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Teaching, Learning and Assessment Practices in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions: The Quality Aspect in Focus

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Abstract

Quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional concept, which should embrace all its functions and activities: teaching and academic programs, research and scholarships, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, services to the community and the academic environment. In view of this both public and private Higher Education Institutions are under scrutiny. However, critics commonly allege that private institutions are identified with low academic quality. Quality is not simply defined in terms of inputs and resources; quality is also described in terms of processes and outcomes. The purpose of the study is, therefore, revolved around the processes dimension of quality in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The study focused on the ways in which HEIs deliver there academic programs with special reference to Teaching, learning and Assessment. In this qualitative inquiry data was drawn from, HERQA's institutional quality audit reports, self evaluation documents, the investigator's experience as quality auditor and the related literature. The teaching, learning and assessment practices of 14 HEIs have been analyzed .Thus, the study revealed among others the following.

The teaching-learning process is still highly dominated by the traditional forms of teaching especially the lecture; there are no standard criteria set by the institutions to keep the balance between theory and practice; it seems universal that the institution have no explicit written policy on teaching and learning; very few staff maintain regular consultation hours for students, it is virtually non-existence; majority of the senior courses are taught by fresh undergraduate instructors; students spoke of staff not turning up to teach; and in most cases tutorial are not part of the teaching and learning regime. The mid-semester and end-of-semester closed examinations predominate as tools of assessment in almost all institutions; grade are mostly determined by using the norm-references system; there is no wide spread practices of anonymous marking, of moderation, of double marking or of the systematic development of external examiners; the institutions appear to have no specific policy document on assessment ;and there is no transparent system that ensures students are assessed appropriately and graded fairly.

The study also revealed some exemplary practices by the institutions which appear to be relevant to share in order to enhance quality in teaching, learning and assessment. Furthermore, the study also indicated that similar trends are observable in all the HEIs in regard to teaching, learning and assessment practices Nevertheless, the private institutions are generally smaller in size, limited in programs, market-oriented and fee and tuition-dependent. The overall conclusion is that the HEIs should extent more efforts in a number of areas to ensure the quality of their programs that fit to the standards as per their mission. Finally some recommendations were forwarded for further enhancement of quality in the processes dimension.

BACKGROUND

Higher education in Ethiopia

Modern higher education in Ethiopia was initiated with the opening of University College of Addis Ababa in 1950. In 1961 most of the established colleges were reorganized under the Haile Selassie I University, which the latter changed its name to Addis Ababa University after the Dergue (Military Junta) took over in 1974 (Wondwosen 2008). His Excellency Dr. Sintayehu W/Michael, Minister of Education, in his opening speech at the 5th National Conference on Private Higher Education Institutions, 2007, stated:

> *It is almost sixty years since higher education in our country began .... Up to the turn of 1991, there were only two universities in the country with their total number of students not more than 15,000 and their annual intake capacity of only 3,000. Of the two, the then Alemaya University of Agriculture, now Haramaya University, used to offer training only in agriculture-related areas of studies. (Proceedings of the 5th National Conference on Private Higher Education Institutions in Ethiopia 2007, p.iii).*

Until 2000, the gross enrollment rate (GER) of higher education in Ethiopia had only been limited to 0.8 percent – a figure far less than the Sub-Saharan average of 4 percent (World Bank 2003).

As latest literature indicated, Ethiopia is currently undertaking major public higher education expansion. To this end, at present there are 22 public universities and 10 more under construction. The total enrollment in higher education in 2005/06 reached 180, 286, (MOE: 2006). In 2001/02 this figure was only 34,556 indicating a dramatic increase in five years time. Although Ethiopia's higher education GER has risen from 0.5 in 1993/94 to 1.7 percent in 2001/02, this is still considered to be the lowest worldwide, ranking ahead of only a few low-income countries in Africa (World Bank 2005). As of 2008/09 the total enrollment of the higher education institutions in all programs including regular, evening, summer, and distance for all reporting government and non-government institutions is 319,217 of which 55,264 are enrolled in non-government higher education institutions and this accounts for 17.3% of the enrollment . In addition, it can be noted that over 96.8% of the enrollments comprise the undergraduate degree program (MOE: 2010).

Emergence and expansion of private higher education

In the last twelve years, the Ethiopian higher education system has witnessed a remarkable change unprecedented in its history in the form of the unanticipated emergence and expansion of Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs). The 1994 Education and Training Policy (ETP) of the country stressed the government's (the then Transitional Government of Ethiopia) readiness to involve private providers in the sector. This idea, according to Wondwosen (2008), was probably the first positive step towards the establishment of private institution in the country after the collapse of the military government in 1991 which subdued private initiatives. PHEIs in Ethiopian context refer to all non-public institutions offering post-secondary education and training. Private higher education institutions in Ethiopia emerged largely from language schools and computer training centers (Teshome 2007). In addition to the ETP the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) of Ethiopia stated the need for involving the private sector in higher education. The Higher Education Capacity Building Program Document by MOE (2002) asserted that the involvement of the private sector has to increase in the long term. One can possibly say that the legal foundation for Private

Higher Education in Ethiopia was laid for the first time in the Higher Education Proclamation No. 351/2003 (2003).

In a matter of less than a decade's time several colleges mushroomed, throughout the country, even though at the beginning most of them are geographically concentrated in Addis Ababa.). All the PHEIs currently enroll over 39,000 students which are 23% of the total national enrolment in higher education (Rayner and Tesfaye 2005). The accredited private and non-government higher education institutions in the country account for about 24.8% of the 2004/05 overall (degree and diploma levels) enrolment and about 9.3% of the degree level enrolments of the system (Teshome 2007). The Education Statistic Annual Abstract (2005/6) published by the MOE stated that higher education enrollment has exceeded the mark of 200,000 in both public and private institutions of higher learning. The document indicated that the share of the private sector has reached more than 22%. The same document hinted that the participation of the private providers in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is by far higher than that of the public sector accounting for nearly 60% of the total trainee population. There were virtually none twelve years ago and now there are more than 200 private colleges engaged in both diploma and degree programs with enrolment capacities ranging from a few hundred up to thousands (Ashcroft 2007).Presumably, the only book on PHEIs in Ethiopia by Wondwosen (2008) explained that Ethiopian PHEIs have shown a remarkable growth in terms of location, type and size. Their impressive development in terms of expanding higher education is widely acknowledged. The total number of institutions operating in various parts of the country has now reached 328 (double counting involved). Among these two provide post-graduate programs, 55 run undergraduate degree program, and the rest are engaged in certificate and diploma level trainings. The big numbers of PHEIs are found in 4 regions of the country including Addis Ababa. In 2008/09 as indicated above, higher education enrollment in non-government higher education institutions accounts 17.3% of the total enrollment in undergraduate and postgraduate programs of the country.

Quality issues in higher education institutions
Quality in higher education is a multi- dimensional concept, which should embrace all its functions and activities: teaching and academic programs, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, facilitates, equipment, services to the community and the academic environment (Rao: 2003). According to Rao, internal self-evaluation and external review conducted openly by independent specialists, if possible with international experience, are vital for enhancing quality. Quality also requires that higher education should be characterized by its international dimension: exchange of knowledge, interactive networking, mobility of teachers and students and international research project while taking into account the national culture values and circumstances. In view of this, both the public and private sectors are under scrutiny. However, critics commonly allege that PHEIs are identified with low academic quality and hyper commercialism (levy: 2002). It is true Ethiopian PHEIs, have not been without problems. This has not been only due to the fact that they lacked quality but also due to the surprise element in their formation, the attitude that the public has had as a result of this, and substantially due to the nature of some dishonest providers who are instrumental to reinforcing the notion that private higher education is "sub-standard" (Wondwosen 2008).

Even though, the general attitude of the public towards private colleges is to perceive them as "diploma mills" and "certificate shops", some studies hinted that the perception is more of idea rather than reality as there are aspects where private colleges even exceed that of government (Bekalu and

Maru 2004, Gebrekidan 2007, Damtew 2005, Wondwosen 2008). A significant number of PHEIs in Ethiopia are engaged in augmenting the capacity of both public and private agencies, organizations and offices by providing short and long term trainings free of charge. The majority of Ethiopian PHEIs also provide free scholarships to thousands of students who are unable to pay for their education. (Damtew 2005) dubs this a 'unique scenario' of the Ethiopian private higher education system. PHEIs in Ethiopia have been praised for the variety if ICT training they offer, which are unavailable or in short supply of many of the public institution (World Bank 2003).

Accreditation in Ethiopia is a very recent occurrence which appeared with the coming of private providers. The accreditation practice essentially focused on input. The possibility of looking into process and output was almost non-existent. This practice continued until the establishment, in 2003, of Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA). HERQA's institutional and program accreditation process in Ethiopian Higher Education is different for public and private HEIs. Currently the institutional and program accreditation which applies only to PHEIs is in-put based. However, the agency is interested, according to Tesfaye (2007) in moving from an input based system to a processes and out-put based system.

Quality often means fitness for purpose, i.e. that an institution must have in place adequate mechanisms to assure itself and others that it is able to achieve its stated aims and objectives, and that these will be achieved consistently. It links to value for money, which is attractive to governments and other funding agencies, and maybe measured in terms of indicators such as failure of drop-out, completion rates, teacher to students' ratios, etc. Other approaches to the concept of quality include:
- Something distinctive or exceptional;
- Excellence and maintenance of high standards using bench-marking criteria;
- an educational process producing a standardized 'quality product' which relies on defined minimum threshold standards;
- Transformation referring to the enhancement of the abilities of students (adding value as the key objective of the educational process).

Quality audit by HERQA
The Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA), now re-named Education and Training Quality Assurance Agency (ETQAA) is an autonomous agency established through the Higher Education Proclamation (351/2003) as one of the key agencies responsible for guiding and regulating the higher education sector in Ethiopia. The mission of HERQA is to help ensure a high quality and relevant higher education system in the county. The Agency is mandated to report on the relevance and quality of higher education offered by all higher education institutions (HEIs) in Ethiopia.

As one of its key activities HERQA will carry out institutional quality audits of all HEIs. An institutional quality audit is an in-depth analysis and assessment of the quality and relevance of programs and of the teaching and learning environment. Equally importantly, an institutional quality audit will assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of a HEI's approach to quality care, its systems of accountability and its internal review mechanisms.

An essential contribution to a HERQA institutional quality audit is a Self Evaluation Document prepared by the HEI. An institutional quality audit will seek to verify claims of quality and relevance made in a Self Evaluation Document.

HERQA has identified the following ten key aspects of operation which will form the focus points for quality audits in Ethiopia HEIs.

1. Vision, Mission and Educational Goals
2. Governance and Management System
3. Infrastructure and Learning Resources
4. Academic and Support Staff
5. Student Admission and Support Services
6. Program Relevance and Curriculum
7. Teaching, Learning and Assessment
8. Student Progression and Graduates Outcomes
9. Research and Outreach Activities
10. Internal Quality Assurance

Teaching learning and assessment

Teaching, learning and assessment, among others, are the ways in which a service is delivered. They require measurement of quality. In light of this, HERQA in its document (QA 02/06/V1 2006) pointed out that every HEI must employ appropriate teaching, learning and assessment methods to ensure effective implementation of its programs. In this regard the following reference points were listed.

- The appropriateness, variety and level of innovation of teaching methods.
- Practice regarding academic advice and tutorial support.
- The balance of theory and practice.
- The extent of evaluation of approaches to teaching and learning and the consequent action.
- The extent to which the assessment policy and procedures and the criteria for marking ensure that students are graded fairly and that standards are appropriate and applied consistently.
- The extent of communication of the assessment policy and procedures.
- The appropriateness of mechanisms to ensure that assessment methods for each course in each program are balanced (e.g. between continuous and end of course, formative and summative, diagnostic and attainment), are matched to the learning outcomes and are applied appropriately.
- The adequacy of the student appeal procedure.

The enhancement of learning and teaching and the implementation of criterion-referenced assessment are vital to the HEI's claim about the quality of its graduates, which defines the trust and confidence of stakeholders and the general public. Hence HEIs are expected to have a well formulated polices in regard to teaching and learning as well as assessment to ensure the effective implementation of their programs. The policies should address the responsibilities of the different stakeholders involved in the instructional process.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As it is clearly known the prime functions of institutions of higher education are: (i) teaching, (ii) research, and (iii) service: Thus, as far as quality is concerned the HEIs are expected to dedicate

themselves to enhancing the quality of their programs and services within the context of their missions, resources, and capacities, and to create an environment in which teaching, public service, research, and learning occur. Although evaluation of an institution's educational quality and its effectiveness in achieving its mission is a difficult task requiring careful analysis and professional judgment, an institution is anticipated to document quality and effectiveness in all its major aspects.

Quality is not simply defined in terms of inputs and resources- what the institution has. Quality is also described in terms of processes and outcomes-what the institution does with what. Hence Quality is conceptualized as "production-measurement" of
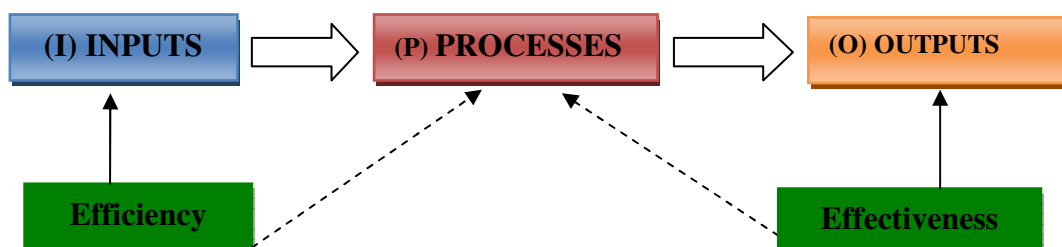
In other words the dimensions of quality are: (i) inputs, (ii) processes, and (iii) outputs, otherwise the whole picture of quality is not fully comprehend in all the prime functions HEIs.

Inputs are the **resources** required for a service and are typically quantity oriented. Examples relevant in higher education are: students, faculty, staff, finances, technology and infrastructure –all resources received to support programs, activities and services.

Processes are the ways in which a service is delivered. They require measurement of quality. Processes include the means used to deliver programs and service, for example, assessment of student learning, faculty development, use of technology, program review, course approval, use of academic advising, etc.

Outputs reflect the quantity of products actually produced. Examples of outputs are: degrees awarded, retention rates, graduation rates, sponsored research funding, licenses, portfolios, job placements, student satisfaction surveys results, alumni, and employees

In view of the above discussion, the purpose of the study is, therefore, revolves around the **processes dimension of quality in Ethiopia HEIs**. In other words, the study focuses on the ways in which HEIs deliver their academic programs with especial reference to Teaching, Learning and Assessment which is identified by HERQA as one key aspects of operation which will form the focus points for quality audits in Ethiopia HEIs.

OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this paper is to examine whether HEIs in Ethiopia give due attention to the processes dimension of quality in particular to Teaching, Learning and assessment components and to forward possible measures that might be employed to improve the current quality –related problems.
With this in mind, the specific objectives are:

- To describe the current status of teaching, learning and assessment.
- To evaluate areas of strengths and weakness in teaching, learning and assessment practices.
- To inquire whether there is difference between public and private institutions in their practices.
- To forward further recommendations to ensure effective implementation of programs.

METHODOLOGY

In this qualitative inquiry data is drawn from.

i) HERQA's institutional quality audit reports, the agency so far produced audit reports of nine public universities and five private higher education institutions,

ii) Self evaluation documents of four HEIs,

iii) The investigator's experience as quality auditor who has been trained and engaged (as a team member) in external quality audit of two public universities and private college and

iv) The related literature

All the 14 institutional quality audit reports by HERQA have been thoroughly read and reviewed especially the major ideas portrayed in regard to the teaching, learning and assessment have been identified and extracted. More over the self-evaluation documents have been studied. The Self Evaluation Document (SED) is a document that a HEI writes about itself.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Current practice of teaching, learning and assessment of 14 HEIs in Ethiopia as extracted from Quality Audit Reports of HERQA

No.	Institution	Teaching and Learning	Assessment
1.	Adama University	- Dominated by the lecture method - No specific policy document - Large class size, time, students little experience, content coverage-as an obstacle to active learning - Some active learning practices by Social Sciences and Languages staff - Very few members of staff maintain regular consultation hrs. - Most staff members do not produce teaching materials. - Teacher absenteeism being a problem. - Majority of senior classes are taught by fresh undergraduates.	- Mid-semester and end-of-semester closed examinations predominate. - Other forms of student assessment are use in some departments. - Continuous assessment could not be applied. - No reported practice of anonymous marking, of moderation, of double marking or of employment of external examiners. - No transparent system that ensures that students are graded fairly and consistently. - Appears to have no specific policy document on assessment.
2.	Arbaminch University	- No policy on teaching and learning - The predominant form of instruction is the traditional chalk and talk method. - Little active (student-centered) learning. - Number of students, lack of reference book, internet access and lab. equipment, as well as inexperience staff, is presented as obstacles to student-centered method. - Students are not advised properly. - Classes do not always start on the scheduled date.	- No evidence of a student assessment policy - Mid and end of semester closed examinations are the dominant forms - Other modes are also used in assessment - Department examination review committees exist but no evidence of operation - Few faculties have external examiners (e.g. Water Technology, Engineering and Post graduate programs). - Grades are determined mostly by norm referencing. - No transparent system that ensures students are graded fairly & consistently.
3.	University of Gondar	- Lecture method is the predominate form of instruction - There is attempt of learner-centered approach in school of Pubic Health. - Large class size time, content coverage ,junior instructors etc. –presented as obstacles not to implement active learning methodologies - No policy on teaching and learning - No guidelines for the development of teaching materials. - Instructors face lack of specialist equipment and other essential resources to support teaching.	- Lack of policy in assessment strategy. - There is an attempt to produce an assessment policy - The University dominantly uses mid and en-of-semester closed examinations. - College of Medicine and Health Science employs a progressive assessment. - Continuous assessment hardly practices - No examination committees - Grades are mostly determined by using the norm-referenced system. - No reported practice of anonymous marking, of moderation, of double marking of employment of external examiners (except few

			faculties)
			• Lack of transparent systems that ensures students are graded fairly and consistently.
4.	Addis Ababa University	• No policy on teaching and learning. • In general, teaching and learning is characterized by lectures. • Very few active learning techniques are used • Increasing number of students and lack of appropriate resources as well as inexperience of staff and their lack of pedagogical skills an indicated as obstacle to employ student-centered methods. • Student-centered learning process exists in some faculties such as Law and Technology. • Lecture notes are available on the Technology Faculty server. • Instructors in graduate program use various forms of teaching such as power point presentation, seminar, etc. • Teaching technology (aids) are adequately available in some faculty, they are limited in other faculties for graduate programs only. • No supportive evidence of whether is a written policy and guidelines on the development and approval of teaching materials. • No monitoring mechanism to check whether staffs are providing advising and counseling services. • Most students do not get advising services. • Some staff do not teach regular according to the schedule. • Instructors take attendances regularly. • Tutorials are not part of the teaching and learning regime in most courses. • The balance between theory and practice is not well maintained except in few faculties like Medicine, Informatics and Law.	• No evidence of a student assessment policy apart from the one which is indicated in the Senate legislation. • Mid and end of semester closed examinations are the dominant means to assess student performance. • The use of continuous assessment is not reported. • Examination prepared by individual instructors are not reviewed and approved prior to their administration • No department examination committees • There is no practice of anonymous marking, double marking, or moderation. • Post graduate programs use external examiners to help assure acceptable standards. • No appropriate feedback on assessment to students. • Grades are determined mostly by norm referencing. • There is no transparent system that ensures students are graded fairly and consistently. • Student reported that student complaint handling system is virtually non-existence.
5.	Jimma University	• Dominated by lecture method • Lack of pedagogical skill on the part of some young instructors, shortage of instructors in some areas, large class size are cited as obstacles to active learning. • Practice-based approach to teaching /learning in Community Based Education program. • Efforts by the college of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine to establish smart classrooms in exemplary.	• No apparent general policy on assessment • Most assessment focuses on the reproduction of memorized facts • Faculties and departments mainly use norm-referenced approaches • Grading system differs from faculty to faculty for equivalent courses. • Post-assessment feedback by department of Horticulture seen as positive practice

7. (cont.)		• Commencing classes late at the beginning of the academic year. • No explicit policy on teaching and learning	• College of Agriculture and Veterinary are exemplary by showing progress in making teacher evaluation by students more transparent and effective. • College of Agriculture and Veterinary practices an anonymous marking system and establishes exam. Committees at department level. • Medical and Public Health faculties, use external examiners.
6.	Mekelle University	• The Teaching learning has had a strong practical emphasis through Practical Attachment Program (PAP). • Unfortunately PAP is no longer the case. • In general, teaching and learning is characterized by lectures. • Very few active learning techniques are used. • No standard criteria to keep balance between theory and practice • Growing numbers of students and workload on instructors, shortage of equipment, resources inexperience graduate assistants and content coverages are presented as obstacles. • Poor time keeping and class times being shortened. • Several courses, including final year courses, are taught by quite young and inexperienced instructors. • No policy on teaching and learning • The appropriate use of audio visual technology is to be welcomed. • The availability of good quality teaching material is to be welcomed. • Academic counseling and support to student is virtually non-existent. • Tutorials are not part of the teachings and learning regime in most courses.	• Typically a course is examined by a mid-semester and end –of-semester examination. • No evidence of any widespread use of continuous assessment. • Setting of an examination is the personal activity of an instruction. • The University does not practice anonymous marking nor double marking, nor moderation of marks. • Some courses have external examiners (e.g. College of Health Sciences). • Grading was essentially norm-referenced except in college of Health Science which uses criterion referenced marking.
7.	Hawassa University	• While lecturing is the dominant mode of teaching, approaches to teaching and learning vary across the faculties. • Variety is reported in Awassa College of Agriculture. • Size of teaching groups and the inexperience of staff are two major factors influencing the teaching. • No policy on teaching and learning • The practical attachment element of courses is to be welcomed. • Tutorials are not common practice. • Vast majority of teachers do not offer a consultation time.	• No written policy on assessment. • Student assessment is mostly by mid-semester and end –of-semester examinations. • No evidence that continuous assessment is widely practiced. • Examination committees are not always established, when they are, thy do not always function. • No practice of double marking or moderation or for first degree courses, the use of external examiners, also, there is no anonymous marking. • No robust, transparent system that ensures that students an assessed fairly and consistently.

		• Members of staff have produced lecture handouts. • Classes to start late, and staff absence becoming a tradition.	• Grades are agreed with reference to a normal distribution and not to any grade criteria.
8.	Bahir Dar University	• The process is dominated by the lecture method. • No policy on teaching and learning • Two major factors influencing teaching: one is the size of classes and the other is the inexperience of staff, many of whom are very recent graduates. • Active learning is not widespread, only in the Faculty of Education. • Little reported use of audio visional materials. • Some departments offer insufficient practical work since there is a lack of budget to purchase equipment, chemicals and other materials. • Tutorials are organized by the gender club and the student council and are offered for female students. • Members of staff have produced modules that are provided to students to guide their learning. • Few members of staff maintain a regular consultation hour for students. • Classes do not always start on the scheduled date and the calendar is not fully respected, staff do not always turn up to teaching scheduled classes.	• Assessment is mostly by mid-semester and end-of-semester examinations. • Some depts., especially Faculty of Education, have introduced a variety of assessments. • No evidence that continuous assessment is widely practiced. • Setting and marking of examination seems to be done exclusively by individual instructors. • Marks scheme, together with marking and grading, appears to be the sole responsibility of the instructor with no checking or monitoring systems. • Instructors use a norm reference system. • No reported practice of anonymous marking, of double marking or of the systematic employment of external examiners. • There is no transparent system that ensures that students are assessed and graded fairly and consistently and the current practice is open to abuse. • No policy on assessment. • Progress has made to establish a testing center.
9.	Haramaya University	• Is dominated by the lecture method, the domination of this form of teaching also extends to laboratory work • Number of students in a class and lack of pedagogical knowledge and training are major obstacles not to use active learning approaches. • The use of active learning does not appear to be widespread. • No evidence in the extent of tutorial support and academic counseling being provided. • Instructors often being classes late and try to cover the courses in a rush. • Members of staff don't always teach according to the schedules. • Major learning resource is the library no provisions of other learning materials such as modules, developed to support particular courses except the practicum handbooks and some laboratory manuals. • Has no policy on teaching and learning.	• No policy on assessment • Student assessment is mostly by mid-semester and end-of-semester closed examination • The setting and marking of examination seems to be done mostly by individual instructors as is the development of a mark scheme, marking and grading. • Instructors in the faculty of Business and Economics where instructors offering the same course work together to set a common examination • Examination committees are not well established. • Anonymous marking in some courses in Faculty of Business and Economics. • Most of the staff do not allow students to see the exam papers. • There is a general lack of experience and expertise in assessment methodology. • Instructors use a norm reference system. • For undergraduate course little reported practice of anonymous marking, of moderation, of double marking or of the employment of external examiners

			• No transparent system that ensures that students are assessed and graded fairly and consistently.
10.	Royal University College	• No policy on teaching and learning • Teaching and learning is characterized by lecture • Lack of facilities, limited experience in teaching, more junior colleagues without pedagogical training, inadequate preparation, class size etc. are presented as barriers to active learning. • Moot court, in the Faculty of Law found to be an impressive facility.	• Mid-semester and end-of-semester closed examinations as the dominant means. • Other forms are also used • No examination review committees at department/faculty level. • Some instructors do not conduct examination according to the schedule. • No clearly stated system/procedure to check whether a given course is delivered as described and assessment undertaking as per the course outline-left to the individual instructor. • Marking and grading is not peer checked or moderated. • In most cases departments use a normal distribution grade system. • No transparent system that ensures students are assessed appropriately and graded fairly and consistently.
11.	Unity University College	• Teaching is dominated by lectures • Only in few cases is active learning and student-centered methods of teaching employed. • Appears to have no written policy on teaching and learning. • Low levels of academic support and guidance and counselling available to students. • Regular consultation hours are generally not given by instructors.	• No written policy document on assessment, but course modules are quite clear on how students are assessed. • Some information on assessment is included in the Instructors' Handbook and the Students' Handbook only focusing on remarking. • No evidence of any committee approval system for examinations. • Marking was done by individuals and there was no checking for accuracy of application of any marking scheme or for the moderation of mark. • Marking of examinations does not appear to be anonymous. • No practice in the use of external examiners. • No assessment, marking and grading procedures that assure students of the accuracies and fairness of the grades.
12.	Admas University College	• Teacher-centered approach still dominate. • There are attempts being made to make teaching more participatory. • Students resistant and instructors' little experience are challenges to using active learning methods. • Has a useful teaching-learning delivery guideline and communicated to most staff. • Most staff members do not produce teaching materials.	• Has student assessment guidelines and distributed to department heads and campus deans. • Assessments being both continuous and formative and establishment of examination committees are reported. • No reported practice of anonymous marking, of moderation, of double marking or of the systematic employment of external examiners. • No clear system to ensure that students are graded fairly and consistently. • The grading system is norm references.

13.	City University College	• Appears to be on overall policy on teaching and learning. • Some hints of a proper mix of various teaching methods (e.g. Computer Science). • In some departments the balance between theory and practice is well maintained (e.g. Law and Computer Science).	• The grading system is norm referenced • Assessments procedures and practices are left by and large to the instructors. • No institutionalized procedures. • Marking of examinations does not appear to be anonymous. • No grading approval committee. • No transparent system that ensures students are assessed appropriately and graded fairly and consistently. • No practice in the use of external examiners.
14.	St. Mary's University College	• Appears to be no overall policy on teaching and learning. • Learning approach vary depending on the discipline. • In Faculty of law there is dominance of in-depth-discussion and Socratic teaching, courses in business discipline largely adopt lecture and the department of computer science has a heavy emphasis on active learning. • Staffs are frequent users of audio visional aids. • Center of Educational Improvement, Research and Quality Assurance is actively researching aspects of teaching and learning and assessment.	• Has a policy concerning course coverage and assessment procedures. • Uses norm-referenced system. • Policy of providing feedback to students on their assessments • No moderation of grades nor is the practice to employ external examiners. • No practice of double marking or checking for accuracy of marking and recording, also there is no anonymous marking. • No robust and transparent system that ensures that students are assessed fairly and consistently is open to abuse.

EVALUATION OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

The teaching, learning and assessment practices of the considered HEIs have been evaluated as follows.

A) The teaching-learning process
- Teaching-learning process is still highly dominated by the traditional forms of teaching especially the lecture method in which students take notes from a presentation given by an instructor and/or copy from the board. In most cases the teaching and learning process at the universities and university colleges involve little active (student-centered) learning – a process whereby students engage in higher-thinking tasks such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation and do not passively listen to a lecture. There are cases that the domination of this form of teaching also extends to laboratory work. While the use of active learning does not appear to be widespread, there are promising signs in some departments/faculties /colleges in employing proper mix of various teaching methods.

- Large class-size, work load, shortage of equipment and resources, inexperienced graduate assistants, content coverage, etc. are repeatedly presented as obstacles to active learning. The EQA teams are of the view that these are not impossible barriers to active learning.

- There are no standard criteria set by the institutions to keep the balance between lectures, tutorials, laboratory practicals, projects, and group activities. Simply course instructors, depending on the nature of the course are expected or advised to keep the balance as much as possible.

- It seems universal that the institutions have no explicit written policy document on teaching and leaning and thus instructors would appear to have little to guide them in their approach to teaching. The purpose of teaching and learning policy is to identify institutions' learning and teaching ethos and clarify how this is enacted at the institutions.

- In addition to teaching formal classes, members of staff are expected to provide academic counseling and support to students. Departments assign academic advisors to students at the start of each academic year. Students expressed their view that the vast majority of teachers do not offer a consultation time for academic counseling and support to students. Most institutional quality audit reports concluded that very few members of staff maintain regular consultation hours for students. Large number of students in a program and crowdedness of staff offices are presented as a major factor influencing the offer of academic counseling.

- Majority of the senior class students in many institutions are taught by fresh undergraduate instructors who lack the experiences of teaching and unable to complete the courses on time.

- Student spoke of staff not turning up to teach, of overloaded lectures and few opportunities to engage in discussion. Course coverage was often raised as a concern. Students reported that instructors often begin classes late and try to cover the course in a rush causing unnecessary pressure on the students. This was corroborated during discussions with staff and different explanations were offered .While students

considered starts to be due to the tardiness of staff, staff reported that registration of students can be delayed. Staff also indicated that some courses are overloaded. In most reports it is stated that staff absences and catch up classes clustered immediately before examinations so overloading students and giving insufficient time for reflection and consolidation. Attendance and other devices that have been used to check the presence and absenteeism of teachers were not as such practiced in the HEIs.

- Tutorials can provide important support to more formal instruction. In most cases both staff and students reported that tutorials are not part of the teaching and learning regime in most courses but are scheduled in such disciplines as mathematics English ,science and technology. There are promising starts in some departments particularly in supporting female students those who are academically less performing.

- While the appropriate and frequent use of audio visual technology and the considerable effort into developing the teaching skills of instructors are to be welcomed it was hinted that audio visuals are often used to avoid the need to write on the board or to cut down on presentation time and so get through the content faster.

Student Assessment
- The mid-semester and end-of-semester closed examinations predominate as tools of student assessment in almost all institutions under consideration. However, other forms of student assessment such as laboratory reports, projects and classroom activities are used in some departments. Instructors in the different meetings, appreciate the value of alternatives ways of assessing students. However, it was claimed that continuous assessment could not be applied. The reasons forwarded include large class sizes and the lack of student readiness to be assessed in such modes. In real sense these are not significant obstacles to overcome.

- While there are few cases in the use of criterion- referenced marking, grades are mostly determined by using the norm referenced system where students are evaluated in relationship to one another rather than the criterion-referenced grading that measures how well students do relative to pre-determined performance levels. Such a system is not appropriate to maintain standards between different cohorts of students.

- While there are few encourage signs in the use of external examiners and anonymous marking in some departments, there is no widespread practice of anonymous marking (i.e. the marker does not know the name of the student whose paper is being marked), of moderation, of double marking or of the systematic employment of external examiners.

- The quality of assessment is vital to the HEIs' claim about the quality of its graduates, which defines the trust and confidence of stakeholders and the public. Taking this into account, the HEIs appear to have no specific policy document on student assessment apart from the one which is indicated in the senate legislations in public universities and some efforts in private ones.

- The presence of a student complaint handling system in HEIs is to be welcomed. Students representatives knew that they could complain but all said that to do so was a waste of time. Complains took too long to be dealt with and were rarely upheld. Thus, students are very reluctant to exercise their right in practice. Majority of students in

the discussions held the view that there is no transparent system that ensures students are assessed appropriately and graded fairly.

Good practices
The following are some exemplary practices identified in the Institutional Quality Audit Reports which appear to be relevant to share in order to enhance quality in teaching, learning and assessment in HEIs. These good practices identified are limited to a particular departments /faculties /colleges /Institutions.

- The presence of some active learning practices and learner-centered approach.
- The attempt to establish smart classrooms. A good number of sections which have been equipped with computers and beamer LCD projector to facilitate the teaching-learning process.
- The availability of lecture notes on server to be accessed by students.
- The practice that instructors take attendances regularly
- The availability modules produced by member of staff that is provided to students to guide their learning.
- The rare presence of teaching-learning delivery guideline, which addresses the role of the instructor, learning strategies, classroom management, effective teaching, planning, etc.
- The presence of some tutorials by departments, gender office and student council mostly offered for female students.
- A practice-based approach to teaching /learning and a strong practical emphasis through practical attachment program.
- The appearance of post-assessment feedback to students in few departments.
- The progress in making teachers evaluation by the students more transparent and effective by introducing a series of measures in which student can be involved.
- The emergence of an anonymous marking system of students' exam papers in some courses.
- The practices of establishing committees at department level to monitor the preparation of exams and their administration.
- The attempt to produce an assessment policy that would be applicable throughout the whole institution.
- The use of external examiners to help assure acceptable standards, particularly of dissertations.
- The good start in establishing centers for educational improvement, research and quality assurance which actively researching aspects of teaching, learning and assessment.

Private HEIs Practices vis-à-vis Public HEIs
Similar trends are observable in all the HEIs in regard to teaching, learning and assessment practices. Nevertheless, the PHEIs are generally smaller in size, limited in programs, market-oriented and fee- and tuition–dependent. PHEIs, especially those in regions, are often reliant on staff from major public institutions and largely staffed by part-timers. And at the same time, PHEIs appear to be more flexible. The PHEIs are concentrated in the fields of study relatively inexpensive to offer or fields that have rather rapid pay-off in the job market .Most of the public HEIs only offer general education course through syllabuses set by the previous universities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall conclusion is that the HEIs should exert more efforts in a number of areas to ensure the quality of their programs that fit to the standards as per their missions. Thus, there is a need to develop distinct written policy on teaching, learning and assessment and that instructors, particularly new instructors, require help and support to develop their teaching range, pedagogic skills and professional confidence. In addition, the institutions need to make clearer their requirements from staff with regard to academic counseling and tutorial support. Furthermore, the HEIs should begin to use criterion-referenced assessment, establish, implement and monitor transparent and robust mechanisms to ensure that students are graded fairly and in relation to course objectives and develop practices that can assure continuity of standards.

Nonetheless, the author of this study would like to go beyond these essential ideas and forward the followings for further enhancement of quality in the processes dimension.

- Establishment and development of strong quality assurance system in each HEIs;
- Strong commitment of the top management bodies towards quality ;
- Authorities should stop double standard policy and work towards strong public-private partnership;
- Strong regulatory government body to check quality care systems of the HEIs; and
- Since quality is the concern of all bodies, including the public, create and raise awareness of all stakeholders to work towards quality.

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