

Assuring the Quality of Teaching at Makerere University in Uganda: Practices and Experiences of Academics and Students

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Abstract

Quality is an ethos in academia and assuring it is top of the agenda at many universities. Since the 1990s, substantial research has been conducted on the quality assurance systems of developed countries with advanced higher education systems. However, literature on quality assurance systems in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa is limited. The study examined the practices and experiences of stakeholders at the student-academic interface in assuring the quality of teaching at Makerere University. A case study design was employed and respondents included academics and final-year students. Data was collected through documents review, interviews and focus group discussions. Thematic analysis and content analysis were used to analyse the data. The findings demonstrate that the university employs five practices to assure the quality of teaching, namely, recognition of teaching, student evaluation of teaching, pedagogical training, monitoring and supervision of teaching, competence-based deployment and interfacing. The findings further show that stakeholders had varying experiences of teaching quality assurance practices.

Keywords: quality, quality assurance, good teaching, practices

Introduction

Quality assurance has been a topical issue in higher education since the mid-1980s. Nevertheless, formal quality assurance at university level in Sub-

Saharan Africa is a recent phenomenon (Materu 2007; Materu & Righetti 2010; Odhiambo 2014) and is, therefore, under-researched and under-documented (Chiome 2012; Mulu 2012; Singh 2011). Relatedly, Mulu (2012: 19) asserts, 'Quality assurance systems and practices in higher education institutions in the Sub-Saharan African context are rarely addressed'. Therefore, it can be inferred that while there is no shortage of international literature highlighting the history, context, concerns and challenges of quality assurance in higher education in western industrialised nations, in nations of vastly different cultural roots and emerging economies, a dearth of literature exists. Against this backdrop, this study was conducted at Makerere University to answer the following research question: What are the practices and experiences of stakeholders at the student-academic interface in assuring the quality of teaching at Makerere University?

This paper comprises seven sections. After this introductory section, section two provides information on Makerere University. Section three addresses the conceptual and contextual perspectives of the paper. The fourth section presents literature on practices used by universities to assure the quality of teaching and is followed by the methods section. Section six presents the results, while the final section discusses the findings and delineates conclusions.

Context of Makerere University

Makerere University, the oldest public university in Uganda, was established in 1922 as a technical college. In 1949, it became a university college affiliated to the University of London. Under the affiliation arrangement, it offered academic programmes leading to the general degrees of the University of London. It became one of the three constituent colleges of the University of East Africa in 1963 and this marked the end of the affiliation arrangement with the University of London. In 1970, by an Act of Parliament, Makerere became an independent university of the Republic of Uganda. By 2013, Makerere University had a student population of 40,000 undergraduate and 3,000 postgraduate students (Makerere University 2013). The university comprises nine colleges and one independent school. Colleges are structured into schools and teaching departments.

Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives

Before defining quality assurance, it is pertinent to unpack the term ‘quality’. In higher education, quality has often been branded as a notoriously elusive (Green 1994; Jonathan 2000) and slippery (Pfeffer & Coote 1991) concept because it is difficult to define. Harvey and Green (1993) offered five discrete definitions of quality: quality as exceptional, quality as perfection, quality as fitness for purpose, quality as value for money, and quality as transformation. The transformation notion of quality is relevant to this study based on the idea that transformation of students (in terms of knowledge, skills and personal attributes) is the object of teaching and presupposes the fundamental purpose of higher education.

As in the case of quality in a general sense, quality assurance defies a single definition. Lim (2001) defines quality assurance as all policies, attitudes, actions and procedures directed towards ensuring the maintenance and enhancement of quality. Harvey and Green (1993: 19) define quality assurance as ‘mechanisms, procedures and processes in place to ensure that the desired quality, however defined and measured, is delivered’. A common thread that runs through these definitions is that quality assurance is concerned with putting in place policies, procedures and practices aimed at maintaining and enhancing quality. Quality assurance in higher education serves two purposes: accountability and improvement of education. Accountability is the *raison d’être* of external quality assurance in higher education while improvement is the purpose of internal quality assurance.

Since quality assurance aims to improve teaching, it is pertinent to unpack ‘good teaching’. It is plausible to emphasise that teaching is not an end in itself but a process of fostering high quality student learning. In fact teaching is fit for purpose if it promotes learning. Teaching quality in higher education is assured through a series of quality assurance practices- institutional arrangements to guarantee the quality of teaching.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in the neo-institutional theory which was developed by Meyer and Rowan in the 1970s. It posits that organisations operate in environments dominated by rules, requirements, understandings, assumptions, beliefs and procedures about what constitutes appropriate forms and behaviour

(Meyer & Rowan 1977; Oliver 1997). Accordingly, organisations are under constant pressure to adapt their structures and behaviour to the institutional environment in order to ensure their legitimacy and hence their chances of survival (DiMaggio & Powell 1983:50). Neo-institutionalism further postulates that organisations adopt new practices and policies not from internal motivation to innovate and change but from external influence (DiMaggio & Powell 1983; Meyer & Rowan 1977). The transfer of contextual values, ceremonies and symbols onto the structures, strategies and practices of an organisation generates isomorphism, that is, ‘a constraining process that forces one unit in the population to resemble other units that face the same set of institutional conditions’ (DiMaggio & Powell 1983: 149). Isomorphic change occurs by three fundamental mechanisms: coercive, mimetic and normative (DiMaggio & Powell 1983).

Coercive institutional pressure often takes the form of governmental regulations or laws and stems from actions of regulatory agencies and major providers of resources to organisations. On the other hand, mimetic isomorphism is characterised by the imitation of policies, strategies, structures and technologies already successful in related organisations. Finally, normative isomorphism occurs through professionalisation. Decoupling is another core construct frequently used in the neo-institutional theory. The idea of decoupling suggests that reforms, in terms of policies, practices and structures, can be delinked from what is going on inside of the organisation (Meyer & Rowan 1977).

Despite its popular usage in organisational studies, the neo-institutional theory has received a plethora of criticisms. First, the theory explains homogeneity rather than change (Greenwood & Hinings 1996). Finally, the theory downplays the ability of individual organisational members to respond proactively, creatively and strategically to institutional influences (Ang & Cummings 1997: 235). Despite these conceded limitations, the theory was relevant to the study. It indeed shaped data analysis and discussion of the findings. First, the theory was used to explain the emergence of formal quality assurance practices in teaching at Makerere University. Secondly, neo-institutionalism was used to account for the homogeneity of quality assurance in teaching within universities in Africa and across continents. Finally, the theory was used to explicate any potential nexus or disconnect between formal quality assurance practice in teaching and improvement of teaching.

Quality Assurance Practices in Teaching

Quality assurance of teaching can take various forms. These forms are presented below:

Student evaluation of teaching (SET) involves students evaluating teachers using questionnaires. Feedback from student evaluation of teaching is intended to improve the quality of teaching. Student evaluation of teaching staff is a common form of quality assurance of teaching in higher education institutions in Africa (Kadhila 2012; Materu 2007; Mhlanga 2008; Mulu 2012; Utuka 2012; Zenawi 2012). At Cairo University, Alshamy (2011) established that student feedback was not taken seriously by students. He attributed this to the belief by students that their feedback would not make a difference and to the lack of a culture of feedback in earlier stages of their education.

Peer observation of teaching (POT) is another quality assurance practice in higher education. It involves academic colleagues giving and receiving feedback on their teaching practice and its effectiveness in promoting student learning (Harris, Farrell, Bell, Devlin & James 2008). The aim of peer observation of teaching is to improve teaching (Blackmore 2005). Mhlanga (2008) established that peer review of teaching was an entrenched quality assurance practice at the universities of the Witwatersrand, Botswana and Zimbabwe. Although informative on this quality assurance mechanism, the study by Mhlanga did not explore the process and experiences of peer reviews in the three higher education institutions.

Another quality assurance practice in teaching is **excellence teaching awards**. Teaching excellence awards often cite two purposes: recognition and celebration of excellent teachers; and the promotion of teaching excellence and enabling dissemination of excellent teaching practices (Gunn & Fisk 2013). In addition, Chism (2006), based on the US experience, identified three purposes of teaching excellence awards as: to symbolically acknowledge support for teaching; to honour excellent teachers; and to create teaching role-models who can motivate other faculty to enhance their own practice.

Teacher professional development/pedagogical training is used as a quality assurance practice in teaching. The primary aim of pedagogical courses is to foster a shift from teacher-centred approaches to more student-centred approaches (Postareff 2007) thereby enhance learning.

The literature has revealed some of the mechanisms or practices used at universities to assure the quality of teaching. Most of the literature rarely

delves into experiences of students and academics with the quality assurance practices in teaching.

Methods

The study employed a case study design and aims to ‘optimise understanding of the case rather than to generalise beyond it’ (Stake 1995: 86). Owing to its qualitative nature, the study employed both purposive and convenience sampling techniques. Multi-stage purposive sampling was used to select colleges of Makerere University, schools, departments. Students and lecturers were selected from the departments. The following colleges were selected: College of Education and External Studies (CEES) and College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS), representing the Arts domain; College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT) and College of Health Sciences (CHS), representing the sciences domain.

From each college, one school was purposively selected from which two teaching departments were also purposively selected. One academic programme was purposively selected from each of the sampled departments. In the interest of using information-rich participants, purposive sampling was used to select lecturers. The following criteria were used to select academics from each department: a full-time member of staff; a minimum of three years in the university service; and having coordinated or currently coordinating a course.

Between six and seven final-year students undertaking each of the selected academic programmes were selected using the convenience sampling technique; as a result, 50 students were sampled. The main assumption associated with convenience sampling is that the members of the target population are homogeneous (Ross 2005). Homogeneity of students was assumed because all students were enrolled on the same academic programme and in their final year of study. Final-year students were used as respondents because they were in a position to provide information relating to quality assurance since they had spent considerable time at the university. The total number of respondents was 65, comprising 15 academics and 50 final-year students. The sample of academics comprised a full professor, an associate professor, three senior lecturers and heads of department, six lecturers and four assistant lecturers. Table 1 below shows how multi-stage sampling was used to select academics and students.

Table 1: Sample size and sample selection for academics and students

College	School	Department	Programme	Number of respondents	
				Academics	Students
CEES	Education	Humanities and Language Education	Bachelor of Arts with Education	3	6
		Science, Technical and Vocational Education	Bachelor of Science with Education	1	6
CHUSS	Liberal and Performing Arts	Philosophy and Development Studies	Bachelor of Development Studies	1	7
		Performing Arts	Bachelor of Arts in Drama and Music	2	7
CEDAT	Engineering	Civil and Environmental Engineering	Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering	2	6
		Electrical and Computer Engineering	Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering	2	6
CHS	Health Sciences	Dentistry	Bachelor of Dental Surgery	2	6
		Nursing	Bachelor of Nursing	2	6
Total				15	50

Data was collected from 1 April to 1 July 2014 using interviews for lecturers and focus group discussions for students and by reviewing documents. Regarding document review, the following documents of the university were reviewed: Phase 111, End of Phase Summative Report of the Makerere

University-Carnegie Corporation (2012), The Policy on Appointment and Promotion of Academic Staff (2009) and the Quality Assurance Policy Framework (2007). Though follow-up questions were asked, data collection was guided by the following questions:

- (a) Can you tell me how Makerere University assures the quality of teaching?
- (b) What would you identify as the main strengths and weaknesses of these systems of quality assurance of teaching?
- (c) If you had the opportunity to alter the ways by which the university assures the quality of teaching, what changes would you make?

Interviews lasted between 45 and 60. On the other hand, each discipline-specific focus group discussion with students lasted 60 to 90 minutes. Data from interviews and focus group discussions was analysed using thematic analysis. Data from documents was analysed using content analysis and excerpts from documents were used to supplement themes from interviews and focus group discussions. To ensure confidentiality of academic respondents, codes were used to identify them based on the discipline followed by a sequence in which the interviews were conducted with 'LAE' standing for Lecturer in Arts Education; 'LBDS' connoting Lecturer in Bachelor of Dental Surgery. Others were 'LDS' representing Lecturer in Development Studies; 'LCE' representing Lecturer in Civil Engineering; 'LEE' symbolising Lecturer in Electrical Engineering; 'LMD' implying Lecturer in Music and Drama; and 'LSE' signifying Lecturer in Science Education.. Finally, the year and programme of study is used to identify students rather than codes.

Results

Teaching Quality Assurance Practices at Makerere University

In this section, we examine the current architecture of quality assurance of teaching at Makerere University. Six teaching quality assurance practices were evident in the data and are examined below:

Recognition of Teaching in Promotion

There were mixed reactions by academics regarding whether the university recognises teaching in the promotion processes of lecturers. Two respondents were of the view that Makerere University recognises teaching during promotion. Nevertheless, they were concerned that recognition of teaching was predominantly in terms of ‘length of teaching’ rather than ‘quality of teaching’. A lecturer in the Bachelor of Dental Surgery programme argued:

When it comes to teaching, they actually recognise it in terms of the number of years that you have taught, especially when you are being promoted, they emphasise the number of years taught. (LBDS-1)

While making reference to how teaching is treated in the point system evaluation criteria for promotion, a lecturer in Arts Education said: ‘...It is even a bit unfortunate that even when it comes to promotion, for example from lecturer to senior [lecturer], teaching doesn’t count much’ (LAE-1). The preoccupation with tenure could be attributed to the fact that it is easier to measure the length of teaching than the quality of teaching. A lecturer in Bachelor of Dental Surgery alluded to this thus:

When it comes to promotion, teaching may not be given the value it deserves maybe because there is no obvious scale to decide on the quality of teaching whereas for publications and [community] service, it is easy to see. (LBDS-1)

Secondly, the assumption that quality of teaching improves with the length of teaching could be an explanatory factor for the current preoccupation with the length of experience.

Other respondents alluded to failure by the university to recognise teaching in promotion and the skewed attention given to research (and publication). Similarly, the respondents argued that there was lack of parity of esteem between teaching and research in considering applications for promotion from academics. As to whether teaching is recognised in promotion, a lecturer in Electrical Engineering remarked: ‘It looks like teaching time is not relevant for promotion and yet it forms the core aspect of what someone (a lecturer) is doing (sic) at the university’ (LEE-2).

A lecturer in Arts Education corroborated this view by arguing:

‘Promotion is not hinged on...teaching. Promotion is hinged on your own academic progress. Have you researched? Have you published? It is not how many years [that] you have taught’ (LAE-3). A lecturer in Nursing voiced similar sentiments:

Good teaching is not rewarded because...promotions are based on publications So you may be a very good teacher, you may religiously teach, you are always prepared [for class], you do everything but without publishing, you will not be promoted. (LDN-1)

Asked about what could be done to improve the quality of teaching, a lecturer in Dental Surgery replied: ‘Provide a carrot and stick. Because right now, the carrot is for [research and] publication; there is no carrot for teaching’ (LBDS-2). In light of the circumstances described above, academics were of the view that concentrating on teaching without research in one’s discipline would thwart the chances of career progression.

Resulting from weaknesses in the current reward practices for teaching, especially in promotion, the respondents were of the view that the university should introduce a teaching-only career route. For example, asked about what could be done to improve teaching, a lecturer in Dental Surgery said:

Provide a carrot for teaching. Let there be two tracks: a teaching track and a [research and] publication track. They say that they recognise both teaching and research but the truth is different. Those [academics] who are in teaching get discouraged if they are not recognised. Those who are in teaching but not doing research are not recognised; they are not promoted. (LBDS-2)

The evaluation criteria were reviewed to identify possible matches or mismatches between the perceptions of respondents and stipulations of the policy. Applications for promotion are evaluated using 11 items (**Table 2**) with each item scoring points out of a total of 100. The eleven items and their corresponding points are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Points Promotion Criteria of Makerere University

No.	Criterion	Maximum points
1.	Academic and professional qualifications	20
2.	Publications	25
3.	Teaching ability and experience	13
4.	Research	8
5.	Supervision of students' research	10
6.	Other core academic activities	8
7.	Service to the university and the community	5
8.	Membership of professional bodies	2
9.	Conduct	5
10.	Professional practice/outreach services	2
11.	Innovation	2

Source: Makerere University (2009)

From **Table 2**, we can infer that the three missions of the university (teaching, research and community service) are not given equal weight as far as the evaluation criteria for promotion are concerned. Teaching and the third mission (community service) hold a subordinate position to research and account for 13 points and 8 points, respectively, while research (and publication) accounts for 33 points. This corroborates the perception of academic respondents regarding lack of parity of esteem between teaching and research. The celebrity status accorded to research by the university did not come as a surprise. First, the university seeks to reposition itself as a research-led university where research and teaching are mutually reinforcing. This strategic repositioning is well-articulated in the strategic plan. Secondly, Makerere University is preoccupied with improving her ranking and research forms the bulk of the input into most regional and international ranking schemes. Finally, good teaching, compared to research, is not easy to measure.

Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET)

Student evaluation of teaching features in the quality assurance policy of Makerere University (2007) as a quality assurance practice. However, student

evaluation of teaching is yet to take root in the entire university. Final-year students of Development Studies and Education had never evaluated teaching during their tenure at the university. Asked whether they evaluate lecturers at the end of each course unit, a student of Development Studies replied: ‘We (students) are not even allowed to do that (evaluate lecturers). You try to do that, they (lecturers) will make you fail [the course].’ This statement points to an impediment to students’ motivation to evaluate lecturers, that is, fear of retribution. However, students of Engineering and Music and Drama evaluated teaching during their first year of the university experience.

Online student evaluation of teaching at Makerere University has registered disappointing outcomes. This is evidenced in the implementation gap of student evaluation of teaching. Students’ indifference to evaluating teaching using the online form has been cited by the university to be the major hurdle to student evaluation of teaching. The Makerere University-Carnegie Corporation summative report points to lack of motivation by students to evaluate teaching: ‘...a lot needs to be done to motivate students to carry out the assessment of teaching’ (Makerere University 2012: 38). One factor that dissuades students from filling in the online student evaluation of teaching questionnaire is the perception that university administrators do not take their feedback seriously. Therefore, students regard evaluation of teaching as a mere form-filling or box-ticking exercise and an encroachment on their precious time. A student of Nursing put it thus: ‘...we the students do not really believe that ...our evaluation [of teaching] really counts. So really we pay less attention to such exercises because we are really not sure whether it will count at the end.’

Another student of Nursing echoed:

...we always get this belief that it (student evaluation of teaching) never matters because you say this and you see the same thing over and over again. This one is evident when sometimes we get challenges in the classroom and then we make general complaints... to our head of department, and then you see the same thing happening [again]. So, you get the feeling that it doesn’t matter even if I complained; these people (lecturers) are here to stay.

Based on the above, it can be argued that students are more likely to complete evaluation forms if they perceive value in them.

The poor implementation of student evaluation of teaching ought to be understood against the backdrop of a decade of Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY) support to Makerere University (2001-2011). The CCNY support to Makerere University was segmented into three phases: Phase 1 (2001-2004), Phase 2 (2004-2007) and Phase 3 (2008-2011). Development of a quality assurance support mechanism was one of the nine thematic areas or projects of the Carnegie Corporation support. The final phase of the CCNY support to Makerere University (2008-2011) had ‘improv[ing] teaching and learning through student evaluation of lecturers’ as one of its strategic objectives. This phase saw piloting of an online and paper-and-pencil student evaluation-of-teaching tool. The tendency to treat student evaluation of teaching as a ‘project’ or what we have referred to as ‘projectisation’ rather than an institutional issue has had ramifications for the quality assurance mechanism. One consequence of this project-based approach is that student evaluation of teaching tended to be implemented for accountability purposes, that is, to provide accountability for an output in the project documents and the associated funds but not out of a genuine desire to improve teaching. The end of the CCNY support to Makerere University in 2012 plunged student evaluation of teaching into a dormant state. This discourse challenges the view that internal quality assurance serves the improvement rather than accountability function. Depending on context, internal quality assurance can serve an accountability function. The study demonstrates that internal quality assurance can serve the accountability function if treated as a project for which the university has to be accountable to funders. At the institutional level, the implementation gap of student evaluation of teaching demonstrates how, as advanced by the neo-institutional theory, certain reforms can be introduced for symbolic reasons and tend to be detached from the core activities of an institution.

Pedagogical Training

Since 2006, the university has been offering pedagogical training to lecturers. The duration of pedagogical training ranged between four to five days. Data was gathered on the experiences of academics with pedagogical training. Out of the 15 academics who were interviewed, only four had received pedagogical training. The four lecturers voiced mixed experiences. Only two respondents were satisfied with the training and took the trouble to implement what they learnt. One of them said:

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I attended one [pedagogical course]; it must have been at the beginning of 2013. But what they were telling us was like for the future. They were introducing that learner-centred teaching and they were telling us [about] how those guys [in the College of Health Sciences] have done it. I actually liked the approach (student-centred learning) and I applied a few of the things they were telling us. I think that was really good. (LEE-1)

However, a lecturer in Dental Surgery described the pedagogical training she attended as basic: ‘We got some [pedagogical] training some time back. It was quite rudimentary’ (LBDS-1).

Similarly, the pedagogical training did not change the approaches to teaching of a lecturer in Civil Engineering:

I attended one [pedagogical training class]. I learnt something but not to the effect of changing the way I do things. I was invited for a second one but I turned it down because I did not feel it was going to add value to what I do. (LCE-1)

This point of view suggests that while pedagogical training can change a lecturer’s conception of teaching, it does not guarantee that a lecturer will change his or her approach to teaching.

Monitoring and Supervision of Teaching

Monitoring and supervision of teaching by academic administrators is widely used to assure the quality of teaching at Makerere University. Asked about how the quality of teaching is assured in the department, a lecturer who is at the same time a head of department said: ‘Heads of department and deans do the supervision of teaching. We don’t leave it to our colleagues, the lecturers and professors; we go on to supervise [teaching]. We make sure that...people (lecturers) go to class [and teach]’.

Another lecturer corroborated this view: ‘There is monitoring and supervision of...teaching by heads of department [and] the deans. They encourage us to start teaching on time when the semester has just started [and] they can come around and see whether people (lecturers) are actually teaching’ (LAE-2). A lecturer in Music and Drama echoed this view thus: ‘My boss, the

head of department, supervises the teaching and learning at the level of a department...I know that quality has been looked at in terms of: Are lecturers teaching? What are they teaching? Are they teaching in time?’ (LMD-2).

Regardless of the merits of monitoring and supervision of teaching by academic administrators, it can be argued that the quality assurance practice is obsessed with compliance with course outlines, adherence to timetables and physical appearance of teachers in class. Undoubtedly, these can contribute to learning. However, the practice is delinked from the learning; it is more concerned with quality assurance than quality enhancement.

Interfacing

Departments have mechanisms through which students, in some cases students’ representatives, interface with heads of department and course coordinators to provide feedback on teaching. A lecturer in Music and Drama attested to this mechanism: ‘There are also mechanisms...for students to discuss their issues as far as teaching is concerned with the heads of department or even [course or unit] coordinators’ (LMD-2).

One head of department corroborated this view: ‘We also talk to class coordinators and students themselves to find out how teaching is progressing.’

Admittedly, this quality assurance practice is valuable in providing feedback on teaching. However, the challenge may arise when a complaint is brought against the course coordinator or head of department.

Competence-based Deployment

One way of guaranteeing that teaching is fit for purpose is to ensure that the curriculum is implemented by competent academics. Academic units of Makerere University ensure that the competence of lecturers and deployment are in sync. In other words, the deployment of academics to teach course units is informed by the lecturers’ expertise in the area, as attested by a lecturer in Arts Education:

Even when it comes to the teaching load, people (lecturers) do not just pick anyhow. We look at the expertise of the individual; that so and so did a master’s [degree] in and therefore he or she can be able to

handle a course which is related to what he or she majored in. (LAE-1).

Discussion and Conclusions

Teaching quality assurance practices at Makerere University bear a strong resemblance to those that were identified by Mhlanga (2008) in universities in Southern Africa and current practices in advanced economies. The homogeneity of quality assurance practices in teaching is a pointer to internationalisation of quality assurance of teaching and can be attributed to isomorphic forces. This lends credence to some assumptions of the neo-institutional theory and specifically those relating to isomorphic change. Nevertheless, student evaluation of teaching appears to be the dominant approach to assuring quality of the teaching in African universities. This approach was identified by Mulu (2012) in Ethiopia, Utuka (2012) in Ghana, Alshamy (2011) in Egypt and Zena (2012) in Ethiopia. Makerere University embraced student evaluation of teaching owing to influence by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, a major provider of resources at the time, and out of the desire to comply with the NCHE Quality Assurance Framework which makes it mandatory for universities to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate lecturers. Therefore, coercive isomorphism was the major driving force behind the introduction of student evaluation of teaching.

Data suggests that student evaluation of teaching is not functional at Makerere University and this attests to the challenge of creating and sustaining change in universities. Students' ambivalence towards student evaluation of teaching, in part, accounts for the dismal performance of student evaluation of teaching. This finding is consistent with Alshamy (2011), who established that students in Egyptian universities did not take evaluation of teaching seriously because of the belief that their feedback would not make a difference and the lack of a culture of feedback in earlier stages of their education. Hence, the efficacy of student evaluation of teaching is likely to be enhanced if the university gives feedback to students on how their evaluations are being used in addition to students seeing the feedback as influencing their total learning experience.

Since 2006, Makerere University has been providing pedagogical training to lecturers. Studies conducted in other contexts give insights into how

the efficacy of pedagogical training can be enhanced. The duration of pedagogical training is one of the predictors of success of pedagogical training in improving teaching. Gibbs and Coffey (2004) hold that university teachers become less teacher-centred and more student-centred after 4-18 months of training. In the same vein, Postareff *et al.* (2007) also established that short-term training pedagogy courses do not have a positive effect on teaching. Specifically, Postareff and colleagues found that teachers who had less than one year of pedagogical training (or less than 30 ECTS) scored less on the student-centred approach scale. The duration of pedagogical training that is recommended in these studies is at odds with the duration of pedagogical training at Makerere University. The findings revealed that pedagogical training at Makerere takes less than one week. Makerere University, therefore, has to rethink the short and workshop-style pedagogical training.

At Makerere University, there is lack of parity of esteem between teaching and research in human resource practices of the university such as promotion. The evaluation criteria for promotion are skewed towards research rather than teaching. This is despite the strategic plan of the university recognising teaching and research as mutually reinforcing. This finding corroborates the report of the European Commission on improving the quality of teaching and learning in Europe's higher education institutions, which observed that in most European Union member states, the academic career was more strongly linked to research than to teaching with respect to, among others, promotion and performance-related rewards (EC 2013).

The emphasis on research is anchored in a tacit assumption that research indirectly improves the quality of teaching. This nexus is articulated by Gibbs (2008: 18), who opines that research benefits teaching indirectly based on the premise that 'deep understanding of the discipline's key concepts and approaches derived from being actively involved in disciplinary research translates into clear and profound explanations for students and insightful critiques of limitations in students' understanding'. Secondly, the emphasis of research – the 'publish or perish' dictum – is intended to differentiate a university educator from a school teacher and is consistent with the NCHE Quality Assurance Framework (2008: 9-10), which states:

What distinguishes a university educator from a school teacher is the production of knowledge through, mainly, research. A school teacher transmits already known knowledge, while a university educator must

constantly create the knowledge he/she delivers to students.

The NCHE regards research as a measure of quality and productivity of an academic. Finally, the relationship between teaching and research has been perpetuated by the desire to improve rankings. Such rankings are ‘biased heavily towards more easily countable research publication citation indices rather than looking at the wider university mission in areas as fundamental as teaching and learning which are less amenable to such counts’ (EC 2013: 36).

The celebrity status accorded to research creates a reputational gap between teaching and research. This reputational gap may inadvertently divert the attention of academics from teaching to research and create a disincentive to improve the quality of teaching. This trend has been witnessed in research-intensive universities in advanced economies where many academics consider teaching as ‘tax paid to enable the important work of research, which they believe is the basis for recognition, rewards and promotion’ (Benson, Smith & Eubanks 2013: 213).

In view of the findings and discussion, we can distil two theoretical insights. The first theoretical insight is that internal and external quality assurance typologies do not serve completely different purposes in higher education. Contemporary literature on quality assurance in higher education creates a conceptual divide between internal quality assurance and external quality assurance with each type of quality assurance assumed to serve a specific purpose in higher education. Specifically, internal quality assurance is regarded as serving the function of improving teaching and learning – which is the object of quality assurance in higher education – while external quality assurance is deemed to serve the accountability function. In view of that, methodologies that are employed for each type of quality assurance have tended to vary. External quality assurance employs quality assurance methodologies such as institutional and programme accreditation, institutional audit and peer review, while internal quality assurance employs practices such as student evaluation of teaching, peer observation of teaching, pedagogical training and self-evaluation/assessment.

This study demonstrates that while the classification of quality assurance is stable, there can be an overlap in functions of internal and external quality assurance depending on context. In the case of Makerere University, internal quality assurance practices such as student evaluation of teaching and pedagogical training have been re-directed to serving the accountability rather

than the improvement function because quality assurance was initiated and implemented as a project. Implementation of these practices by the university was aimed at providing accountability for outputs in the Makerere University-Carnegie Corporation of New York project document. Accordingly, the results of implementation of these practices are decoupled from teaching. Therefore, universities in developing countries should be wary of donor-driven and project-managed internal quality assurance initiatives which defeat the purpose of internal quality assurance of improving teaching. We can conclude that isomorphism, though it has the ability to influence the adoption of internal quality assurance practices, has equal potential to re-direct internal quality assurance mechanisms from enhancement of teaching to accountability. The case of student evaluation of teaching which was skewed towards the accountability function rather than improvement of teaching lends credence to this proposition. Therefore, the imperative to shift from quality assurance to quality enhancement in university cannot be overemphasised.

The second theoretical insight is that students respond to their perceptions. If they perceive a quality assurance practice as not addressing their concerns, it is unlikely that they will positively respond to it. The implementation gap in student evaluation of teaching is a classic example of this assertion. Therefore, altering the perception of students can contribute to the revitalisation of the student evaluation teaching.

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