion.

“Despite the lack of monitoring and evaluation instruments, the School still struggles to manage and maintain quality by sticking to internal basic requirements of the programme as specified in the curriculum developed to guide the training and senior management of the school on selecting the exams quality/committee” (Respondent 3).

It could be noted that the School Senior Management is also charged with the responsibility of selecting the Examination Committee and its activities to ensure quality. Moderation of questions, logistics, supervision of the examination process, and distribution of answer scripts to various lecturers are also major functions executed by this committee. Like the Assessment and Moderation Committee of the School of Education, the School Senior Management also meets twice every semester, usually at the beginning and the end of semester when exam approaches. At the beginning of the semester, the management meets to discuss the results of the previous semester and schedule re-sit exams for students with 'F' grades, while the second meeting is held in preparation for the end of semester examination.

A similar but differently applied approach exists at the School of Agriculture to achieve assessment goals and best practice. Here, the Examination Committee is the body conferred with the responsibility to coordinate examination preparation and activities. This committee consists of the Head of School, principal and senior lecturers, and other full time lecturers of the school. Membership of this committee is by virtue of the position occupied by the individual and extends as long as the member remains in that position. Here also, the Committee meets twice every term - at the beginning of the term to discuss the results of the previous examination and also schedule re-sit examination for those students with failing grades, and at the end of the term to discuss and prepare examination logistics and moderate exam questions.

The fourth constituent school of The Gambia College, the School of Nursing, has a similar body and approach but declined to participate in this research. Therefore, much could not be elaborated on their institutional quality assurance practices. However, it became amply evident that none of the satellite schools of The Gambia College has any school-specific policies, procedures, manuals, and or guidelines that regulate quality assurance. They all rely on The Gambia College Quality Assurance Policy (2018) as a guideline for quality implementation and enforcement. Thus, by speculation, similar types of quality assurance lapses that retard her sister schools may be expected to bedevil the School of Nursing as well. Their reluctance to participate in the research may be indicative of that situation or even worse.

Moreover, The Gambia College Quality Assurance Policy (2018) requires the establishment of an internal quality assurance unit that will provide leadership for quality assurance and good practice at The Gambia College; to be accountable for implementing QA initiatives, manage its details and

ensure their successful implementation. The Policy equally requires the Quality Assurance Unit to lead and oversee the development and implementation of the whole Gambia College quality assurance initiatives; and to lead, co-ordinate and support quality assurance and enhancement management system across The Gambia College, contribute to the identification, development and promotion of The Gambia College quality assurance protocols and mechanisms. This approach contributes ultimately to the formulation of The Gambia College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policies. It is confirmed and evident from the reviews and interviews that a Quality Assurance Directorate exists, but its functions and roles in attaining and improving institutional quality are not well defined, thus not understood by the directorate. It is believed that quality assurance is misconstrued and misconceived by The Gambia College authorities. Their oblivion regarding the implementation and maintenance of quality principles is beyond imagination. Parts or some of the responsibilities of the Quality Assurance Unit are in fact shifted to the Human Resources Directorate. The following statements from a respondent substantiate this observation.

“Class attendant checklists and daily lecturer attendant checklists are given to the class secretaries to fill which is later submitted to the Human Resources Department. The role and function of Internal Quality Assurance Department is shifted to the Human Resources Department” (Respondent 1).

The Quality Assurance Unit is designated to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the policy. Monitoring, a key element in quality assurance practices, cannot be shifted to another department within the institution. Where the Human Resources Department can produce tools to collect information, how about the Quality Assurance Unit? It could be argued that there is conflict of roles at The Gambia College which indicates that the philosophy of quality assurance is not well understood by the administration and that the quality assurance practitioners do not actually understand the work of their departments. The excerpt, taken from a respondent during an interview, is explicit on this matter, *“it seems that the Quality Assurance Unit is dormant in coordinating quality issues”*. The reason for this dormancy is that the Quality Assurance Unit cannot work to articulate monitoring and evaluation needs of the institution. The unit only seems to take examination invigilation as the most important work, but quality goes beyond that scope. This is confirmed by Harvey (2004-2012 as cited in Geda, 2014) who posits that the process and nature of quality assurance also bears a dynamic dimension, where quality assurance not only seeks to ensure that the minimum quality thresholds are reached at a certain point in time, but also aims to improve the quality of higher education provision over time. The efforts of an active quality assurance practitioner who knows what quality entails and translates these actions into practice may eventually improve the quality profile of his/her institution.

According to Vlăsceanu, Grünberg and Pârlea (2007) as cited in Geda (2014), quality assurance is “... an all-embracing term referring to an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining, and improving) the quality of a higher education system, institutions, or programmes.” In an instance where quality is viewed as conformance, monitoring and evaluation reaffirms the level of attaining the minimum acceptable standard for recognition or approval to start a programme. The measure of how far a particular intervention has been achieved is an important decision making instrument for quality assurance practitioners. Therefore, such a situation as exists in The Gambia College where the essential instruments of monitoring and evaluation are over sighted in the quality process cannot be expected to attain or improve quality assurance because the measure cannot be achieved without these appropriate working instruments.

The next issue concerns performance indicators which can generally be defined as data acquired at regular intervals to track a system's performance (Fitz-Gibbon, 1996; Geda, 2014). From a theoretical point of view, the development of performance indicators in the educational context is

affected by the idea that quality cannot be improved unless measured (Dill, 1995 as cited in Geda, 2014). In recognition of this principle, the 2018 Gambia College Quality Assurance Policy requires the IQA to develop key performance indicators for the College because they are very crucial in the measurement of quality performance. According to Banerjee and Buoti (2012 as cited in Kurniasih et al., 2020), key performance indicators are a spectrum and a quantitative measure that evaluate institutional performance to achieve organisational goals. KPIs are used to identify measurable objectives, monitor trends, and assist in decision making.

However, it seems that neither the Quality Assurance Unit nor the school authorities in charge of quality, has a working understanding of performance indicators. Where indicators are not developed, it is very difficult to measure performance, which gives a clumsy picture of quality implementation and maintenance. It simply implies that quality cannot be improved unless measured with the help of performance indicators, as emphasised by Dill (1995, cited in Geda, 2014). In an institution like The Gambia College, the use of performance indicators will be helpful to compare the performance of the various programmes to determine where improvement is required so as to adopt best practices. Ewell (1999) argues that performance indicators are regarded as useful tools both for accountability purposes and for informing policy and decision-making. The IQA must kindle the vigor of quality implementation, as much is expected from the department in providing leadership in quality maintenance in the institution. The expectation is too high and staff are determined to improve the situation when equipped with the requisite quality competency rooted out in continuous training and development. An excerpt from a respondent state this in clear terms.

"We need periodic training on quality assurance" (Respondent 1)

In the course of data collection, no evidence of the practice of development and documentation of course files, implementation of the curriculum activities, and adherence to the scheme of work activities was found and no respondent mentioned it during the interview, neither was any document presented as evidence. It must be understood that the quality assurance implementation at The Gambia College is rather vague.

The second key performance indicator requested in the NAQAA manual requires the measure of student learning process. Measuring student learning process entails curriculum based monitoring tests, frequent evaluations and formative assessments. These processes determine the extent of minimum skills and knowledge gained or transferred in a particular course. The performance of each student in every question must be systematically analysed to help determine where improvement or emphasis is required. In essence, a continuous analysis of student performance is required in each course by each lecturer in each semester. In this research, such records were never evident therefore, there is no measure of students' learning process at The Gambia College.

The final indicator that NAQAA requires The Gambia College to adopt is monitoring the quality of assessment which requires quality assurance practitioners to be cognizant of the assessment criteria, learner performance, standardisation of assessment criteria, examination questions, moderation, and measuring of learner's achievement of learning outcomes. These are important processes to attain this indicator. The continuous evaluation of these processes determine where a general overhaul of the system requires improvement. To ensure success in this indicator, the quality practitioner must conduct continuous quality audits shortly before assessment periods. At The Gambia College, some activities such as question moderation are performed but not perceived to be a mandatory undertaking which forms a measurable key performance indicator. There is no much attention, regard or effort given to the moderation process. An excerpt from a respondent will suffice:

“The period for moderation is very short; therefore, it is not done adequately. Students encounter problems that could have been solved if enough time was provided for moderation” (Respondent 3).

It could be understood that though moderation process is accomplished to strengthen NAQAA's formal advice, it is not actually implemented to improve quality of assessment or a measure of attainment of the key performance indicator, and no evidence of its occurrence was available during data collection in this research.

There is no intervention without challenges. The findings of the research regarding the objective of the study reveal that the challenges facing quality assurance implementation at The Gambia College are many and varied. Some of them are outlined below:

Curriculum update and periodic review have been common challenges affecting all the schools of The Gambia College even though the Quality Assurance Policy (2018) requires every programme to be reviewed every three years. There has not been any such thing in the last three years in all the programmes of the College. For the School of Agriculture, there hasn't been just a curriculum review for over two decades and even the long serving staff members cannot remember any recent curriculum review for their school. Curriculum reviews are therefore overdue for the School of Agriculture. Unfortunately, a similar trend occurs in the other schools. An excerpt from a respondent says it all:

“Since I became employed in this school in 2010, I cannot remember any curriculum review” (Respondent 1).

Frequent curriculum review is desired to overcome the challenges of outdated training programmes and also expose students to current developments in the field. It also equips students and lecturers to be at par with regional counterparts operating in the same domain with requisite knowledge and skills. In addition, while the curriculum is stagnant, the space to accommodate students is shrinking but the student number increasing. This is a worrying and distressing situation to implement a successful quality assurance process. Efforts should be made to consider student intake with the available resources, particularly the lecturers. There is a disproportional student-lecturer ratio at The Gambia College, more so at the School of Agriculture. Only few lecturers exist who are mostly overloaded with work.

Besides curriculum reviews and implementation, The Gambia College faces great challenges in improving quality performance. Establishing the Internal Quality Assurance Directorate with beautiful policies is not the only essential measure to guarantee quality assurance implementation and maintenance. The commitment and readiness of staff, particularly the IQA practitioners to translate these policies into action/practice will bring more value to the quality assurance profile of The Gambia College. Policies guide action, but where action is never performed, no result will ever be achieved to bring meaningful change or transformation as quality is viewed as transformative. It may be argued that the philosophy of quality is misconstrued and misguided by the quality practitioners of The Gambia College, because quality assurance is not only limited to the examination invigilation and examination processes. This is only a single entity of a quality process identified by NAQAA as a key performance indicator. It seems there is a serious lack of knowledge and understanding of the whole process of quality assurance and its implementation at The Gambia College. The Quality Assurance Policy is a fairly worded document that can guide quality practices and implementation, but the requirements of the policy itself has not been observed, let alone develop the performance indicators to determine the level of quality practice. Here is an excerpt from an interviewee.

The Quality Assurance Unit is required to design induction courses for academic staff as specified in the Quality Assurance Policy (2018). The induction courses will help to familiarise the academic staff with quality issues and make them understand that quality is everybody's business

and not an isolated philosophy reserved for only the practitioners. Where such a task enshrined in the policy document cannot be practiced, this is an indication that the IQA is not committed, interested or serious about advancing quality at The Gambia College. Where the IQA deviates from performing its own task, it may be difficult for the same IQA to lead or coordinate a meaningful corrective action, or conformance for improvement in a situation where performance falls below expectations. Despite identifying them in the Quality Assurance Policy (2018), the IQA could not develop a standard operating procedure or an action plan or key performance indicators that will guide quality implementation at The Gambia College.

Conclusion

The formulation of quality assurance policies is not enough to begin a realistic quality assurance implementation and maintenance programme. It is only when these commitments are translated into action that a viable result that can change the scope and sphere of institutional quality be achieved. The research findings revealed that a quality assurance policy does exist at The Gambia College, but that at the time of this research, it has not been approved by the College Council to make it a legitimate instrument that guides the quality implementation process. Added to that, is the fact that the policy itself does not set out monitoring and evaluation procedure that will measure conformance, performance and the level of its own implementation. Therefore, the paper not find any evidence of the implementation of the quality assurance policy at The Gambia College.

However, the study can authoritatively confirm the existence of the Quality Assurance Directorate, though the quality practitioners do not seem to understand the philosophy of quality assurance that will eventually articulate effective implementation, enforcement, coordination and communication of quality issues that affect the institution. In addition, the findings of the study showed that performance indicators which are the basis of monitoring and evaluation instruments of the quality implementation process did not exist. Until the indicators are developed, much improvement will not be expected because performance cannot be measured without indicators. The study observed numerous challenges which require concerted efforts and commitments to bring about effective changes to quality assurance practice and implementation at The Gambia College. Such challenges include student population sprawls; scarcity of furniture and other physical facilities and amenities such as classrooms and staff rooms; lecturer overload; lecturer shortage; and a general lack of capacity to implement quality assurance policies. Thus, the study concludes that The Gambia College Quality Assurance Policy requires the Council's approval which will instill courage and confidence in the authorities and quality assurance practitioners to ensure its implementation. Without the approval of the Quality Assurance Policy, quality implementation at The Gambia College will ultimately be difficult to achieve because what could have been done was never done on time.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, the paper offers the following recommendations:

The Gambia College Quality Assurance Policy (2018) should be approved by the Governing Council for proper implementation and practice;

Considering that quality is everyone's business within the organisation, the academic staff of the College should be encouraged to participate effectively in quality assurance implementation and maintenance programmes. This requires capacity and competence development in quality matters;

The IQA needs to develop quality assurance standard operation procedures to guide the process. The development of the standard operating procedures with continuous training and capacity building will subsequently give the academic staff a broader perspective of quality assurance

implementation, maintenance, improvement and practical application;

Key performance indicators need to be developed to ensure the measurement of performance. It is suggested that teaching and learning remains a vital indicator in academic quality assurance that invariably highlights fitness for purpose. This indicator embeds a series of activities undertaken to measure the performance of the desired quality dimension. Student learning progress is also an important milestone in the implementation of quality assurance in education that requires special attention. This will ultimately give rise to the learning outcome of a programme, the measure of which will naturally give an informed decision to the institution's management and policy makers regarding the viability of a programme;

The development of these indicators will subsequently require the development of efficient and effective monitoring and evaluation instruments that will effectively measure the institution's quality performance;

Staff training to gain the requisite knowledge in quality assurance is desired to improve competence in quality matters;

The College should develop a strategic plan to cover all areas of its functions; and

The Gambia College must endeavour to update and review all existing curricula of all the programmes as curriculum plays a pivotal role in quality implementation and maintenance.

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