Quality Systems for Higher Education: The Case of Faculties of Education and Health Sciences, University of Botswana

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BACKGROUND

- History of quality assurance in HE in Africa
  - Affiliation to partner Universities in colonising countries
  - Increase in enrolments vs resources
  - Higher education as an important factor for economic development and knowledge based economies
Purpose of the presentation

- To share ideas for input from colleagues
- To discuss processes and challenges of QA in the faculties of Education and Health sciences
The University of Botswana in brief

- Established 1982 by an act of parliament
- Vision: A leading Centre of academic excellence in Africa and World
- Only public University in the country
- Key to expanding the quantity and improving the quality of human resources
Definition of Quality

- Quality can be defined in various ways based on interpretation (WHO, 2008)
  - **Quality** can be defined as _fitness for purpose_- conforming to generally accepted standards as defined by institution, quality assurance bodies and appropriate academic and professional communities (University of Botswana 2003)
  - **Quality in Higher Education**: The degree to which a program meets its requirements: A set of established standards or the necessary competencies of any program (Dohety 2005).
Definition of Quality Assurance

- a planned and systematic review process to determine whether or not acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced (Borahan and Ziarati (2002:914))

- A process that brings about reforms to raise quality of edu. and training
Why quality in HE

- Monitoring and assessment of the quality of education and training (World Bank Africa Action Plan)
- Higher education supporting other levels of education, the economy and the society as a whole
- Enhancement of internalisation and regionalisation
- Economic Development
- Achievement of EFA and MDGs
- For academic competitiveness locally regionally and globally
Methodology

- **Participant observation:**
  - The researchers are quality assurance overseers in the Faculties.

- **Documentary analysis**
  - Review of the Faculties Quality assurance reports
  - The UB Learning and Teaching Policy
  - The academic quality assurance policy
  - Other relevant documents
Internal QA Processes in the two faculties

- New Programme approval (Dept, Faculty, CAD, APRPC, Senate, Council)
- Programme reviews
- Formative assessment (CA)
- Summative (exams, projects etc).
- Research and Teaching Awards
- Course outline reviews
- Peer reviews
External QA Processes

- 5 Yearly External Programme Reviews
- External Examination of Graduate Research Projects
- Engagement of Regulatory and professional bodies such as Professional Councils and Associations
- Advisory Boards
- Students and Staff exchange programmes
- Research Grants
QA Challenges in the two Faculties

- **Inadequate Human and Material Resources:**
  - Failure to attract and retain senior academics
  - High student : lecturer ratios
  - Academic autonomy versus dependence on government funding
    - e.g. Special Education and Bachelor of Nursing Science programme Nursing (no satisfactory skills lab).
  - Inadequate equipment in practice settings
Inexperienced Quality Assurance Staff
- Overseers and committee members do it out of mere interest with no training

Limited workshops and seminars on QA

Work overload on the part of QA members

Limited meetings by QA committees as they are unsure of what to do (reports confined to CA and exams, moderation and registration).

Poor culture of reading
Challenges continued

- Lack of grading descriptors
- Low level of formal collaboration among faculties and departments
- Academic management procedures (late allocation of courses, leading to late commencement of classes, poor preparation,)
- Timetabling issues (omissions and clashes)
Challenges continued..

- Poor advisement of students
- Unprofessional conduct of some staff (failure to mark and provide feedback)
- Manual registration and timetabling
Recommendations

- The Faculties to adopt system of generic assessment descriptors.
- Intensive workshops and seminars to be mounted for quality assurance staff.
- The University to provide better incentives to attract professors who should provide academic leadership for quality.
Recommendations

- Clear guidelines be developed to assist quality assurance committees.

- Interfaculty quality assurance collaboration be strengthened

- Course allocation to be done before the end of the semester for the next one.

- On-line Registration and time-tabling be expedited