Peer Reviewers’ Profile and Perception of the External Quality Assurance System in Ethiopia

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Outline for presentation

1. Higher Education in Ethiopia
2. The Context of the Present Research
3. Major Findings of the Study
4. Concluding observations
1. Higher Education in Ethiopia

Some Features

• Ethiopian education system: 8 years of primary education; four years of secondary education; 2-3 years of TVET; 3-5 years of undergraduate studies; and 2-4 years of post-graduate studies.

• A two-tier system of post-secondary education

• Aggressive expansion schemes of public universities since 2000

• Out of 22 universities, 20 have been established after 2000, and ten more universities are being built
• More than 60 private higher education institutions
• 320,000 students (Cf. MOE 2010) with a gross enrolment rate of 5.3 at national level

System Level Structures
• **Ministry of Education (MOE) roles:**
  – Determining requirements,
  – Enforcing policies and strategies,
  – Providing assistance and cooperation, and
  – Conducting needs assessment on the relevance of educational provisions
Cont...

• Higher Education Strategy Center (HESC) - 2003
• Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) - 2003

• **Duties and Powers of HERQA:**
  – ensuring quality and relevance
  – responding to pre–accreditation & accreditation requests
  – preparing and issuing directives;
  – supervision and continuous evaluation of HEIs; and
  – public disclosure of information
2. The context of the present research

• Peer Review: Some Major Considerations from the literature
  ❖ Definition “A process of subjecting the performance of institutions to the scrutiny of experts from the field being evaluated”
  ❖ Responsibilities (SED, site visit, and Final report)
  ❖ Recruitment (competencies, attributes, identification)
  ❖ Preparation/Training
  ❖ Other Essentials
    ➢ Code of Conduct
    ➢ Conflict of Interest
• **Some Features of External Quality Audit in Ethiopia:**
  – Applies on both Private and Public HEIs
  – Selection of HEIs and Scheduling by the Agency
  – Procedures
    • Self Evaluation by HEIs leading to SED
    • Examination of the SED and the Site Visit
    • Reporting and Publication of the Report
  – External quality audit parameters
    ◆ *Vision, Mission and Educational Goals*
    ◆ *Governance and Management System*
    ◆ *Infrastructure and Learning Resources*
    ◆ *Academic and Support Staff*
    ◆ *Student Admission and Support Services*
    ◆ *Program Relevance and Curriculum*
    ◆ *Teaching, Learning and Assessment*
    ◆ *Student Progression and Graduates*
    ◆ *Research and Outreach*
    ◆ *Internal Quality Assurance*
  – Achievements so far
    ◆ Procedures and frameworks
    ◆ Guidelines, manuals
    ◆ Training and orientation
    ◆ Quality Audit (14 from 2007-2009)
• **Objectives of the study**
  – Assess the profile of peer reviewers;
  – Gauge the perception of peer reviewers towards the manner in which the external quality audit has been effected;
  – Explore their suggestions for further improvement of the existing peer review process.
• **Method of the study**
  – Subjects of the study
    • Reviewers who participated in the 2007-2009 External Quality Audits undertaken on 14 HEIs
  – Source of Data:
    • Documentary evidence (manuals, guidelines, etc)
    • Questionnaire survey (n=18/25 with 72% response rate)
    • In depth interview (n=4 reviewers + Head of QA Unit in HERQA)
  – Data Analysis:
    • Quantitative & qualitative
4. Major Findings of the Study

1. Profile of Peer Reviewers (Recruitment, Composition and Preparation)

• Recruitment and Composition
  – All recruited from public and private HEIs with a strong focus on their academic qualification.
    ❖ 61% of the reviewers have PhD
    ❖ Academic rank: 2 Prof.; 5 Ass. Prof.; 6 Asst. Prof. 4 lecturers
    ❖ Teaching experience: from none to well over 30 years
    ❖ Agency Staff less qualified and less experienced (but high commitment)
    ❖ Size of Committee 5-6 two or three from Agency
  – Nomination made by HEIs based on Agency criteria
  – Criteria set by the Agency
    ❖ Expertise and Experience: qualification, academic rank, experience of working in academic areas in higher education institutions, research experience.
General Attributes and Skills:

– Commitment & readiness

– Professional competence and impartiality

– Effective and cooperative team member

– Working as an effective and cooperative team member

– Ability to prepare and submit reports on agreed deadlines

– Keeping the confidentiality of all information
• **Training and Preparation**
  – Reviewers received 4 days training (theories and concepts of QA; approaches and techniques of EQA; practical and organizational aspects of a QA visit; documentation and making judgements)
  – MOU between reviewers, HEIs and Agency
  – Manual guiding the whole process

• **Conflict of Interest:** Institutions were asked to express their agreement on the reviewers chosen

2. **Perception of Reviewers towards**
   – HERQA
   – Audited HEIs
   – Other Reviewers
Reviewers' Perception of HERQA

- Arranging transportation and accommodation
- Effecting per diem and payment for service
- Giving guidelines for quality audit
- Giving the SED as early as possible
- Giving the needed awareness & training
- Spelling out responsibilities clearly

Legend:
- Red: Very bad
- Purple: Bad
- Light Blue: Good
- Yellow: Very Good
- Light Purple: Excellent
- Blue: No response
• HERQA was rated by the majority of reviewers as very good to excellent in terms of spelling out responsibilities, giving awareness & training, giving out the Self Evaluation Document (SED)

• With regard to effecting per diem and payments and that of arranging transportation, HERQA was rated lower
Preparing the SED
Planning & accommodating the site visit
Presenting documentary evidence as needed
Availability for interview and discussion
Providing the needed information as required
Readiness to accept comments

Reviewers' Perception of Audited HEIs

- Very bad
- Bad
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent
- No response

Scale from 0 to 50
The majority of reviewers rated HEIs from good to very good in all of the criteria set.

- However, the interview and open-ended comments indicated that HEIs are not free from problems.
  - Should be serious about the audit business which should be reflected in the preparation of the SED.
  - The need for making the necessary preparations as contrasted with acting for the sake of complying with HERQA’s requirements.
• The overall perception appears to tilt towards the positive in each of the categories
• The interview and the open-ended questions revealed that respondents underscored the need for additional training
• The need for secrecy, team spirit, group work, unbiased and objective assessment, adequate preparation, adhering to principles and procedures, and meeting deadlines was emphasized
4. Concluding observations

- Profiles and views of reviewers cannot be neglected: “quality assurance based on team visits is no better or worse than the quality of the members of the team”

- **Positive elements:**
  - High level of rating in most cases for all parties involved.
  - Availability of clear guidelines,
  - Scheme for avoiding conflict of interest,
  - Availability of training for reviewers
  - Dedication of HERQA staff,
Areas of Concern:

• Limited pool of auditors
• HERQA’s limited resources
• Lack of interest to serve in similar responsibilities in the future
• Lack of follow up with existing reviewers after their task is over

Any lessons to take or share.......???
Thank YOU!!!