AFRICAN QUALITY ASSURANCE NETWORK FORUM 2023

CONCEPT NOTE

THEME:

Potentials of Quality Assurance in Advancing Excellence in Higher Education in the Digital Era

Hosted by the Tanzania Commission for Universities

28TH -30TH NOVEMBER 2023
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Introduction

According to the literature on quality in higher education, there is no agreed definition of Quality Assurance. "The perception of quality assurance is very multi-dimensional and contextual, and a gap exists in the view between professionals in quality assurance and academic staff and students" (Ryan 2015[1]; referencing Smidt, 2015, p. 626).

Higher education in Africa is undergoing significant transformations driven by the need to meet global standards, provide relevant skills to students, and contribute to sustainable development. The setting in which higher education institutions work has had significant changes in the previous decades. This has included expanding interest in higher education, technological progression, developing learning economy, and weight on higher educational institutions to react to the needs and desires of stakeholders. Indeed, higher education institutions are progressively being examined on their value addition to the stakeholders and the society at large. Stakeholders are demanding high-quality teaching and employable skills. Subsequently, higher education institutions are challenged to make sure their programmes respond to the needs of the labour market.

In addition, the role of universities as producers of knowledge and information is not well explored in Africa. Research and publishing activities in Africa remain in deficit compared to the rest of the world and the situation is yet to change as only a few institutions serve as the preeminent and dominant centers of knowledge creation and information sharing. This situation is exacerbated by low funds allocated to research in institutions. The poor research context negatively affects research outputs and the training of PhD students who are future researchers. All these translate into an inadequate capacity to respond appropriately and innovatively, through research, to the various demands of a rapidly changing knowledge economy.

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[1] Ryan, T. (2015), Quality Assurance in Higher Education: A Review of Literature, Academic Quality and Accreditation, Laureate Education, Inc. Higher Learning Research Communications. Volume 5, Num. 4. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1132941.pdf

As the continent strives to find solutions to the above challenges, ensuring excellence in education and research becomes paramount. The COVID-19 pandemic brought to the forefront the importance of quality assurance standards and guidelines for online and distance education because many students and teaching staff found themselves forced to rely on teaching and learning methods that they were not proficient in. And, as technology continues to shape the future of education, quality assurance will remain a critical component of ensuring students receive a valuable and effective learning experience. However, this cannot be achieved or reached if quality assurance systems are not in place and functioning well. With the changing environment, there is a need for continuous innovations in internal and external quality assurance systems and practices to respond effectively and efficiently to a rapidly changing and expanding higher education sector. Interventions are necessary across all levels including higher learning institutions, quality assurance regulators, and policy bodies.

To this effect, the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) is organizing a forum to exchange knowledge on the role and the potentials of quality assurance in advancing excellence in higher education in the digital era. This forum is particularly important, as it will provide opportunities for AfriQAN members, sister networks, and other quality assurance practitioners to share best practices and experiences on key issues related to quality assurance in digital education, research, and doctoral education. It will also serve as a truly African, and multi-linguistic space to debate and discuss continental quality assurance practices and experiences.

The African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) is a pan-African network that has been set up to help institutions concerned with Quality Assurance in higher education in Africa through capacity building and practice sharing. The network is committed to the enhancement of the quality of African higher education and to collaborating with similar organizations on other continents.

The forum goal

The AfriQAN 2023 forum endeavours to provide a platform to discuss the potential role that quality assurance can and must play in supporting the advancement of excellence in African higher education. Presenters and participants are expected to focus on quality assurance topics related to digital education, doctoral education, research, partnerships, and collaboration.

Forum Objectives

i. Explore the potential role of quality assurance in advancing excellence in higher education,

ii. Discuss the quality assurance challenges and opportunities of digital education in ensuring quality outcomes,

iii. Identify and discuss specific obstacles and potential solutions to doctoral education and research in African higher education institutions and the quality assurance mechanisms to advance the research agenda on the continent,

iv. Present continental collaborations and partnerships in quality assurance,

v. Strengthen and support quality assurance networks' collaboration,

vi. Disseminate continental quality assurance standards, guidelines, and practices,

vii. Foster collaboration and advance the culture of quality in the higher education arena across the continent.

Expected Participants

The conference will be of interest to all stakeholders involved in the quality assurance of higher education in Africa as well as practitioners in quality assurance from other regions of the world. Participation will among others comprise the following:

- Vice-Chancellors, Rectors, and Provosts of higher education institutions
- AfriQAN members
- Quality Assurance Agencies
- Regional bodies (CAMES, SARUA, IUCEA, RUFORUM, ARUA, AWAU and others…)

- Regional networks (RAFANAQ, EAQAN, SAQAN,…)

- Higher Education Policy and Decision Makers and Experts

- Quality Assurance practitioners

- University Academic, Research and Administrative Staff

- Professional bodies

- Students and student unions

- Development Partners

- Stakeholders in higher education in Africa and from other regions of the world

Forum and AfriQAN General Assembly Dates

- **Arrival**: Monday, November 27

- **Forum**: Tuesday-Wednesday, November 28-29

- **AfriQAN General Assembly**: Thursday, November 30

- **Departure**: Friday, December 1

Working Languages

The working languages of the meeting will be English, French, and Portuguese

Venue

The conference will be held at Serena Hotel, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Registration

Register for the conference via: https://www.research.net/r/QANConfReg23

For further information

For further information please contact:

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