HARMONIZATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE OF TEACHER EDUCATION: A RESPONSE TO DEMAND FOR QUALITY EDUCATION IN AFRICA

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Abstract

In this reviewed article, harmonization of Quality assurance of teacher education is investigated. Quality of teacher education in Africa has become a matter of concern in the recent past. Strategies for ensuring quality education in institutions of higher learning cannot be overemphasized. African countries are increasingly demanding for the harmonization of quality assurance in teacher education that will ultimately facilitate the students' mobility, professional development, information and intellectual resource in order to produce the required human capital for their developing economies. UNESCO and other nongovernmental organizations agencies have put up efforts on quality assurance of higher education which includes teacher education in Africa as a significant determinant of the quality of educational services delivered. This paper was based on desk study and publication on the websites. It has attempted to review the harmonization of quality assurance of teacher education as a prerequisite for quality education as demanded by African societies. The second objective is to determine the teachers' role in ensuring quality education and finally, it winds up by highlighting the challenges facing the harmonization of quality assurance of teacher education in Africa. The study established that, African countries, like many countries of the world are in the move towards internationalization of their education systems particularly higher education in order to respond to the societal demand for quality education that is competent and competitive nationally and internationally. The mobility of knowledge, skills and qualifications nationally and across the nations has dominated the call for quality education. African countries have thus, attempted to move towards harmonization of the quality assurance of teacher education which is one of the strategies for provision of quality education. However, the challenges that have to be overcome include poverty, inferior technology, forces of globalization, mass enrolment in higher education, student-centered learning, developing economy, political domination in higher education and historical injustices.

Keywords: Harmonization, Quality Assurance, Teacher Education, Quality Education

Introduction

The development of a nation is directly related to the standard and quality of its educational system. In this respect, teacher education which is offered at the institutions of higher learning is playing a fundamental and important role in reforming and building up the society, and is directly responsible to the development and consolidation of the nation. Teacher education has been proved an instrument for changing the social, economic, cultural and political system of the nation. It is a system that prepares competent, talented and professionally equipped teachers who in turn produce competent and talented individuals for the national development. That is why it would be right to say that teacher education possesses the most crucial position in the entire system of education. Thus, it is imperatively important to pay close attention in harmonization of teacher education in order to make the teacher more productive, effective and successful in shaping the future human capital of the nation (Suleiman, 2011; Suleiman et al, 2012).

Harmonization here may be understood as a process whereby different institutions or national systems of higher

education agree to align their approaches to various aspects of the higher education enterprise in order to realize mutual benefits. Building capacity for quality assurance that meets international standards requires significant investment in technical assistance, training, knowledge sharing, analysis and coordination, which are costly and time-consuming yet quite vital (UNESCO, 2013; World Bank, 2009).

In the last decade, higher education in Africa has witnessed a transformation influenced and catalyzed both by internal intricacies and external dynamics. The external environment—fuelled by the "knowledge economy," economic liberalization and regional integration—as well as the internal environment impacted by changing governance and political dynamics have all had considerable impact on the development of higher education in Africa (Tefera, 2014). The role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in human capital development, research and technological innovation cannot be underestimated. All over the world investment in higher education is a critical component of national development. Nations today depend increasingly on knowledge, research-based-evidence, technological innovations and up-to-the-minute skills which are by product of HEIs. It is commonly presumed that formal schooling is one of several important contributors to the skills of an individual and to human capital (UNESCO, 2005). For instance, in 2011, the Inter-University Council for East Africa published the Rolling Strategic Plan 2011/12–2015/16. The plan aimed at harmonizing higher education in East Africa through the implementation of common quality assurance standards, a common qualifications framework, credential recognition, and a credit transfer system

(World Bank, 2009).Thus, quality of higher education and the need for effective quality assurance systems beyond those of institutions and nations themselves are becoming precedence themes in international strategies for higher education in Africa.

Literature Review

This paper was based on desk study and publications and Journals on the websites. The study has attempted to review the harmonization of quality assurance of teacher education as a prerequisite for quality education as demanded by African societies.

Dynamics in African Education: A Historical Perspective

Several historical factors contributed to the decline in quality of higher education in Africa. These include a decline in per unit costs amid rapidly rising enrollments; insufficient numbers of qualified academic staff in higher education institutions as the result of brain drain, retirements and HIV/AIDS; low internal and external efficiency; gender inequality and poor governance (The World Bank, 2009). Other factors that affected African higher education between 1970s & 1980s included; economic crisis, political upheavals, wars, military regimes, dictatorship, grosses misuse of resource and poverty (Mohamedbhai, 2016).

According to Shabani, Okebukola and Oyewole (2017), the level of quality education had fallen so low by mid 1990s, that all stakeholders in higher education, including institutions, governments and donors reached a consensus on the need and urgency of taking sustainable actions to reverse this trend and revitalize higher education. After the 1998 World Conference on Higher Education by UNESCO and its

partners, initiatives that were taken included; (a) the revision of the conventions for mutual recognition of degrees and periods of studies, (b) harmonization of higher education programs and qualifications, (c) establishment of quality assurance agencies, (d) capacity building in the fields of quality assurance and teaching and learning in higher education. Thus, quality education and quality assurance had become the key themes since 1990s for ensuring quality higher education almost everywhere. Teacher education becomes the central focus here because it's the teachers who deliver the curriculum content to the learners and it has to be done qualitatively.

On the other hand, the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education held in Paris adopted recommendations to accommodate the new dynamics of higher education and research in the service of social progress and development. The recommendations included: (a) expanding access to higher education while ensuring quality, equity and relevance, (b) establishing and /or strengthening quality assurance systems and higher education and research spaces, (c) and promoting regional and international mobility of students and academic staff. Thus, African countries like many other parts of the world took up the move toward internationalization of their education systems particularly higher education to respond to societal demand for the creation of knowledge that is competent and competitive nationally and internationally.

Education as a Societal Demand

According to Ojiambo (2009) any country which is unable to develop skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else. It is well-established that nations invest in higher education because society expects to benefit from its contribution on national development in three principal ways (Adamu and Addamu, 2012). First, society expects its higher education institutions to produce highly skilled personnel in technology, teaching, medicine, law, engineering, management and other professions; second, higher education institutions have the responsibility of producing their own corps of academic personnel that is, the intellectual resource pool that will, through scientific research generate new knowledge and innovation to solve developmental problems. Third, higher education institutions produce teachers, doctors, legal officer, administrators and managers for other levels of human resources development institutions (Faganel & Dolinšek, 2012; Ekundayo & Adedokun, 2009). To achieve the principal ways in its thrice, higher education institutions are forced to set and regulate their programs in accordance with regulatory organ aiming to ensure quality of education offered.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that concerns have been raised about the production or output of higher education institutions – about whether societies are getting real value for their investments in higher education. With these increasing demand and continuously growing systems of higher education in Africa, quality assurance and relevance of the education offered to Africans are becoming a central concern. Within individual countries, there is a persistent debate about whether new forms of quality assurance for higher education are needed, and what approaches would be most effective. Internationally, a consensus is emerging, especially around the core elements of a quality assurance approach that is appropriate for higher education. Thus, pressures have increased to

establish measures and mechanisms for quality assurance in education in general and in higher education in particular.

In order to ensure the process of harmonization of quality assurance and accreditation systems in higher education succeeds, a number of cross-state organizations, government treaties, and conferences across Africa have been initiated in the last decade. These conferences majorly deal with harmonization of study programs which go concurrently with quality assurance and accreditation (Association of African Universities, 2009). The emergence of private tertiary institutions and the need to regulate their activities have also become a concern and the main motivating factor for the establishment of formal Quality Assurance in Africa (World Bank, 2007).

Sub-Saharan Africa has a fast increasing number of private higher education institutions and the lowest tertiary gross enrollment ratio in the world. Rapid growth in enrollments amidst declining budgets during the 1980s and 1990s, the proliferation of private provision of higher education and pressure from a rapidly transforming labor market have combined to raise new concerns about quality. Countries of Africa are becoming conscious of the need for effective quality assurance of teacher education and quality improvement. According to Materu (2007), there is need to improve quality of tertiary institutions, the need to reassure the public about the quality of private providers, and the importance of ensuring that tertiary education offered in both public and private tertiary institutions which will enable African to meet acceptable local and international standards for a favorable competitive labor market.

Literature Review: Harmonization of Quality Assurance for Teacher Education in Africa

The significant role of teachers in improving quality of education cannot be overemphasized. UNESCO (2012) reported that, teachers are ultimately the determinants of our collective ability to innovate, to invent, and to find solutions for tomorrow. Nothing will ever replace a good teacher and nothing is more important than supporting them. Good teachers appear to be effective with learners of all achievement levels no matter how heterogeneous their classroom. In the same context for developing countries, the quality of teacher education measured by subject matter has more significant impact on student performance in comparison with teacher's experience.

The African Higher Education Harmonization Strategy was adopted in 2007 to ensure comparability of qualifications by the African union commission. Since then, More than 60 per cent of quality assurance agencies have been created during the last decade and many of them still lack the capacity needed to implement their mandates effectively, necessitating capacity building in quality assurance (Shabani, 2013).To this end, quality assurance is seen as an all-embracing term referring to an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating of assessing, guaranteeing, maintaining and improving the quality of a higher education system, in the institutions and or programs.

A study by Vermeersch (2002) on impact of teacher quality on student participation in Kenya showed that, those teachers who had substantial training could make up the loss of time in providing school meals while increasing school attendance without any loss on test scores. Robert Maynard Hutchins (1899-1977), an American

educator put it that education is not to reform students or amuse them or to make them expert technicians. It is to unsettle their minds, widen their horizons, inflame their intellects, and teach them to think straight, if possible. Thus, the significance of teachers' role in improving quality education is underscored.

An effective teacher education must be determined by the extent of relevance of its mission and objectives based on national goals, priorities and targets, thereby ensuring national relevance for a country, that is, fitness of purpose. The quality of teacher education will also be determined by the extent at which it meets the objectives and mission of the institution and program set by the stakeholders. That is, it must be judged on its objective to meet the value for the money, and transformative by developing the capacities for its products for social development and economic growth for the 21st century and beyond (AVU, 2012).

Teachers training institutions therefore, need to be harmonized with teachers from other African institutions and worldwide in terms of their technological competences so that to improve the knowledge and skills concerning the competences expected of a well-qualified teacher. As a result, participation will thus open access to mobility and employability throughout Africa. Every nation and its tertiary education graduates are competing in an environment shaped by their own local and national needs as well as international expectations and standards. With globalization, the impacts of international standards are increasing and public demand for transparency and accountability is on the rise. Educators and policymakers are therefore challenged to set appropriate standards of their own which draw on and

reflect the unique history, needs, and expectations of their stakeholders.

African countries therefore must take the harmonization of teacher education through the conceptualization and identification of best practices with other teacher training institutions and universities in the world. The ultimate goal should be to participate with the goal of being part of promoting networking among African universities for the creation of knowledge on competences and the dissemination of quality education that will allow for credit transfer, employability and students' and teachers' mobility in Africa. By so doing, teacher education at the university takes an active role in creating the vision for higher quality education in Africa in the twenty-first century. Kedir, (2006) and Freire, (1984) observed that the conflict between tradition and modernity causes what has come to be known as the agony of modernization: However, the revolution in science and technology has, without question, fostered the most dramatic changes in people's lives, in addition to the application of science to practical human affairs in terms of technology. Thus, education too must meet these changes as the society demands of it.

The quality audit examines the existence of a system of quality assurance procedure and its adequacy adopted by the institution. Quality assessment consists of carrying out the evaluation; reviewing, measuring and judging of the quality of teacher education processes, practices, programs and services through appropriate techniques, mechanism and activities. Accreditation for quality is the outcome of a process by which a governmental, Statutory body or private body evaluates the quality of an institution as a whole in order to determine if it meets the pre-determined standards or criterion. Accreditation will

ensure the control of quality related to minimum standards in teacher education, accountability and transparency, quality enhancement and facilitation of student mobility. The result of this is the reward of a status of recognition to operate for a limited period (Sanyal, 2013).

A research finding by Bloom, Canning, and Chan (2006), indicates that expanding tertiary education may promote faster technological catch-up and improve a country's ability to maximize its economic output. Thus, the need for competences, such as adaptability, team work, communication skills, and the motivation for continual learning, has become critical. Tertiary institutions are challenged to adjust their program structures, curricula, teaching and learning methods to adapt to these new demands. Societies in the 21st century expect all children to be prepared to think critically, solve problems and be creative. The achievement of this expectation, to a larger extent, rests upon the development of a highly qualified and committed teaching force. It requires the knowledge, skills, abilities and commitment of teachers whose preparation in terms of training, shapes and informs what is needed for the future generation learners (UNESCO-IICBA, 2011).

A tertiary institution is only as good as the quality of its teaching staff—they are the heart of the institution that produces its graduates, its research products, and its service to the institution, community, and nation (World Bank, 2007). Higher education plays a key role in supporting other levels of education such as the production of teachers for secondary schools and other tertiary education institutions, to the training of managers of education and conducting research aimed at improving the performance of the sector (Hanushek and Wossmann, 2007). According to UNESCO-

IICBA (2011), as earlier cited, the challenges confronting teacher development in Africa requires well thought-out approaches that benefit member states maximally. These approaches should reflect the current thinking in the fields that they deal with such as the ICT enhanced teacher development which is grounded in the belief that teaching has its own unique knowledge base , which, in 21st century, it the technological pedagogical content knowledge.

Higher education in Africa has always been an international affair owing to its history and trajectory. The internationalization of higher education is increasing in importance and complexity. It is contributing to the quality of higher education and research, the level of regional and international interaction and connectivity, and the development of human resource capacity, especially for countries active in the knowledge society. Growth in the international dimension of higher education includes such factors as student/scholar mobility, regional and international networks, curricular reform, research initiatives, new types of providers and commercial cross-border program delivery. These elements bring new opportunities, challenges and risks to higher education systems and institutions in Africa and other regions of the world. There is the mobility of the intelligentsia—students, faculty, researchers and professionals. (Teferra and Knight, 2008). Thus, Sub-Saharan Africa is now paying greater attention to issues of quality education at the tertiary level because this is one major approach to ensuring quality education.

Knowledge and information have become central elements of development and economic competitiveness in the globalized economy. This trend has significantly raised the importance of

intellectual workers, prompting the global search for high-endowment knowledge workers and fostering the global and regional mobility of students and skilled labor. According to UNESCO-UIS (2006), Nine out of ten international students who stay in the region go to South Africa, especially those from other countries in Southern Africa: Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In addition to South Africa, Ghana, Egypt and Uganda have also emerged as major recipients of international students, particularly from within Africa (Mulumba et al., 2008). The movement of African students within the continent is limited. Quality education will keep the students in their countries of origin. Thus, harmonization of quality assurance is called for.

Rapid growth in enrollments amidst inadequate budgets and the pressure from a rapidly transforming labor market have combined to raise new concerns about quality. However, the countries of Africa are now responding to the conscious need for effective quality assurance for their teacher education and the improvement in the educational services as well as the need to reassure the public about the quality of private providers, and the importance of ensuring that tertiary education offered in both public and private tertiary institutions meets acceptable local and international standards (UNESCO, 2013). Thus, there is need to harmonize the quality assurance of teacher education in order to bring the same at par with the current standards of teacher professional development which will ensure dealing with the changing concepts and beliefs about education for posterity.

The African higher education system is probably the most internationalized education system in the world unfortunately by omission. Coupled with this is the interest in cross-border higher education which is growing in many countries due to a number of factors. These factors include changes in composition of student population and student mobility (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2004); staff and program mobility; long distance educational delivery (Chetro-Szivos, 2010) and the global trend of mass movement of higher education. Other forces behind the significance of cross-border higher education are the nations' increasing awareness on the role that cross-border higher education can play in building national capacity and enhancing regional and global collaborations (Moore & Lambert, 1996); increased demand for higher and continuing education; and the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in delivering education (Kim, Kim & Ahn, 2010).

Many higher education institutions in Africa consider cross-border higher education as a strategic approach to cultivate collaborations, assisting receiving nations in human resource development, generating revenue and responding to the global demand for an educated workforce and a globalized society (Chetro-Szivos, 2010). Due to nations' incapacity to satisfy the educational demands of all students there is a general belief that various forms of cross-border higher education can offer better opportunities for improving the skills and competencies of students from the receiving country (Vincent-Lancrin & Pfotenhauer, 2012; Sum, 2005). The bottom line here is that higher education and teacher education institutions and programs must provide the leadership and model the new pedagogical tools for the current generation of students who will use the tools in the context of the culture, needs and economic conditions in their country. This

would respond to African demand for quality education.

Africa relies heavily on the discourse, paradigms and parameters set by others, coupled with the fact that it is weakest global higher education system, thus, rendering it vulnerable to global whims and idiosyncrasies (Teferra, 2008). The global interest in engaging Africa has gained momentum, so that, the number and complexity of international and regional development partnerships have come into play in this regard. African universities are engaging in extensive partnerships with universities and research institutions around the world without pondering their impact. Indeed this seems cynical and there is need for the mode of the existing partnership to be reviewed so as to give the teacher education the strategic priority to develop knowledge based society to meet the demands for 21st century.

On the other hand, Regional and international actors involved in the development of academic and research cooperation programs in Africa have proliferated. The multinational agencies, such as the African Union Commission; the European Union Commission; multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, UNESCO and the African Development Bank (ADB); regional associations such as the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), Association of African Universities (AAU); and sub-regional associations such as the Southern African Universities Association (SARUA), Inter University Council for Eastern Africa (IUCEA), CAMES, the ECOWAS Education Sector, and CEMAC Space for Higher Education, Research and Professional Training have all increased their activities by developing different new initiatives including the exploration of new cooperation modalities. Among the new ones include EU-

Africa Cooperation in Higher Education through Mobility, Access to Success, Tuning and Harmonization, Network for the Coordination and Advancement of Sub-Saharan Africa-EU Science & Technology Cooperation (CAAST-Net), and the most recent one called ERAfrica, a new international ERA-NET which aims at improving research cooperation and coordination between Europe and Africa. The role of cooperation agencies has been viewed to be vital in the area of research and strengthening higher education in Africa (Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, 2010). Although such cooperation reinforces the mutual framework on higher education, the teacher education in Africa has largely been left in the hands of the individual countries' education policy and therefore devoid of proper harmonization for the 21st century teacher.

The National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agencies for higher and teacher education in Africa have been formed but either with no autonomy or with semi autonomy. Coupled with the fact that education ministerial positions are political in nature and often subject to high turnover, there could be problems of consistency leading to loss of credibility and trust in the system (UNESCO, 2013). Perhaps it would be important to recognize that, the successful development of standards of quality assurance and criteria for accreditation of higher learning institutions requires broad consultations with the professionals rather than relying on political appointees.

Quality Assurance Systems; a Necessity for Teacher Education

Teacher education is central to policies implementation for increasing employment opportunities for youth of the present and the future in Africa no matter

the level of schooling. According to the World Development Report 2007, three key features contribute towards a successful policy response to youth unemployment. These are: (1) Expanding opportunities for the accrual and preservation of human capital (i.e., access to formal education and training); (2) Enhancing the capacity of the youth to take advantage of job opportunities; and (3) Creating programs and mechanisms to equip youth with the tools and/or skills needed to do the same (Elder, Schmidt and Sparreboom, 2010). However, the challenges teacher education and training faced includes access, equity, quality, efficiency, relevance and democracy in the African educational and training policies (SADC, 2007).

Tchombe (2010) argued that reforms in teacher education must begin by considering the characteristics of Africa's learners and the conditions in which they are learning. Education during the colonial era had its specific mission and teachers were trained to respond to that mission. Today, there are new expectations for education where the focus is on having teachers be visionary leaders to ensure sustainable education. The paradigm shift is from teacher dominated classroom practices to that of partnership between the teacher and the learners and their peers. This calls for classrooms where the learner is seen as an active, socially constructed agent and learning and literacy as creative activities through which learners can begin to analyze and interpret their own lived experiences, make connections between these experiences and those of others, and in the process, extend both consciousness and understanding (Kedir, 2006).

Teacher education programs in Africa are very diverse. Before the establishment of regulatory bodies in some countries, each teachers' college was highly autonomous, following only the goals of the school's proprietor. Even within countries, great diversity was noticeable as teacher education developed. Today, the number of institutional levels has decreased as countries strive to create a teaching force in which all teachers hold degrees. There is therefore the demand for an education that can lead to economic development and employment. Schools should provide a more relevant work oriented education, providing youngsters with the skills of language, numeracy, team working and technical skills that will access the labor market. Findings from Angel-Urdinola, Semlali and Brodmann, (2010) on School Transition Survey show that 60 to 70 per cent of all employers interviewed complained that first-time job seekers lacked appropriate skills for the work place. Thus, this calls for the need to review, modernize and broaden the scope of teacher education curricula in order to cope with the new challenges.

Africa is a continent in which there are sometimes literally dozens of mother tongues within the same state. It was often the colonial language that was adopted as the language of instruction because no indigenous language was sufficiently developed to serve as a lingua franca. There are viewpoints, that one limiting factor is the huge cost of language development, with the concomitant cost of producing materials. Students who progress to higher education must acquire the ability to access literature in some of the major languages of the world. Attention now to focus on the curriculum for teacher education which should put emphasis on language development for effective communication and creating global citizens (Kiesselbach, 2012).

The entire education system in Africa has limited resources and infrastructure.

Most African countries bear a burden of economic hardships resulting from continued dependence on an unbalanced global economy. In that economy, Africa has been partly disadvantaged because of its colonial and neo-colonial legacies, leaving the education sector under on-going constraints in revenue and other resources. That, a prerequisite for providing an access to quality public education is funding. This situation of lack of funding does not spare the higher education sector.

In order to engage in relevant program design, development and implementation, each institution of higher education requires major investments in the acquisition of such resources such as, , hiring and retaining competent staff, purchasing or developing high-quality, relevant books or texts, effective machinery such as ICT hardware and software, science and laboratory equipment, furniture, reliable electronic libraries, laboratories, lecture rooms, dining rooms, hostels, reliable water and food supplies. Whichever way one looks at it, funding is crucial for any meaningful research, growth and development to take place in higher education (UNESCO, 2010: Omwami and Keller, 2010).

Challenges Harmonization of Quality Assurance of Teacher Education in Africa Face

First, teacher education faces considerable challenges, risks and threats while it also concurrently enjoys remarkable opportunities and potentials. While expansion has been the hallmark of the sector in the last decade, there has been decline in per unit costs; rapid increase in student enrolment; the poor quality of students admitted to universities because of both the low quality education and/ or lack of qualified teachers; poor standards of

academic and research infrastructure in both the public and private universities; dilapidated infrastructural facilities like libraries and laboratories; Inadequate pedagogic training of academic staff mechanism; poor governance; limited capacity of quality assurance mechanisms; and lack of quality assurance agencies to create and enforce the harmonization process so as to meet the required international standards(Shabani et. al., 2017).

Second, rapid growth in the number of students in teacher education has lead to dropping of quality of education substantially. Along with this is the rapid growth of tertiary enrollment in Africa without a matching increase in funding. Private investment in tertiary education that began mushrooming since the year 2000 is also on the rise in Africa due to the fact the public investment has not been able to keep up with this frantic pace to accommodate the demand for education in every faculty. Kiamba, (2003); Adu and Orivel, (2006) posits that the features of quality assurance of teaching and learning requires an input framework that includes students, teachers, non- teaching staff, managers, curriculum developers, physical facilities, finance and instructional materials for an improved education quality.

Third, political pressure and the desire by academics in Higher Education Institutions to maintain quality have not allowed a healthy culture of quality to evolve. Changes in quality assurance mechanisms over the years have been driven by factors such as rapid enrollment growth to meet increasing social demand and the desires of the political class in order to please the masses. This greater control over the governance and decision-making in higher educational institutions by political

class, appointments to management and governing bodies is made largely on political, rather than on merit and therefore does not support quality (Bloom, Canning, and Chan 2006).

Fourth, the financial cost and limited human resource capacity are main constraints that inhibit full-scale deployment of quality assurance processes in Africa. Higher education institutions in Africa, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, are the most financially challenged in the world. According to Teferra and Altbach (2003a, 2003b) the causes include the pressures of expansion and mass enrolment, the economic problems that make it difficult, if not impossible, to provide increased funding for higher education, a changed fiscal climate and policy direction induced by multilateral lending agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the pressure of other social and health issues such as HIV-AIDS on government budgets, the inability of students to afford the tuition rates needed for fiscal stability; and misallocation of available financial resources, such as the provision of free or highly subsidized education.

Fifth, standards set by quality assurance agencies vary in their scope. That is, quality means different things to different stakeholders. Most of the currently active quality assurance agencies in Africa focus on institution-level (rather than program-level) quality assurance. It is difficult to reconcile them all. For instance, in countries of Cameroon, Kenya, and Uganda, public universities are called "accredited" *de jure* but do not go through the processes of self-study, peer review, site visit, and so forth (UNESCO, 2013).

Sixth, despite having national quality assurance and accreditation agencies, it is unfortunate that most countries in Africa

have embarked on the development of cross-state quality assurance agencies, networks and general regional collaboration in matters related to quality assurance through the hand of fellowship from International agencies. Most of the projects and /or workshops on quality assurances have either been sponsored or involving international organizations like World Bank, UNESCO and the Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity (GIQAC)(Kayombo, 2015). The foregoing gives the clue that the current movements for cross-state, even national quality assurance and accreditation movements are not free from international influences from outside Africa. As larger parts of Africa originated from former colonial masters, it is unfortunate that the former colonial masters' education systems and movements are used as benchmarks for higher education in Africa.

Seventh, a significant challenge perhaps is on the quality models. Whatever model adopted, there are also many methodological problems related to measurement of quality. In East Africa for instance, the re-establishment of the East African Community on 30th November, 1999 created an opportunity through which cross-border higher education would be more officially promoted and executed within the signatory countries. Maviiri (2006) declared that although there is a high level of interaction among the East African countries in terms of higher education, they still need more rigorous collaboration among themselves. This is due to the fact that East African countries have different ICT policies and they certainly differ in the levels at which they apply technology in education. These differences may have some implication on the extent of harnessing the benefits of cross-border higher education. Agencies of quality assurance in East African

countries do not explicitly delineate the roles to be played by, for instance, the national governments, and student bodies, professional and academic bodies as outlined in other international guidelines and standards such as OECD and UNESCO's (2005) joint guideline on provision of cross-border higher education (Sanga &Ahn, 2014).

Eighth, virtually all African higher education systems have recorded massive growth in the last decade. However, statistics on employability and information on the usefulness of the learning for the society are difficult to collect and compare with the intended learning outcomes. According to the World Bank report (2011), during the previous fifteen years, the total number of students pursuing higher education in Africa tripled. Despite these massive expansions, significant access disparities in gender, geographical location, ethnicity, economic and social status, religious affiliation, and field of studies remain in the sector. Despite considerable on-going efforts to bridge these gaps, and also some gains, access to higher education for these groups still remains low (World Bank, 2009). If the number of female students on campus is small, the number of female faculty is even smaller. The under-representation of female faculty in higher ranks, qualification levels and certain fields of study are particularly severe.

The ninth challenge which is inexorable in the region is the design and implementation of appropriate policies for financing secondary, vocational/technical and higher education. As numbers of children completing primary education increasing, they will expect to enter secondary education, and graduates of secondary education will naturally wish to enter tertiary education. Changes in quality

assurance mechanisms over the years were driven by factors such as rapid enrollment growth to meet increasing social demand, significantly decreased public funding of higher education amid rising enrollment, and the effects of the brain drain. The policy imperatives that demand an expansion in upper levels of education are strong in terms of balancing resource requirements and availability, social demands and economic needs for a more highly skilled labor force (UNESCO, 2011).

Tenth, failure to retain the skilled human capital is another observable challenge. Most emigrants are initially attracted abroad by the quality and status attached to tertiary institutions in those countries. But at the completion of their studies, too few return home to apply their newly acquired skills. The debate on the positive economic effects of skilled emigration (brain drain) on the sending countries remains inconclusive. Thus, assuming that other factors that influence migration choices remain constant, improving the quality of tertiary education in Africa would likely enhance the attractiveness of home institutions and consequently increase the number of qualified students that study in their home country institutions. Thus, African government is challenged to make their higher education more economically attractive so as to retain skilled human capital.

Eleventh, recent increases in private sector participation in tertiary education appears to have provided the trigger for governments, and to a less extent institutions, employers and the public, to give a greater attention to educational quality. Lacking robust mechanisms to regulate private tertiary providers, some governments began to face problems of

educational quality stemming from the rapid growth of private higher education institutions such as unlicensed private institutions, unqualified academic staff, sub-standard curricula, and lack of essential facilities, for example, laboratories. At the same time, calls for a higher quality of graduates from employers, together with governments' recognition of the need to be competitive internationally and to meet the demands of knowledge societies, has fueled a recent debate on the need to set national benchmarks linked to world-class standards. Ncayiyana(2006) observed that the old collegial model of quality assurance could no longer be relied upon solely to ensure that the public was being well served, or that the taxpayer was getting value for money.

Twelfth, the external examiner system, where it exists, help to ensure that academic programs and final examinations are reviewed on a regular basis by people committed to maintaining academic standards. In many universities, external examiners are given substantial power over final marks and lend credibility and legitimacy to the final grades in the eyes of the students, the institution and the public. Due to the growing size of the student populations and the resulting difficulties for effective external examination inability to read all of the examinations in very large classes, and the high cost of the system itself with the increasing prices of air fares and lodging for growing numbers of examiners, the quality assurance efforts seem to greatly suffer.

Thirteenth, the number of non-degree granting tertiary institution, particularly teacher education in Africa is large, diverse and still growing. These institutions play a critical role in the production of medium and highly skilled human resources. The teacher education in these non-degree tertiary institutions is geared towards producing certificate and diploma holders who will be teaching in both primary and secondary schools. Yet, little is known about how quality assurance should function in these institutions. There are unanswered questions as regards the specific niches that these institutions serve, whether the types of programs they offer actually target these niches, and whether they have a distinct future. These and other questions need to be addressed with some urgency. To start with, a mapping exercise to establish a typology of these institutions would be useful.

Fourteenth, African countries face serious problems in setting up effective accreditation mechanisms because of limited qualified hands and adequate financial resources. Specifically, training is required for staff of national Higher Education Quality Assurance in Sub-Saharan Africa agencies, professional organizations, university senior staff, quality assurance unit staff, and peer reviewers. Graduate competence that can be assessed in terms of global standards is important for companies considering foreign direct investment, and for graduates seeking mobility in a global labor market. Consequently, national licensing and accreditation norms that measure up to global standards, or at least can be calibrated against them, will likely need to be developed over time within Africa.

Fifteenth, while the frontiers of academic isolation have been gradually conquered and the quality of and access to teaching and research resources have improved the academic environment; Africa still remains the continent with least IT communications, poorest wired and greatest service deficiencies in the world. Many universities in Africa, including national flagships, enjoy only limited access to the

Internet, in the process losing out on the tremendous opportunities and possibilities that accompany robust ICT platforms. According to Bon (2010), the formidable physical, institutional, infrastructural, logistical and technical challenges will continue to constrain institutions from effectively tapping the technology.

Sixteenth, the unemployment for the youth who have been trained for various job skills is critical. Despite the steady growth registered in the region over the past decade, the economic base for absorbing the exploding graduate population still remains thin. Furthermore, a good number of graduates who have jobs feel that they are under-employed and undercompensated because African governments continue to remain one of the largest, if not *the* largest, employers of professionals and graduates in their respective countries. Some experts advise that youth unemployment can be reduced if tertiary education institutions link up with productive sectors in curriculum development and in the so-called open space activities.

Seventeenth, in East Africa, despite the similarities that exist in many aspects in their higher education, the general education systems and national educational philosophies of the member countries are different in certain fundamental aspects. For example, Tanzania and Uganda follow a 7-4-2-3 system in which there are 7 years of primary education, 6 years of secondary education (divided into 4 years of ordinary or lower secondary and 2 years of advanced or upper secondary school), and at least 3 years for higher education, whereas Kenya has followed an 8-4-4 system, that is 8 years of primary, 4 years of secondary and at least 4 years of higher education since 1980s and now in the process of changing the system to competency based curriculum. Here,

learners take 3 years in institute of higher learning; 3 years in senior secondary education, that is, grades 10,11 and 12; Lower secondary of grades 7,8 and 9; upper primary of grades 4,4 and 6; lower primary of grades 1,2 and 3.There is also pre primary education that lasts for 3 years(Nyakangi,2019). These differences have a direct repercussion on student exchange across these countries. In some cases students are compelled to do either a bridging program or a matriculation examination before they are admitted for university studies in a neighboring country. Under these circumstances, quality of education may mean different things to different institutions and partner countries (Sanga & Ahn, 2014).

Conclusion and Recommendations

In spite of these difficulties, institutions of some African countries have made concerted efforts for assuring quality teacher education. As much as they may not have set up agency for quality assurance, but they have quality assessment procedures which could give them the framework for harmonizing teacher education. The following recommendations could serve to strengthen the harmonization of quality assurance for teacher education in Africa.

First, sub-regional, regional and international partnerships need to have a potential for accelerating the development of Higher Education quality assurance in Africa, especially in small countries or post-conflict situations. These groupings provide opportunities for QA staff to learn from each other and to share resources—thereby leveraging economies of scale.

Second, the features of quality assurance of teaching and learning requires an input framework that includes students, teachers, non- teaching staff, managers,

curriculum developers, physical facilities, finance and instructional materials for an improved education quality.

Third, the policy imperatives that demand an expansion in upper levels of education are strong in terms of balancing resource requirements and availability, social demands and economic needs for a more highly skilled labor force

Forth, national licensing and accreditation norms that measure up to global standards, or at least can be calibrated against them, will likely need to be developed over time within Africa.

Fifth, youth unemployment can be reduced if tertiary education institutions link up with productive sectors in curriculum development and in the so-called open space activities.

Sixth, while it is not a common practice to find ICT courses in teacher education programs in Africa, it is recommended here that this has to be considered as a necessity in the teacher development program. If African teachers must be enabled to use effective tool to improve teaching and learning that is geared towards ensuring quality education, ICT is mandatory. This is not only a reversion of traditional teaching but transforming the teaching force into a technological literate and innovative worker.

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