



Towards a New Model of Internal Quality Assurance for Ugandan Universities

¹Charles Eryenyu, ²Prof. Seppo Holta, ³Prof. Proscovia Namubiru Ssentamu

¹Busitema University, Uganda

²Higher Education Group, University of Tampere, Finland

³Head Quality Assurance Department, Uganda Management Institute

Corresponding Author: eryenyuc@gmail.com

Received July 14, 2020; Revised July 24, 2020; Accepted July 24, 2020

Abstract: *The purpose of this research was to determine how academic staff in Ugandan universities are implementing internal quality assurance (IQA) practices in their universities. The study examined the internal and external factors that determine an individual academic staff's perception of the IQA practices using a concurrent mixed methods design. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from 321 respondents using self-administered questionnaires and key informant interviews. Data analysis and interpretation was grounded on Lipsky's (1980) theory of street level bureaucracy and Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior. The analyses which reflect the views of a pragmatic realist, show that academic staff are positive about the presence of IQA practices in their universities, but they are not involved in the policy planning and they do not get relevant feedback from the different IQA activities they undertake. There was evidence of little understanding and application of institutional research (IR) to inform quality assurance and other management practices. This research thus recommends the adoption of an evidence-based dialogue (EBD) model. This model is an original proposition that provides a framework to integrate institutional research with IQA practices as well as facilitating constructive communication between university management and academic staff.*

Keywords: *Ugandan Universities, Internal Quality Assurance, Evidence based model, Planned behaviour, Street level bureaucracy*

How to reference this article (APA):

Eryenyu, C., Holta, S. & Ssentamu, P. N. (2020). Towards a new model of Internal Quality Assurance for Ugandan Universities. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 4(3), 75-87.

1. Introduction

The Uganda's national quality assurance framework (NQAf) provides for the regulatory and internal quality assurance (IQA) components. The regulatory component is the obligation of the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) and is concerned with setting policies which universities must comply with, while the IQA is based at each university for purposes of enhancing the quality of academic work. IQA at institutional level means establishment of a quality assurance structure, developing quality assurance practices and implementing them.

Quality assurance practices are the activities deliberately designed by universities to manage, control and enhance the quality of its academic products and services. In this respect, Universities in Uganda are required by NCHE to develop and implement their own IQA policies. Nonetheless, Nabaho, Oonyu and Aguti (2016) observed that the regulatory and internal components of the NQAf are not mutually exclusive. This paper reports on the findings of the study conducted to explore the perceptions of academic staff in two Universities in Uganda on the implementation of IQA policy practices. Specifically the study sought to find out the perceptions of academic staff towards IQA practices in their universities and how they

are implementing the IQA practices. At the time of undertaking this research (September, 2019), Uganda had nine public universities, nine private chartered universities, one private university set by an act of parliament and several private universities at different stages of university growth and development (NCHE, 2018). In consideration of the fact that organizational growth and size have direct effects on management of change and on employees' behaviours, this study considered universities which had attained some level of mature coordination stage (Greiner, 1998). However, the names of these universities have been coded for ethical reasons as U1 and U2 to represent the public and private university, respectively; this was approved by Gulu University Research Ethic Committee (GUREC).

1.1 The research problem

It has been common to find studies that report about positive attitude of academic staff towards external quality assurance and controls. For example: Manatos, Sarrico and Rosa (2014) in Portugal; Rasmussen (1997) in Denmark; Huusko and Ursin (2010) in Finland and Stensaker et al. (2011) in Norway all reported about a positive attitude of academic staff towards external QA mechanisms. But with regard to IQA, Lucas (2014) and Newton (2002) found that the attitudes and responses of academic staff to structured IQA practices in UK universities and colleges were negative, Jones and Saram (2005) report about the negative views of academic staff towards QA procedures in the Hong Kong universities while Anderson (2006) also found a negative perception of IQA by academic staff in Australian universities. On the local scene, Lemaitre et al., (2011) reported that QA is "hardly an operational concept" whereby operational staff tend to associate it with top university management. Uganda in particular and East Africa in general (Matovu, 2017; Machumu & Kisanga, 2014; Nkunya et al., 2013; Materu, 2007) questioned the effectiveness of the IQA practices being implemented in universities. According to Matovu (2017; p.703) whereas universities may be interested in operationalizing IQA practices, they lack adequate resources to do so. Relatedly, Kakembo and Makumbi (2017; p.81) found that many universities lack structures and personnel for sustainably operate community engagement activities, which is one of the core pillars of university quality

There seems to be a strong belief among internal stakeholders of higher education that the current QA practices are more ceremonial and a management slogan than actually assuring the quality of university education. There is no clear explanation why academic staff feel that the effectiveness of QA is mere conviction and policy compliance (Mårtensson, Roxå & Stensaker, 2014; p. 354; Jarvis, 2014; p. 155, Rosa & Teixeira, 2013; Don, 2010; Blackmur, 2004). Despite the presence of the IQA policies

in universities, reports of poor pedagogic skills among teachers, ill-prepared graduates, missed and shortened lectures and low research output still persist (Malunda & Atweibembeire, 2019, p.3; Atweibembeire et al, 2018, p.72). Principally, the IQA practices appear to be lacking a more comprehensive methodology which can produce empirically reliable knowledge about the management of university quality (Leiber, Stensaker & Harvey, 2015). At operational level, when the IQA practices were introduced into the universities, there seems to be no clear articulation of how to inculcate its values among the street level bureaucrats. This blurred vision of IQA practices among academic staff in Universities is further complicated by the fact that the subject of QA in higher education is still under-research and under-theorised (Martin, 2018, 26; Krause, 2012, p. 285). There are insufficient theories to support QA either as an academic discipline or as a field of practice. This has made it difficult to provide substantive explanations for the divergent views ensuing from its implementation in universities. As far as the implementation is concerned, there is still limited understanding of how the academic staff are implementing the IQA practices in their universities. No study seemed to focus on the limited support for the IQA practices by academic staff (Lemaitre et al 2011; IUCEA, 2011; Materu 2007). It has been observed that academic staff treat the QA movement as a form of neoliberal model brought into higher education which interferes with the academic autonomy and as such they tend to respond in ways that protect academic autonomy (Raaper, 2015, p.18; Shahjahan, 2014, p. 225). This tends to result into a disruption of the QA norms, values, practices, and ideals in academia. Such phenomena could have negative implications on the implementation of IQA policies in universities and the overall achievement of the national QA goals.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual and theoretical background

This research examined how university environment combine with academic staff personal factors to influence the implementation of IQA practices. According to Bandura's (1986) triadic reciprocity model, human actions, environment and personal factors are in a state of bi-directional causal relationships. As illustrated in figure 1, university environment combines with staff's personal factors to influence their perception of IQA practices which in turn affect the implementation of IQA practices.

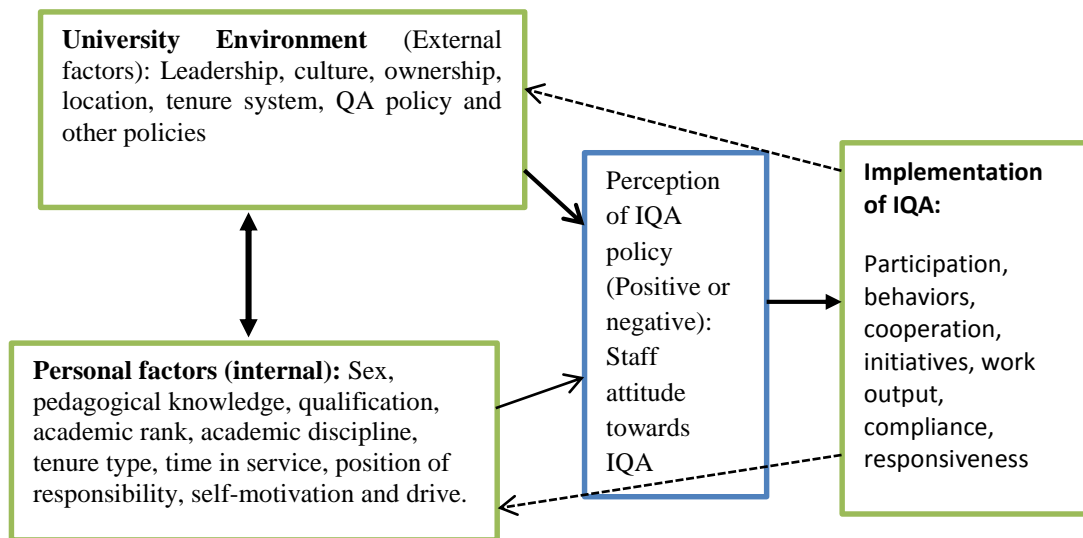


Figure 1: Conceptual framework showing interrelationships among university environment academic staff personal factors, perception and implementation of IQA. Inspired by Bandura's (1986) triadic reciprocity model

Perception in general terms refers to that process by which people receive, select, organize, retrieve and make sense of the information around them, characterized by decisions on which information to pay attention to, categorizing the information as important or not (Preetu, 2012, George and Jones, 2005).. Therefore, the perceptions determine how academic staff implement IQA practices. In this case, implementing IQA practices refers to the activities that the academic staff participate or engage in, physically, mentally, emotionally, socially or otherwise to put the IQA policy practices into effect.

To understand why academic staff exhibit particular set of behaviourstoward IQA practices, this research adopted Lipsky's(1980) theory of street level bureaucracy and Ajzen's(1991) theory of planned behaviour. Lipsky (1980) found that operational staff in an organization; whom he called *street-level bureaucrats*, have a certain degree of autonomy and discretionary power in their work. Discretion is the degree of freedom that street-level bureaucrats have in deciding the quantity and quality of service during policy implementation. The main argument of the theory of street-level bureaucracy is that the sum total of the actions and decisions of the street-level bureaucrats during policy implementation actually become the policies of the government or any organisation they work for (Lipsky, 1980). Whereas Lipsky used the term street-level bureaucrats to refer to public workers who interact directly with the citizens, in this study the term street-level bureaucrats is used to mean the university academic staff who are directly involved in IQA policy implementation processes. The theory of planned behaviour on the other hand states that human behaviour is guided by three types of beliefs, that is, beliefs about the likely consequences; beliefs about the normative

expectations from public; and beliefs about other factors that may affect performance of the behaviour. These result into subjective attitudes towards the behaviours which in turn give rise to perceived behavioural control and the manifestation of intentional acts (Ajzen, 1991). As noted by Winter (2002), the theory of street-level bureaucracy is stronger in identifying than explaining coping behaviours of street-level bureaucrats. Therefore, whereas the theory of street-level bureaucracy was used to identify and to predict the behaviours of academic staff while implementing IQA practices, the theory of planned behaviour focused on the justification for the behaviours. That is, the theory of planned behaviour in this study is concerned with the content of the academic staff behaviours while the theory of street-level bureaucracy is concerned with processes through which the behaviours are exhibited during the policy implementation.

Implementing IQA practices in universities is an organizational change process whose success heavily relies on the attitudes and perceptions of members within the organization. Human factors have been known to contribute to either the achievements or failures of new policies in organizations (Beer &Nohria, 2000). Humans being in organizations can exhibit cognitive, affective and physical behavioural patterns towards any change process or policy depending on the perceived expectation from the policy. Successful implementation of a policy such as the IQA policy requires unconditional participation and goodwill of the academic staff. Apart from the human factor, the other factor that determines the successful implementation of the IQA policy is the university environment. The university working environment broadly includes physical surroundings, facilities, work relations and other policies that govern the work of

academic staff. The environment can be enabling or inhibiting which can lead to behaviour modification either in favour or against the policy principles. Human beings have behaviour control mechanisms (Ajzen, 1991).

Bandura (1999) identified three types of environments: imposed, selected and constructed. In this case the imposed environment is the IQA policy that the staff have to implement whether it is for or against their interests. In circumstances where the imposed environment is against the interest of academic staff, they will always find ways of dealing with it (Lipsky, 1980). The selected and constructed environments relate to other policies, resources, all such factors with punishing and rewarding effects that facilitates or prohibits academic staff to have ways of dealing with imposed environment.

In operational terms, IQA policies are partly mechanisms for monitoring the work of academic staff and being monitored means mistrust. Baty (2004) observed that QA make staff to go through a state of psychological unrest at some point during the process of implementing QA activities. Such unrests are followed by a feeling of being mistrusted. A state of being doubted creates a feeling of incompetence in human beings which can trigger psychological distress in an academic staff. Such staff may resort to their self-efficacy and normative behavioural controls to deal with the situation (planned behaviour). This results into a form of change/policy resistance (Newton, 2002; Ajzen, 1991). Conversely, academic staff who think positively about IQA practices are likely to be supportive and work towards the policy success.

3. Methodology

This research explored how the academic staff in the two case universities perceived IQA practices and consequently how their perceptions determine the way they implement the IQA practices in their respective universities. Following a multi-case research design, a total of 317 respondents selected using stratified random sampling filled survey while two academic registrars (AR1 and AR2) and two quality assurance officers (QA1 and QA2) were purposely selected as key informants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Quantitative and quality data were collected concurrently using questionnaire and key informant interviews. The different data sources and types provided corroborated evidence which was then analysed with aid of SPSS, v.20, Nvivo v.10 software for quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The analyses provided answers to the two specific questions:

1. What are the views of university academic staff on the IQA policy practices in their universities?
2. How are academic staff implementing IQA practices in their universities?

4. Results and discussions

This research had a response rate of 83%. Of the 321 respondents 218 (69%) were from U1 while the other 99 (31%) were from U2. By gender, 181 (59%) of the respondents were male, 91 (29%) were female while 39 (12%) did not disclose their gender. Among the respondents, 161 (51%) were from Arts-oriented academic disciplines while 155 (49%) were from the Sciences. These percentages represent the proportions of respondents in the different strata in the population of academic staff in the two case universities.

The views of academic staff on the IQA practices in their universities

Whereas studies by (Lucas, 2014; Newton, 2002; Jones & Saram, 2005, Anderson, 2006 and Lemaitre et al., 2011) had showed that academic staff perceive structured IQA practices negatively, this current research tends to shed a different picture about the perception of academic staff towards IQA practices. At least 274 (92.3%) % of the respondents agreed that IQA practices which are being implemented in their universities are important in the operations of their universities. This empirical evidence is supported by the two quality assurance officers (QAOs) who independently reported that at first when quality assurance was being introduced in their universities, staff did not like it; but with time they became cooperative towards implementing QA activities. Two of the four key informants (QA1 and QA2) explained that, academic staff and students at first were more reluctant in participating in the QA activities. But after sometime, a sense of ownership and buy-in started building slowly amongst all the stakeholders including academic staff. The buy-in and the subsequent willingness of academic staff to implement the IQA practices were largely because of the stringent measures that the policy came with. Key informant, AR1 further said,

“there is cooperation with staff in implementing QA measures not because they want but because it is a policy. The policy forces them to cooperate” (AR1).

The academic staff and other internal stakeholders then started cooperating with quality assurance officers because as a matter of procedure, the academic work is linked to quality procedures within the quality assurance offices. The policies have been structured such that when academic staff want their work recognized, the work has to pass through a quality control centre. According to key informants QA1 and QA2, when QA “started biting” staff became cooperative. This is a good rider on the theory of street-level bureaucracy that there is no absolute “discretion power” in an organization. The theory of street-level bureaucracy had argued that street-level bureaucrats -- in this case the academic staff -- as policy

implementers have operational autonomy and discretion during the time of policy implementation that reshape the policy. It is being observed in this research that the operational autonomy and discretion powers of street-level bureaucrats are highly censored by the management controls. For example, payroll management and recognition of research publication for staff promotion are linked to adherence to some IQA procedures. These force staff to comply.

However, apart from the stringent measures that the IQA policies came with, at beginning, there was lack of understanding of what the policy has to offer relative to the work of the academic staff. As key informant, QA1 explained, even quality assurance officers (QAOs) themselves never understood their roles as quality assurance officers but with time the work and responsibilities of QAOs started becoming clear and the IQA policy also started supporting academic staff to do research and publications. These contributed to the building of a positive mindset towards IQA policies among academic staff.

According to the quantitative data, 192(61.2%) of academic staff stated that IQA practices are helping them as academic staff, 280 (88.3%) said that it was important for their universities to have an IQA policy and 292 (92.1%) of academic staff agreed that it was important to use IQA policy to promote academic work (mean 3.8), while 269 (84.8%) rated academic improvement mechanism as the number one purpose of IQA practices in their universities with mean score of 4.12 out of a five point Likert scale. Academic staff in this research further rated themselves as the number one quality assurers in their universities; mean = 3.90. This was closely followed by their belief that academic heads of department (mean = 3.89) are the ones assuring quality of higher education. Bearing in mind the idea of street-level bureaucrats, these findings tends to agree to the idea that academic staff as street-level bureaucrats are the real determinants of university quality assurance policies (Newton, 2002; Lipsky 1980). The results tend to suggest that those who really can assure the quality of university education are in the departments. This also confirms the bottom heaviness of academic institutions (Clark, 1983). However, the teaching staff did not disagree with the role of other stakeholders in assuring the quality of university education. Except for the case of the general public where the mean score was below average (mean = 2.71), all other stakeholders were well rated as important in assuring the quality of university education. Basing on this data, it can be argued that the responsibility for quality assurance increases from individual academic staff, to heads of department, the offices of the academic deans, university management, quality assurance officers, university funders, university council, students and the general public. The fact that the academic staff rated themselves highly in their role to assure the quality of university education also seems to suggest that they care about

quality of the education provided in their universities. It is an indication of a progressive development in quality assurance culture among academic staff. This result further tends to demonstrate that, whereas it is every stakeholder's responsibility to assure quality, the academic staff have the primary responsibility to assure the quality of university education.

Although all the respondents (teaching staff, academic registrars and quality assurance officers) pointed out that some structured IQA processes are time-consuming and bureaucratic, all of them recognized the importance of having an IQA system in the university. Having a working IQA system in place leads to national, regional and international recognition, improves university image and leads to better rankings. QA1 stated that they prepare an inventory of the publications and forward them to ranking agencies. This practice increases international visibility of the university. At U1, the presence of a quality assurance office also attracted some funding from an external donor that facilitated research and other IQA activities. The presence of IQA policies in the case universities have provided clear guidelines on research and support for research activities increased the research output of academic staff and eventually their personal profiles. This is the case of bi-directional causal influences predicted by the triadic reciprocity model (Bandura, 1986). Hence, there has been an observed change in the way academic staff view IQA and its activities. It can then be inferred here that in universities where management controls are weak and QA does not in any way support academic work positively, quality assurance practices will be negatively viewed by academic staff. Human beings are known to use self-efficacies negatively if the imposed environment does not positively support their individual lives (Bandura, 1999).

However, there were some predictor variables whose mean scores were around the average of 3.0. For example, quality as exceptional (3.20), quality as zero defect(3.05), the roles of general public (2.71), the role of students (3.13), the role of university council (3.15), the role of funders (3.33), increased academic freedom (3.10), communication between academic staff and top management (3.16) and a reduction in funding for academic work (3.07). The mean score of 3.0 in a 5-point Likert scale is neutral, undecided or just moderate. A neutral point is a state of apathy; a beginning point of either resistance or commitment (Coetsee, 2011). Coetsee's (2011) model of resistance-commitment continuum illustrates that organization members' resistance or commitment to change grows from the state of apathy (neutrality) to either passionate commitment or violent resistance to change. Therefore, despite the fact that academic staff who took part in this study in general showed positive perceptions of the IQA policies, greater attention should be paid to those parameters where their responses were in the state of indifference. Academic staff with such neutral responses can fulfill all the IQA

procedures in purely formal ways without any emotional (personal or professional) attachment. Hence, there is need for deliberate efforts to create positive energies in all academic staff at all levels - the effort towards a quality culture.

This study investigated the implementation of IQA practices in the case of universities (U1 and U2) at operational level, particularly, among the academic staff. Table 1 shows the frequencies of staff participation in some of the IQA activities.

Implementation of IQA practices by academic staff

Table 1: Academic staff frequency of participation in IQA activities

IQA activities	Never (0)	Once(1)	Two times(2)	Three times(3)	Four or more times(4)	Mean (2)
Facilitated any QA workshop	192(62.5%)	51(16.6%)	21(6.8%)	28(9.1%)	15(4.9%)	.77
Participated in mission or vision setting	163(53.1%)	64(20.8%)	33(10.7%)	25(8.1%)	22(7.2%)	.95
Participated in any strategic planning process	149(50.5%)	64(21.7%)	34(11.5%)	29(9.8%)	19(6.4%)	1.00
Participated in setting QA indicators	159(53.0%)	56(18.7%)	34(11.3%)	24(8.0%)	27(9.0%)	1.01
Participation in the development of QA policy	149(49.3%)	67(22.2%)	31(10.3%)	36(11.9%)	19(6.3%)	1.04
Participated in developing QA evaluation tools	151(49.7%)	48(15.8%)	43(14.1%)	39(12.8%)	23(7.6%)	1.13
Attended QA workshops	134(43.4%)	71(23.0%)	38(12.3%)	34(11.0%)	32(10.4%)	1.22
Participated in developing departmental QA indicators	133(44.0%)	55(18.2%)	42(13.9%)	30(9.9%)	42(13.9%)	1.31
Attended QA committee meetings	118(40.1%)	70(23.8%)	26(8.8%)	53(18.0%)	27(9.2%)	1.32
Implemented the recommendations of students' evaluation of staff	120(39.3%)	69(22.6%)	37(12.1%)	41(13.4%)	38(12.5%)	1.37
Implemented peer review Recommendations	117(37.9%)	69(22.3%)	45(14.6%)	44(14.2%)	34(11.0%)	1.38
Participation in peer review of academic programs	74(23.9%)	78(25.2%)	52(16.8%)	59(19.1%)	46(14.9%)	1.76
Participation in self-review of academic programs	83(26.8%)	51(16.5%)	51(16.5%)	61(19.7%)	64(20.6%)	1.91

Source: Primary Data, 2019.

The implementation of IQA practices occurs at different levels. Like in any policy, participation starts from the point of policy formulation. The results show that the participation levels of academic staff in all selected activities are positively skewed. That is, below average. The least participated-in activities are facilitating QA workshops (mean= 0.77), developing mission and vision (mean = 0.95) and strategic planning. In all the aspects of IQA practices investigated in this study, staff participation is the only variable where the responses of the academic staff are all below average. These findings are consistent with top-down nature of the Ugandan QA policy model. Uganda's national quality assurance framework was initiated regionally through the Inter-university Council of East Africa and the policy was cascaded down to the institutions. With top-down policy development

approach, operational staff (the street-level bureaucrats) are less involved at planning levels. In this model of policy development, a policy idea is conceived by top management; it is designed and its activities planned and communicated to grassroots implementers to do the implementation. All such policies have one common challenge: How to get the grassroots implementers buy into the policy philosophy (Nkunya et al., 2013). The findings of this research therefore show that, first, there is low participation by academic staff, especially at planning level; and secondly, senior academic staff are more involved at the planning levels than the junior staff. Those who participate less in planning activities tend to view the IQA practices as burden, time consuming and an increase in academic workload, figure 2.

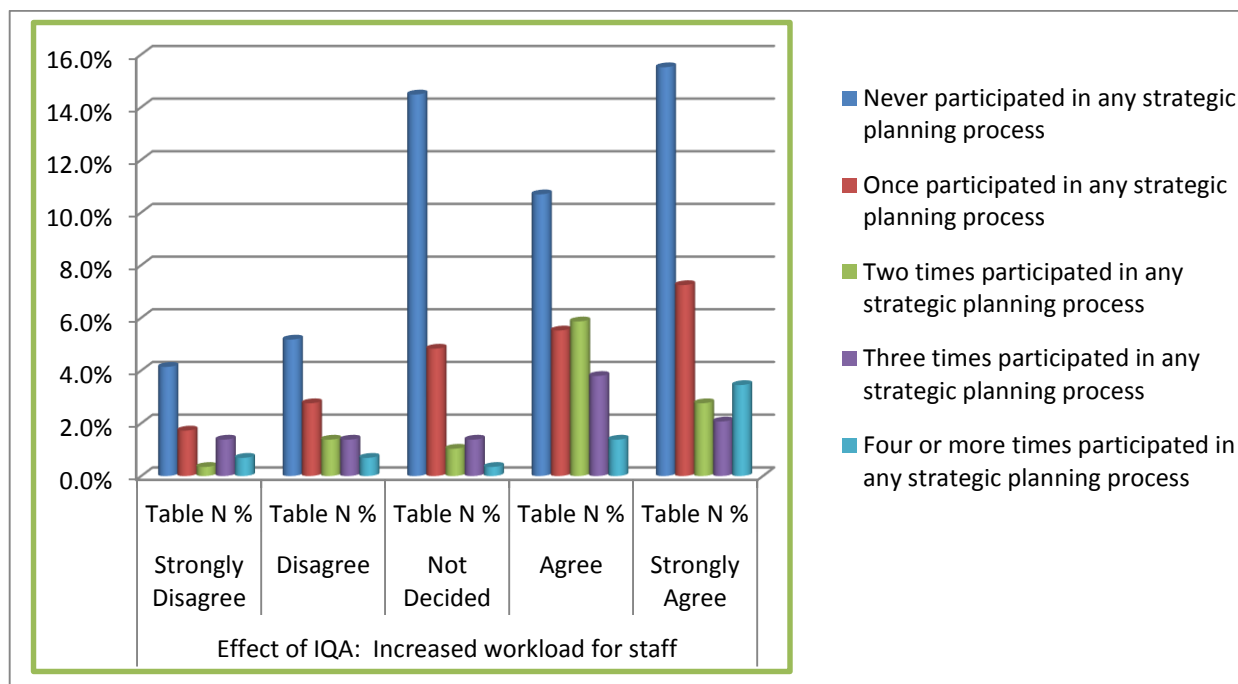


Figure 2: Participation in planning IQA versus perceive effect of IQA of academic work load

The academic staff seems to disagree with the process through which in IQA policies come into existence – the policy planning and development processes. For the cases where there were negative perceptions, such as involvement in strategic planning, facilitating QA workshops/seminars, formulation of university vision and mission as well as setting IQA indicators/benchmarks; the low scores could be attributed to lack of participation in those activities. Fitting the results of this study into the Deming cycle (Plan, Do, Check and Act), it could mean that the academic staff are less involved at the Plan and the Act phases of the cycle, they are more involved at the Do phase and somehow at the Check. Unfortunately, the QA officers (key informants) do not have a clear explanation for this scenario. None the less, the literature on policy developments, trainings and related workshop highlights the huge cost associated with census participation. The universities are using the cascade model to instill QA values among academic staff yet the effectiveness of this model in transferring values is very slow.

The cascade model is a mechanism for training of trainers at the central level to trainees at the local level through several layers. In this model, first cohorts of trainers are trained in a specific subject area and when they are deemed qualified as trainers; they become the trainers of a second-layer group. This process continues until all institution members are trained (Hayes, 2000; Karalis, 2016). A trained cohort of staff has the responsibility to educate the rest of the staff in their departments or units. However, according to National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicines (NASEM), there is no learning theory that supports this model of learning in transferring knowledge and values (NASEM, 2015;

Karalis, 2016). The effectiveness of the cascade model is further reduced by the authority of managers to choose training participants. The selection process is susceptible to human bias. Although all the interviewees in this research denied such human biases, (NASEM, 2015) found that in such trainings, it is possible to find “that the same people are re-trained multiple times per year while most of their co-workers are never trained once”. The cascade model will make it longer to diffuse quality assurance norms and values into the academia. If quality assurance ought to evolve from policy to culture, then all academic staff need to be direct participants in the quality assurance activities at all levels. A recent study by (Cardoso et al, 2018) revealed that when academic staff are not involved in quality assurance activities, they “present partial withdrawal” from such activities. Partial withdrawal is a behavioural problem that (Raaper, 2015) described as covert ways of resistance while Vettori (2018; p.96) described similar behaviours as “lines of conflict that are hardly visible but still effective”. It is possible to prevent academic staff from switching into a withdrawn mode by involving them at the early stages of IQA policy formulation.

When planning IQA policies, university managements tend to use professors, senior lecturers and academic staff in positions of responsibility such as heads of department and academic Deans. This was statistically illustrated and confirmed by interviewees AR1, QA1 and AR2. Table 2 shows that whereas the proportion of staff participation in the different IQA activities remain stable for professors, it decreases for assistant lecturers, lectures and senior lecturers with increase in the frequency of participation. That is, for academic staff with lower ranks the majority

don't participate and the participation levels are even much lower for activities at planning levels.

Table 2: Relative frequencies of academic participation in strategic planning

Frequencies	Rank of the Respondent				
	Assistant Lecturer	Lecturer	Senior Lecturer	Associate Professor	Professor
Never(0)	67(53.6%)	49(50.5%)	27(57.4%)	3(37.5%)	1(11.1%)
Once(1)	24(19.2%)	21(21.6%)	9(19.1%)	2(25.0%)	3(33.3%)
Two times(2)	14(11.2%)	12(12.4%)	4(8.5%)	1(12.5%)	2(22.2%)
Three times(3)	16(12.8%)	8(8.2%)	3(6.4%)	1(12.5%)	1(11.1%)
Four or more times(4)	4(3.2%)	7(7.2%)	4(8.5%)	1(12.5%)	2(22.2%)

Primary data, 2019

Academic staff involvement in the development of the internal quality practices and leadership support for IQA policy practices have been identified as two most important factors for the effective implementation of the IQA policies (Martin, 2018). Unfortunately, Martin (2018) also found that only a small percentage (15%) of administrative staff feel that the active participation of all stakeholders is an important factor for the success of the university's IQA systems. Such findings highlight the difference between the academic and administrative cultures in the universities; where administrative staff may deliberately leave out some academic staff in the initial planning activities. Though the tension between administrative and academic staff in universities have been there long in the history of higher education (Clark, 1983; p.10) , (Pechar, 2012) observed that the implementation of QA policies and other forms of neoliberal policies in universities seems to have resulted in decline in authority and autonomy of the academic oligarchy. That is, the neoliberal policies seem to empower administrative staff over the academic staff. In this study, whereas the interviewees (QA1 and QA2) acknowledged the significance of stakeholders' involvement in the design and development of the IQA policies, they were not explicit on why their universities still use the top-down approach in IQA policy development.

It should be noted that people who are involved in the policy planning do understand the philosophy behind the policy; as such they do have a positive attitude toward such a policy as opposed to those who are not involved in the policy planning. This finding is not in any way unique to these case universities. A UNESCO (2017) study that involved eight universities reported that university members who because of their positions were involved in the design and revision of particular IQA tools understood the tools better compared to 'ordinary teaching person'. This makes them positive about such QA tools. Therefore, it can be concluded that if universities want the academic staff to have a positive attitude towards the different IQA practices, let all of them be involved in the planning of

those activities or IQA instruments. A major concern for academic staff as far as the implementation of IQA practices concerned is the tradition of being left out of the IQA policy change-related decision-making processes. Yet, there is a significant positive relation between the attitude of academic staff and their involvement in IQA planning and decision making processes. These findings not only corroborate well with participatory change management literature but also tend to affirm (Atweibembeire, Ssentamu & Musaazi, 2018) study that investigated staff participation, teaching and research in private universities in Uganda. Atweibembeire et al. (2018) found out that there is low involvement of academic staff in most planning activities, yet when academic staff are involved at the planning stages of IQA activities; they tend to perceive such activities positively. Participation is a very important change management factor that can significantly change the attitude of the organisational staff (Kotter, 2001). On the other hand, lack of participation is a precursor to resistance. Therefore, universities need to seriously consider involving academic staff at the planning stages of IQA practices. This, however, might come with increased cost; it should be treated as the necessary cost of quality.

The absence institutional research: This study found the concept of institutional research (IR) highly lacking not only in the two case universities but in the entire HE literature in Uganda. Where some elements of IR are being indirectly practiced, the results are not shared by the relevant stakeholders. Institutional research (IR) is the research conducted within HEIs to provide information which supports institutional planning, policy formulation and administrative decision making (Saupe, 1990; p.1; Volkwein, 2008). Institutional research may be known by different names but what is important about it is the purpose. IR focuses on research in the institution for institutional use. Specifically, IR is characterised by a series of activities that involve collecting, analysing and interpreting institutional data about students, staff, funders, alumni, academic programmes as well as management operations. The information from such data

is then used to help institutional managers in planning and decision making. Broadly, institutional research (IR) provides organizational intelligence (Volkwein, 2008; Volkwein, Liu & Woodell, 2012).

Organization intelligence in the context of higher education institutions demands that there is an institutional research personnel who is knowledgeable about major decision areas that the institutions face; an understanding of students enrolment planning, the meaning of academic workload, resource prioritization, facility planning, academic institution value chain, reviews, and ability to do cost benefit analyses for education options. It further demands an understanding that the academic institution operates in a social environment where skills to work with others in the institution as well as an understanding of how the political nature of major institution decision are very important.

Whereas QA focuses on institutions and programmes, IR is directly involved in all institutional activities, collecting and analysing empirical data to facilitate institutional planning and decision making (Calderon & Mathies, 2013). Therefore QA requires data or information provided by the IR office to inform the development and implementation of IQA practices. Currently, there is limited utilization of data collected by the QA officers to inform IQA practices. For example a total 189(61.9%) academic staff had implemented recommendation from students' evaluation of academic staff less than once while 37.9% never saw recommendation of peer reviewers. None utilization of data collected by university QA officers makes the process of ensuring quality incomplete. Perhaps this is the major difference between QA and IR; not putting to use the collected data. QA also tends to use the information it collects to inform external stakeholders; namely quality regulators (e.g. NCHE), ranking agencies and the general public. Both QA1 and QA2 said they submit regular QA report to NCHE; QA1 also added that QA office in their university prepare an inventory of research done by their academic staff and submit to the university ranking agents. Apparently, the logic is to show the outside world that the institution is doing the right work, yet internally the real situation may be different. IR on the other hand uses its self-study findings to inform internal decision and planning for quality improvement.

So far, the use of QA data by academic staff for improvement is negligible. For example all the academic staff did not know why the findings or the results of students' evaluation of academic staff were hardly shared by those evaluated. Whereas the QA2 stated that the results of students' surveys were shared, at least 94(39.8%) did not agree that they use results from students evaluation of staff to improve their teaching. These findings add to the voice of Martin and Emeran (2017) who found that while universities have IQA systems in place, they do not have effective IQA methods.

Universities collect information from staff, students and employers but the information is not used to inform decision-making processes; not used in planning; or even being used in resource allocation. Similarly, the most recent work of Martin (2018, p.58) confirms that in the process of implementing IQA policies, universities collect a lot of information but that information is not used in management decision making and policy formulation and review. Non-utilization of QA data makes IQA activities incomplete and a waste of resources and time. It is the incompleteness of the IQA processes which is the major shortcoming of implementing IQA practices in universities. This shortcoming could be overcome by integrating the principles of institutional research (IR) into quality assurance (QA) as management practices.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Despite limited involvement at the planning stages of the IQA practices and lack adequate feedback from different internal quality assurance (IQA) surveys, the academic staff have positive perception of the current IQA practices in their universities. The observed resistive behaviours from academic staff towards IQA practices were largely due to the way IQA practices were introduced in the universities, which made it appear like a tool for controlling academic staff. The top-down policy nature in which QA was introduced required an elaborate and holistic mechanism for infusing QA values into the academia. Quality assurance system has its values which were not infused into the academic values. For instance, a culture of being monitored or being evaluated by learners was all new among academic practices. The induction of academic staff into IQA practices needed to demonstrate reciprocal benefits of such practices to academics staff.

Because most QA policies are remotely designed and presented to academic staff, academic staff tend to show conditional participation because they look at the policy as a top management ideology. Lack of initial involvement in the policy at formulation level coupled with lack of feedback from the different IQA activities that academic staff do engage-in is responsible for the limited support for some IQA practices in the universities. None utilization of the principles of institutional research makes it difficult to understand the positive effects of the different IQA practices being implemented in universities. Academic staff do not know how different IQA practices contribute to improvement in academic work or academic profiles of individual academic staff. The problem of limited support for IQA practices by academic staff is compounded by the limited resources in the universities for implementing the IQA practices.

5.2 Recommendations

Stakeholders' participation is a known change management strategy in organizational policy implementation. For improved levels of unconditional participation of academic staff in the IQA practices, it is highly recommended that the academic staff be involved in the initial planning of all such IQA practices and relevant feedback should be given to academic staff about the different IQA activities. This can be possible if the principles of institutional research (IR) are integrated into IQA systems. This paper therefore recommends the adoption of an evidence-based dialogue (EBD) model which integrates IR with IQA system to facilitate the communication between university management and academic staff in matters of university quality management.

Models are descriptions that enable visualization of something that cannot be seen directly, they may be presented in terms of patterns or figures (Kuhn, 2004). Since the advent of QA in higher education (HE), many QA models have been suggested to guide QA practices.

Some of the traditional QA models adopted from the business sector into HE include: the Plan Do Check Act cycle (Deming, 1999); the Balance score card (1992); the Baldrige quality awards (1987); Total Quality Management (1951); and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) (1947). Higher Education specific QA models includes: the Transformative Model (Harvey & Knight, 1996); Comprehensive Educational Quality Assurance Model (Boyle & Bowden, 1997); the Engagement Model of Quality (Haworth and Conrad, 1997); the Responsive University Model (Tierney, 1998); the University of Learning Model (Bowden & Marton, 1998); and Cheng and Tam's (1997) multiple models of quality. All these models seem to lack the dimension of evidence of effectiveness of the IQA within a given university context which is being provided for by the EBD model. With the EBD model, the integration of IR into IQA system can provide information about which IQA practices are effective for a given university. Institutional research (IR), if properly implemented, has the capacity to support institutional management even beyond quality assurance. The proposed Evidence Based Dialogue (EBD) model is illustrated in figure 3.

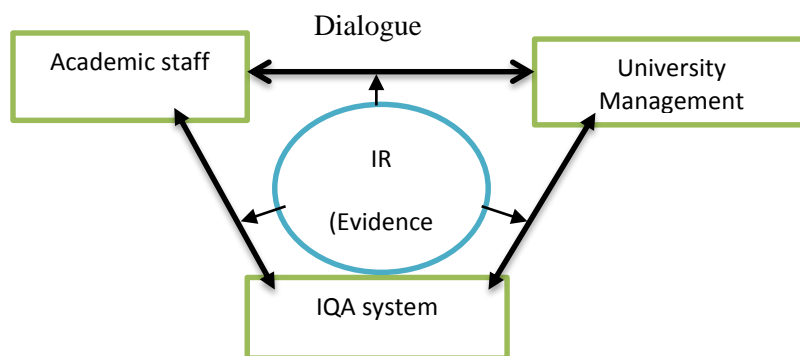


Figure 3: Proposed Evidence-based dialogue model of IQA management; original drawing 2019.

Implementing this model requires an establishment of IR office or IR as a function of QA department, this depend on size and the level of development of the institution. The office of institution research provides data (information) that help management to make informed decisions, and make management decisions transparent to academic staff hence facilitating a dialogue (feedback) between university management and academic staff. This type of dialogue ensures that both academic staff and university management have meaningful inputs into the institution's quality assurance measures. With data from the institutions research, both the academic staff and university management can, not only defend but also justify their actions with respect to institutional quality assurance practices.

The four dimensions of the evidence-based dialogue model are:

- i. University Management which is characterised by management policies, budgeting, leadership and leadership behaviours or culture.
- ii. IQA system which comprises a series of planned activities to be done by staff and management in order to guarantee the quality of university education.
- iii. The academic staff that are diversely defined by their sex, disciplinary orientation, professionalism, employment contracts, job functions and a range of human behaviours.
- iv. The institutional research (IR) office which conducts research within an institution solely for the purposes of providing evidence to support decisions, planning, resource allocation and policy analyses.

The strength of this model is that, it is evidence-based dialogue between the university management and academic staff. Therefore, an understanding of what constitutes good IQA practices should be a product of a

continuous dialogue between university management and academic staff. If university management can put in place a communication strategy that supports this dialogue, right from top management to lower units, then IQA systems will function more effectively. The dialogue should be continuous because apparently QA in universities is a dynamic proposition which keeps changing with the trends in higher education. Higher education quality is defined by multiple realities arising from different perspectives of higher education trends, events and stakeholders. IQA practices should be developed through a process of mutual negotiations and settlement by key stakeholders in order to align different perspectives linked to practical quality problems in Universities. According to Schwartz (2012) a consensus through debate, alignment and settlement is a prerequisite for solving real world problems. The problems related to quality in universities are real world problems that need continuous debate and eventually alignment; which are provided for by the EBD model.

The EBD model will also link the IQA system with other policies and activities. The adoption of the principles of institutions research (IR) can facilitate effective university-wide planning in curriculum, policy analyses, human resource management, capital development, leadership and the entire institutional working environment. The EBD model if adopted by universities will ensure transparency through information sharing between staff and university management. When communication between staff and management is supported by data arising from an IR office, there won't be any form of suspicion about the different policies, activities or practices by universities actors. This can be a foundation of inclusive participation in policy design, development and implementation that seems to be at low levels currently. Further research may be necessary to assess the role of institutional research in enhancing effective university-wide planning and management beyond quality assurance practices.

References

- Ajzen, I. (1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Practices*, 50, 179-211.
- Anderson, G. (2006). Assuring Quality/Resisting Quality Assurance: Academics' responses to 'quality' in some Australian universities. *Quality in Higher Education*, 12:2, 161-173, DOI: 10.1080/13538320600916767.
- Atweibembeire, J., Ssentamu, P., N. & Musaazi, J.C. (2018). Staff Participation and Quality Teaching and Research in Private Universities in Uganda. *Journal of Education and Practice*

www.iiste.org, ISSN 2222-1735 (Paper) ISSN 2222-288X , Vol.9, No.17, 2018.

- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1999). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Asian journal of social psychology* (1999) 2, pp. 21- 44.
- Baty, P. (2004) 'Academic quits dog's life to raise her hounds. *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 30 July, p 3.
- Beer, M. & Norhia.N., (2000). Cracking the code of change. *Harvard Business Review*. Boston MA.
- Blackmur, D. (2004). Issues in higher education quality assurance. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 63(2):105-116, Published by Blackwell Publishing Limited.
- Calderon, A., & Mathies, C. (2013). Institutional research in the future: Challenges within higher education and the need for excellence in professional practice. In A. Calderon & K. Webber (Eds.), *Global issues in institutional research, New Directions for Institutional Research. No .157*, (pp. 77–90). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Cardoso, S., Rosa, M., & Videira, P., (2018). Academics' participation in quality assurance: does it reflect ownership? *Quality in Higher Education*. 10.1080/13538322.2018.1433113.
- Clark B. R. (1983). *The higher Education systems: Academic organization in Cross- National perspectives*. London: University of California Press.
- Coetsee, L. D. (2011). *Peak performance and productivity: a practical guide for the creation of a motivating climate*. Potchefstroom: Onsdruckers.
- Creswell J.W., & Creswell J. D., (2018). *Research design: A qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches (5th Ed.)*. SAGE Publications, Los Angeles, USA.
- Don, H. (2010). Achievements and Consequences of Two Decades of Quality Assurance in Higher Education: A Personal View from the Edge. *Quality in Higher Education*, v16 no 2 p.177-180.
- George, J. & Jones, G., (2005). *Understanding and Managing Organizational Behavior* (4th Edition). Prentice Hall.

- Greiner, L. E. (1998). Evolution and Revolution as Organizations Growth, *Harvard Business Review*.
- Hayes, D. (2000). Cascade training and teachers' professional development. *ELT Journal*, 54(2), 135-145.
- Huusko, M. & Ursin, J. (2010). Why (not) assess? Views from the academic departments of Finnish Universities. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35 (7), 856-869.
- IUCEA. (2011). Proceeding of the regional Workshop on Higher Education Quality Management in East Africa. CHE. Nairobi, Kenya.
- Jarvis, D. S. L. (2014). Regulating higher education: Quality assurance and neo-liberal managerialism in Higher Education—A critical introduction. *Policy and society*. Volume 33, issue 3 pages 155-166.
- Jones, J., & Saram, D. (2005). Academic staff views of quality systems for teaching and learning: A Hong Kong case study. *Quality in Higher Education*, 11(1), 47-58.
- Karalis T., (2016). Cascade Approach to Training: Theoretical Issues and Practical Applications in Non - Formal Education. *Journal of Education & Social Policy*. Vol. 3, No. 2; pp: 104-108.
- Krause, K. (2012). Addressing the wicked problem of quality in higher education: Theoretical approaches and implications. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 31(3), 285–297.
- Leiber, T., Stensaker, B. & Harvey, L. (2015). Impact evaluation of quality assurance in higher education: methodology and causal designs. *Quality in Higher Education*. 21. 288-311. 10.1080/13538322.2015.1111007.
- Lemaitre, M. J., Matos N. & Teichler, U. (2011). East African-German Co-operation in Enhancing Quality Assurance in Higher Education: An External Review of the IUCEA-DAAD Pilot Initiative. Downloaded from <http://iucea1.org/qawp/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/review-IUCEA-DAAD-QA-initiative-March-2011.pdf> on Thursday April, 16, 2015.
- Lipsky, M. (1980). *Street-level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public services*. New York, Russell Sage Foundation.
- Lucas, L. (2014). Academic resistance to quality assurance practices in higher education in the UK. *Policy and Society*, 33 (2014) 215–224.
- Machumu, H., J., & Kisanga, S. H., (2014). Quality Assurance Practices in Higher Education Institutions: Lesson from Africa. *Journal of Education and Practice*. www.iiste.org ISSN 2222-1735 (Paper) ISSN 2222-288X (Online) Vol.5, No.16.
- Malunda, P. & Atwebembeire, J. (2019). Staff Development and Quality Education in Uganda: Analysis of Quality Teaching and Research in Private Chartered Universities. Accessed at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330385648> on April 27, 2020.
- Manatos, M. J., Sarrico, C. S., & Rosa M.J. (2014). Perceptions of academics on ESG implementation in Portuguese universities. EHES, Universitat Duisburg, Essen.
- Maria, T., Vassilis, G. & Panos, F. (2010). Evaluation of the factors that determine quality in higher education: An empirical study, *Quality Assurance in Education*, Vol. 18 Iss 3 pp. 227-244 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09684881011058669>
- Mårtensson, K., Roxå, T. & Stensaker, B., (2014). From quality assurance to quality practices: An investigation of strong micro cultures in teaching and learning, *Studies in Higher Education*, 39:4, 534-545. Routledge, Taylor and Francis.
- Martin M., & Emeran C., (2017). How does Internal Quality Assurance impact quality and employability? Available at: <http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/how-does-internal-quality-assurance-impact-employability-3551> Retrieved on July 21, 2019.
- Martin, M., (2018). Internal Quality Assurance: Enhancing higher education quality and graduate employability. IIEP-UNESCO, Paris, France.
- Materu, P., (2007). *Higher education quality assurance in sub Saharan African: status, challenges, opportunities and promising practices*. The World Bank Publication, Washington, USA.
- Matovu, M. (2017). The state of internal quality assurance systems in Ugandan universities: issues, opportunities and challenges. *European journal of education studies*, Vol. 3, Issue 8. 1111. Available at:

<<https://oapub.org/edu/index.php/ejes/article/view/983>>. Date accessed: 23 March. 2018.

- Nabaho, L., Aguti, J. N. & Oonyu, J. (2016). Assuring the Quality of Teaching at Makerere University in Uganda: Practices and Experiences of Academics and Students, 23,1; PP.40 – 61
- NASEM (2015). *Improving Quality of Care in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: Workshop Summary*. The National Academies Press, Washington DC, USA.
- NCHE (2018). Annual Performance Report and Financial Statement of the Financial Year 2017/18. NCHE, Kampala, Uganda.
- Newton, J. (2002). Views from below: Academics coping with quality. *Quality in Higher Education* 8, no. 1: 39–61.
- Nkunya, M. H. H., Kuria, M., & Wilde, M., (2013). Cross-border partnership for quality enhancement in higher education: achievements of the IUCEA/DAAD/HRK quality assurance initiative for East Africa. Available at: http://www.eua.be/Libraries/EQAF_2013/IVb_1_Kuria_Nkunya.sflb.ashx accessed on February 20, 2015.
- Pechar, Hans. (2012). The Decline of an Academic Oligarchy. The Bologna Process and ‘Humboldt’s Last Warriors’. 10.1007/978-94-007-3937-6_33.
- Preetu P. (2012). *The perceptual process*. Retrieved from: <http://www.slideshare.net/PreethamPreetu/perception> On June 4, 2016.
- Raaper, R. (2015). Academic perceptions of Higher Education Assessment Practices in neoliberal Academia, *Critical Studies in Education*, DOI: 10.1080/17508487.2015.1019901
- Rasmussen, P., (1997). A Danish Approach to Quality in Higher Education, The Case of Aalborg University, in Brennan, J. de Vries, P. and Williams, R. (eds.) *Standards and Quality in Higher Education*, Higher Education Policy Series, Vol.37, Jessica Kingsley Review 37(1), 1–7.
- Rosa, M. J. and Teixeira P., (2013). Policy Reforms, Trojan Horses, and Imaginary Friends: The Role of External Stakeholders in Internal Quality Assurance Systems. *Higher Education Policy* (2014) 27, 219–237. doi:10.1057/hep.2013.20
- Saupe, J. L. (1990). *The functions of Institutional Research, 2nd ed.* Florida: The Association for Institutional Research.
- Shahjahan, R. (2014). From ‘no’ to ‘yes’: Postcolonial perspectives on resistance to neoliberal higher education. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 35(2), 219–232.
- Skolnik M. I., (2010). Quality assurance in higher education as a political process. *Higher Education Management and Policy* .OECD, Volume 22/1.
- Stensaker, B., Langfeldt, L., Harvey, L., Huisman, J., & Westerheijden, D. (2011). An in-depth study on the impact of external quality assurance. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 36 (4), 465-478.
- UNESCO. (2017) *.From Tools to an Internal Quality Assurance System*. University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany International Institute. IIEP Paris, France.
- Vettori O., (2018). Shared misunderstandings? Competing and conflicting meaning structures in quality assurance, *Quality in Higher Education*, 24:2, PP: 85-101, DOI: [10.1080/13538322.2018.1491786](https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2018.1491786)
- Volkwein, F. J., Liu, Y., & Woodell, J. (2012). The structure and functions of institutional research offices. In R. D. Howard, G. W. McLaughlin, and W. E. Knight (Eds.), *The handbook of institutional research* (pp. 22–39). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Volkwein, J. F. (2008). The foundations and evolution of Institutional Research. *New Directions for Higher Education*, No. 141; pp 5 -20. Wiley Periodicals, Inc.
- Winter S.C. (2002) .Explaining street-level bureaucratic behavior in social and regulatory policies. Paper prepared for the XIII Research Conference of the Nordic Political Science Association held in Aalborg 15-17 August 2002. Available at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.197.6703&rep=rep1&type=pdf>, accessed on March 6, 2020.