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Quality Assurance Approaches in Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Outline of Presentation

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1. Background to Quality in HE in Africa

The Rise & Fall of HE in Africa (1)

- Modern public HE in Africa has its roots in university colleges created during European colonial period
- After independence in 1960s, colleges became universities modelled on European ones – same academic structure, governance, curricula, methods of instruction, etc.
- 1960-1980: African universities thrived with generous support from their government & Europe
- Several became centres of excellence, e.g. Makerere, Ibadan, Khartoum, Cheikh Anta Diop.

The Rise & Fall of HE in Africa (2)

- 1970s & 1980s:
 - economic crisis
 - political upheavals, wars
 - military regimes, dictatorship
 - gross misuse of resources
- These inevitably had an impact on funding of HE
- 1990s: World Bank's decision to support basic education and not higher education
- In spite of being cash-strapped, African universities continued to survive & to increase HE provision, vital for development; but Quality suffered
- 1998: the saving grace – UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education

HE in Africa at Beginning of 21st Century (1/2)

- Increased enrolment – institutional massification
- Reduced public funding, insufficient infrastructural development
- Lack of qualified academic staff – brain drain
- Disastrous effect of HIV/AIDS
- Poor governance, political interference
- Poor internal efficiency
- Mismatch between graduate output & employment
- Increasing presence of private HEIs and CBHE, often of dubious quality
- Wide consensus on importance of improving quality of HEIs in Africa for them to play development role in achieving EFA targets and the then MDGs

HE in Africa at Beginning of 21st Century (2/2)

Agenda for Improving Quality in HE in Africa

- Control student enrolment according to capacity
- Improve & expand infrastructure, but with little increase in public funding
- Train & retain existing academic staff, & recruit qualified staff to replace ageing ones
- Increase research output
- Generate alternate sources of funding – cost-sharing
- Ensure relevance of programmes, greater linkages with productive sectors & improve employability of students
- Improve governance & efficiency in management of HEIs
- Wide use of ICT in T&L, research, administration, etc.
- Meet demands for greater transparency & accountability

Beginning of Revitalization (1/2)

- Development assistance to post-secondary education in Africa increased significantly after UNESCO WCHE 1998:
 - 1990-1999 - \$ 110m/year
 - 2000-2005 - \$ 515m/year
- Revitalization really started as from 2005
- AUC's COMEDAF II, Algeria, April 2005: HE recognised as a priority area
- African Union's Action Plan for the 2nd Decade of Education (2006-2015) identifies HE as one of 7 focus areas
- AUC's harmonization strategy (2007): greater intra-regional mobility, benchmarking & QA in HE

Beginning of Revitalization (2/2)

- 2007 Africa-EU Strategic Partnership: triangular cooperation (A-A-E) for development; teacher education at all levels; Africa-EU cooperation in S&T research for development
- Regional Economic Communities (RECs) (SADC, EAC, ECOWAS, etc.) in Africa take the cue from AU and include HE in their respective plan of action
- UNESCO WCHE 2009 gave special attention to Africa. Noted progress made since WCHE 1998 but recognised that many challenges still existed in revitalisation of HE in Africa.



2. QA Initiatives in HE in Africa:

National, Regional & Continental

QA Initiatives in HE in Africa (1)

National Initiatives

- End 1990s & early 2000s: several HEIs e.g. U of Mauritius , St Mary's Uni College, Ethiopia, U of Dar es Salaam, introduced QA at institutional level through collaboration with European universities, before introduction of national QA processes
- c. 2001: South Africa's Council for Higher Education was first to introduce national QA processes through its HEQC
- In several of African countries a QA unit/section under the Commission or Council for HE undertakes this function (Nigeria, Kenya, Mauritius, Ghana); in some countries Quality is assured by the Ministry responsible for HE
- A few countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Tanzania) have set up specific QA agencies for Accreditation and/or Evaluation processes in HEIs
- However, only about half of 48 SSA countries have national QA agencies

QA Initiatives in HE in Africa (2)

Regional Initiatives

- 2003: HEQMISA, an initiative started in 2002 to promote QA in SADC (Southern African) HEIs with support from GIZ(GTZ); assistance provided to Malawi, Namibia, etc. Not much progress made
- 2005: IUCEA embarks on promoting QA systems in public & private HEIs in 5 East African countries with support from DAAD; the project has now been extended to West & Central Africa
- 2005-06: CAMES undertakes LMD reform as per the Bologna Process in Francophone HEIs to improve Quality; it is also responsible for Accreditation; but no explicit activities in Evaluation processes; same with CEMAC for Central African countries; and UNESCO Bamako Cluster Office & UEMOA for West African countries

QA Initiatives in HE in Africa (3)

Continental Initiatives

- 2007: After surveying HEI needs for QA in a first phase, AAU launches its second phase for promoting QA in HEIs
- 2009: AfriQAN formally launched and hosted by AAU. Mainly for capacity building of national QA agencies, but also HEIs. Initially supported by World Bank & UNESCO
- Pilot African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) for rating HEIs launched by AUC in 2010; uses self-assessment against set standards + external evaluation i.e. a mixture of Accreditation & Evaluation processes. 32 HEIs responded. Second call sent out in 2014
- ICQAHEA as QA Forum held every 1-2 years by Bamako Cluster Office with support from GUNI Africa, 7th Conference in 2015 in Abuja, Nigeria
- 2010-2012: Africa Quality Connect project run by AAU, EUA & IUQB to build institutional capacity through Partnership. EUA's IEP methodology applied to 5 African univs. Was successful but not continued because of lack of funding



3. Consequences of Poor Quality & Challenges in Implementing QA in HE

Consequences of Poor Quality in HE

- In spite of many efforts, Quality of HE in Africa is still wanting, as evidenced by several surveys and reports
- In 2010, NUC of Nigeria withdrew accreditation of academic departments in over 20 Nigerian universities – lack of infrastructure & qualified academic staff
- In 2011, Engg Reg Board of Kenya refused to recognize engg degrees from 3 leading public univs – poor curricula, lack of qualified staff & insufficient physical facilities
- In 2011, Council of Legal Education of Kenya rejected applications to practice law from graduates of several public & private univs – similar grounds
- In South Africa as well many law firms find LLB graduates deficient in basic skills for practising law
- In 2014, IUCEA reported survey of employers in 5 East African countries: 51-62% of graduates considered as ‘half-baked’

Challenges in Implementing QA in HE

- Many initiatives in promoting QA in HE in Africa but they are disparate & uncoordinated, mostly at regional levels, with little collaboration among regions & key organisations
- Effective application of QA process requires institutional QA systems to be set up; lack of knowledge about QA process, inadequate capacity, too heavy teaching & administrative load of academic staff & lack of financial resources are major handicaps
- National QA agencies also lack trained staff & capacity for implementing Evaluation process in HEIs; few have developed guidelines and standards
- Evaluation process rarely applied to private HEIs – mainly Accreditation
- Lack of experience in Africa in applying Evaluation process to ODL and CBHE
- Very little work done on QA in postgraduate programmes, yet they are vital for Africa's development



4. Two New Initiatives/Approaches

Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance & Accreditation (HAQAA)

- HAQAA is part of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, is funded by EU
- Partners are ENQA (coordinated by Univ of Barcelona), EUA, AAU & DAAD
- Launched in February 2016, covers period Dec 2015-Nov 2018
- Main objectives:
 - Development of a Pan-African QA & Accreditation System & Framework
 - Enhance regional collaboration in QA & regional networks
 - Capacity building for both internal & external QA
 - Promoting good practices between Europe & Africa
 - Build upon regional initiatives and political priorities

Benchmarking of African Universities Initiative

- Initiative being developed by the World Bank as part of its Partnership in App Sc Engg & Tech (PASET) project
- Main objective is to improve quality & relevance of univs by comparing data & performance indicators with other univs
- A pilot phase of 7 SSA univs undertaken in 2014 with assistance of Shanghai Jiao Tong Univ (SJTU)
- A major workshop held in Nov 2015, co-organised with AAU & attended by some 100 reps from wide range of African HE stakeholders; methodology, comparators/indicators discussed
- Following strong endorsement, first phase of benchmarking to be launched in 2016 in partnership with AAU, regional & national African QA agencies and SJTU
- Main activity of first phase will be benchmarking capacity building in QA agencies and univs



THANK YOU