

**QUALITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ETHIOPIAN
HIGHER EDUCATION: CRITICAL ISSUES AND PRACTICAL
IMPLICATIONS**

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HIGHER EDUCATION: CRITICAL ISSUES AND PRACTICAL
IMPLICATIONS**

DISSERTATION

to obtain

the degree of doctor at the University of Twente,

on the authority of the rector magnificus,

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on account of the decision of the graduation committee,

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by

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This book is dedicated to my colleague, the late Markos Tadesse, who showed us commitment and professional integrity during his career in Mekelle University.

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Preface

This study critically examines quality and quality assurance in the Ethiopian higher education context and explores the environmental factors (internal and external) that either facilitate or hinder quality assurance practice for improvement of student learning. The inception of the topic for my research project traced back to 2004 while I was working as a researcher and coordinator of the testing and measurement services unit at the Institute of Educational Research, Addis Ababa University. In this capacity, I participated in the planning and development of entrance examinations for Ethiopian higher education and presented research papers in national conferences. This gave me an opportunity to develop some insights about the challenges of the Ethiopian higher education system. Particularly, my presentation on the topic: *The Quality versus Quantity Dilemma in the Expansion of Higher Education in Ethiopia: Implications for Future Direction*, in a national conference held in 2006 at Addis Ababa was a turning point. This presentation and the feedback forwarded from conference participants inspired me to initiate and pursue my PhD research in the area of quality and quality assurance in Ethiopian higher education. To this end I started exploring all possibilities to undertake my PhD research abroad. Finally, I found CHEPS, the University of Twente the right place to realize my dreams.

My first communication with Dr. Don Westerheijden in 2006 and later in 2007 was the beginning of the journey for my PhD research at CHEPS. Thanks to CHEPS for giving me this opportunity. Doing PhD research at CHEPS is intellectually stimulating and provides opportunities to learn from working with highly specialized and experienced scholars in the field of higher education. The long journey of my PhD research is now towards the end. This journey could not have been completed without the support of several people whom I owe special thanks. First of all, I am very grateful to my promoter Prof. Dr. Jürgen Enders and my supervisor Dr. Don Westerheijden for their continuous encouragement, invaluable advice and scholarly guidance throughout my study. It was an honor to work with them. I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Jürgen Enders for his critical and constructive comments in shaping my theories and putting my study into perspective. I thank and appreciate Dr. Don Westerheijden especially for his expertise; timely and critical comments and suggestions; thought provoking conversations; patience and persistence; dedication and enormous support from the beginning to the end of this research. The devotion of his time including weekends and holidays to providing me all the necessary support in person and

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Mulu Nega
Addis Ababa, September 2011

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Abbreviations

AAU	Addis Ababa University
ADRCs	Academic Development Resource Centers
ADLI	Agriculture Development Led Industrialization
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
BPR	Business Process Reengineering
CSA	Central Statistical Authority
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
EGSECE	Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination
ENLA	Ethiopian National Learning Assessment
EQUIP	Education Quality Improvement Program
ESDP	Education Sector Development
ESLCE	Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination
ETP	Education and Training Policy
ETQAA	Education and Training Quality Assurance Agency
EUA	European University Association
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
NAE	National Agency for Examinations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
GPA	Grade Point Average
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GTP	Growth and Transformation Plan
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESC	Higher Education Strategic Center
HESO	Higher Education System Overhaul
HERQA	Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency
HSIU	Haile Selassie I University
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
JU	Jigjiga University
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
MU	Mekelle University
OBPR	Old Business Process Reengineering
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PASDEP	Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to end Poverty
PDCA	Plan-Do-Check-Act
PSLCE	Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination
QUAL	Qualitative

QUAN	Quantitative
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
TQM	Total Quality Management
UEE	University Entrance Examination
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to set the background of the study. It begins with a brief historical overview of the issues on how and why quality and its assurance become important agendas of many higher education institutions across the globe. The second section deals with the rationale and contribution of the study. This is followed by presentation of the research problem including the basic research questions of the study in section three. The focus of the study and the theories that inform the study are explained in the third and fourth sections, respectively. Finally, the organization of the dissertation is presented in section five.

1.1 Background

This study attempts to look at the systems and practices in educational quality assurance at higher education institutions in Ethiopia. Quality has been an implicit concern of higher education institutions since the founding of the mediaeval universities as autonomous and self-governing communities of fellows in Europe (Neave, 1994; Van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994). By tradition, it had been seen as self-evident and natural element of university-level learning and as part of the professional responsibility of the academia (Harvey and Askling, 2003).

The rapid changes in the higher education context driven by political, economic and socio-cultural forces in the latter part of the 20th century have generated concern for quality and created challenges to the implicit and self-evident traditional views about assuring quality in universities (Massy, 2003; Amaral, 2007; Martin and Stella, 2007; Brookes and Becket, 2008). The major changes include: massification of education, greater diversity in terms of program provision and student types, matching programs to labor market needs, shrinking resources, heightened accountability and indirect steering of higher education. These have brought a call for more formal (explicit and systematized) quality assurance schemes than was needed in the traditional elite universities (Brennan and Shah, 2000; Trow, 2000; Harvey & Newton, 2004; Dill, 2007; Westerheijden, Stensaker & Rosa, 2007). As a result, various countries across the world have adopted formal quality assurance systems with the purpose to regulate and improve quality of their higher education systems.

Formal quality assurance in higher education, which was first introduced in a few developed countries (USA and Western Europe) in the 1980s and 1990s, has radiated rapidly to other developed and developing countries over the past two decades (Van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994; Schwarz and Westerheijden 2004); Dill, 2010). Different actors such as the World Bank, UNESCO, OECD, and international networks (e.g. INQAAHE) and regional organizations as well as professional associations have played significant roles in the introduction and spread of formal quality assurance in higher education across the globe (Singh, 2010).

At the higher education institutions level, the traditional collegial approaches to quality, embedded in the classical university values of professionalism and trust have given way to a more systematized and explicit quality assurance practices since the 1990s (Campbell and Rozsnyai, 2002; Wright, 2003; Dill, 2010). The main thrust of formal quality assurance in higher education is to stimulate, attain and increase systems' and institutions' effectiveness, efficiency, cost savings, quality and transparency towards stakeholders interested and involved in it (See Vaira, 2007).

Despite the lack of consensus over the concept of quality¹, formal quality assurance has now become one of the central components of reform and policy instruments to adapt higher education institutions to the increasing expectations from both internal and external stakeholders all over the world. As Reichert (2008) puts it, quality assurance is so widespread and its vocabulary so pervasive nowadays in higher education policy and discourse that one forgets how relatively recent the enthronement of the term "quality" actually is. The quality revolution in higher education has underscored the expectation that universities must demonstrate that they are providing quality education and strives to improve it (Anderson, 2006).

In Sub-Saharan African countries formal quality assurance is an even more recent phenomenon. The increasing concern for quality in many Sub-Saharan African countries comes at a time from growing recognition of the potentially powerful role of higher education for growth and its rapid expansion since the new millennium (Materu, 2007). In the recent past, many of the Sub-Saharan African countries have implemented higher education expansion policies, which resulted in a significant enrolment growth (McPherson, 2008) within the existing and newly emerging colleges and universities as well as in changes regarding student demographics. The demand for access in many Sub-Saharan countries will increase significantly in the coming years due both to demographic growth and to

¹ See also chapter 2.

increased access at primary and secondary educational levels (Shabani, 2007). However, despite the rapid enrolment expansion during the last few years, higher education participation rate in this region has remained among the lowest in the world (6%). At present, the major challenge facing many Sub-Saharan African nations is, on the one hand, of addressing the unmet demand for access through rapid expansion of their higher education and on the other, of improving quality of their education in the context of the prevailing socio-economic, fiscal and political constraints.

A great deal of research work has been conducted in the domain of quality assurance over the past three decades. Despite the progress that has been made through research and debate, there is still no universal consensus on how best to manage quality within higher education (Brookes and Becket, 2008). Much of the researches conducted so far focus on how quality could be defined, on the design and relevance of various national quality assurance schemes, on appraising the applicability of industrial models to higher education, on the tension between improvement and accountability in both external and internal quality assurance approaches, and on the effects of such quality assurance processes in higher education in the context of developed countries (Harvey and Williams, 2010; Pratasavitskaya& Stensaker, 2010).

However, empirical research on the relation between quality assurance processes and improvement of organizational level practices is very scant. There is, for example, a lack of evidence on whether student learning¹ is significantly improving as a result of government policies focusing on the quality of higher education (Stensaker, 2003). A recent review of the empirical research studies on quality assurance undertaken by Harvey and Williams (2010) suggests that it is not clear whether quality assurance systems have truly enhanced higher education. This shows that there is lack of universal agreement on the extent to which the adoption of quality assurance in developed countries has generated the desired improvements in the core educational processes of universities.

The review of the existing empirical studies also shows that the quality assurance systems and practices in higher education institutions in the Sub-Saharan Africa context are rarely addressed. As Lim (2001) argues, many developing countries adopted the quality assurance models from the developed countries, and the relevance and usefulness of such models to the specific context of developing

¹ Student learning here refers to the knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities attained by students as result of their higher education experience. Student learning experience is the sum total of all experiences related to the completion of a study program in higher education institutions.

countries is still an area of debate. This suggests that analysis of quality assurance systems and practices and their relation to improvement of organizational practices in the context of Sub-Saharan African countries is an area of great interest for empirical study.

Like other Sub-Saharan African countries, concern about quality of higher education in Ethiopia is on the rise vis-à-vis the rapid institutional and enrolment expansion (Ashcroft, 2004; Teshome, 2007). The number of universities has risen from 2 before 2000 to 22 by 2008/9; and is still expected to grow to 33 by 2013 (MoE, 2008/09). The total enrolment capacity in the undergraduate programs has grown from 67,682 in 1999/2000 to 309,092 in 2008/09 with an annual growth rate of 22.3% (MoE, 2009/10). Following this rapid expansion, the issue of quality has become a point of discussion and major concern among all stakeholders including the government. There is a general concern that the rapid enrolment expansion accompanied by inadequate resources; incompatibility of existing capacity and lack of organizational arrangements may result in deterioration of academic quality and standards. As a response to the increasing concerns, the Ethiopian government has endorsed higher education proclamation and established national quality assurance agency to regulate quality of the education offered in higher education institutions since 2003. Empirically, however, not much is known about how the Ethiopian universities assure quality of their education under the circumstances of rapid enrolment and program expansion, and in the face of a multitude of constraints including changes in student demographics.

Hence, this study focuses on the analysis of quality and quality assurance systems and practices in Ethiopian universities. It sets out to examine actual quality assurance practices in terms of improving student learning, gaps and constraints, and to identify the contextual factors that influence the adoption and implementation of quality assurance in the universities. This study also seeks to derive theoretical explanations for the existing quality assurance practices and to identify priorities for improvement at the universities.

1.2 Rationale and Contributions of the Study

This study is about the systems and practices of assuring quality of education in the public universities of Ethiopia. The reason for undertaking research in this area in the Ethiopian context is threefold. First, the development and implementation of quality assurance in higher education is one of the areas of ongoing debate. Quality of education and its assurance come at the forefront of all crucial issues in the context of increasing recognition of the role of higher education for national development. How universities demonstrate quality of their education in a changing higher education environment requires an

understanding of their current practices and systems for assuring quality based on empirical research.

Second, formal quality assurance practice at university level is a recent phenomenon. More important, it is not well researched and documented in the context of developing regions like Sub-Saharan Africa. In the Ethiopian context, research on higher education in general and on quality assurance in particular is inadequate (Amare, 2007). A review of some of the books written on Ethiopian higher education (Teshome, 1990; Damtew and Altbach, 2003; Teshome, 2007; Amare, 2007; Taye (ed.), 2008) indicates that none of them had a focus on quality assurance in higher education. The first three authors dealt with the higher education development process and system in Ethiopia, whereas the last two authors focus on academic freedom in higher education.

Moreover, among the 92 articles published in the Ethiopian Journal of Education over the 2000-2009 periods, only 15 were related to higher education topics, all other than quality assurance. Similarly, only 2 out of the 21 articles published in the Journal of Education for Development over a period of three years (2006-2008) focus on higher education themes, yet, none of them had relation to quality assurance. Also, out of the 38 articles published in the Ethiopian Journal of Higher Education (2004-2007), only 3 of them dealt with aspects of quality in higher education. Some of the articles published on aspects of quality in higher education (see Ashcroft, 2003; Mekasha, 2005; Mulu, 2008; Nuru, 2005; Rayner, 2006; Zenawi, 2007) had no focus on quality assurance practices related to student learning. This shows a research gap in the topic of quality and quality assurance in the context of the Ethiopian higher education.

Third, there is an environmental change in the Ethiopian higher education landscape. The environmental changes could be illustrated by: a rapid institutional and enrolment expansion amid financial stringency, frequent changes in policy directions, perceived decline in quality of education, etc.¹ The public universities are becoming complex in terms of expanding access and study programs and they depend on government for their full financial resources. These trends raise a concern about quality of education and thus lead to demands for accountability on the part of universities. Such changes necessitate the undertaking of a study such as this, which helps to fill the research gap on quality and quality assurance practices in the Ethiopian universities.

¹ See also chapter 5.

This research is the first attempt in terms of its focus on quality assurance systems and practices at the university level with a focus on student learning, the use of mixed methods approach and data drawn from academic staff, students, management and external stakeholders (MoE and HERQA). This study is significant because it adds both theoretical and practical knowledge to the available literature on how universities develop and implement quality assurance mechanisms to improve quality of their education in a given environmental context. Theoretically, this study is believed to bridge the research gap in the area of quality assurance in higher education in the context of a developing country. First, the findings of the study can be used to develop theoretical framework and/or model for building quality assurance systems that fit to the context of Ethiopian universities. Second, this study may also serve as an inspiration and reference for further research in the area of higher education in Ethiopia.

This study has also practical contributions. It may give pertinent and timely information concerning the existing systems and practices of assuring quality to the Ethiopian public universities, to other higher education institutions and to governmental organizations. The study also helps to raise the awareness of key stakeholders regarding the problems in the development and implementation of quality assurance and the areas that need improvement. Finally, this study provides information to policy makers involved in the planning, management and improvement of the higher education system in Ethiopia.

1.3 The Research Problem

As indicated above, the environment in which the Ethiopian universities operate is rapidly changing. There is a rapid enrolment expansion in universities. The public universities are also facing inconsistent policy direction¹. Under such circumstances, the public universities are required to establish and implement internal quality assurance mechanisms to safeguard and improve the standards and quality of their education programs (Proclamation 650/2009). The issue of whether the public universities are actually implementing quality assurance mechanisms to improve quality of their education vis-à-vis the current changing environmental context is not clear. Thus, the research problem of this study could be stated as: First, *How and under what circumstances do the public universities in Ethiopia assure quality of their education*, and second, *what are the contextual factors and framework conditions that underlie their quality assurance systems and practices?*

¹ Examples of inconsistency of policy are endemic to Addis Ababa University that tried all the following arrangements within a very confined period: *Reform, strategic planning, graduate mix policy and Business Process Reengineering*.

This fundamental research problem is further broken down into basic research questions.

As this study comprises analyses of organizational level quality assurance systems and practices, it deals with terms and concepts like quality and its assurance, quality assurance models and their underlying assumptions and with theories that can be used to explain how contextual factors influence existing practices. Hence, the first research question of this study can be put as:

- 1) *What is already known about issues on quality and its assurance in higher education institutions? And what theories can be used to explain the adoption and implementation of quality assurance at universities?*

These questions will be addressed through the review of the literature on quality assurance in higher education institutions covered in chapter 2 and through the theoretical framework elaborated in chapter 3. The theoretical inputs are collected from the literature worldwide. However, reasonable attention will be committed to the applicability of models and concepts to Sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly to Ethiopia. The conceptual framework derived from the reviews of quality assurance literature and from organizational theories serves as a stepping-stone for the subsequent empirical analysis of the study. The empirical part of the study on Ethiopia begins with analysis of the actual quality assurance practices at universities in terms of improving the conditions necessary for quality education. The second basic question is thus:

- 2) *What are the Ethiopian universities actually doing in terms of improving quality of education? What is known about the quality of their educational input, process and output vis-à-vis student learning? How do they know that they provide quality education? What are their current quality assurance policies, structures and instruments?*

This set of questions is addressed empirically in chapter 6 and 7 of this study. Next, the convergence or divergence in quality assurance practices among the Ethiopian universities is explored through the light of the following research question:

- 3) *Are there differences among the universities regarding quality assurance practices? What are the possible explanations for such differences?*

Theoretically, this set of questions will be approached through contingency theory and elements of neo-institutional perspectives. Empirically, the differences among Ethiopian universities will be analyzed alongside the other empirical questions (in chapters 6 and 7). The fourth research question intends to see the extent to which international quality assurance models are applicable to the Ethiopian context. Hence:

- 4) *What are the framework conditions and/or models that underlie the quality assurance in place at the universities? How is the situation comparable with good practices in quality assurance?*

This study also attempts to identify contextual factors and examine how these factors influence the implementation of quality assurance at public universities in light of the fifth research question phrased as:

- 5) *What are the possible factors that enable or hinder the adoption and practice of formal quality assurance system at the universities?*

This research question will be addressed through the conceptual lens derived from contingency and institutional theories in chapter 8. Finally, the sixth research question is concerned with identifying priorities and practical implications for improved quality assurance practices at the public universities in Ethiopia.

- 6) *Considering the gaps between actual practices and good practices, what is needed for improvement? And how can that be implemented?*

1.4 Focus of the Study

The empirical focus of this study is limited to the analysis of the systems and practices of assuring quality of education at the undergraduate level of public universities in Ethiopia. This is due mainly to the fact that it is the Ethiopian public universities that are engaged in degree-granting higher education. None but one private institution has a full status of a university. The remaining ones function with the status of a university college, college or institution and run dominantly diploma programs. Their programs are mainly linked to the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) program of the country. The post secondary TVET programs comprise of three training levels; i.e. level 3, Level 4 and Level 5. Students are expected to sit for the Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination (EGSECE) after completing the 10 years' general primary and secondary education.¹

Public universities and private colleges differ in terms of the purpose and content of their training and student intake. Public universities accept students who completed the college preparatory program education (Grades 11 and 12) and who passed the University Entrance Examination (UEE). On the other hand the private colleges accept those students based on completion of the general secondary education (grade 10) and on passing the EGSECE. Students with a low

¹ See also chapter 5.

UEE grade from preparatory program are also welcome to join the private higher education institutions.

Another limitation of this study is that it only focuses on quality of education that is embedded in improvement of student learning at the undergraduate level. The other core functions of a university such as research and community service are not the focus of this study. In the Ethiopian context, the focus is more on the formation of human capital through enrolment and program expansion at both the undergraduate and graduate levels than on research. The ETQA is treated in this study in terms of its role in stimulating and impacting on the development and implementation of internal quality enhancement mechanisms in the public universities.

1.5. Theoretical and Methodological Orientation¹

This study is grounded in the argument that student learning is at the center of the mission of higher education institutions, and it is enhanced through improvement-led quality assurance practices. In this regard, a quality assurance practice becomes effective when it focuses on the core educational processes that affect quality of student learning. It is also argued that a university's quality assurance system and practice is shaped and influenced by its internal and external environmental factors.

A conceptual framework derived from the contingency and institutional theories together with quality assurance models guide the research study. These theories help to explain how organizational environment influences the development and implementation of quality assurance in universities. Contingency theory holds as its underlying premise that best practices depend on the contingencies of the situation. Hence the negation of the idea that there is one best way pertinent for all organizations in all circumstances. The institutional perspectives heavily emphasize the importance of the institutional environment in which constructed rules and realities may override objective contingencies. Both theories share the idea that organizations operate within a context that ultimately affects how they structure themselves and undertake their activities.

The difference between the two theories lies primarily in whether organizations are supposed to respond to contextual demands for rationality or for legitimacy. We use the notions of task environment in contingency theory to show how a

¹ See chapters 3 and 4.

given organizational context influences the adoption and practice of quality assurance in the universities. The notions of institutional environment derived from institutional perspectives will be used to explain how external expectations and norms influence organizational practices. My aim in using the theories is not to achieve total merger of them. It is rather to explain how quality assurance is perceived and actually implemented in the public universities as required by the organizational environment. In other words, the application of both contingency and institutional theories allows the study to look at the organizational interface in examining quality assurance practices at organizational level.

This study applies a mixed-methods approach. Mixed-methods approach refers to the use of a mixture or combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, approaches, or concepts in a single study (Johnson and Christensen, 2008; Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007). Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is helpful to get better and deeper understanding of a complex phenomenon by capitalizing on the strengths of the two methods and offset their weaknesses. This approach is employed in this study for the reason that studying the practice of quality assurance in universities is a complex and multifaceted process that involves the perspectives of different actors and, the collection and analysis of data from different sources.

1.6. Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized in ten chapters. The second chapter, obviously following this introductory chapter, provides the conceptual framework of the study. It begins with the debates on what counts as quality and its assurance in higher education. Then it proceeds to discuss the approaches to quality assurance including the notions of quality values and the ways of thinking to quality assurance. It presents the arguments on the power tension between the accountability-oriented external and the improvement-led internal quality assurance approaches. It also discusses the quality assurance models developed for higher education and the international trends in quality assurance practices. The ideal practices in quality assurance including the criteria are drawn based on a synthesis of the conceptual framework and common elements of the models.

Chapter 3 attempts to examine and elaborate the organizational theories that enable to understand and explain the factors that either enable or hinder the practice of quality assurance in universities. The main elements and assumptions of two organizational theories, contingency and institutional theories, are also discussed therewith. In addition, the chapter provides the arguments that support universities as open system organizations, criticisms of the organizational theories, application of the theories and the conceptual models of the study. The

major dimensions of the conceptual framework of the study: actual quality assurance practice, good practices in quality assurance, university characteristics and organization environmental factors and their interrelationships are also discussed.

The main elements of the conceptual framework of the study are operationalized in chapter 4. The efficacy of the quality assurance practices in terms of improving student learning in the universities constitutes the dependent variable of the study. The factors drawn from the task and institutional environments form the independent variables of the study. Chapter 4 also presents the research paradigm and design, methods, validity and reliability, data sources and sampling, instrumentations and procedures, and data analysis techniques. It clarifies the arguments regarding the use of mixed methods design in this study.

The fifth chapter sets the context of the study. It describes the higher education system of Ethiopia including its socio-economic and demographic contexts, historical development, the present educational structure, the legal and regulatory frameworks, and the major changes in the higher education landscape. These serve as a contextual basis for the study.

Chapters 6 through 8 provide the empirical findings based on analysis and interpretation of data. Chapter 6 is concerned with the analysis of data on quality of input, process and output along with improvement in student learning. Data analysis on the implementation of quality assurance policies, systems, structures, procedures and instruments are discussed in chapter 7. The findings in chapter 6 and chapter 7 address the second and third research questions posed in this chapter. Chapter 7 also discusses findings of the data analysis concerning the framework conditions and models that underlie the present quality assurance practices in the Ethiopian universities. It addresses the fourth basic research question of the study raised in the preceding sections of chapter 1. Findings of the data analysis concerning the organizational and environmental factors that influence the adoption and implementation of quality assurance systems and policies in the universities are presented and discussed in chapter 8 vis-à-vis the conceptual framework of the study. Chapter 8 also addresses the fifth research question of the study. Finally, a summary and conclusion including implications and recommendations of the study are discussed in chapter 9. Chapter 9 also includes some remarks on methodological reflections and limitations.

2 Conceptual Considerations: Quality Assurance in Higher Education

2.1 Introduction

Our study uses the basic concepts: Quality and Quality Assurance. The issues on these concepts have been domains of debate in the literature concerning higher education; the focus being on what counts as quality and how that can be assured in higher education. This chapter deals with the arguments highlighted in the literature on quality assurance in higher education. It begins with the varied definitions proposed to grasp quality and its assurance. As is common to definitions, there seems to be no universally accepted definition of quality. Another key dimension of the literature deals with the arguments on the different approaches to quality assurance. Such arguments are embedded in the power tension between improvement and accountability, respectively associated to internal and external quality assurance. A critical review of the different quality assurance approaches, methods and the underlying values and power relations are reviewed in section 2.3.

This chapter also reviews the literature concerning the origin and adoption of quality assurance models in higher education. Section 2.4 examines the quality assurance models developed for higher education and derives a synthesis of common features. It also tries to defy the notion that quality assurance models developed for industry are suitable to the core functions of higher education institutions.

The review in section 2.5 addresses quality assurance experiences of developed and developing countries; an undertaking aimed at drawing some international good practices. Synthesis of the main elements of the conceptual discussions is presented in section 2.6. This shares a similar aim with the section preceding it. Finally, section 2.7 of this chapter comes up with conclusions and remarks.

2.2 Conceptualizing Quality Assurance in Higher Education

The basis for conceptualizing is, as in any field of study, to start with providing working definitions for the most frequent and endemic vocabulary. Accordingly, this study makes use of basic terminologies pervasive in the literature in order to carve the main theme of this study.

2.2.1. Debates on Defining Quality

Defining the term quality is one of the challenging tasks and ‘repeated mantras’ among scholars in the contemporary higher education. Many authors consider quality as a notoriously elusive (Gibson, 1986; Neave, 1986; Scott, 1994), slippery (Pfeffer and Coot, 1991), relative (Baird, 1998; Harvey and Green, 1993; Middlehurst, 1992; Vroeijenstijn, 1992; Westerheijden, 1990), dynamic (Boyle and Bowden, 1997), and multidimensional (Campbell and Rozsnyai, 2002) concept. Other scholars approach quality as it embodies both intrinsic and extrinsic elements (Ball, 1985; Barnett, 1992, and van Vught, 1994). Still to other authors, quality is a philosophical concept that lacks a general theory in the literature (Green, 1994; Westerheijden, 1999).

Many scholars have referred to the highly cited tagline of Pirsig (1974) “what the hell is quality?” To show the confusion associated with the understanding of quality:

Quality... you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is. But that's self-contradictory. But some things *are* better than others, that is, they have more quality. But when you try to say what the quality is, apart from the things that have it, it all goes *poof!* There is nothing to talk about. But if you can't say what quality is, how do you know what it is, or how do you know that it even exists? If no one knows what it is, then for all practical purposes it does not exist at all. But for all practical purposes it really *does* exist. What else are the grades based on? Why else would people pay fortunes for some things and throw others in the trash pile? Obviously some things are better than others...but what's the “bitterness”?... So round and round you go, spinning mental wheels and nowhere finding anyplace to get traction. What the hell is quality? What *is* it? (Pirsig, 1974, pp. 163-164)

This suggests that it is not possible to find a universally accepted and comprehensive definition of quality in higher education. It has been subject to various and ambiguous interpretations.

Mortimore and Stone (1991), for example, identified four uses of the term quality: *an attribute or defining essence; a degree or relative worth; a description of something good or excellent, and a non-qualified trait*. This definition contains a normative or comparative element. Others liken quality to the standards that must be met in order to achieve special purposes to the satisfaction of customers (Ellis, 1993). Standards, according to Ashcroft and Forman-Peck (1996), refer to the minimum threshold by which performance is judged. From the human capital perspective, Barnett (1992) correlates quality of higher education to both the character of the educational development and the educational achievements of the students engaged on the programs of study in question. Supporting this view, Dill (2003)

equates quality with academic standards- the specific levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities that students achieve because of their engagement in higher education.

From the stakeholders' perspective, Vroeijenstijn (2006) concluded that quality is in the eye of the beholder and any definition of quality must take into account the views of various stakeholders. In line with this, Cheng and Tam (1997) described quality as a system that constitutes the input, process, and output of the educational system and that provides services that completely satisfy both internal and external stakeholders by meeting their explicit and implicit expectations. The expectations of the different stakeholders may not only be disparate but even contradictory at times. Similarly, Vlăsceanu and associates (2007, p.70) pointed out that quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional, multilevel, and dynamic concept that is related to the contextual settings of an educational model, to the institutional mission and objectives, as well as to specific standards within a given system, organization, program, or discipline.

Sustaining the stakeholders' views of quality, Harvey and Green (1993) identified five discrete but interrelated ways of thinking about quality as follows.

Quality as exceptional: this notion is related to the traditional and elitist academic view that perceives quality as something special, and distinctive. In educational terms it epitomizes excellence, high level performance, passing a minimum set of standards unattainable by most. In this view, quality is achieved if the standards are surpassed. Such focus on exceptionally high standards of academic achievements would normally drive higher education institutions to selective intake. The internal stakeholders, the faculty/academic staff for instance, are more likely to support this view.

Quality as perfection: quality is perceived as a consistent or flawless outcome. It focuses on the specifications of processes. It is also culminated by the interrelated ideas of zero defects and getting things right first time. This view is based on the assumption that if consistency can be achieved then quality would be attained as a matter of course. This dimension of quality is not always applicable to higher education, since no higher education institution could possibly and soberly aim at producing identical or defect-free graduates (Watty, 2003).

Quality as fitness for purpose: conformity with institutional missions as well as capacity to fulfilling customer's requirements is the principal perspective underlying this. There is wide spread agreement on the critique that 'fitness for purpose' alone is too wide an interpretation of quality in higher education; hence the need to accompany it by some discussion of 'fitness of purpose' (Westerheijden, 1999). The interpretation of quality as fitness of purpose is linked to the adequacy of the quality-related intentions of an organization, which

provides a check on fitness for purpose (see also Harvey, 2006). This way of thinking is of paramount importance to external stakeholders interested in the utilitarian functions of higher education.

Quality as value for money: This view perceives quality in terms of return on investment or expenditure. This view embodies efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. It focuses on how the inputs are efficiently used by the process in a manner that they produce the desired outputs. A simple instance could be an attempt to producing more graduates with less cost. This way of thinking seems to be of interest to those who fund higher education including government, administrators, parents and students.

Quality as transformation: refers to the classic notion that views quality in terms of change of the learner from one state to another. In educational terms, transformation refers to the enhancement and empowerment of students or the development of new knowledge through the learning process. This notion of quality presupposes a fundamental purpose of higher education in terms of transforming the life experiences of students. The transformation concept, as argued by Harvey and Knight (1996), is a meta-quality concept. The other concepts are possible operationalizations of the transformative process rather than ends in themselves. Harvey (2002) suggests that in an era of mass higher education, value-added transformation ought to become the central element of any concept of quality rather than *excellence, fitness for purpose or value for money*.

There is also an emerging argument in the literature on the view of *quality as culture* (see EUA, 2006; NAAC, 2007; Harvey and Stensaker, 2008). Such perspective recognizes the importance of the organizational view of quality as a process of transformation, where each entity is concerned with and acknowledges the importance of quality. This way of conceptualization is related to the intrinsic traits of higher education in which quality is valued as a driving force behind what everyone does in an organization. In connection with this, quality culture is conceived as an organizational culture that involves: (1) a psychological element of shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitments towards quality, and (2) a structural or managerial element with well-defined processes that enhance quality and coordinate efforts (EUA, 2006). Others perceived quality culture as organizational culture, which contributes to the development of effective and efficient care for quality (see Berings, *et al.*, 2010). It is concerned more with the behavior of the people involved in the organization than the operation of a quality system. As Harvey and Stensaker (2008) argued, a quality culture is not likely to be constructed irrespective of the context in which it is located.

From the above discussions, we can observe that quality is a construct and its meaning is contextual. As Barnett (1999) puts it, what counts, as quality is never

neutral and behind it is always a tacit idea of higher education. In other words, the various arguments on what constitutes quality are rooted in the values and assumptions of the different authors about the nature, purpose and fundamental processes of higher education. As Boyle and Bowden (1997) argued, in a context of purposeful organizations and enterprises quality can only be defined in relation to articulated values, purposes, desired processes, experiences and outcomes. Since the purpose of higher education varies and changes across time and context in response to changing environments, so too should the meaning of quality. In this regard, there is a strong support for envisaging quality in terms of 'fitness for purpose' in higher education.

Within the *human capital* perspective, there is a strong argument for conceiving quality as 'transformation' that focuses on important aspects of higher education: educational processes and the enhancement of student learning experience. It is argued that student learning is any way a necessary condition for all the possible purposes or core operations of higher education, though there is no well-established 'production-theory' prescribing how to turn available inputs into the desired end (Westerheijden, Stensaker and Rosa, 2007). The better the higher education institution, the more it achieves the goal of empowering students with specific skills, knowledge, and attitudes which enable them to live and work in the knowledge society (Campbell and Rozsnyai, 2002). Horsburgh (1999) also argued that the focus of quality should, in such a rapidly changing world, be on the attributes of graduates, where the transformation of the learner is central. In this regard, Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2003) argued that it is the view of quality as "transformation" of the participants that is capable of addressing the concerns of all the stakeholders' group.

It should be noted that each of the approaches to defining quality has implications on the nature of quality assurance system and on the policy adopted in a particular higher education system. Also, the emphasis given to each conception of quality depends on the context. The concepts and issues concerning quality assurance are discussed in the section that follows.

2.2.2. Quality Assurance

There is a wide range of discussion on the concept of quality assurance in the literature concerned with higher education. The arguments around the adoption of quality assurance depend on diverse perspectives on what counts as quality. Consequently, there seems to be no universally accepted conceptual framework of quality assurance in higher education.

To Vroeijenstijn (1995) quality assurance is 'a systematic, structured and continuous attention to quality in terms of quality maintenance and improvement.' Most authors on the concept of quality assurance share this view. UNESCO (2004), for example, described quality assurance as a systematic review of educational programs to ensure that acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being maintained. Similarly, INQAAHE (2005) defined quality assurance as 'all those attitudes, objects, actions and procedures, which through their existence and use, and together with the quality control activities, ensure that appropriate academic standards are being maintained and enhanced in and by each program.' Wilger (1997) also shares similar views that quality assurance is a collective process by which a university ensures that the quality of educational process is maintained to the standards it has set itself. Contained in these definitions are issues of maintenance and improvement of quality and standards, embedded in the demands for accountability.

Other authors focus on learning in conceptualizing quality assurance in higher education. Centrex (2004), for example, defines quality assurance as the means by which an organization confirms that conditions are in place for students to achieve the standards set by the training organization. Green (1994) also maintains that quality assurance practice is considered important for it enables a university become a learning organization. If this is so, underlying pedagogical assumptions concerning the teaching and learning relationships implicit in quality assurance come into focus. To Barnett (1992), quality assurance implies a determination to develop a culture of quality in an institution of higher education, so that everyone is aware of his own part in sustaining and improving the quality of the institution.

Still others consider quality assurance in higher education as a process of establishing stakeholder confidence that provision (input, process, and outcomes) fulfills expectations or measures up to threshold minimum requirements (Harvey, 2002). In the context of higher education, quality assurance is viewed as the ongoing development and implementation of ethos, policies, and processes that aim to maintain and enhance quality as defined by articulated values and stakeholder needs (Boyle and Bowden, 1997). In line with this, Cheng and Tam (1997) noted that if higher education is considered as a system, then any quality assurance program should concentrate on assessing input, process and outputs.

Quality assurance is also viewed as an all-embracing term covering all the policies, processes and actions through which quality of higher education is maintained and developed (Campbell & Rozsnyai, 2002). In the same vein, Vlăsceanu, Grunberg and Parlea (2007) provide an extended description of quality assurance as follows:

Quality assurance is an all-embracing term referring to an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining, and improving) the quality of a higher education system, institutions, or programs. As a regulatory mechanism, quality assurance focuses on both accountability and improvement... Quality assurance activities depend on the existence of the necessary institutional mechanisms preferably sustained by a solid quality culture. Quality management, quality enhancement, quality control, and quality assessment are means through which quality is ensured (2007, p.74).

The definitions given above illustrate that quality assurance is a generic term open to many interpretations. However, there seems to be a consistent thread that we could find across the varied perspectives. Some common elements are apparently highlighted through the vocabulary like *systematic*, *planned* and *structured*. Accordingly, a quality assurance system in higher education institutions may be described as the totality of the policies, values/attitudes, procedures, structures, resources and actions devoted to ensure continuous improvement of quality of the educational processes.

The definitions also imply conceptions like accountability, improvement, or both. Advocates of quality assurance view accountability as necessary not only to satisfy external constituents, but also as a precondition for improvement, especially in undergraduate education (Wilger, 1997). There is also an argument that improvement, arising from regular monitoring of the services offered, should be at the heart of any quality assurance process (FETAC, 2007). This suggests that quality assurance has both intrinsic and extrinsic roles in effecting improvement, sustaining accountability and encouraging exchange between the system and its context. There is also a tension between improvement and accountability in quality assurance, which leads to the different types of quality assurance. This and related issues are further explored in the next section.

2.3 Types of Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Much of the discourse on quality and quality assurance dwells on issues of values and power relations between and among the different stakeholders in higher education institutions. Such ways of thinking determine the quality assurance types adopted by a certain higher education institution. This section presents the varied ways of thinking that underlie the diverse quality assurance types and models in higher education.

2.3.1 *The Quality Values and Power Tensions to Quality Assurance*

As Brennan and Shah (2000) argue, how quality assessment is organized and managed is importantly a question of power. Moreover, the introduction of systems of quality assurance involves shifting the balance of power between the institutional and system levels. Conceptions of quality in particular higher education institutions and countries may entail several types of values. This suggests that the adoption of an approach is contingent upon quality conceptions and values of a certain type. Brennan and Shah (2000, p. 14) identified four main forms of quality values that underlie different approaches to quality assurance, viz. *academic, managerial, pedagogic* and *employment* focus.

In the *academic*, criteria of quality stem from the characteristics of the subject; the focal point. This type is associated with strong professional authority and academic values. Conceptions of quality are based on subject affiliation and vary across the higher education institution, which has limited scope to define and assess quality.

The *managerial* category is grounded on the assumption that good management can produce quality. Hence it is associated with institutional focus of assessment. The institutional policies, procedures and structures are the spotlight of the assessment. Quality characteristics are regarded as invariant across the entire institution. According to the authors, the principles of TQM provided an underlying ideological justification for this type.

In the *pedagogic category*, teaching skills and classroom practices of the faculty is emphasized. This is strongly associated with staff training and development. Quality characteristics are considered invariant across the institution. In this approach, a lot of emphasis seems to be given to the delivery aspect than to the content.

In the *employment-focused category*, more attention is given to graduate output characteristics, standards and learning outcomes. This approach is normally associated to customer satisfaction in which employers of graduates are usually regarded as customers. It takes into account both elements of subject specific and core characteristics of high quality education. Quality contains some features invariant across the institution. Some other features may also vary according to subject.

These four categories are elaborated further and applied by Luckett (2006). Luckett argues that quality assurance systems are replete with power tensions; and thus, the focus in analyzing any quality assurance system should not be so much on how quality is formally defined, as on in identifying whose interest is served. Accordingly, key questions such as '*who is in control of the evaluation? Who*

initiates and owns it? Is the ownership internal or external to the academic community?' should be asked in analyzing any quality assurance system.

Adopting the four quality values, Luckett proposed four ways of thinking to quality assurance in universities: '*collegial rationality, managerial rationality, facilitative rationality, and bureaucratic rationality*' (Luckett, 2006). Each of these types of quality assurance is summarized hereunder.

Quality assurance in the *collegial* type is conducted within the norms and values of the academics since it presupposes that academics are in control of the conditions of their professional work. The purpose of this quality assurance is enlightenment of academics and improvement in which academics learn more about their teaching and determine how to improve. The models of quality assurance in this type are typically controlled and owned internally and locally. The academic staff would initiate and design the evaluation of their programs and determine the criteria for making context-specific judgments about quality. The criteria for quality are usually implicit, founded in shared meanings with interpretive and inter-subjective methodology. The most utilized method in the collegial type is self-evaluation wherein the academics themselves are the key agents of the evaluation. Students are not considered as customers and their evaluations and opinions are subject to triangulation with opinion data from other sources such as external peers and staff themselves. The academia owned the evaluation results and they are the primary audience of the findings. The results serve formative purpose never linked to any extrinsic reward or punishment. The effectiveness of this type is based on collegial agreement on improvements made. The conception of quality as excellence fits this type. This is praised for it is most likely to lead to genuine improvement of quality. On the other hand, the fact that the evaluation and peer reviews may lack critical distance; and hence, may become protectionist is a point of criticism against it. The critique can also be taken farther by suspecting that quality criteria may remain implicit and unclear to outsiders, hence, improbability to meet accountability requirements.

The *managerial* type to quality assurance is grounded in the belief that good management is the key factor in productivity of successful organizations. Corporate management, explicit systems and procedures, strategic planning and greater centralization and regulation by management characterize this category. As a response to external pressures, monitoring of academic work through the establishment of institutional quality management systems is believed to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of institutions as organizations. Quality assurance is viewed as a management tool to strengthen the institution and the central authority at the expense of professional power. The purpose of quality assurance in this type is to enlighten the senior management.

The locus of control of quality assurance in this category is at the senior management level and usually devolved to the middle management level. The institution as a whole is the focus of evaluation in this type and the senior managers are the primary audiences as well as the owners of the model of quality assurance. The methods include self-evaluation, followed by validating findings by external peers and then using findings for summative purpose. The management in consultation with quality assurance experts determines the evaluation criteria. The definition of quality as fitness for purpose fits this type because the focus is on improving effectiveness and efficiency. The managerial approach may be useful in facilitating accountability culture in universities. The methodological critique of this type is the assumption that human achievement of predetermined goals can be objectively measured against standardized criteria. In this approach, students are considered as customers.

In the *facilitative* type, external authorities or agencies play a facilitative or supportive role in quality assurance. The quality assurance models are owned and controlled externally but are improvement oriented. The criteria used to measure quality would be internally owned. The typical method here is that quality assurance is external audit where the external agency validates the internal quality assurance system; but does not make judgments about quality as such. The evaluators are peer experts who operate on behalf of the external agency but their appointment is mostly approved by the evaluated. The results of evaluation are neither punitive nor linked to funding and the evaluation report is often confidential. This type of quality assurance is useful to stimulate systematic internal self-evaluation and improvement processes. It helps to make institutional quality assurance processes more explicit and institutionalized. One of the drawbacks of this type is that evaluations can be superficial and add little value to the institutional self-evaluation. The definition of quality as fitness for purpose also fits more to this type.

The *bureaucratic* type to quality assurance is based on norms and values that are external to the institutions and on which they are imposed. These norms and values are those related to governance and control such as administrative efficiency and system building priorities that are grounded in the instrumental view of higher education. Quality assurance models have accountability and compliance purposes and are externally controlled and owned by a government-funded and appointed agency with legal status. The government usually initiates quality assurance, and reflects the interests of external quality agency.

The quality assurance methods employed in this type are institutional audit¹ of quality assurance systems, the accreditation² of institutions and programs, evaluation of research and external examination³ of students. Standardized criteria provided by government are used to measure performance and accountability with a focus on input, output and outcomes. Students are viewed in this type as customers. The results of evaluation are linked to sanctions in terms of running a program or institutions and funding. The strength of this type is that it asserts government control and institutes a standardized model of accountability across the system and uses quality assurance to steer the higher education system towards state defined goals. It is, however, likely to be a reduction of diversity in the higher education system and the process dimension is usually ignored in the evaluation processes. The quality assurance is unlikely to contribute to the improvement of the organizational practices. Consequently, this may drive the academics to a culture of compliance and conformity. The definitions of quality as fitness for purpose and quality as value for money fit this type.

The *four types* to quality assurance reviewed above underlie the notions of purpose and power tensions in the implementation of quality assurance systems in universities. The collegial type to quality assurance is based on the professional view of quality and its assurance. In this type, the assumption that the academics are governed by professional ethics, integrity and reasonableness may be true. But this by itself might not be a guarantee for the successful implementation of quality assurance in universities unless it is accompanied by some degree of transparency and objectivity. The other three types may not result in improvement of quality in higher education institutions unless the participation and ownership of the academics is ensured. This suggests that a successful implementation of quality assurance in universities demands a balanced blend of the four quality assurance types.

¹ Institutional audit refers to a process of checking to ensure externally or internally whether specified practices and procedures are put in place (Harvey and Askling, 2003). It checks the extent to which the institution is achieving its own explicit or implicit objectives (Woodhouse, 1999).

² Accreditation is an evaluation of whether an institution or program meets minimum acceptable standards and qualifies for a certain status (Schwarz and Westerheijden, 2004).

³ External examination refers to the system whereby one or more persons from another institution or organization monitor the assessment process of an institution for fairness and academic standards.

The four types can be classified into two broad domains: internal and external. The collegial and managerial types go to the internal quality assurance, whereas the external quality assurance comprises the facilitative and bureaucratic types. There is a tension on the balance between the two domains of evaluation. This and related issues are briefly discussed in the section that follows.

2.3.2 External versus Internal Quality Assurance

There is a continuous debate in the quality assurance literature on whether the emphasis of quality assurance should be on accountability or on improvement. How appropriate balance between these two purposes might be struck is also another point (See Campbell & Rozsnyai, 2002). The dichotomy between external (accountability-oriented) and internal (improvement-oriented) quality assurance exercises is a matter of how the exercise is initiated, who owns the practice and the resulting effect on higher education institutions.

Internal quality assurance refers to those policies and practices whereby academic institutions themselves monitor and improve the quality of their education provision, while external quality assurance refers to supra-institutional policies and practices whereby external bodies assure the quality of higher education institutions and programs (Dill, 2007). It is argued that external quality assurance is in general more accountability-oriented, summative, and judgmental and that it provides only a snapshot of quality, while internal quality assurance is more formative in nature and likely to lead to continual quality improvement efforts and the development of quality culture in institutions (Barnett, 1994; Askling, 1997, and Wiclund, *et al.*, 2003). External quality assurance assumes the conceptions of quality as fitness for purpose and value for money, whereas the transformation view of quality is linked with internal quality assurance approach.

Van Vught (1994) argues that, on the one hand, quality assurance systems that only emphasize on collegial peer review without reference to the needs of outside stakeholders like professional organizations, employers and other training organizations risk isolating higher education institutions from the rest of the world. On the other hand, the academic experts of the institutions may not take quality assurance systems seriously and are limited to merely providing accountability to the state. This suggests the need for the right balance between the two. As Boyd and Fresen (2004) put it, the internal and external approaches are not mutually exclusive opposites but are both essential, in relative proportions, for a successful quality assurance system at the higher education institutions. In this regard, the equilibrium between the internal and external mechanisms, mediated by the institutional quality culture, is necessary for the

effective implementation of quality assurance in higher education institutions (see Harvey, 2007).

There are, however, arguments that quality improvement is not easily achieved through external quality assurance whatever the official balance between quality improvement and accountability may be (Westerheijden, *et al*, 2007). This suggests that external quality assurance cannot stand alone in effecting quality improvement in higher education institutions. In relation to this, Harvey (1996) argued that an external quality assurance approach in higher education has a high probability of leading to a culture of compliance in the end. The academic staff may comply with external quality assurance mechanisms to minimize disruptions rather than to improving quality. External quality assurance is also criticized for its inadequacy to address issues related to actual student learning experience. Genuine improvement, according to Barnett (1999), comes through self-understanding. Other authors also had the opinion that academic quality is best guaranteed when the responsibility for it is located as closely as possible to the processes of teaching and learning (Wilger, 1997).

The arguments above suggest that externally controlled quality assurance mechanisms may not necessarily lead to quality improvement, but that they can complement internally controlled quality assurance mechanisms. In this sense, it can be argued that a formal quality assurance system leads to continuous quality improvement when it is internally owned and controlled and the external quality assurance system plays a supportive and facilitative role to the internal practices. Continuous quality improvement, as the EUA depicted, requires organizational commitment for self-evaluation. Effective self-evaluation demands addressing four fundamental questions: *what is the organization trying to do* (focus on leadership and policies)? *How is it trying to do it* (focus on strategies and resources for action)? *How does it know it works* (focus on indicators and measures of success)? *How does the organization change in order to improve* (focus on feedback and learning)? These four questions are embedded in the PDCA (Plan- Do-Check-Act) cycle.

We can also notice that the *accountability* versus *improvement* argument has implication to the nature of quality assurance systems. According to Westerheijden (2007), quality assurance schemes appear in a confusing multitude of forms, with different aims, scope, foci, levels, etc. There are differences in quality assurance systems ranging from the scope on education/teaching or research or community service to a focus on input or processes or output, from the level at national or institutional or program to the responsibility on government or buffer body or institution (*ibid.*). There is also no 'one -model fits all' approach to quality assurance.

The next question would be: *what is contained in the quality assurance models of higher education in terms of quality improvement?* The next section dwells on this and related issues.

2.4 Quality Assurance Models for Higher Education

This section presents a review of the quality assurance models developed for higher education. It begins with a brief discussion on the germination and adoption of quality assurance in higher education. It then proceeds to describe them. Finally, the common elements of the models are derived and synthesized to determine the main elements of a comprehensive quality assurance model.

2.4.1 *The Emergence of Quality Assurance in Higher Education*

The renewed interest in quality of higher education since the 1980s centered on two questions: one is related to improvement; the extent to which graduates learn the knowledge and skills necessary for a changing economy. The second is related to accountability; the extent to which higher education institutions spending tax money in the right direction (Westerheijden, Stensaker and Rosa, 2007). As Williams (1993) noted, the occurrence of quality management approaches in higher education is a product of the market ideologies of the 1980s and the managerialism that accompanied it. During this time, management of quality was made central to the new discourse on governance of higher education institutions (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2003). Many higher education institutions adopted the quality management models originated in the world of business and industrial production such as TQM, ISO9001, EFQM and BPR since 1980s. Each of these models is described in the following.

Total Quality Management (TQM): this is derived from the 1951 Total Quality Control concept originated by Feigenbaum. TQM is a comprehensive philosophy that is grounded in implanting awareness of quality in all organizational processes. A variety of meanings and approaches to TQM have evolved over the past years (e.g. Kanji, 2001, and Dean and Bowen, 1994). However, instead of focusing on what is unique in each approach, Harvey (1995) identified ten issues that are common in most Total Quality Management approaches that Berghe (1997) classified them into two categories. The first five issues are: *a clear customer focus; continuous improvement; quality assurance of internal processes; process orientation, and prevention instead of inspection to achieve quality* are the underlying concepts of TQM. The other five issues: *management and leadership commitment, involvement of all employees at all levels, teamwork, systematic problem solving, and focus on facts* are operational principles of

TQM. In this regard, quality assurance, as one of the underlying concepts, is an integral component of TQM and is linked to other components.

At the center of TQM is a systematic and continuous improvement of quality, which in itself is a process, the process of applying methods such as the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA)-cycle (Chaffee, Ellen, Lawrence, 1992). In general, proponents of TQM argue that it is a deliberate, strategic and systematic organizational and management approach characterized by constant organizational effectiveness, innovation, improvement and change.

ISO 9001: refers to a series of standards for quality assurance within organizations, introduced in 1987 by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), which is based in Geneva, Switzerland (Abraham, *et al.*, 2000). The series of the ISO 9001 standards are designed based on the concept that 'certain minimum characteristics of a quality management system could be usefully standardized with a focus on process rather than product' (*ibid*). ISO 9001 is an example of quality management systems; a set of policies, processes and procedures required for planning and execution in the core business area of an organization.

As is natural to a family of norms, ISO 9001 originally contained five standards (ISO 9000: 1994 version). Later, three of them were revised (ISO 9001: 2000). From the revised standards (ISO 9001: 2000 and ISO 9001: 2008), ISO 9001: 2000 is more generic and flexible standard that focuses on designing and establishing a quality management system. It also aims at meeting and enhancing the requirements of the customers, organizations and other concerned parties (Bokhari, 2006). ISO 9001:2000 is a process model that integrates the various internal processes within an organization such as management responsibility, resource management, product (and or service) realization; and measurement, analysis and improvement and intends to provide a process approach for project execution.

The objective of the ISO 9001 series of standards is to provide an effective quality system reflecting a company's practices for producing goods and services that confirm requirements (Halis and Oztas, 2001). It should be noted that this model focuses on enabling an organization to identify, measure, control and improve the various core business processes that will ultimately lead to improved business performance.

European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM): this Model was introduced and administered by the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) at the beginning of 1992 as a framework for assessing applications of the European Quality Award (EFQM, 2003). The Excellence Model is a diagnostic tool for self-assessment of the current health of an organization. That is, through self-assessment the organization is better able to balance its priorities, allocate resources and generate realistic business plans (Neely, 1998; Oakland, 1999).

Nine fundamental concepts characterize the EFQM Excellence Model. These are: *results orientation, customer focus, leadership and constancy of purpose, management by process and facts, people development & involvement, continuous learning, innovation and improvement, partnership development, and corporate social responsibility* (EFQM, 2003). The Excellence Model is considered as a non-prescriptive and the most 'value-added' framework that covers nine different areas classified into two major components: 'Enablers' and 'Results'. While the first refers to leadership, policy, strategy, partnership, resources, and processes, the latter imply people results, customer results, society results and key performance results. This is an attempt to measure an organization's performance and success from different stakeholders' perspectives (Bokhari, 2006).

The premise behind the EFQM model is that customer satisfaction, people satisfaction and impact on society are achieved through leadership, i.e. a body ultimately responsible to leading to excellence in business results (Berghe, 1997). Excellence is at the center of this model. Thus, organizations are evaluated towards excellence based on the nine building blocks of the model.

Business Process Reengineering (BPR) refers to a fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical temporary measures of performance such as cost, quality, service, and speed (Hammer and Champy, 1993). It is concerned with change in five components: *strategy; processes; technology; organization, and culture*. Achieving efficiency and effectiveness by radically rethinking existing processes is the ultimate goal and theoretical perspective that underlie the implementation of BPR in organizations. BPR has elements of providing quality service, improving service and product quality, which in turn suggest the need to adopt and implement quality assurance systems to meet BPR objectives.

The four models discussed above are not mutually exclusive to each other. EFQM, ISO 9001 and BPR are essentially variants of TQM methodology. They all share common features in terms of continuous improvement in organizational processes and in their focus on the role of leadership. Quality assurance, customer and process orientation are important elements in these four approaches. All the quality management models are governed by quality assurance principles that focus on the quality of conformance to specifications. The requirement for self-assessment against predefined criteria is also a common feature of the models. Some of the requirements of quality assurance systems embedded in these models include defining and setting quality standards, devising mechanisms and procedures, monitoring improvement, analyzing causes of failures and taking corrective actions.

There are mixed views in the literature regarding the application of these models to the field of higher education. These models have been applied in quite a large

number of higher education systems in the US and many European countries such as the United Kingdom (Williams, 1993; Temple, 2005). However, the relevance and fitness of these models to higher education has been one of the areas of vigorous debate in the academic circles and, as Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2003) noted, there is still no agreement on a model for quality in higher education. The debate mainly dwells around the nature and aspects of higher education; service and education.

Proponents of the quality management models argue that the quality assurance principles contained in such models are flexible and capable of providing effective quality management methods necessary to nurture quality culture and to improve quality of education. For example, some authors stressed that TQM was 'not panacea, nor placebo, but certainly had potential' to improve administrative and academic structures and to the functioning of higher education (Williams, 1993; Bokari, 2007; Kanji, et al, 1999).

There seems to be little disagreement in the debate regarding the application of quality management models to the service aspects of higher education. In this regard, Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002) maintained that the general features of an industrially applied total quality management models are quite appropriate to the service functions of universities.

Opponents of this view argue, on the other hand, that quality assurance should be an intrinsic and not extrinsic value of higher education (e.g. Middlehurst, 1992). Consequently, they argue against the appropriateness of quality management approaches to the core functions of higher education institutions. Houston (2007), for example, pointed out that, universities with their underpinning values of academic freedom, collegiality and professionalism, and with their diverse and complex processes of teaching, research and community service fit uncomfortably within the machine metaphor that is dominated by quality management practices such as TQM. Brookes and Becket (2008) has also the opinion that these models may encourage a culture of managerialism. In a similar vein, Westerheijden (2000) argues that broadly looking at the practice of quality management in the higher sector in the past ten years enables one to infer that the conception of a university as an industry is a euphemism for control by the funding bodies.

Finally, Birnbaum (2001) concluded that the adoption of quality management approaches such as TQM in academic institutions is a 'myth and illusion'. This view is even taken further by Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002) who appraised the practice of quality management in higher education. They maintain that it is deteriorating into managerialism in institutions in view of lack of both development of shared vision and of commensurability between quality management techniques and educational processes. Such continuing debate on the application of quality management models in higher education has resulted in

the development and adoption of various quality assurance/management models considered suitable to the nature and core-processes of higher education. Some such models and approaches proposed for higher education are reviewed hereunder.

2.4.2 Quality Assurance Models Developed for Higher Education

The active debate on the suitability and applicability of the industrially originated quality management models to the field of higher education sufficiently proves that no quality assurance model could be singled out for general acceptance and suitability. As Westerheijden (1999) puts it, there is no theory of quality per se, and it is necessary to link quality to its context and to the processes of which it is part. In the recent past, attempts have been made to propose and adopt quality assurance/management models/frameworks considered suitable and applicable to the nature and characteristics of higher education. These models along with the reflection underlying them could possibly enable one draw some elements of an ideal quality assurance practice. Accordingly, this section puts forward quality assurance models by way of proposals to the higher education in Ethiopia.

2.4.2.1 The Transformative Model (TM)

This model is presented by Harvey & Knight (1996). It is rooted in the notion of qualitative change on the part of the learners. In this model, education is considered as a participative process and students as participants, as opposed to products, customers, service users or clients. Hence, education is not a service for customer but an ongoing process of transformation of the participant (Harvey and Knight, 1996). This model is premised in the proposition that an effective model is one that develops a quality culture of continuous improvement. It shifted the primary emphasis on quality from external scrutiny to internal effective action. As summarized below, this model focuses on two main concepts: enhancing and empowering the participant; viz. the student.

First, quality education is one that effects changes in the participants and thereby enhances them. They call it 'Value-added measure'. It judges quality in terms of the extent to which the educational experience enhances the knowledge, abilities and skills of students.

The second major concept of this model is empowering participants. It involves giving power to participants to influence their transformation and thereby taking ownership of the learning-process. The transformation process itself provides the opportunity for self-empowerment through increased confidence, self-awareness, and so on. Empowering learners includes the development of students' critical

ability. Students' capacity to transcend received ideas, preconceptions and prejudices is emphasized.

The transformative view commits students to life-long learning, to critical reflection and to riding the continuous flow of change. According to this model, learning should be a transparent process that is based on dialogue between teachers and students, and also among teachers about the teaching and learning process. This contributes to a rich and relevant total student experience as well as to multifaceted dialogue. This model gives emphasis to the need to devise a quality system that drives improvement from the staff-student interface. Therefore, quality assurance systems, according to this model, should both be student centered and oriented towards the experience of the learner.

2.4.2.2 Comprehensive Educational Quality Assurance Model (CEQAM)

Boyle and Bowden (1997) propose this model based on their general knowledge of quality assurance and academic needs and culture. According to the authors, the requirement for comprehensive quality assurance approaches include: 1) an overarching vision or purpose of the organization, 2) effective leadership and management, 3) people including policies and plan for human resource development and employee involvement and trust etc., 4) customer focus that includes knowledge of needs and expectation and customer satisfaction, 5) evaluation and continual quality improvement, and 6) structures, policy and procedures that support primary purposes and processes.

This model is grounded in the overall perspective that all support groups in an institution must develop quality assurance approaches that best enables them to achieve their goals. This model contains a number of enabling conditions, basic principles and values, and a set of related key elements integrated to form a quality assurance framework. According to the authors, the model should be interpreted in the light of its principal elements listed below.

Key Output Elements: contains evidence based quality improvements in student learning (programs), and evidence for accountability requirements, including knowledge of quality.

Key Enabling/Process Elements: include vision, values and strategic goals (including plans); program quality assurance system and processes; faculty development program; assessment of student learning (processes and information on outcomes) and faculty/personnel evaluation systems.

Key Support Systems: includes support groups, structures, policies and resources, and their quality assurance system.

The authors perceive the model in an integrated way. The three elements: *Program quality assurance system*, *Faculty development* and *Assessment of student learning* all shape the critical outcome element, namely the *Quality and continuous quality improvement in student learning*. The element *Faculty development* is viewed as an important determinant and functional partner for *Program quality assurance*. Similarly *Faculty development* and *Faculty evaluation* need to be interrelated. Similar to the transformative model, this model has a clear focus on the quality improvement in student learning.

2.4.2.3 The Engagement Model of Quality (EMQ)

This model, developed by Haworth and Conrad (1997), is grounded in the idea that students must be meaningfully engaged in learning activities through interaction with others and through conducting worthwhile tasks. In this perspective, 'high quality programs are those that contribute to the development and improvement of student learning experiences. This model emphasizes on the engagement and interaction of academics, administrators, and students in mutually supportive teaching and learning. According to this model, teaching and learning should be based on critical dialogue, mentoring and cooperative. As summarized by Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002) the model maintains that in high quality programs the principal stakeholders: academics, students, and administrators invest in five separate clusters of program quality. These programs include: participatory culture, interactive teaching and learning; adequate resources, faculty and basic infrastructure. Each of these contributes to enriching the learning experience of students. In this model, like the transformative model, program quality that enhances students learning experience is considered a primary purpose of higher education.

2.4.2.4 The Responsive University Model (RUM)

Tierney (1998) suggested this model based on the views of different authors. The main premise of this model is that quality relationships are characterized by mutuality and equality. Responsiveness of universities is required. This, according to the author, is viewed from different perspectives, namely, students, community and national points of view. The university should be student centered in programs, community centered in outreach and nation centered in research. This requires the academic staff to review regularly their academic programs in line with the internal and external demands and changes. The focus is on customers based on internal and external partnerships. This model (cited in Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2002) emphasizes on communication, which requires new relationships and partnerships both internally and externally. It also requires

the university to develop networking and partnership with government and the public. In this model, there is a clear focus on meeting the learning needs of students through communication and partnerships.

2.4.2.5 The University of Learning Model (ULM)

Bowden and Marton (1998) propose this model that shares similar ideas with the transformative model of quality in giving emphasis on 'enhancing students learning'. The authors (cited in Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2002) argued that quality in a university context relates strongly to quality of learning. This model views higher education from a pedagogical perspective. The authors argue that the essential goal that underlies universities is learning and knowledge formation. Learning is the core process in all the functions of a University. Accordingly, teaching, research and service are considered as the means, not the aims of, the university system. Preparing the individual, the community, and the society to face future problems and opportunities based on current knowledge is the ultimate objective of a university system.

Student learning in this context is not only, and probably not even mainly, a function of teaching. It however depends up on how each student experiences the learning opportunities. This model highlights a synergistic involvement of academics in course/research teams, in developing a holistic view of students' competencies and a collective consciousness of what is common and what is complimentary. In this model, there is a shift from an input-oriented educational approach to a learning-focused approach. This in turn requires a shift in university organizations to focus on policies and activities centered on student learning.

2.4.2.6 The Generic Quality Model (GQM)

Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2007) developed this model based on a synthesis of other quality models and approaches previously discussed in the literature. It focuses on student learning experience and an active collaboration at the educational delivery level as a basis for quality. The authors argue that quality in higher education is related to quality of student learning. Hence, the focus has to be on enriching the learning experiences of students.

The authors suggested that as learners are transformed in higher education, it would directly address and even exceed the 'value for money' criteria of the funding bodies and the community at large. The quality management process in this model integrates both the service aspects and the core areas of learning and teaching. The core features of the model include: 1) a clear focus on 'transformation' of the learners (and of the institution); enhancing them through adding value to their capability and

ultimately ‘empowering’ them; 2) a synergistic collaboration at the learning interface, which is grounded in the idea that high quality programs are anchored in collegial and supportive cultures that invite widespread involvement; 3) a significant commitment to improve learning that considers the critical importance of creating tangible mechanisms to preserve the commitment in order to stimulate progress.

The main elements of the model include institutional transformation of learning; teaching for transformation; assessment for transformation; quality improvement, and monitoring for quality. In this model, institutional transformation for learning involves development of a collective conscious and teaching as key performance indicators. According to this model, the focus of quality assurance is on improvement of students’ learning. Learning improvement in turn should be informed by educational theory.

In this generic model, emphasis is given to the role of the student. Empowerment of the course team across all boundaries to facilitate a dialogue centered on learning is also another point of focus. Implementation of this model requires the development of collective consciousness and vision shared by all actors involved. The model carves a clear role for senior management to encourage and ensure collegial culture. Commitment of senior management, culture of continuous improvement, team interaction and shared vision within the academic community are also some requirements for the actualization of quality assurance. Similar to the preceding models, this model focuses on what and how students are learning and on how student learning can be improved.

2.4.2.7 Dill's Academic Quality Framework (DAQF)

This framework is proposed by Dill (1992) based on his basic assumption that a higher education program can be conceived as an interrelated system. The focus in this framework is on the centrality of academic design and on the means of managing academic quality in higher education. The emphasis is on the entire program chain. Teaching is carried out through a designed program that features specific educational processes. Quality, in this framework, is not “assessed in,” or not “controlled in,” but “designed in.” In this perspective, academic quality is the responsibility of all academic programs with strong leadership exercised collegially by the faculty as a whole. The educational program is not static. Rather, it is continually designed and redesigned based on stakeholders’ needs as well as faculty knowledge and expertise. The core activities of academic quality management would address the following critical intersect in the program chain.

Source Management and Student Selection: This focuses on cross-functional teams and on increased coordination of related processes including admission, registration etc. A concern with student quality and success is the underlying idea

in this regard. In the quality management processes, there is greater emphasis on assuring the continual improvement and reliability of the performance of incoming students based on measures of academic quality.

This entails not only assessing students for admission on critical measures, but also systematically validating the preparation of the student body and effectiveness of selection processes based on the essential criteria of academic quality. Thus, an academic quality management perspective places greater emphasis on the relationship between student selection and their long-term success on academic tasks. The integration and coordination of source management and student selection with the process of academic program design is also another focal point.

Academic Program/Process Design: Faculty members' skills in instruction, course planning, and student assessment based on common causes of variation are the basic concerns here. There is also an emphasis on the importance of coordinated program designs/ cross-functional design teams including faculty representatives, educational assessment, production materials as well as sequencing of those academic program components to effective student learning. The academic program design involves the sequencing of various academic program components to make student learning more effective.

Customer Needs Research: The model recognizes the importance of conducting research on college alumni as well as on potential employers. This is to find out the relevance of academic skills and of knowledge to post academic success. Survey on the perceptions of alumni in various occupational sectors as to what constitutes quality academic preparation could provide institutions with the potentially valuable customer research.

Design a Supporting Quality Information System: This deals with the collection of data on measures of the students' performance. This model involves measures based on assessment embedded in the educational process. Core elements of the process include student admission and placement, dropout, graduates' competence and their satisfaction in their respective programs. These critical components of an ideal academic quality information system are necessary to support the management process of student selection and source management, program or process design, customer satisfaction and institutional legitimacy. This model puts emphasis on institutional processes and conditions that affect student-learning experience.

2.4.2.8 Massy's Model of Quality Process (MMQP)

This is developed by Massy (2003) as a quality process model dealing with both the design and implementation of quality. In this model, design quality refers to the specification for the product or service, whereas implementation quality refers to how well production actually meets the specifications. As Massy (1997) noted, focusing attention on teaching and learning, assisting institutions in their efforts to improve teaching and learning quality, and facilitating accountability for quality are the objectives of this model. The following five domains of activities are contained in this model:

Determination of desired learning outcomes: This domain deals with the intended outcomes of the educational programs expressed in terms of changes in students' capabilities and experiences.

Design of curricula: This refers to the content, sequence, organization and relevance of the curricula including course materials. This domain deals with design quality.

Design of teaching and learning process: This domain deals with the organization and selection of appropriate teaching methods as well as other resources. Some of these resources include roles and responsibilities of the faculty and feedback mechanisms.

Design of Student examinations and use of examination results: This deals with the selection and use of assessment measures and indicators to assess the students' learning, which includes the determination of long-term outcomes of educational experiences and the procedures to be employed.

Implementing quality assurance: This refers to the mechanisms employed by the academic community to assure to which extent content is delivered as intended, teaching and learning process is being consistently implemented, and assessments are effected and results effectively used.

Putting more emphasis on desired learning outcomes, curricula, educational processes, student assessment, and implementation quality is the central theme in this model. It also focuses on the quality of design of curricula, on outcomes and on the processes of teaching, learning and assessment.

2.4.2.9 Quality Management Framework for Higher Education (QMFHE)

This model is proposed by Csizmadia (2006) based on insights derived from a review of quality assurance and management models previously described in the literature. This model is grounded in the basic system model that characterizes higher education as an academic organization. It employs the input-throughput-output approach with a focus on education and its direct support processes. The

main elements of the model are described under input, throughput and output dimensions.

The input dimension includes external influences such as governmental expectations, accreditation agencies, students' demands and resources. The specific educational processes such as academic, governance and support processes are categorized under the throughput dimension. Finally, the elements such as student satisfaction with courses, student/employer satisfaction with degree programs, study results, research output and services are categorized under output. This model also focuses on education and support processes that influence quality of learning outcomes.

2.4.2.10 The University as a Learning Organization Model (LOM)

This concept was first coined by Senge (1990). The fundamental premise of a learning organization is that learning is valuable, continuous, and most effective when shared, and that every experience is an opportunity to learn (see Kerka, 1995). A learning organization is an organization skilled at creating, acquiring, and transforming knowledge; modifying its behavior; facilitating the learning of all its members, and continuously transforms itself (Lewis, *et al.* 2008).

In this perspective, a university is conceptualized as being both explicitly and implicitly built on notions of relevance to the importance of learning at an individual level. This perspective considers quality of education as a dynamic concept involving continuous improvement and development of members, practices, processes, and outcomes of an educational organization (Cheng and Tam, 1997). The main characteristics of a learning organization are: learning culture, free exchange and flow of information, commitment to learning, valuing people, climate of openness and trust and learning from experience (Nakpodia, 2009).

The five disciplines essential to a learning organization include team learning, building shared vision, awareness of mental models, personal mastery and systems thinking (Senge, 1990). Team learning focuses on the ability of the group to learn, and shared vision refers to building understanding and commitment among members concerning the organizational vision. Awareness of mental models refers to the assumptions that affect ways of seeing and interacting with the environment. Personal mastery is related to development of an individual's vision. Systems thinking involve integrating others into a coherent theory. The main trust of this perspective is that the chances of successful implementation of quality assurance in university will be improved if the organization operates as a learning organization with a commitment to continuous quality improvement (Lim, 2001).

2.4.3 A Synthesis of the Main Elements of the Models

The review of the models indicates that formal quality assurance in higher education originated from the quality management models of industries. The quality management models, in one way or the other, focus on a culture of continuous improvement of organizational processes. They also put emphasis on the role of leadership and management for change, on customer satisfaction, on organizational outcomes and etc. It is argued that the quality management models are not easily applicable to the higher education sector because unlike the industries, universities and other educational institutions use a professional production technology. In addition, they deal with students, human beings, not with lifeless raw materials. The quality management models may be more readily applicable to the service aspects of universities (e.g. managing student admission, resources, facilities and support services etc.). In this study the elements of continuous improvement, and leadership and management are considered important, though the application of the models to teaching and learning processes is questionable.

With regard to the quality assurance models adopted for higher education, there are some commonalities in focusing on the internal and pedagogical processes. To the *transformative model*, *comprehensive educational quality assurance* and *generic models*, for example, a culture of continuous quality improvement is at the center of quality assurance. These models focus on the conditions and internal processes including aims, policies and methods that drive improvement at the student-staff interface. In a similar vein, creating mutually supportive teaching learning through the engagement and active participation of staff, administrators and students are at the center of the engagement model. The responsive university model also highlights the university to be student centered in its services. These models focus on quality of programs that contribute to the improvement of students learning and development.

To the *University of learning* model, all the organizational characteristics and educational processes of universities are means to enhance quality of learning and thereby prepare the learner as well as society to face future problems and opportunities. The *quality management framework for higher education*, *Dill's academic quality framework* and *Massy's model of quality process* also emphasize on the conditions that affect quality of student learning. These include a focus on learning outcomes, on curricula, on educational processes, and on quality management. The *learning organization* perspective also focuses on the importance of learning and on culture of continuous quality improvement in an organization.

Table 2-1 presents a summary of the main elements of the quality assurance models developed for higher education (the '✓' mark is used to indicate the focus of each model).

A closer look at Table 2-1 shows that the quality assurance models are not mutually exclusive. There is a clear focus on student learning, the primary educational processes and on continuous quality improvement across the models. Student learning may be described as the totality of the experiences attained by students as a result of their engagement in the educational process. It is related to the specific levels of knowledge, skills and abilities that students achieved as a consequence of their engagement in a particular college or university program (Dill, 2003). As Barnett (1992) argued, the student experience is of high quality where there is a process of student development designed to enable students to advance to the higher order capabilities, which typify a genuine higher education.

The emphasis on student learning experience goes in line with the argument by different authors on the importance of students' learning and the role of students in the quality of their learning (Barnett, 1992; Dill, 1995; Harvey, 1995). It also goes in line with arguments regarding quality monitoring (Horsburgh, 1999). Barnett (1992), for instance argued that, at whatever level (national, institutional or program), serious interest in the quality of higher education should entail the improvement of the student experience. Astin (1993) had also the opinion that institutional excellence should be measured in terms of the growth and improvement in students learning. In a similar vein, Tam (2002) noted that 'true quality' depends to a large extent on the institution's commitment to and interest in the educational and personal development of its students.

Considering the main features of the models and the supporting views cited above, I maintain the argument that an effective quality assurance model in higher education is one that focuses on the core educational activities and processes that affect quality of student learning experience. Accordingly, I propose hereunder the domains of activities that should be considered in quality assurance model for student learning.

Table 2-1 Summary of Main Features of Quality Assurance Models

Focus	Quality Assurance Models ¹									
	TM	CEQAM	EMQ	RUM	ULM	GQM	DAQF	MMQP	QMFHE	LOM
Student learning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Learning outcomes	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Preparation & selection of incoming students							✓			
Design of curricula		✓					✓	✓	✓	
Teaching and learning processes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student assessment process	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓
Engagement of staff, students and administrators	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Staff development program		✓					✓			
Personnel/Faculty evaluation system		✓								
Organizational policy& structure		✓						✓		
Effective leadership & management		✓					✓	✓	✓	
Demands, expectations & satisfaction of stakeholders		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
Quality information system		✓						✓		✓
Culture of continuous quality improvement	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Implementation quality								✓	✓	✓
Resource management		✓	✓					✓		✓
Partnership and collaboration				✓	✓	✓				

¹ Transformative Model: TM; Comprehensive Educational Quality Assurance Model: CEQAM, Engagement Model of Quality: EMQ, Responsive University Model: RUM, University of Learning Model: ULM, Generic Quality Model: GQM, Dill's Academic Quality Framework: DAQF, Massy's Model of Quality Process: MMQP, Quality Management Framework for Higher Education: QMFHE, University as a Learning Organization Model: LOM.

Educational Inputs: These refer to the human, financial and physical resources that directly or indirectly influence quality of teaching and student learning. One of the inputs is the number and preparedness of *incoming students*. The students' preparedness could be viewed in terms of their prior training and ability to pursue university education. Previous researches have demonstrated that the academic preparation of incoming students is an important foreteller of performance, retention and persistence in college (e.g. Kuh, 2007; Astin, 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). The policies, mechanisms and procedures employed to validate the preparation of students and the effectiveness of admission criteria and standards are some of the critical issues to this end.

The second input is related to the sufficiency and status of *academic staff*. The academia is considered as the academic core of higher education institutions in facilitating learning. The issues under this category include the availability of adequate, qualified and motivated academic staff with the required teaching and research skills.

Resource is the third input referring to information, financial and physical resources. Adequate financial resource, availability of physical facilities and support services such as libraries and laboratories are considered as necessary conditions to facilitate quality of student learning. Information and its analysis are critical to the improvement of quality. It may include measures of educational quality of an institution including graduates' competence and satisfaction. It is argued that resources in all forms are vital if colleges and universities are to provide satisfying and meaningful student learning experience and if quality assurance is to be more than a buzz phrase (Gift and Bell-Hutchinson, 2007; Massy, 2003). The key issues include: (i) the availability of adequate and viable resources (financial, facilities, services and support units), (2) resource allocation vis-à-vis student enrolment data, and strategic improvement of teaching, learning and assessment.

Educational Processes: This domain refers to all the organized actions and means used to deliver educational programs, activities and services that facilitate the transformation of the learner. Improved student learning experience is possible in a rigorous learning environment that requires active participation and engagement of all actors (students, teachers and leaders). This includes the curricula, teaching and learning, student assessment, staff development programs, and quality and utilization of learning resources.

Curricula are planned learning experiences offered to students. They include modes of teaching and learning and forms of student assessment. The quality of curricula is crucial in defining the quality of the teaching and intended learning

outcomes. The main issues include quality of the curriculum design, approval and review requirements and processes.

Teaching and learning refers to the organized activities related to content delivery. An effective teaching and learning process is one characterized by a shared, strategic view of learning and by the selection of appropriate teaching methods. Effective teaching incorporates critical reflection on experience-based and research-based knowledge and on pedagogy. High quality education is, fundamentally, all about affording high quality student learning (Prosser & Trigwell, 1998). Accordingly, assuring quality of teaching and learning processes is keeping a focus on how and what students learn, and on the mechanisms of improving that. In this regard, the critical issues include: (1) the assumptions that underlie the teaching modalities, methods, strategies and processes, (2) the availability of policies and opportunities to reflect on practices, and (3) a planned research program on teaching.

*Student assessment*¹ is an integral part of the educational process at the higher education institution level. Effective assessment supports deep learning in students. It plays a key role in shaping the learning approach of students and in driving their engagement and learning in the educational process. An institution's genuine commitment to assessment is a clear public statement of its desire to offer quality programs and improve student learning and development (Gift and Bell-Hutchinson, 2007). The main quality issues focus on the methods employed to monitor student's learning outcomes, on the link of outcomes to improvement of teaching and learning processes, on the credibility and reliability of the assessment, and feedback mechanisms.

Staff development program aims at improving the academic qualification and professional competence of staff. It is central to the quality of higher education in terms of maintaining and enhancing quality of the teaching-learning process. The central issue here concerns the availability of adequate staff development systems, policies, strategies, practices and opportunities

Quality and utilization of learning resources: This is concerned with the creation of physical academic environment for the effective and proper utilization of facilities and services. It includes libraries, computing laboratories and other learning resources.

¹ Assessment is an evaluation that makes graded judgments about quality, asks how good are outputs? (Kis, 2005). Student assessment may be conceived as the systematic process of collecting and using information from multiple sources concerning what students know, understand, and can do as a result of their educational experience.

Many authors articulated the importance of educational processes for the transformation of the learner. Barnett (1992), for example, argued that the quality of teaching, the quality of examination process, the quality of courses and the quality of staff development are core educational activities that directly and immediately affect the quality of student's development. Similarly, Horsburgh (1999) pointed out that the curriculum, the actual teaching and learning practices, assessment and examination, learning resources, and internal monitoring systems influence the learning experience of students in universities. In relation to this, Massy (2003) focuses on the quality of the processes. These are 'meta' activities that define planning and provide feedback and control systems needed to guide teaching and learning. Examples of such activities include: finding the most appropriate curricular content and new teaching methods, designing a better assessment, peer evaluation of teaching, and etc. (*Ibid*).

Educational Outputs: Output provides a measure of some aspect of an organization's performance. There are arguments that the outputs of universities can be tangible, intangible or value addition through examination results, employment, earnings and satisfaction (e.g. Becket and Brookes, 2006). There may not be discernible end products of universities as the transformation process continues after graduation (Harvey, 1995); often these later impacts are called 'outcomes.' Quantitative measures of output such as completion rates and research publications may be used as indicators of higher education performance, but they are not sufficient to show improvement in student learning. Hence, a meaningful quality assurance process should go beyond quantitative measures of output.

This may include the collection and analysis of data on attrition rate¹, on student learning experience and achievement², on satisfaction or the perceived meaningfulness of learning of staff and students, on graduate employment³ and earnings, etc. (Access Economics PTY Limited, 2005).

¹ Attrition rate or non-completion rate shows the proportion of students in a particular year who neither graduate nor continue studying in award course at the same institution in the following year (Access Economics PTY Limited, 2005).

² Student learning experience and achievement are aligned with the quality of knowledge, generic skills, abilities, values and attitudes attained by graduates. This is usually measured in terms of satisfaction with the quality of their experience including quality of courses and the skills they have attained (see Chalmers, 2008).

³ The graduate employment rate is linked with the labour market that shows the proportion of full-time employment as a percentage of graduates available for full-time work (Hannan and Werguin, 1999; Access Economics PTY Limited, 2005).

The next question would be: *what lessons can be learned from the experience of other countries regarding the practice of quality assurance in higher education?* The next section addresses this and related issues.

2.4.4 Quality Assurance Experience of Some Selected Countries

This section presents a review of the experiences of some developed and developing countries with the purpose to derive at some international trends in quality assurance practices. The selecting mechanism employed includes *experience in quality assurance, development context, varied continent and types of higher education system*. USA, UK, and the Netherlands are selected from the developed countries based on their long time history and experience in the practice of quality assurance in higher education while Australia and Norway are included to ensure representation of developed countries from other continents. Likewise, Asian China and India as well as African Kenya and South Africa are selected from the developing countries based on the accessibility of a relatively recent literature. The themes through which quality assurance of these nations is appraised are: *approach and level, purpose and scope, Method/procedures*.

2.4.4.1 The Approaches and Levels of Quality Assurance

Accreditation, assessment and audit are the three main approaches to quality assurance. Many higher education systems adopt one or more of these approaches. USA, the Netherlands, Norway, India, South Africa and Kenya are some of the countries that adopt accreditation in their higher education systems. Decentralized governance and market coordination characterize the higher education system in USA, whereas in the rest the higher education system is mainly in control of the nation state.

The formal quality assurance system in the USA involves accreditation and intra-institutional processes (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994) since the late 19th century. Accreditation in USA is a process of self-regulation created by the higher education institutions and programs to assure and improve academic quality (Eaton, 2003). It takes two forms: (1) institutional accreditation undertaken by the regional accreditation bodies that derive their legitimacy from the higher education institutions, and (2) specialized accreditation conducted nationally by profession-controlled bodies with a focus on nation-wide reviews of programs and some single-purpose institutions (Van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994). The intra-institutional review is a systematic review of programs mainly used by universities to assess quality of study programs and enhance institutional decision-making (*ibid*).

The *Netherlands* has also adopted accreditation as the quality assurance approach for all its educational programs (universities and universities of applied sciences) since 2003. The accreditation system in this country allows degree programs to be checked for compliance with certain quality criteria. Quality maintenance and provision of teaching and research programs are mainly the responsibility of the higher education institutions.

In *Norway*, the quality assurance system involves (1) local quality assurance systems, (2) cyclical external audits of these local quality assurance systems, (3) institutional self-accreditation of study programs and an external accreditations allocating authority for institutional self-accreditation, (4) external accreditation of study programs (in cases without institutional self-accreditation authority), and (5) non-regular external reaccreditation of study programs (unrelated to local accreditation authority) (Stensaker, *et al.*, 2010). Here, accreditation is not compulsory for universities and specialized university institutions to establish study programs, unless external evaluations have shown quality problems (*Ibid.*). Whereas, completing a one time institutional accreditation is a must for non-university higher education institutions to establish study programs. It is carried out through a combination of institutional audits and specific program assessments. In this regard, a satisfactory internal quality assurance is a precondition for accreditation status of a certain institution (Haugland, 2006).

The quality assurance framework in *India* incorporates elements of three approaches to quality assurance: accreditation, assessment and academic audit (V S Prasad, Stella, 2004). The focus of accreditation is primarily on quality of the institutions of higher education. The assessment focuses on classifying institutions on a nine-point scale regarding their stands in a quality continuum. A small team of external peers carries out quality audit followed by a public report.

In the context of *South Africa*, the quality assurance system incorporates program accreditation, institutional audit and national reviews focused on a particular area of existing programs. The program accreditation focuses on compliance with minimum standards. The institutional audit checks the effectiveness of an institution's internal quality assurance mechanisms in the core functions of the institutions. All higher education institutions are subject to the same approach of quality assurance.

In the case of *Kenya* quality assurance is done through an institutional accreditation system. It is mandatory for all private and public institutions other than the public universities established by an act of parliament. Various professional bodies are also involved in quality assurance processes. In Kenya accreditation means public acceptance and confirmation as evidenced by award of a Charter, that a university meets and continues to meet the standards of

academic excellence set by the Commission (Commission for Higher Education, 2008).

The main approach to quality assurance in *UK* and *Australia* is institutional quality audit. In UK, universities and colleges are autonomous and self-governing institutions. Institutional quality audit and performance assessment are used as approaches to review and ensure that the universities and colleges are providing higher education and qualification award to the level of an acceptable quality. Each institution has internal quality assurance system to enhance quality of its provision. The main elements employed to standards and quality includes: the assessment of students and the procedures for the design, approval, monitoring and review of programs (QAA, 2005). In the case of *Australia*, quality audit is the main approach to quality assurance. It focuses on the adequacy of the institution's quality assurance arrangement. It is based on external quality monitoring, but it does not provide any specific criteria to the universities.

China's main approach to quality assurance is teaching quality evaluation; i.e., a comprehensive review including teaching, management and quality assurance processes (LI, 2010). Teaching quality evaluation is the most influential evaluation activity in Chinese higher education; similar to the UK institutional audit (*Ibid*). The discipline-based review carried out by discipline-based higher education teaching steering committees is also another nationwide quality evaluation system. There are both centralized and decentralized quality assurance bodies in China. Higher education institutions in China have been required to establish their own internal quality assurance system since 2008.

Besides the three approaches, many developed countries employ an external examiner system (e.g. UK, Australia), licensing or certification of graduates by professional associations (e.g. USA, surveys on student learning experience and graduate employment. These mechanisms are considered important in understanding quality of student learning: the knowledge, ability and skills attained as a result.

2.4.4.2 Purpose and Scope of Quality Assurance

As shown in section 2.3, improvement and accountability are the two major purposes of quality assurance in higher education. Improvement-led quality assurance is formative in nature: it focuses on continual improvement, but not on control. While accountability-led quality assurance is summative and judgmental that focuses on accounting of an institution's performance to stakeholders and public information. No matter the balance between the two, accountability and improvement are features of the purpose of quality assurance systems in most of

the countries reviewed (USA, Norway, Australia, the Netherlands, South Africa and Kenya). In the UK, India and China, the purpose includes quality control.

The scope of quality assurance is teaching/learning and research in most of the countries reviewed. Besides, the scope of the UK's quality assurance includes internal quality assurance processes and policy, while Australia includes management and quality assurance processes. In China and Kenya the focus is on teaching and learning aspects.

2.4.4.3 Criteria and Methods for Quality Assurance

Two basic methods: self-evaluation/self-review/self-study within the institution; followed by peer review and/or external review including site visits characterize the quality assurance system of the countries afore discussed. The accreditation process in USA involves self-assessment followed by a visit of a team of external assessors and a binary judgment about the attainment of threshold academic standards that has an implication for the eligibility of institutions to participate in federal student grants and loans.

In the Netherlands, the same principles of self-evaluation and peer review with on-site visit are applied. The Dutch higher education institutions have a long time experience of monitoring the position of their graduates on the labor market by means of annual surveys (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2004). In Norway, institutional accreditation processes are dependent upon the initial audit of institutional quality assurance systems and self-assessment is an integral part of the accreditation process. In China, India, South Africa and Kenya, the methods include self-review by the institution, followed by peer review, on site visit and reports.

The same is true with the institutional quality audit in UK where self-study, peer review/external review and public report are the methods of quality audit. Besides this, the quality assurance methods in the universities of Australia include: assessment of new units of study; reviews of courses; student evaluation of teaching; use of external examiners, surveys of graduates and employers, and use of performance indicators (Harman and Meek, 2000).

The criteria or aspects of quality assurance: academic content/curricula, teaching/learning, student assessment, resources (staffing, facilities and services) are common features of the quality assurance system across the reviewed countries. Besides, some countries focus on evidence of student learning outcomes (USA, UK, the Netherlands and Australia), institution's mission and student recruitment and Admission (USA, UK, Kenya), Institutional organization and management (Norway and India).

2.4.4.4 Lessons Learned

The preceding sub-sections provide a brief overview of the quality assurance experiences of some selected countries in terms of the approach, level, purpose; scope, methods and criteria for quality assurance. Analysis of the review indicates that there are both similarities and differences among the quality assurance systems of the selected countries.

Most of the quality assurance systems of the countries exhibit similarities in terms of the purpose, scope, methods and criteria for quality assurance. Regardless of the approaches followed, the purposes of quality assurance encompass the elements of both accountability and improvement in most of the countries reviewed. The scope of quality assurance is Teaching/learning and research in most of the quality assurance systems albeit some countries consider additional elements. Methodologically, the self-review/self-study/self-evaluation, followed by peer review/external review, on site visit and report are common features of the quality assurance system across the countries. Internally, the self-study is mainly linked with the improvement purpose, and the peer review/external review has elements of accountability.

There are also commonalities in terms of the criteria/standard for quality assurance. In this regard, aspects of the educational process such as curricula, teaching/learning, and student assessment are common denominators of the criteria for quality assurance across the countries.

Nevertheless, there are variations in terms of the approach and level of quality assurance among the quality assurance systems. Some countries employ institutional and program accreditation as their approach to quality assurance (e.g. USA and Norway). Others, like the Netherlands adopt program accreditation. Still others like Kenya adopt institutional accreditation. Countries like India and South Africa use the combination of program accreditation, institutional audit and assessment. China, for its part, applies the teaching quality evaluation. In the UK and Australia, institutional quality audit is the approach for quality assurance. Also, evidence regarding student-learning experience is not a common feature of the quality assurance systems. Some countries employ external examiner system or professional licensing (e.g. UK and USA), or student and graduate employment surveys (e.g. the Netherlands and Australia) as mechanisms to gather and analyze information on quality of student learning. The lesson that can be drawn from such variations is that the system of quality assurance must be in consonance with the historical and educational context of a country.

It is noticeable that the review focuses on the quality assurance system of the countries, but it does not cover the actual quality assurance practices in the higher

education institutions. Hence, the next question is: what do the empirical studies show regarding the experience in quality assurance practices? In relation to this, Lim (2001) conducted empirical study and identified six conditions in which quality assurance systems have worked in universities of developed countries. These include (1) availability of qualified staff with the required teaching and research skill and experience; (2) full time employment and engagement in the same institution; (3) presence of adequate physical, electronic, and administrative support services; (4) appointment and promotion of staff based on academic merit; (5) commitment and understanding of university's top leadership to quality assurance system, and (6) presence of a fair degree of academic freedom. The author argued that the necessary and sufficient conditions for efficient quality assurance are not present in developing countries. This suggests differences in quality assurance practice between developed and developing countries.

2.5 Conclusion: towards good practices in quality assurance

The major themes and issues related to quality assurance in higher education are reviewed in this chapter. Naturally, the discussions on the concepts and definitions of quality and its assurance lack consensus among scholars. A closer look at the reviews indicates that student learning is implied in the definitions suggested by different authors. There is a strong support by many authors for the view that quality is a transformation of the learner (Barnett, 1992; Harvey and Green, 1993; Birnbaum, 1994; Frazer, 1994; Harvey and Knight, 1996). To this end, we would argue that the conceptualization of quality and its assurance in higher education becomes meaningful when it centers on student learning experience. In this context, especially at the undergraduate level, quality assurance becomes effective when it focuses on the core educational processes and conditions that affect quality of student learning. This is related to the issues on what should the purpose of quality assurance be. Many of the debates on the purpose of quality assurance are based on the four quality values proposed by Brennan and Shah (2000) and elaborated by Luckett (2006).

The review also showed that there are two quality assurance approaches, namely the improvement-led internal and accountability-oriented external with a noticeable tension in between. Such a tension is related to power relations between the different stakeholders of higher education. It is argued that the accountability- oriented quality assurance encourages compliance culture rather than improvement; student learning is enhanced through improvement-led quality processes and strategies that improve the core educational processes.

The argument for the improvement-led quality assurance is embedded in the assumption that quality of student learning depends largely on quality of the internal processes of the institution; it is best guaranteed when the responsibility for quality assurance is located as closely as possible to the processes of teaching and learning (Wilger, 1999). In this context, the effectiveness of accountability-oriented quality assurance system is viewed in terms of its facilitative role and in its reinforcing effect on the internal quality processes.

Another common feature of the quality assurance models is emphasis on student learning experience. A synthesis of the models provides common features and the domains of activities to be considered in a quality assurance model for student learning. On the other hand, the review of the quality assurance experiences just presented illustrates not only similarities but also variations in quality assurance systems. There are commonalities in quality assurance experiences. Self-evaluation is at the center of the quality assurance systems mainly linked to improvement; suggesting that there are some similarities across quality assurance systems in terms of purpose, scope, methods and criteria that have found broad acceptance in many countries. The variations across the systems also indicate the importance of context in understanding quality assurance practices.

Based on the synthesis of the reviews discussed in the subsequent sections, good practices in quality assurance are proposed with a view of identifying the conditions or key success factors for a viable quality assurance model for student learning.

2.5.1 Good Practices in Quality Assurance¹

A formal quality assurance system leads to improvement of students' learning experience when the higher education institutions own it and when the external quality assurance domains play a supportive and facilitative role. This goes in line with the arguments by different authors that quality of student learning is maintained through a professional commitment and engagement (e.g. Barnett, 1992; Harvey and Knight, 1996; Wilger, 1999; Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2003; Dill, 2006; Harvey and Newton, 2007; etc.). In this regard, a blend of the collegial or managerial-internal and facilitative-external quality assurance approaches suggested by Luckett (2006) seems to be appropriate for a viable quality assurance system.

¹ The phrase 'Good practices' is used here to refer to the effective or ideal institutional practices that characterize exemplary quality assurance systems

I propose key features of the good practices necessary for the functioning of an effective quality assurance system in higher education institutions in the paragraphs to follow.

1. *A Focus on quality improvement:* The primary purpose of quality assurance should be improvement in student learning. This shall involve defining educational quality in terms of student learning outcomes, taking care of students' needs in all aspects of the organizational processes, and making continuous quality improvement a priority. A culture of continuous improvement of learning is crucial in this regard.
2. *Focus on core educational processes:* Improvement of teaching, learning and assessment processes should be the foci of the quality assurance practice. This shall also involve ensuring the coherence in curricula, teaching learning, and assessment processes, checking whether the key educational processes are properly implemented, monitored and improved.
3. *Involvement of academic staff:* the academic staff should be involved in and committed to the development and implementation of quality assurance. This requires, as Wilger (1999) noted, an institutional environment within which quality is everyone's responsibility and within which a self-critical commitment to its maintenance and enhancement is a part of the professionalism of all faculty and staff. This also involves provision of opportunities for professional development, and ensuring motivation and satisfaction of staff with their work environment and devising incentive mechanisms.
4. *Involvement and commitment of leadership:* the institution's leadership should at all level and the board be involved in and committed to the development and implementation of quality assurance. This shall involve setting the overall direction of the institution towards improvement of quality education, introducing policies and structures for quality assurance with clear responsibility at all levels and monitoring their implementation. In this regard, an institution's leadership and management system is effective if it ensures the active participation of all actors (staff, students, etc.). A professionally capable, credible and visionary leader and/or manager is also crucial in this regard.
5. *Participation of students:* the quality assurance systems should value the role of students in quality improvement. This shall involve creation of a learning environment that ensures the active participation and commitment of students in their learning and in the quality assurance processes.

6. *Adequate Resources:* a quality assurance system should consider that resources (human, physical, financial and support services) are deployed and utilized effectively to the improvement of quality of education. This shall also include the allocation of reasonable resources to implement quality assurance in the higher education institutions.
7. *Policy and structure:* This is necessary to systematically implement quality assurance in the higher education institutions. This should involve the policies and structures necessary to support and enhance the primary educational processes, ranging from student admission to reward structures. The policies and structures for quality assurance should clearly delineate the role and responsibility of all actors.
8. *Accountability and transparency:* Though the primary foci of quality assurance are not accountability, the needs of other stakeholders (parents, employers and government) should be taken into account through publication of the outcomes of quality assurance. In connection to this, the external stakeholders (government agencies) should play a facilitative and supportive role in the quality assurance processes.

3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction: Organizations as Open Systems

This chapter sets out the theoretical foundation of this study. Organizational theories provide valuable insights in this regard; as the focus of this study is on organizational level practices.

Contemporary organizational theories stress the importance of an organization's environment. Many such theories have their roots in the open systems perspective. In the open-system perspective, organizations are assumed to be the most important parts of the environment (Lenz, and Engledow, 1986). The core of open systems perspectives is underpinned by the idea that organizations are complex adaptive systems that operate and constantly interact within a given environmental context, and that their interaction with their environment is vital for their survival and success (Scott, 1998; Daft and Steers, 1986; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Child, 1972; Kast and Rosenzweig, 1972; Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967; Katz and Kahn, 1966, etc.).

Open systems approaches view organizations as systems that draw certain inputs from the environment, transform them, and discharge the outputs to the external environment in the form of goods and services (Daft, 2001). It is externally oriented in the sense that it promotes quality, efficiency, responsiveness, flexibility, customer orientation, and effectiveness (Yasin, et al, 2000). In view of open system framework, a highly effective organization is in constant communication with the environment it operates in. In view of this, division of labor, decision-making structure and formalized system of rules and policies are characteristics of nearly all organizations, regardless of their differences in size and function (Mintzberg, 1983).

A number of organizational studies had given attention to the view of an organization as an open system over the past years (e.g. Parsons, 1961; Burns and Stalker, 1961; Lawrence and Lorsch, 1969; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; etc.). These studies acknowledge that organizations are embedded in multiple environments, both technical and institutional, to which an organization must respond (see also Scott, 2001). In the context of the accelerated changes in the higher education environment, the open systems perspective is considered useful to understand organizational environments (both internal and external) of universities. Hence, this chapter begins with a brief overview of the arguments on universities as open system organizations.

Organizational theories are concerned with the relation between forms of involvement and forms of control (Etzioni, 1961), structure and technology relations (Perrow, 1967), the match between structure and environment (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1969), the power of one organization over the other (e.g. Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) and the deeper and more resilient aspects of social structure (Meyer and Rowan, 1977, Powell and DiMaggio, 1991, Oliver, 1991; Scott, 1995). The organizational theories selected for this study focus on the environmental interfaces that influence the operation of organizations. Thus, the third and fourth sections of this chapter present brief discussions on organizational theories that are considered relevant for the purpose of this study. Section five provides an overview of the higher education studies on quality assurance that employ organizational theories. Finally, the main elements of the conceptual model are drawn together and discussed in the sixth section.

3.2 Universities as Open System Organizations

The view of universities as organizations enjoys continued popularity as reflected in the writings of many researchers (Meyer, *et al.*, 2005; Washington and Ventresca, 2004; Colbeck, 2002; Stensaker and Norgård, 2001; Scott, 2001; Santos, *et al.*, 1998; Fjortoft and Smart, 1994; Birnbaum, 1988; Cameron, 1981; Cameron, 1978; Gross, 1968). As Bastedo (2005) argues, to better understand higher education as an organization, a university must first be considered an open system. True to the nature of open systems, higher education institutions too depend on constant interchange with the environmental factors. Many scholars recognize universities as open system organizations¹. Birnbaum (1988) depicted colleges and universities as open and dynamic systems existing in and interacting with their environment.

Some characteristics common to open systems include ‘goals, hierarchical systems and structures, officials that carry out specific duties, decision making processes that set institutional policy, and a bureaucratic administration that handles routines’ (Baldridge, 1999). However, there are arguments that portray a university as a complex organization with unique characteristics (Van Vught and Maassen, 1992; Allen, 1988; Birnbaum, 1988; Clark, 1983; Baldridge, *et al.*, 1997; Livingstone, 1974). The fundamental elements that characterize a university as a unique organization include goal ambiguity, task complexity (knowledge

¹ It is also interesting to note that the view of the university as an open system organization is not always taken for granted. There are also counter arguments that view the university as communities of scholars or as an institution or an idea (see Newman, 1954 and others), which is beyond the scope of this study.

manipulation), client service, problematic technology, professionalism, flat organizational structure and environmental vulnerability (see Clark, 1983; Baldridge, *et al*, 1977).

Weick (1976) also viewed educational organizations as loosely coupled¹ systems. He argued that in loosely coupled systems there is difficulty of attaining unity, integration, coordination and consensus in organizational processes. In such circumstances, a breakdown in one portion of a loosely coupled system is sealed off and does not affect the other portions of the organization. A university is also characterized as organized anarchy (see Cohen and March, 1974). According to the authors (cited in Baldridge, 1999), an organized anarchy refers to a confused organization with very little organizational coordination and central goal making. In such organizations, neither control nor coordination is practiced; decisions are often by-products of activities unintended and unplanned. It is also characterized by provision of generous resources that allows people to go in different directions, by the fluidity of the institution and lack of clear destination.

As noted by Santos and associates (1998), these organizational characteristics cannot be dissociated from the environmental conditions affecting universities. As open system organizations, the core activities and processes of universities depend on the contextual factors within the organizational environment. Two organizational theories: *contingency theory* and *institutional perspectives* based on an open system framework provide a theoretical lens to clarify how organizational contexts affect the practice of quality assurance in universities. The underlying premise of *contingency theory* is that the best practices depend on the contingencies of the situation, implying that there is no one best way for all organizations, while *institutional perspectives* emphasize the importance of the institutional environment of organizations.

Notwithstanding the apparent discrepancy between the two theories, many researchers acknowledge their interrelations and complementariness in understanding and framing the environmental context of organizations (Donaldson, 1995; Drazin and Van de Ven, 1985). Both theories share the idea that organizations operate within a context that ultimately affects how they are structured and undertake their activities. Their difference lies primarily in whether organizations are assumed to respond to contextual demands for rationality or legitimacy. In this study, the intention is not to look for the marriage of the two theories, but rather to use some elements of both theories in explaining

¹ Loosely coupling here refers to things that may be tied together either weakly or infrequently or slowly or with minimal interdependence (Weick, 1976).

organizational level practices. The distinct elements and assumptions of each theory are briefly described in the subsequent sections.

3.3 Contingency Theory

Contingency theory explains how organizations adapt to their immediate operating contexts. It posits that the best way for an organization to organize depends on the environmental context it operates in. The two fundamental assumptions of *contingency theory* are, first, that there is no one best way to organize, and, second, any way of organizing is not equally effective under all conditions (Galbraith, 1973). The main thrust of *contingency theory* is to understand the interrelationship within and among subsystems as well as between organizations and their environments. It focuses on how organizations operate under varying conditions and in specific circumstances.

'Fit' is a key concept for contingency theorists. Central to contingency theory is the proposition that the performance of an organization depends on the fit between its properties and its relevant context (Drazin and van de Ven, 1985, p. 515). This theory holds that there is an optimal fit between an organization and its environment. That is an effective organization is optimally adjusted to specific environmental circumstances (Frederiks *et al.*, 1994). A closer fit between the organization and its environment results in better organizational performance, whereas misfit leads to organizational problems.

'Uncertainty'¹ is another important concept of contingency theory. As Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) noted, the amount of uncertainty and rate of change in an environment influences the development of internal features in organizations. Many authors argue that as circumstances become more uncertain, organizations must become more complex in an effort to adapt and survive (e.g. Ashby, 1956; Burns and Stalker, 1961). The differences in the degree of uncertainty and complexity of environmental demands can serve to explain part of the variance in organization's response to the environment (see Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967; cited in Bastedo, 2005).

Contingency theory focuses on the interface between the organization and its task or technical environment. The task environment is thought of as the context immediately surrounding the organization, which is often described as stable versus dynamic; simple versus complex (see Gupta, *et al.*, 1994). It is also assumed

¹ Uncertainty is the inherent state of nature, pervading organizational life, which results when information is limited, ambiguous, complex, unpredictable, or probabilistic (see Clampitt & Williams, 2005).

to include organizations, which directly influence the goal setting and goal achievement of an organization (Lenz and Engledow, 1986). The environment, for *contingency theory*, is a source of inputs, of markets for output, of competition and of regulation.

Contingency theory analyzes interrelationships among three elements: the nature of the task performed by the organization, the environmental context of the organization and the structural arrangements of an organization (Mohamed, 2010). It contends that organizations are contingent upon several internal and external environmental factors.

Most theorists studying organizations have identified organizational size, age, location, technology, leadership, goals and culture as some of the contingency variables that affect organizations (e.g. Donaldson, 2001; Henderson, 1999; Child, 1972; Vroom and Yetton, 1973; Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967; Thompson, 1967). Many organizational studies have used this theory as a useful tool to examine the extent to which organizational characteristics explain and predict organizational practices (e.g. Donaldson, 2001; Daft, 1992; Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967). However, emphasis on the role of organizational contingencies may not alone be sufficient to understand how organizations perceive and deal with their environmental expectations. Hence, the elements of institutional theory provide useful insights regarding the influence of organizational environment.

3.4 Institutional Theory

One of the fundamental assumptions of *institutional theories* is that the environment exerts enormous influence on how organizations operate. They (also named by DiMaggio and Powell, 1983 as new institutionalism) assert that organizations are social systems shaped and influenced by the context of larger social and political frameworks of norms, values and rules (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

An organization's environment may be divided into two categories: the task environment and the institutional environment (see Hall, 1977; Oliver, 1997). The task environment consists of the limited number of factors that directly affect an organization, whereas the institutional environment involves the almost unlimited number of factors that influence all organizations in the society (the general societal environment) (Hall, 1977). In essence, the task environment is composed of the set of factors that are unique to organization, while the general societal environment includes environmental factors that are the same for all organizations (see Bastedo, 2005). Scott (1981), however, argued that it is not always clear the distinction between task and institutional environments. The

factors in the institutional environment could permeate into the task environment under turbulent conditions.

Factors in the task environment include: customers of the organization's output, suppliers of the organization's input, competitors of the organization, and regulatory agencies (see Carroll and Huo, 1986, Jones and George, 2003). Institutional¹ environment refers to the general environment composed of economic, socio-cultural, political/legal, technological, and demographic forces (*Ibid.*). It functions as highly rationalized myth to which organizations must ceremonially conform to appear appropriate and responsible, and not explainable by direct task contingencies (Zucker, 1987; Scott and Meyer, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

Institutional theories assume that organizations seek legitimacy² and approval (see Oliver, 1997). In this regard, organizations mirror policies, structures, rules and regulations that conform to the prevailing expectations of their institutional environment, and thereby obtain external validation or legitimacy (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Oliver, 1991; Scott, 1995). This, in turn, enables organizations to compete effectively, to have better access to resources, and thereby increase their chance of survival. In relation to this, Tolbert and Zucker (1993) argued that the adoption of policies or programs is importantly determined by the extent to which the measure is institutionalized whether by law or by gradual legitimization.

Organizational legitimacy may be attained through symbolic behavior, which refers to the appearance rather than the fact of conformity that allows organizations to alter the public perception of their legitimacy and enhance social acceptance (see Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Oliver, 1991; Berrone, *et al.*, 2009). According to Bastedo (2005), symbolic compliance often occurs through a process of decoupling.³ The idea of institutional decoupling suggests that there is no

¹ Institution refers to the regulatory structures, government agencies, rules, laws and professions, which are considered as mechanisms of environmental control over organizations (Oliver, 1997).

² Legitimacy is defined as the degree to which actions by organizations in a given field are accepted as appropriate and useful by the broader public (see Scott, 1995).

³ Decoupling refers to the process by which certain organizational behaviours are dissociated from the core organizational activities (Bastedo, 2005). It designates a distinction between the formal structure of an organization and its actual day-to-day activities (Meyer and Rowan, 1991). In this regard, independent of the drive for efficiency, organizations gain legitimacy, if necessary through decoupling their formal structures from their technical properties.

perfect link between formal organizational prescriptions (policies and structures) and actual organizational action/ practice.

When organizations respond to external institutional pressures, they protect their technical activities through decoupling elements of structure from other activities and from each other (*ibid.*). Hence, the formal structure serves only ceremonial purpose and often might not correspond to technical efficiency. Meyer and Rowan (1977, cited in Bastedo, 2005) view many of the decoupling procedures acting as ‘rational myths; symbols of efficiency and effectiveness, but which lack those qualities under closer scrutiny. In relation to this, Brunson and Olsen (1993) argue that it is possible to affect people’s picture of an organization by talk, changing a name or projecting an image through symbols without necessarily changing any structures or processes. Lines (2005) also noted that the decoupling of the formal structure and practical action explains the problem of getting public reforms to work as intended, in that reforms may have an effect on a symbolic level but do not have any substantial effect on organizational practice.

Evidences from the extant studies show that organizations maintain symbolic compliance with legal and stakeholder demands by adopting but not implementing governance structures and various positions (Edelman, 1992; Zajac and Westphal, 1995). In view of this, quality assurance systems, policies and structures may be adopted but not implemented in universities.

In focusing on legitimacy, institutional theorists highlight cultural influence on organizational decision-making and on formal structures (e.g. Barley and Tolbert, 1997). They argued that institutions are variously composed of “regulative systems that depend more on external controls; normative elements that rely more on internalization processes, and cultural-cognitive elements, which rest on more deeply set beliefs and taken-for granted assumptions, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life” (see Scott, 2001).

The shared norms, values, beliefs, assumptions, myths and rules that make up an organization’s culture provide understanding of what is valued; how, why and by whom are decisions made within a given organizational context. In connection to this, institutional theorists prescribe that a ‘normative’ match is necessary for organizations to change because of expectations from institutional environment (e.g. government initiatives). Organizations exhibit inertia and resistance towards change when the changes proposed are not congruent with existing norms, values, beliefs and tradition (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Scott, 2004).

3.5 Organizational Theories in Higher Education Research on Quality Assurance

Both contingency and institutional theories are found to be useful in studying the internal and external environmental dynamics of higher education institutions though there are certain points of criticism¹ on them. Some studies have applied the basic concepts and assumptions of contingency and institutional perspectives in researching the influence of organizational environment on the operation of universities (see e.g. Frederiks *et al.*, 1994; Lounsbury, 2001; Casile&Davis-Blake 2002; Erden, 2006; Mitchell, 2006; Rosa, *et al.* 2006; Kezar, *et al.*, 2008). A brief overview of some of the studies is presented in paragraphs that follow.

Erden (2006) applied the institutional perspective to study the Turkish higher education sector and found that where there are no strong coercive mechanisms, and when the legal framework itself has multiplicity within, historical roots of organizations become more effective in influencing the institutions' activities, structures and procedures, creating divergence.

Kezar, *et al.* (2008), in their study of the implementation of equity initiatives in universities found that organizational contextual factors imparted a powerful influence on the implementation of equity initiatives. Their findings demonstrated the interconnectedness of the different organizational context variables and their influence in the implementation of equity initiatives in universities.

Similarly, in a study on online learning policy implementation in higher education institutions, Mitchell (2006) applied the key concept 'fit' in contingency theory to test the hypothesis on policy implementation problem that arises due to a lack of 'fit' between the policy and the contexts in which the policy takes place. The findings demonstrated that the implementation of online learning policy is affected by the degree of fit between the organizational structure and the policy.

A few empirical studies applied organizational theories in the areas of quality assurance in higher education. Frederiks and associates (1994), for instance examined the relationships among evaluations of the quality of teaching and the effects of these evaluations, as well as other explanatory variables in Dutch

¹ One of the criticisms of institutional theory is its emphasis on the institutional environment to the detriment of rational-technical component (Donaldson, 1995), and contingency theory is also criticized for its focus on exchange dependencies and lack of explanatory power for the causations assumed. However, in this study, the elements and concepts drawn from both theories are used to offset the weaknesses of one by the strengths of the other.

universities, based on a contingency framework. One of their findings demonstrated a significant and positive relationship between size of study programs and active utilization of the external evaluation report in universities.

Csizmadia (2006), in a study on the implementation of quality management in higher education institutions, applied institutional theory together with resource dependency to analyze the introduction of quality management in Hungarian higher education. He found that organizational characteristics (organizational complexity, leadership, decision-making processes etc.) influence the pace and scope of implementation of quality management in higher education institutions. That is the more complex the higher education institution, the slower the pace of quality management implemented. Another finding was: the higher the commitment of leaders, the faster the pace and the wider the scope of quality management implementation. In general, Csizmadia's study demonstrated the relevance of organizational theories in analyzing the practice of quality assurance in universities.

Some writers in the extant literature on quality assurance in higher education also articulated the importance of organizational context in understanding and explaining the adoption of quality assurance in universities. Newton (2002), for example, stressed the importance of taking full account of the constraints and circumstances of situation and context, which influence both policy implementation, and the activities of key actors or 'system-users' in changing or reshaping quality policy.

The studies outlined above are useful in explicating the importance of organizational theories in the study of higher education. However, none of these studies focuses on analyzing quality assurance practices vis-à-vis quality of student learning. My study focuses on analysis of the systems and practices of assuring quality for student learning at the university level. The main elements of the conceptual framework of the study are discussed hereunder.

3.6 Conceptual Framework of the Study

In this section, the conceptual framework of the study is presented and elaborated. The main theoretical constructs identified from the quality assurance literature and elements of the organizational theories were combined to draw the dimensions of the framework. The framework conceptualized in open systems perspectives comprises four dimensions. These are the actual quality assurance practice, good practices in quality assurance, university characteristics and the organizational environment. The schematic diagram of the conceptual framework of the study is portrayed in Fig 3-1 below. The single arrow lines indicate the

direction of the influence among the variables while the double arrow line is used to show whether there is a link between actual practices and good practices in quality assurance.

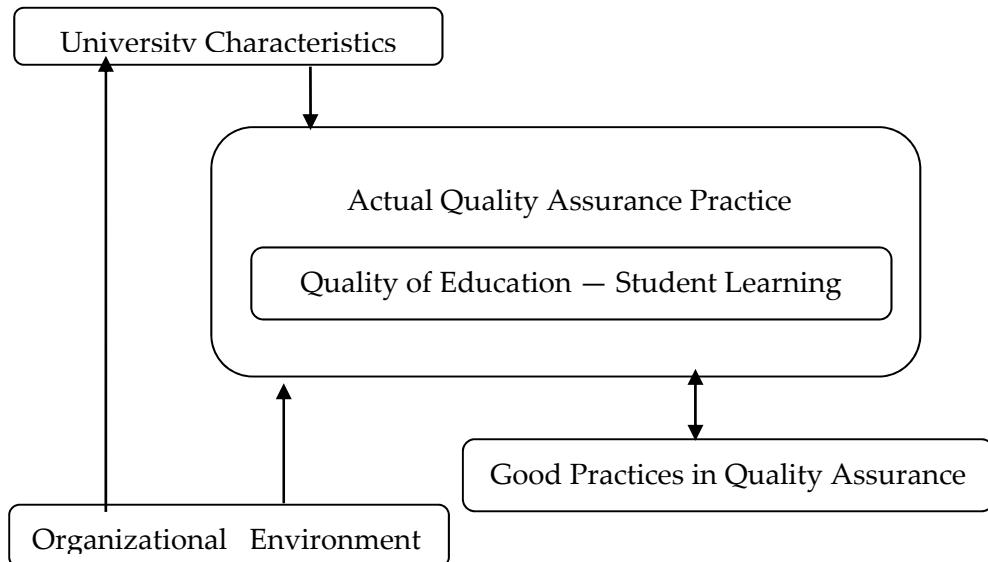


Figure 3-1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

In this study, the influence of the organization's environmental factors and the university characteristics on the actual quality assurance practices of universities will be analyzed. Also, the actual quality assurance practices will be compared with the good/desired practices in quality assurance to identify the gap between intention and actual implementation. The four dimensions of the conceptual framework are described hereunder.

Actual Quality Assurance Practice: From an open systems perspective, universities are conceived as organizations that receive certain inputs from their environment, transform them, and discharge the outputs to the external environment in the form of graduates and services. Hence, as an organization-wide task, actual quality assurance practice refers to what the universities do in terms of ensuring quality of their educational provision (inputs, processes and outputs) vis-à-vis student learning¹. It involves policies, procedures, methods,

¹ Educational inputs include quantity and quality of academic staff, preparedness of incoming students, resources (information, financial and physical). Educational process comprises the design, approval and review of curricula; teaching and learning;

structures and resources necessary to ensure quality. The addition of student learning in this dimension is based on the argument that students are necessary part of the concept of higher education organizations. In relation to this, many researchers of quality in higher education agree that student learning should be at the center of quality assurance systems and practices (D'Andrea, 2007; Harvey and Newton, 2007; Centrex, 2004; Tam, 2002; Astin, 1993; Barnett, 1992; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991, etc.). As Tam (2002) noted, the continuing improvement to maximize student learning and development is the primary goal of universities, and it should be the focus of any concern over quality and its measurement. Thus, actual quality assurance in universities is examined in terms of its emphasis on the conditions and core processes that influence quality of student learning.

Good Practices in Quality Assurance: This dimension represents the conditions and practices necessary for a viable internal quality assurance system that were drawn from the quality assurance literature in chapter 2. These include: a focus on quality improvement and the core educational processes; participation and commitment of leadership, academic staff and students; adequate resources; policy and structure, and accountability and transparency (see section 2.5 of chapter 2 for detailed descriptions of these elements). These elements are used to analyze actual versus good practices in quality assurance.

Organizational Environment: From the institutional and contingency theories, the university's environment comprises of both the task/technical and institutional environments. The environment of public higher education institutions is complex due to the multiple constituencies that higher education must serve, including external and internal actors (see Bastedo, 2005). The external actors comprise governors, legislators, state boards, parents, and etc., while the internal actors include students, staff, and faculty. Each of these actors presents their own demands for organizational adaptation to their needs (*Ibid.*). A number of competing demands from their environment, including increasing access, improving quality, increasing efficiency and effectiveness also influence the higher education institutions. This suggests that the adoption and implementation of quality assurance is not free from the influence of an organization's environment. As Newton (2007) argued, any quality assurance system will always be affected by situational factors and by context. In this study, the suppliers and regulators of the university from the task environment, and the legal/political, and socio-cultural elements from the institutional environment will compose forces of the organizational environment.

student assessment, and quality and utilization of resources. The main educational outputs include graduates and services (See also chapter 2).

Legal Framework: this refers to the legislative and regulative aspects through which governments influence the operation of an organization. It includes the government laws, acts, set of rules and regulations, and reform policies that govern and influence the functioning of an organization. According to Edelman and Suchman (1997), organizations encounter three legal environments. These are: the facilitative environment, in which law passively provides an arena for organizational action; the regulatory environment, in which law actively seeks to control organizational behavior; and the constitutive environment, in which law defines the basic building blocks of organizational forms and inter-organizational relations. In the context of higher education, the legal environment may contain proclamations, funding and quality regulatory frameworks, government control over higher education, policies regarding government's initiatives to widen access, etc. (see Brookes and Becket, 2008). The regulative aspect refers to the internal quality assurance and external quality control mechanisms. In this regard, the government can play an important role in setting the legal framework and establishing quality regulations, licenses and accreditation that legitimizing quality education. The legal framework may facilitate or inhibit the adoption and implementation of quality assurance in universities.

Regulators: This refers to regulatory agencies that possess some public authority to regulate and ensure compliance with laws, regulations, and established rules. This involves evaluation and application of sanctions for non-compliance with rules. Quality assurance agencies and professional associations in higher education and professional associations can be cited for instance. Regulatory agencies can be dependent on or independent from government or politics. Independence refers to the extent to which the day-to-day activities and decisions of regulatory agencies are formed without the interference of politicians.

Suppliers: these are the organizations that provide the university with the input resources that it needs to produce output and services (Jones and George, 2003). The students, staff, financial and physical resources are the main inputs¹ of a university. Universities recruit and enroll potential students from secondary or preparatory schools. A student's success in university education depends fundamentally on the education received in the lower tiers of the education system. In this perspective, the preparation and quality of incoming students matters a lot for the university's quality assurance practices. Similarly, the government, since it is the main source for the critical financial and material resources of public universities may be considered as another main supplier of inputs.

¹ See chapter 2.

Socio-cultural factors: These are related to the social behavior of human beings and their environment. This dimension may include factors such as pressures emanated from greater demand for access, greater diversity of student populations, and stakeholder/consumer pressure for greater accountability or value for money (*ibid*). The adoption and implementation of quality assurance in universities requires commitment and engagement of all actors towards quality learning. These values can be influenced by the socio-cultural factors prevailing in the community. These may include values and attitudes toward knowledge, ability, hard work, achievement, quality learning and material gain; values and perceptions of power and cooperation, and beliefs about student learning, professions and occupations.

University Characteristics: As discussed previously, universities are also viewed as complex organizations with unique characteristics that may influence the adoption and implementation of policies such as quality assurance. The elements that differentiate one university from the other include: leadership and governance, staff and students characteristics, age, size, location and quality culture. Each of these elements is briefly described as follows.

Leadership and governance: from an organizational standpoint, one major element to drawing distinction between successful and unsuccessful organizations is the effectiveness of leadership and governance. This is an organizational factor, which is expected to influence the effectiveness of quality assurance practice in universities in a significant way. Though there are various meanings of the term, leadership may be considered as the art of influencing human behavior towards organizational goals (See Harvey and Foster, 2007). Transformational leadership is considered as the approach of choice in today's complex organizations (see Bass and Riggio, 2006). It involves inspiring followers to commit to a shared vision and goals for an organization or unit, challenging them to be innovative problem solvers, and developing followers' leadership capacity via coaching, mentoring, and provision of both challenge and support (*Ibid*.). It is argued that institutional leaders play an important role in identifying elements constituting the institution's quality assurance systems, in making them explicit, in establishing frameworks for maintaining quality, in sharpening the responsibilities towards quality of post holders, and in raising awareness across the institutions that quality matters (Barnett, 1992). Leadership is also important in promoting a culture of quality throughout the university.

Governance is a means for realizing institutional goals and, in an ideal world, should enable the institution to respond to the demands of the political environment by regulating its internal affairs accordingly (Salter, 2002). It embraces internal management structures, decision-making arrangements and leadership roles. Three hierarchies: legislative, executive and supervisory bodies

are features of the academic governance of universities across many countries. The board is the 'peak academic body' within the academic governance of a university. It may play important roles in setting the university goals, appointing university leadership, maintaining academic standards, and defining the relationship with external stakeholders.

Organizational size: this may be considered as a contextual variable and an institutional phenomenon (Scott, 1992). The former is related to an organization's interface with its environment; large size signaling a complex relationship with the environment while the latter is related to the visibility of an institution to a variety of external constituents. Many contingency theorists consider organizational size as one of the most important factors affecting the structure and processes of an organization (Blau 1970; Damanpour, 1996, and Kimberly 1976). Some authors associate positive and negative effects with large size. As argued by Hitt *et al.* (1990), large organizations have more slack resources for new projects and diversification, greater challenges and more opportunities for promotion and growth among their employees and more control over the external environment.

Others argue that large organizations are more bureaucratic and less flexible, unable to change and adapt quickly and they tend to have impersonal work environments. On the other hand, small organizations are said to be more innovative because they are more flexible, have greater ability to adapt and improve, and demonstrate less difficulty accepting and implementing change (Aldrich and Auster 1986; Damanpour, 1996). In a study of utilization of evaluation results in Dutch universities, Frederiks and associates (1994) found a positive relationship between size and utilization of evaluation results.

Organizational age: there is debate regarding the effects of organizational age in organizational practices. Age is associated with experience and capacity of organizations. Though there are no clear evidences regarding the relationship between age and quality assurance practices in universities, we can assume that age may provide experience and capacity for organizations.

Academic staff and Students: these are the main actors that directly influence the attainment of the goal of universities. The academic personnel in universities are key resources and their performance determines, to a large extent, the quality of the student experience of higher education (Rowley, 1996). Similarly, students can also play an important role in improving quality in higher education through providing feedback on the quality of their experiences. In this regard, academic staff and students matter a lot for the successful implementation of quality assurance in universities.

Quality culture: the interest in the concept of quality culture in higher education emanates from the general interest in the culture of organizations. The sociological perspective regards culture as one of the variables to be used in explaining organizational effectiveness (Maassen, 1996, p.19). Though there is no universally accepted meaning of the concept, the culture of an organization is associated with shared values, beliefs, norms, assumptions, and meanings of individuals participating in the organization (e.g. Tierney, 1988). It includes the ways of doing things and standard operating procedures that develop over time inside an organization. Organizational culture is seen as an independent variable in organizational studies in higher education, since 'in higher education culture can affect student life, administration, and curriculum' (Maassen, 1996, p.41). Quality, as a multi-dimensional and perspective-bound construct, is connected to an organization's culture (see Harvey and Green, 1993). It actually stems from a broader cultural perspective; implying that quality and its assurance are culturally embedded (Harvey and Stensaker, 2008). In this regard, the concept of 'quality culture' highlights that structure and policies alone are not enough to enhance quality.

Harvey and Stensaker (2008) suggested four possible ideal-types of quality culture. These are: responsive, reactive, regenerative and reproductive. The *responsive quality culture* is governed by external demands such as widening access and agency expectations of compliance. It is likely to be exacerbated internally by a lack of buy-in and lack of feeling of ownership. The *reactive quality culture* is characterized by reaction to and lack of engagement with external demands. It is likely to be construed as externally constructed, managed and imposed, with little or no sense of ownership. The *regenerative quality culture* focuses on internal developments, albeit fully aware of the external context and expectations. The improvement process will be a taken-for-granted norm. The *reproductive quality culture* is focused on reproducing the *status quo*, manipulating the situation to minimize the impact of external factors as far as possible. Any attempt to develop a more open, self-critical approach is likely to result in an implacable resistance culture.

4. Operationalization, Research Design and Methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the methodological considerations of the study. It begins with operationalizations of the variables contained in the proposed conceptual framework of the study. The second section presents the research paradigm and the design while the third section discusses the methods, sources of data and sampling, data collection instruments and techniques of analysis. Finally, the issues of validity and reliability are discussed in the fourth section.

4.2 Operationalization

The variables under study are operationalized in this section based on the main constructs of the conceptual framework presented in the preceding chapter. The operationalization begins with the assumption derived from the open systems' perspective that higher education institutions, like other organizations, are open systems designed to transform inputs into outputs. In this perspective, the dimensions of quality assurance depend on the task scope of an organization. The task scope refers to the functions for which an organization has primary responsibility. In the higher education context, many universities articulate the functions of education, research and community engagement in their mission statements and the universities in Ethiopia are no exceptions in this regard.

However, in the Ethiopian higher education, the universities seem to be more engaged in teaching and learning than on the rather de-emphasized two functions; viz. research and community service. This underestimation is not however extended to the mission statements. The focus on education can be observed in the government's priority and emphasis in enrolment and institutional expansion at both the graduate and postgraduate levels. In Addis Ababa University, for example, the research institutes have recently changed their direction and have introduced training programs in response to the graduate expansion plan of the university. Hence the subsidiary of their research functions to the status of secondary importance. This suggests that the task scope of Ethiopian universities is restricted to teaching and learning. Consequently, the functions of research and community engagement are overlooked in this study as well. In the pages just to follow, proposed dependent and independent variables are listed and operationalized in order to examine empirically the educational quality assurance practices in the Ethiopian universities. A set of categorizing measures is also suggested for each variable next to the Operationalization.

4.2.1 Independent variables

Two sets of factors comprise the independent variables of this study. These are: *university characteristics* and *organizational environmental factors*, to be presented as follows.

4.2.1.1 University Characteristics

As discussed in the preceding chapter, universities are considered as complex organizations with unique characteristics. In this regard, the core activities and processes of universities are contingent upon their specific circumstances. Universities vary in terms of their age, size, leadership, staff and student profile, and quality culture¹. Each of these variables is operationalized as follows.

Leadership and governance: the role of central executive officers and senior executives as initiators, leaders, and as the ones supposed to engage in quality initiative is considered an important factor for the adoption and implementation of quality assurance in universities. In this study, institutional leadership is operationalized in terms of its (1) commitment for consistent quality improvement (2) capacity to establish a coherent framework of quality policy and strategies, resources and structures, (3) ability to create critical mass that values quality learning, (4) implementation of feedback from self-evaluation and/or quality audit, (5) influence on quality culture. Internal governance is operationalized in terms of the position and responsibility of quality assurance in governance structure of the university, role of boards, and participation of frontline actors in the planning and implementation of quality assurance initiatives. Perceptual questions for presidents, deans, department heads and academic staff, and documentary analyses have been used in chapter 8 to evaluate the role of leadership and governance.

Organizational size: this is operationalized in terms of the number of students and of faculties in the universities. In this study, three categories of size, *small*, *medium* and *large* are employed. Universities that fall under the *small* category are those whose student enrolment is less than 5000. The *medium* ones have up to 11,000 students while *large* refers to those universities with enrolment capacity of greater than 11,000. Other operationalizations of 'size' would lead to the same order. For instance, *small* could refer to those with less than 10 faculties and with only one campus while *Medium* refers to universities with more than one campus and about

¹ In the Ethiopian context, the public universities are established by the act of parliament with more or less similar vision and mission. As a result, the university vision and mission are not considered as variables for this study.

10 faculties sparsely located. Those universities with greater than 10 faculties and many campuses could be labeled as *large*. This variable is assessed through documentary analysis including statistical abstracts in chapter 7 and 8.

Organizational age: In the Ethiopian context, the age of the universities ranges from the 60 years to 4 years. This study categorizes the Ethiopian universities into three age groups as: *new*, *young* and *old*. *New* universities are less than 5 years old, *young*, less than 15 years, and *old*, older than 15 years. Analysis of documents and of empirical data presented in chapter 7 and 8 used to evaluate the role of age.

Academic staff and Students: this refers to the profile of staff and students in a university. These are operationalized in terms of the commitment and engagement of staff and students. The operationalization includes the number and qualification of staff and background of students in the respective universities. This dimension is addressed through documents and the empirical data analyses in chapter 6 and 8.

Institutional quality culture: this involves the articulation of shared perspectives, values, procedures and approaches to quality assurance practice (Gordon, 2002). In this study, institutional quality culture is operationalized in terms of the extent to which (1) quality of student learning and its enhancement is valued, (2) the values, beliefs, and expectations concerning quality learning are shared, (3) the leadership and staff values self-evaluation and uses feedback to improve quality, (4) leadership, staff and students are committed and engaged in quality assurance activities, (5) there is shared responsibility, ownership, cooperation and collaboration among all actors regarding quality assurance. These indicators have been measured through the perceptual questions contained in interviewees and questionnaires addressed in chapters 8.

4.2.1.2 Organizational Environment

This comprises the second set of independent variables. The arguments from institutional theorists suggest that university organizations are not free of the influence of their institutional environment in undertaking quality assurance practices. In this study, the legal framework, the regulators, the suppliers, and socio-cultural factors are considered as sources of influences of the university environment. Each of these environmental variables is operationalized as follows:

The legal framework: This refers to the most fundamental policy and the legal grounds for the adoption and implementation of quality assurance in universities. In the Ethiopian context, the higher education proclamation No. 351/2003 (FDRE, 2003), endorsed in 2003 and improved in 2009 (FDRE, 2009)) is the major legal

framework that guides the operation of the higher education system. This includes the government reform initiatives such as expansion and graduate mix policies and BPR. The legal framework is operationalized in terms of the extent to which it enables universities assure and improve quality of their core educational processes that influence student learning. Perceptual questions, legal documents and published government reports including audit reports have been used to address the legal issues and are discussed through chapters 7 and 8.

Regulators: These refer to the bodies that enforce the implementation of government rules and regulation concerning quality assurance in higher education. In Ethiopia, the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) is responsible for the external quality regulation of higher education institutions. In this study, the regulators aspect is operationalized in terms of HERQA's role in influencing the establishment and implementation of internal quality assurance system in the universities. Perceptual questions for university leadership, staff, HERQA, and MoE personnel, the proclamation, and published documents such as HERQA and MoE's requirements, self-evaluation and quality audit reports have been used to evaluate this dimension as presented in chapters 7 and 8.

Suppliers: This refers to the sources of inputs of universities, of which students are the primary inputs. In the Ethiopian context, preparatory high schools are the places where students are prepared for higher Education. In this study, suppliers as preparatory schools are operationalized in terms of their role in preparing students for university education. Finance/funding is the other input. The financial source of the Ethiopian universities is mainly from government. In this regard, suppliers are also viewed in terms of fund allocation mechanisms. This variable is approached through perceptual questions and analysis of published national learning assessment reports, national leaving certificate exam and university entrance exam results, and statistical abstracts portrayed in chapters 6 and 8.

Socio-cultural factors: This dimension is operationalized in terms of the extent to which the social factors, the beliefs, attitudes, values and ethos of the wider community influence the adoption and implementation of quality assurance in universities. Perceptual questions, documentary analysis on access and on change and stability in policy environment have been used in chapter 8 to address this issue.

4.2.2 *Dependent Variable*

Quality assurance practice in universities is the dependent variable for the empirical analysis of this study. Quality assurance is conceptualized in this study as the totality of the policies, models, values, procedures, methods, structures, resources and actions devoted to ensure quality of education in universities. Quality of education in universities is envisaged in terms of quality of input, process and output aspects. The operationalization of quality assurance system and practice in universities is approached in terms of its *adequacy* and *efficacy*. Each of these elements is described as follows.

Adequacy: the adequacy of quality assurance practice is related to its focus on quality of education. Quality of education is operationalized in terms of the (1) Input elements: academic background of incoming students, the adequacy and professional competence of staff, and the accessibility and adequacy of resources, (2) process elements: the quality of curricula, teaching-learning, student assessment and examination, staff development, and effective utilization of resources, and (3) Output elements: the quality of graduates. These 3 elements are assessed using perceptual questions and analysis of documents concerning the state of educational quality and the quality assurance practices in chapter 6 and 7, respectively.

Efficacy: the effectiveness of quality assurance practice is operationalized in terms of three aspects. The first one refers to the extent to which the quality assurance practice has been formalized and made workable frameworks/models, systems, policy, structure, procedures and instruments to assure quality of the core educational processes and conditions. The intention here is not to measure quality of student learning, but rather to see if there are functional mechanisms that enable to improve student learning. These mechanisms may include student surveys and established committees that have quality teaching, quality assessment, staff evaluation and development in their remit. The second aspect is related to the extent to which the aim of quality assurance encourages improvement or compliance. The third aspect examines the gap between intention and actual implementation; addressed by comparing actual quality assurance practices in universities against the good practices in quality assurance depicted in the conceptual framework of this study. Perceptual questions for university leadership, academic staff and students, and document analysis in chapters 7 have been used to evaluate this dimension.

4.3 Research Paradigm¹ and Design of the Study

This exploratory study is based on the pragmatic mixed-methods design. Mixed-methods design is one in which both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to answer research questions in a single study (Mertens, 2005). Mixed-methods approach is useful to develop a better understanding of complex phenomena by triangulating or corroborating or complementing one set of results with another and thereby enhancing the validity of inferences (Mertens, 2005, Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2002; Green, Benjamin, and Goodyear, 2001).

However, the concept of mixing methods that reflect different ontological and epistemological perspectives is a point of debate in the mixed methods literature (Quinlin, 2010). Prominent constructivists such as Lincoln and Guba (2005) and Howe (2004) are challenging the concept of utilizing dramatically opposed paradigms and philosophical assumptions in a single study. The constructivists' challenge centers on the incommensurability argument that accommodation between paradigms is impossible. As Guba (1990) argued, multiple-constructed realities abound, that time- and context-free generalizations are neither desirable nor possible, that research is value-bound, that it is impossible to differentiate fully causes and effects, and that knower and known cannot be separated because the subjective knower is the only source of reality.

Proponents of mixed-methods argue that mixing of methods is inevitable, whether done consciously or not, because most research paradigms are not single, pure types but mixtures of (often contradictory) beliefs and practices that are evolving through continuous re-evaluation (Creswell, 2009 and Johnson, 2008). Their arguments focus on complementing the weaknesses of one method by the strengths of the other method by maintaining the importance of the two paradigms (see Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Social research, as Denscombe (2008) argues, inevitably requires a number of different perspectives if it is to provide useful answers to important social questions.

This study is an attempt to demonstrate the complementarity of using exploratory quantitative and qualitative methods in one study. The mixed methods design is chosen for this study based on two assumptions. First, studying quality assurance as a public policy is a complex and multifaceted

¹ The term paradigm refers to a set or cluster of commonly held beliefs or values within the research or scientific community about a field of study. The beliefs are seen as shaping or dictating how scientists and researchers should proceed in carrying out research in their field—what they should focus on, what methods to use and how the results should be interpreted (Commonwealth of learning, 2004).

process that involves the perspectives of different actors and, the collection and analysis of data from different sources. Second, employing a single approach to study quality assurance systems and practices at institutional level may limit the comprehensiveness of the data and accuracy of the findings. Hence, the mixed methods design was selected for this study to generate greater understanding about the issues under study.

4.3.1 Mixed Methods

The mixed-methods design, rooted in pragmatism¹, rejects to choose a single method from among the postpositive and the constructivist paradigms (Mertens, 2004; Patton, 2002; Smith, 1978). Pragmatists argue that a false distinction exists between quantitative and qualitative approaches, and that the relative strengths of each should be tapped in a single study (Creswell, et al., 1996). A mixture or combination of methods that have complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses is the fundamental principle of mixed methods research.

When used alone, according to post-positivists, both quantitative and qualitative approaches are flawed. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches, however, the deficiencies of one approach can be offset by the advantage of the other (Creswell, et al., 1996). Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that '...quantitative and qualitative methods are inextricably intertwined, not only at the level of specific data sets but also at the levels of study design and analysis.' According to pragmatists, if a researcher provides strong evidence for his or her claims about what practices are effective, then s/he has met Dewey's standard of warranted assertability (Johnson and Christensen, 2008).

The broad reasons for linking quantitative and qualitative data include *triangulation, complementarity, initiation, development and expansion* (see Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009; Johnson and Christensen, 2008). According to the authors,

¹ Pragmatism, as a philosophical discourse, uses the criterion 'what works?' to determine which method to use to answer a specific question (Mertens, 2004). In this paradigm, what works is what is useful and should be used, regardless of any philosophical or paradigmatic assumptions. For pragmatists reality is plural, an event and a process, and truth is tentative that will serve the purpose until experience evolves a new truth (Webb, et al., 1996; Marris and Pai, 1976). According to pragmatism, there is no absolute reality, knowledge is arrived at by scientific inquiry, testing, questioning, and retesting and is never conclusive, and meaning is derived from experience (Webb, et al., 1996). In this paradigm, researchers can hold seemingly diametrically opposite view points if they agree on the bases for warranted assertions about the workability of different lines of action (Morgan, 2007).

triangulation enables confirmation or corroboration or correspondence of results from different methods, while *complementarity* seeks elaboration, enhancement and clarification of results using different methods. *Initiation* seeks new lines of thinking through attention to surprise or paradoxes, whereas *development* enables to use the results from one method to inform the other method. *Expansion* enables to extend the breadth and range of inquiry using different methods. Hence, mixed methods not only add to the research toolbox, they also provide the opportunity for a synthesis of traditions (Ibid.).

Mixed methods designs contain two dimensions: time order and paradigm emphasis (see Fig 4-1 below). The time order refers to concurrent versus sequential, while the paradigm refers to equal status versus dominant status. In mixed methods approach the quantitative (QUAN) and qualitative (QUAL) data collection are concurrent with the intention to offset the weaknesses inherent to one method with the strengths of the other (Creswell, 2007). The weight is usually equal on the two methods; but in practice priority might be given to one or the other (ibid).

Creswell and associates (2007) identified six major designs of mixed methods: *sequential explanatory*, *sequential exploratory*, *sequential transformative*, *concurrent triangulation*, *concurrent nested*, and *concurrent transformative*¹. The authors also suggested four criteria to determine the type of mixed methods design for a given research study. These include: the implementation of data collection, the priority given to quantitative or qualitative research, the stage in the research process at which integration of both methods occurs, and the potential use of a transformational value or action-oriented perspective in their study. The integration of quantitative (QUAN) and qualitative (QUAL) results into a coherent conceptual framework is an important step in a mixed methods study².

¹ In sequential explanatory design, the purpose is to use qualitative results to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of a primarily quantitative data. In the case of sequential exploratory design, the focus is on exploring a phenomenon using quantitative results to assist the interpretation of qualitative findings. The sequential transformative design aims to employ the methods that will best serve the theoretical perspective of the researcher. The concurrent triangulation design is used to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings within a single study, whereas unlike the traditional triangulation design, a nested design has a predominant method that guides the research project. Finally, the concurrent transformative design is guided by the researcher's use of a specific theoretical perspective (see Creswell and associates, 2007).

² Note that "qual" stands for qualitative, "quan" stands for quantitative, "+" stands for concurrent, "→" stands for sequential, capital letters denote high priority or weight,

The complementarity of the data from quantitative and qualitative methods has long been appreciated (Creswell, 1995 and Greene, 1994). Collecting and analyzing data using these two approaches, therefore, helps to get a comprehensive and deeper understanding of the problem under study.

The mixed methods design is employed in this study with intent to get a complete and comprehensive picture of the topic under study. The quantitative descriptive approach was used to generate data from a wide number of sources about the respondents' knowledge and practices regarding the nature of the existing quality assurance systems and practices across the target universities. However, the quantitative data may not enable deeper explanations for why a phenomenon occurs. This dimension necessitates the use of qualitative data. Hence, the qualitative approach was employed to get data that captures the different dimensions of respondents' experiences, personal perspectives and meanings, values, norms, and beliefs regarding quality assurance practices. It may also help to get deeper insights of the issues under consideration and capture some trends that may emerge from the data.

In this study, employing mixed methods approaches also serves the purpose of 1) triangulation: gathering data using different methods from different sources helps to see the convergence of results and there by get a relatively comprehensive picture of the issues under study, 2) complementarity: using the strengths of one method to complement the weaknesses of the other method, which helps to improve the breadth and depth of the data.

The mixing of quantitative and qualitative approaches has been applied during the empirical investigation of: (1) quality of education, (2) the adequacy and efficacy of quality assurance systems, and (3) the factors that facilitate or hinder the adoption and implementation of quality assurance system in the universities (see Fig 4-1 for a diagrammatical representation of the study).

The first empirical study deals with a survey of the state of education quality vis-à-vis student learning in the target universities, which is addressed in chapter 6. This survey requires analysis of data collected from different sources and at different time points. It involves a mix of quantitative and qualitative data analysis (QUAN+ qual). One set of baseline data regarding students' background characteristics was collected from students upon entry to the old university (QUAN + qual) and during the educational process (QUAN+ qual) from the same cohort of students. In this study, the survey questionnaires have been used to generate quantitative data

and lower case letters denote lower priority or weight (see Anthony and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

concerning the conditions that influence student learning. Interviews and documentary analysis are also used to get deeper qualitative insights that enrich the data.

The second set of the empirical study investigates the adequacy and efficacy of quality assurance practices in the universities (chapters 7). It involves a mix of quantitative and qualitative data analysis (QUAL+QUAN). The quantitative data has been generated through survey questionnaires from academic staff and students. While interviews with university presidents, deans, department heads, and HERQA and MOE officials' haven been conducted to get qualitative data. Also, the documentary analysis on quality assurance policy, proclamations, rules and regulations, manuals and published reports was used to enrich the data.

In the third empirical study, a mix of qualitative and quantitative data analysis (QUAL+ quan) has been applied to explore the factors that influence the adoption and implementation of quality assurance in universities (chapter 8). Interviews with university management and academic staff, and documentary analysis are used to get qualitative insights, while the survey questionnaire for staff has been applied for the quantitative data analysis. Finally, the findings from the three empirical studies have been integrated in chapter 9, and inferences drawn to answer the research questions of this study.

Validity and reliability evidences are used to ensure quality of the collected data and the trustfulness of the findings of this study. Validity refers to the extent to which results generated by an instrument measure the characteristic or variable it is intended to measure (correctness or truth of inferences), whereas reliability refers to the consistency, stability, or repeatability of the findings. Internal validity helps us to address the question 'Does the research really test what it purports to test?' External validity is useful to answer questions of generalizability of the research results beyond the specific group tested.

Of the nine mixed methods validation or legitimization types outlined by Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2003), this study attempts to address four legitimization types, namely sample integration, inside-outside validation, weakness legitimization and paradigmatic mixing legitimization. In this study, a relatively large and identical sample was selected for both quantitative and qualitative designs. Similarly, the perceptions of participants concerning quality assurance practices in their respective universities as well as the factors that influence existing practices were captured. Finally, quantitative analysis was combined with qualitative analysis of data to improve interpretation of findings.

The following additional activities were also undertaken to improve validity of this study.

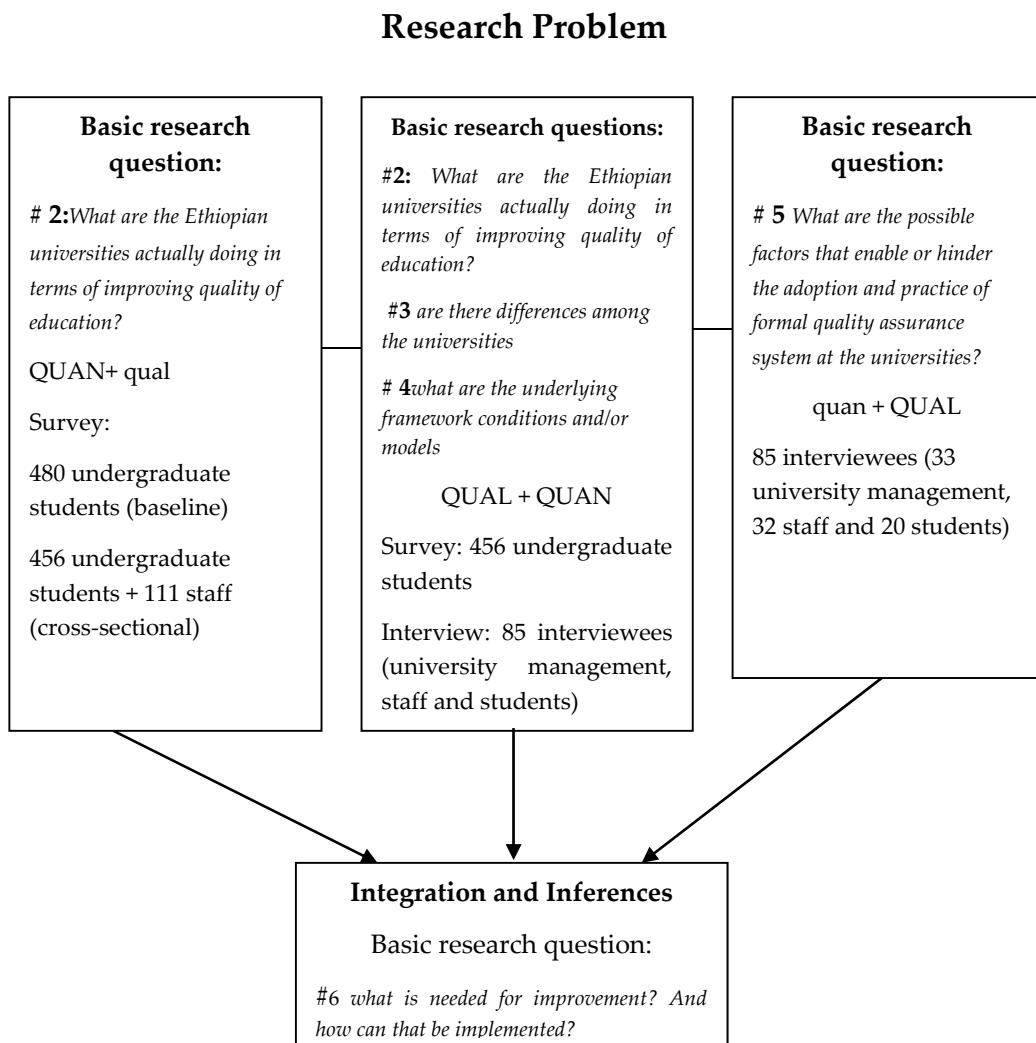


Fig 4-1 Visual Representation of the Study

(a) My efforts to understand the topic through review of the literature. I reviewed the available literature on issues of quality and quality assurance in higher education, experiences of other countries, university characteristics, organizational theories and the Ethiopian higher education system to set the conceptual framework of the study.

(b) Checking and rechecking the data and interpretation of results; frequent discussions about the issues under study with colleagues at CHEPS and AAU;

presentation of preliminary finding of the study at national conferences in Ethiopia contributed to improving the validity of the study.

(c) Triangulating the findings using different sources of data and methods was also used in the validation process.

4.3.2 Data Sources and Sampling

The sources of data comprise three sample public universities: old and large, young and medium, and new and small size universities, respectively. The organizational characteristics of the public universities were used as a basis for selecting the sample universities. The 22 public universities were categorized based on their age and size.

As the 2008/09 statistical abstract of Ethiopia indicates, the enrollment size across public universities ranges from 802 to 50,300 (MoE, 2010). Accordingly, the 12 universities with a total undergraduate enrolment that ranges from 802 to 4450 and year of establishment 2007-2008 are categorized as small and new universities. The 9 universities with a total enrolment that ranges from 6404 to 13798 and are upgraded from college to university status in 2000 are categorized as medium size and young universities. One university with a total of 22,217 annual undergraduate enrolments and year of establishment in 1950 is categorized as large and old university.

Jigjiga University from the new and small universities, and Mekelle University from the medium size and young universities were selected and included in this study using the simple random sampling technique. The Addis Ababa University is included in this study as the only large and old university. Three cases instead of one is preferred in this study for the reason that including more than one case gives more power to the analysis in terms of getting comprehensive and rich data regarding the quality assurance systems and practices of the Ethiopian public universities. The Higher Education Relevance and Quality Assurance Agency (HERQA) and Ministry of Education were also included as data sources to see the influence of the institutional environment on internal quality assurance practices.

After selecting the three cases, data were gathered from 1) Key persons working at managerial positions of the three public universities (university presidents, academic vice presidents, deans and assistant deans of the selected faculties), 2) Instructors and department heads, 3) students and student unions, 4) Key officials and experts working in the higher education sub sector and HERQA of the ministry of education, and professionals and researchers in the field of higher education, and 5) Policy and reform documents, strategic plans, guidelines,

higher education law, reports, student academic records, statistical abstracts, quality monitoring manuals, sample evaluation tools and instruments.

The multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select representative faculties, departments, instructors and students. First the faculties of each university were identified. Next eight faculties (Humanities and Social Sciences; Technology; Business and Economics; Applied Sciences; Law; Informatics; Medicine, and educational sciences) from each university were selected. Again from each faculty one department was randomly selected. Once the departments were identified, twenty graduating students and five instructors were selected from each department using the systematic random sampling techniques. The list of selected students for each section was collected from the record offices of the respective faculties.

Moreover, all the department heads and five full time instructors teaching in all the selected departments of the target universities were included in this study. Finally, the purposive sampling technique was used to select 5 professionals and researchers working in the field of higher education. These professionals were selected based on their long time experience of research and consultancy in the Ethiopian higher education system. The intention for interviewing these professionals is to get more insight into the policy issues and mechanisms working in the national higher education system of the country.

A cohort of 2007 new entry student was selected from the eight faculties of the Addis Ababa University to capture data about the learning experience of students starting from entry to exist. A total of 480 new entry students (60 from each faculty) were selected using the stratified random sampling techniques from the 2007 new entry students of the Addis Ababa University. The Addis Ababa University is selected for this purposes based on the assumption that (1) it is the most preferred choice of the majority of the applicants due to its location in the capital city of the country; (2) it enables to capture data from different types of students such as those students who joined departments based on their academic merit and choice (e.g. faculties of medicine, technology and law) and those who are randomly assigned to faculties (e.g. Educational sciences). Cross-sectional data was also collected from students of the young and new universities with the aim to enrich and illustrate results of the data analysis from students' cohort of the Addis Ababa University.

4.3.3 Procedures and Instruments of Data Collection

In this study, the survey approach and documentary analysis were employed to generate data. The survey method is employed with the intention to collect data concerning the characteristics, attitudes and perceptions of a wide range of subjects towards the practice of quality assurance. The survey data collection

method involves both self-administered questionnaires and interviews. The documentary analysis was employed to provide a contextual understanding of policy and practice environment that underlie quality assurance in universities. Each of the three data collection instruments employed in this study are described hereunder.

Three types of instruments were used in this study. These are questionnaires, interview schedules, and documents.

Questionnaire- three versions of self-administered questionnaires were developed based on the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study. The first version was designed and administered to gather baseline data from the 2007 new entry cohort of students from the Addis Ababa University. The second version was designed to capture cross-sectional data from graduating class students of the three universities. The third version was designed and administered to gather data from academic staff of the three universities. The questionnaires contained items on quality assurance practices and procedures regarding the problem areas of quality such as academic programs and staff, teaching and learning, learning resources, students, assessment and evaluation, curriculum, student services and support, physical and financial resources. The purpose of the questionnaire is to gather quantitative data. Table 4-1 summarizes the questionnaire response rates.

Table 4-1 Questionnaire Response Rates

University	Instructors		Students (cross-sectional)		Students (baseline)	
	Distributed	Returned	Distributed	Returned	Distributed	Returned
AAU	40	40	160	153	480	480
JU	40	31	160	154	-	-
MU	40	40	160	149	-	-
Total	120	111	480	456	-	-

The average response rates for instructors and students (cross-sectional) are 93% and 95%, respectively. The response rate for the baseline survey is 100%.

Interview – different versions of semi-structured interview schedules were developed and administered to the key officials, selected department heads,

instructors, and students. It aims to obtain relevant data regarding the participants' personal perspectives and meanings, opinions, values and beliefs concerning the current quality assurance practices in their respective universities. The semi-structured interviews also enable the researcher to ask for further clarifications of the issues under consideration. Fourteen university officials (presidents, deans and department heads), 23 instructors and 10 students were interviewed from the Addis Ababa University. The interviewees from Jigjiga University include 8 university officials, 4 instructors and 5 students. Similarly, 8 officials, 5 instructors and 5 students were interviewed from Mekelle University. Additionally, the director of HERQA and 2 MoE officials were interviewed.

Document Analysis – relevant documents were obtained and analyzed. The documents include policy statements, proclamations, statistical abstracts, guidelines, circulars, technical reports and other published materials related to higher education and quality assurance. The document analysis was conducted to uncover information regarding student achievement data, policy intentions of quality assurance, pre-history of quality assurance in Ethiopian higher education, financial resources, and staff and student profiles. The document analysis serves two purposes: (1) to enrich and enhance results obtained through interviewees and questionnaires, and (2) triangulate results with survey findings.

Pilot study – a pilot study was conducted to test the reliability and validity of the baseline questionnaire for students in single university, which is similar to the ones included in the study. Analysis of the pilot data indicated that the sub-scales of the questionnaire have good item characteristics in terms of internal consistency and homogeneity of the items contained in each sub-scale. Some items are excluded based on the results of the inter-item correlation analysis. Additionally, the items of the questionnaire were checked and rechecked by colleagues for their face validity and those items that seem vague for students are modified and rephrased. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) of the subscales of the improved questionnaire ranges from .628 to .90, which is considered as psychometrically sound. Similarly, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire for the cross-sectional data were also checked. The results show that the reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) for the instructors' questionnaire ranges from .57 to .99 and it ranges from .52 to .92 for students' questionnaire, which are considered good for the purpose of this study.

4.3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

In this study, the intention is to investigate quality assurance practices in public universities. Thus, the unit of analysis is institutional level quality assurance systems and practices. Of the seven stages of the mixed methods data analysis

processes suggested by Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie (2003), four stages, namely data reduction, data display, data consolidation and data integration were employed in this study. According to the authors, data reduction refers to condensing the dimensionality of quantitative data (e.g. via descriptive statistics, exploratory thematic analysis, cluster analysis) and the qualitative data (e.g. via exploratory thematic analysis etc.); data consolidation deals with combining both quantitative and qualitative data to create new or combined variables; and data display refers to describing virtually the qualitative data (e.g. graphs, charts, etc.); in the data integration stage, both qualitative and quantitative data are integrated into either a whole or separate sets.

In this study, the data collected through questionnaires were coded, entered, cleaned and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 15) computer software. The quantitative data was reduced into descriptive statistics such as percentages; correlations; chi-square tests; t-tests, and one-way ANOVA. The qualitative data were also transcribed, coded and interpreted thematically. The thematic approach was followed to display the analyses and findings from both quantitative and qualitative data. The themes for the data analyses were derived from the conceptual framework of the study that is grounded in the basic research questions. Analysis of quantitative data was displayed first and then corroborated by qualitative data analysis in the form of texts and quotes.

5 Context of Higher Education in Ethiopia

5.1 Introduction

The main objective of this chapter is to set context of the study as well as to provide information about the Ethiopian higher education system. It begins with a brief overview of the demographic and socio-economic context, followed by discussions on the historical development and structure of higher education, on quality assurance and on challenges the higher education system faces.

5.2 Demographic and Socio-economic Context

Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa next to Nigeria with a total population of 75 million (Central Statistics Agency, 2008). The primary school age population (6-14 years) contains 27.18 % of the total population (*ibid*). The secondary school age population (15-18 years) and the higher education age cohort (19-23 years) account for 10.57% and 8.92% of the total population respectively (*ibid*). This indicates that there is a rapidly growing school age population in the country which in turn implies a high demand for schooling at all levels of the system of education.

Ethiopia is predominantly characterized by a rural economy sometimes vulnerable to weather calamities. Agriculture is the main economic basis of the country engaging about 80% of the population and contributing 45% to the GDP and more than 80% to exports (MoFED, 2008). The service sector comes second with 42% contribution to GDP and accounting to 10% of employment (*ibid*). The industrial sector, on the other hand, is still at an infancy stage contributing only 13.4% to GDP and providing employment opportunities to just 5% of the population. Ethiopia's industrial development objectives are based on the overall economic development strategy of the country that is the Agricultural Development Led Industrialization (ADLI) which aims at reducing poverty through an optimum utilization of the country's human and material resources (MoFED, 2002). The government has so far implemented two phases of its economic development plans: Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP) (2000/01-2004/05), and the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) (2005/06-2009/10). Consequently, the country has registered an annual average economic growth rate of 11% for the last seven consecutive years and the GDP per capita in 2009 was USD 900 (MoFED, 2010). The GNI per capita increased from USD 120 in 2003 to USD 330 in 2009 (World Bank, 2010). The government has recently introduced and started

implementation of its third phase development plan (2010/11-2014/15): the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) with the ambition to sustain the two digit economic growth of the country in the coming years.

In the overall economic development strategy and the recent GTP of the country, the role of education in human resource capacity building is identified as one of the key pillars in the economic transformation process of the country. To that effect, the government has been allocating 5.5 to 6% of the GDP to education since 2006 (UNESCO, 2010). The share of public education expenditure (primary, secondary and higher education) from the total government expenditure increased from 11.28% in 1999/00 to 23.6% in 2008/09. Similarly, the share of higher education budget from the total education expenditure rose from 10.21% to 22.6% over the same years. This suggests that the Ethiopian government seems to have recognized the role of education in general and higher education in particular in boosting knowledge based economic development.

The country has registered significant changes in terms of improving access to education over the past years. The number of primary schools (grades 1-8) rose from 11, 490 in 1999/00 to 25,212 in 2008/09. There is also an increase in the number of secondary schools (grades 9-12) from 410 to 1197 and of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) schools from 15 to 458 during the same years. The Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) for primary and secondary education went up from 51% and 10.3% in 1999/00 to 94.4% and 38.1% in 2008/09 respectively. By 2008/09 the total enrollment in TVET was 308,501.

However, whether the increase in government expenditure on education is in correlation with the rapidly increasing student population could be debatable. We can also notice that the rapidly increasing number of primary, secondary and TVET school graduates would ultimately create unprecedented demand for and pressure on higher education unless a parallel growth of opportunities is created at tertiary level.

5.3 Historical Overview of the Ethiopian Higher Education

Schools of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church remained the only educational institutions up until the mid twentieth century. It produced the nation's elites: scholars, artists, religious leaders and teachers (Teshome, 1990). Documentary evidences show that modern higher education, as contrasted to traditional, indigenous, and religious education, is a phenomenon of the 20th century which was heralded by the establishment of the University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA) in 1950 (Amare, 2007; Damtew, 2003; Teshome, 1990). The Ethiopian University shares with other sister African universities in terms of drawing its

models from European and North American prototypes (*ibid*). In its organization, the UCAA was somewhat more American and less British than higher education systems in the former British colonies of East Africa (Saint, 2004). Starting operation with expatriate staff including the president and few students as a two-year junior college, the university was extended to a four-year college consisting of the faculty of Arts and the Faculty of sciences (Amare, 2005).

Additional colleges were established in different parts of the country in between 1950 and 1960. These include the College of Engineering (1952) and the Institute of Building Technology (1954) in Addis Ababa; Alemaya College of Agriculture (1952) and Gondar Public Health College (1954) (*ibid*, 2005, Teshome, 2007). In 1961, the UCAA became Haileselassie I University (HSIU) through the consolidation of the existing colleges. In the late 1960s, Bahir Dar College of Teacher Education and Awassa College of Agriculture were established under the Auspices of HSIU (Teshome, 2007). Other institutes and colleges such as Bahir Dar Polytechnic Institute and Jimma College of Agriculture were also opened during this time. It is interesting to note that the HSIU and other colleges were opened and run in collaboration with foreign countries and international organizations such as USA, Canada, Sweden, WHO, USAID and UNESCO etc. Foreign universities such as Universities of Oklahoma and Utah were also among the friends in terms of financial support, curriculum, staff and administration.

From 1950 to the early 1970s, the influence of central government on the internal affairs of the university was limited and the State-University relationship was characterized by cooperative ventures with relative autonomy and academic freedom. The HSIU had a strong and highly committed board of governors, and the link between staff and administration was strong. The governance and management system was collegial; the faculty participated in every decision made by the university either directly or through their representatives (Amare, 2007). The faculty council of the university, for example, made decisions regarding student admission. The various colleges and students of the university were also responsible for the assurance of the type of programs pursued (Teshome, 1990). The commitment of the University in delivering relevant programs and making them transparent to the public was demonstrated through diagnostic methods such as external evaluations and the use of foreign consultants (Amare, 2007).

This shows that, in the emperor period, the idea of improving quality of programs through review and external examiner processes was practiced as an internal affair of the university, though no empirical evidences are found to show whether these practices were formal and institutionalized. As Amare (2005) argues, this also shows that the Ethiopian higher education system, though born in non-colonial context, was not free of the influence of Western ideas in terms of

organizational structure, legislation, governance and leadership, and in its resemblance with the African colonial universities.

After the Ethiopian revolution in 1974, however, the tradition of relative autonomy and collegial governance of the University was replaced with a system of 'heteronomy'; embedded in the central-control model of accountability. This determined the mode of governance and management to be basically top-down (*ibid*). During the Derg regime (1974-1990), the government's intervention in University affairs expanded, including security surveillance, repression of dissent, mandated courses on Marxism, appointment of senior University officers and control of academic promotions. This resulted in academic brain drain, atrophied intellectual life, and isolation of the country's higher education system from Western experience (Saint, 2004). The development of higher education during this time was also hampered by the *Red Terror*, the nation's painful experience, and by the civil war that lasted for more than two decades.

The Ethiopian higher education system was characterized by lack of attention, low participation rate, inequitable access, gender disparity, and inefficiency compounded with lack of quality and relevance during this time. The involvement of the private sector in higher education provision was also non-existent throughout this time. The Commission for Higher Education of Ethiopia was established in 1977 with the objective to oversee the higher education institutions. However, evidences indicate that the commission was very weak in coordinating the existing few universities, and much less could it ensure the quality and relevance of the education provided in the country. As Teshome (2007) noted, the commission had not been supported with clear and forward looking policies and strategies to expand and reform the higher education sector in the country. It was overseeing a poorly developed higher education system with only two universities and few colleges with a national total student population not more than 30 thousand in the last days of the commission in 1991 (*ibid*.).

In the past two regimes, the pattern of the Ethiopian education system was eight years primary education followed by four years secondary education and four to six university education (8-4-4). Entry to higher education institutions was based on the results of the Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination (ESLCE) developed and administered by the Ministry of Education.

After the present regime came to power in 1991 and introduced a market economy in 1992, the demand for educated manpower grew considerably (Amare, 2007). Accordingly, Education and Training Policy (ETP) was issued in 1994 (TGE, 1994) with the premise to address the persistent problems of the educational system in the previous regimes. The policy served as a major framework for reform and

transformation which views the higher education sector as a source of great potential for economic, social and cultural development. Since the issuance of the policy major reforms have been carried out, and significant changes registered in the education sector in general and in higher education in particular. These reforms include changes in the education structure, curriculum and programs, size, legal and regulatory frameworks. Some of these reform initiatives and changes are discussed in the subsequent sections.

5.4 The Present Higher Education System of Ethiopia

The need to reform and overhaul the education system was recognized quite early in the education sector strategy document. The document includes promoting higher education of good quality, relevance and of focus on research and development (TGE 1994: 13). As of 1994, the educational system has been restructured into an 8-2-2-3 pattern, i.e. eight years primary, two years general secondary education (grades 9-10), two years preparatory secondary (grades 11-12), and 3-5 years university education (*Ibid*). The Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination (PSLCE) comes at the end of the upper primary cycle. Level 1 TVET is provided for dropouts from the lower primary cycle (end of grade 4) and level 2 TVET for dropouts of upper primary cycle (end of grade 8).

At the end of the general secondary education, students are required to sit for the Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination (EGSECE). Accordingly, students are streamlined into either academic (higher education programs in grades 11 and 12) or vocational (TVET) programs (Level 3 to Level 5) based on their merits and preferences. Similarly, those going to university education from the preparatory programs are expected to sit for University Entrance Exam (UEE), developed and administered at central level (see Figure 5-1 below).

Within the framework of the ETP, a twenty-year Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) with five-year rolling phases was designed with a purpose to improve educational quality, relevance, efficiency, equity and expended access at all levels. Higher education got attention during the preparation and implementation of ESDPII (2000/01-2004/05) and ESDPIII (2005/06-2010/11) following the adoption of the National Capacity Building Program in 2002. The emphasis on both phases regarding higher education was to provide good quality higher education to a large number of students equitably but based on merit and thereby to create nationwide sustainable human resource capacity responsive to changing circumstances. The country has recently started the development of ESDP IV (2010/11-2014/15) as of 2011). Quality and internal efficiency in the higher education system are identified among the priorities of ESDP IV.

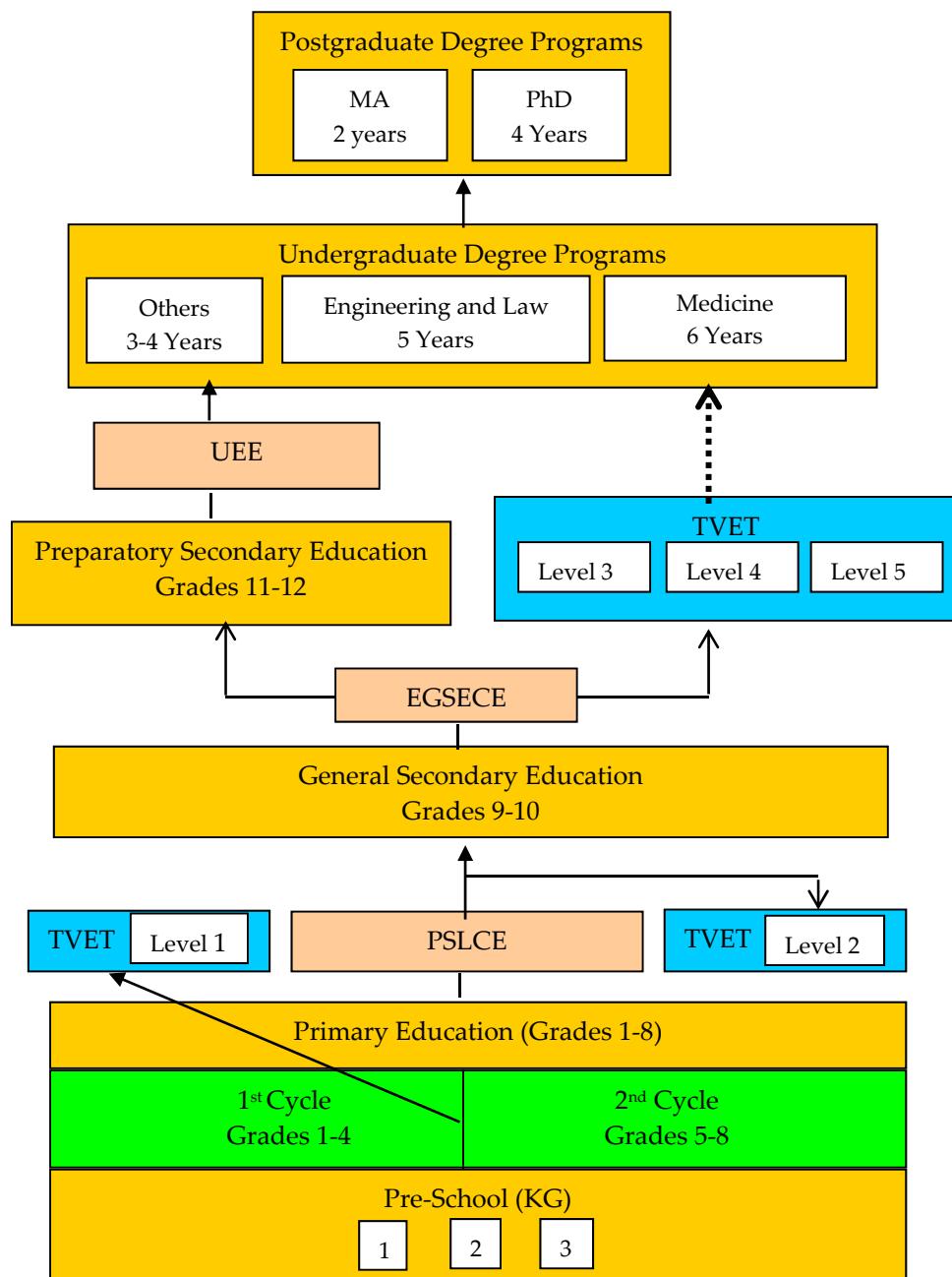


Figure 5-1 Structure of the Formal Education system of Ethiopian (Source: MoE, 2008/09)

Note: PSLCE=Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination; EGSECE = Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination; UEE= University Entrance Examination

Studies were undertaken regarding the need to reform and overhaul the higher education system (MoE 2001, 2002, 2004; Teshome 2001, 2004; Ashcroft 2003, 2004) which include the Capacity Building Strategy and Programs of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Higher Education System Overhaul (HESO). The Capacity Building Strategy and Programs of FDRE documents clearly articulated the mission of higher education institutions as producing high level professionals and researchers that could play critical leadership roles, originating and adapting relevant knowledge to national development (FDRE, 2002). The mission of the higher education institutions was synthesized with the Ethiopian Sustainable Development and Poverty reduction Program that stresses poverty reduction as the core objective of both the government and the people of Ethiopia (MoFED, 2002). The main thrust of the capacity development program was to equitably provide quality higher education to larger numbers. However, education's dependence on public resources is expected to diminish in the longer run.

HESO was another comprehensive study conducted by the higher education taskforce set up by the Ministry. The focus of this study was on different aspects of HEI including on leadership and management, on programs and curricula, on teachers, inputs, access, on post-graduate programs, on instructional resources, organizations, on management quality and relevance, on use of modern technology and on ability to produce good citizenships (MoE, 2001). HESO identified major bottlenecks of the higher education sector including, among other things, lack of clear aims and a strategic vision for the higher education management and its organization, lack of financial management, poor quality of various programs and their curriculum, deficiencies in input and output etc. The study came out with 14 documents including a list of recommendations to overhaul the higher education system vis-à-vis the problems identified. The list of recommendations include the issuance of a comprehensive legal framework for higher education, a proposal for the establishment of quality assurance agency and strategic center, cost sharing and per student funding, privatization etc. (MoE-HESO, 2004). Eventually, the higher education proclamation was launched in 2003; followed by the establishment of Higher Education Relevance and Quality Assurance Agency (HERQA) and Higher Education Strategic Center (HESC) in the same year. Major changes have been registered in the higher education sector since then.

The current higher education system comprises 22 degree-granting public universities, three colleges operating under the auspices of different Ministries such as the Defense University College and other Military Academy Colleges (under Ministry of National Defense), the Ethiopian Civil Service College (under Ministry of Capacity Building), more than 70 private higher education institutions. The private

higher education institutions could be dichotomized as those, which got accreditation of the ministry, and those, which are pre-accredited (MoE, 2005).

5.5 Legal and Regulatory Framework of Higher Education in Ethiopia

There was no comprehensive and functional higher education legislation in terms of clearly stipulating the requirements for explicit quality assurance in universities until the enactment of the higher education proclamation by the government in 2003. Even during the emperor's period, the requirements for quality assurance were not explicitly stated in the university charter, though there were good practices then. The establishment of the higher education legal framework was one of the results of the reform initiatives of ETP, which is briefly discussed as follows.

5.5.1 The 2003 Higher Education Proclamation (No 351/2003)

The Higher Education Proclamation that provided a comprehensive legal basis for the establishment and development of higher education institutions in Ethiopia was endorsed by the Council of Peoples' Representatives of FDRE in June 2003 based on the education and training policy and on the need to establish legal framework for the higher education sector (Proclamation No 351/2003, articles 7 & 43). The proclamation is the first national higher education regulation in Ethiopian history that accorded autonomy of administration, academic freedom and accountability to universities. This proclamation clearly indicates the objectives and expected outcomes, powers and duties, and criteria for the establishment of higher education institutions, educational programs and curriculum, and mechanisms of evaluating the quality and relevance of programs.

The proclamation decreed autonomy to higher education institutions particularly in their administrative, financial and academic matters. Accordingly, most of the administration of personnel including employment, financial administration, and procurement, establishment of relations with local and international is devolved to the institutions (MoE, 2005). The proclamation recognizes both public and private institutions as higher education institutions. It contains provisions concerning the establishment and accreditation of private higher education institutions, and setup of system support organs. Two agencies, the HERQA and HESC, were established based on the proclamation.

HERQA—its name is recently changed to Education and Training Quality Assurance Agency (ETQAA)—was established as an autonomous government organ having its own legal personality with the objective to assure the relevance and quality of higher education offered by any institution (Proclamation

No. 351/2003). Ensuring the relevance and standard of higher education, evaluating the activity and performance of the institutions, gathering and disseminating information about the standards and programs of study of foreign higher education institutions and examining accreditation issues are some of the duties of the agency stated in the proclamation.

HESC is another autonomous organ established to formulate vision and strategy for the higher education system of the country. In that way, HESC aims to enable the system to remain compatible with the country's needs and international developments.

However, the proclamation also suffers from limitations. Lack of clear provisions regarding the establishment of an independent and autonomous private accrediting organization, lack of provisions for accreditation of public universities, lack of provisions for the autonomy of HERQA and HESC, lack of incentives and principles in public fund allocation vis-à-vis quality assurance as well as absence of mechanisms to enforce implementation of requirements are some instances.

The proclamation was modified in 2009. The next section presents major changes made in the modified proclamation.

5.5.2 The 2009 Higher Education Proclamation (No 650/2009)

The 2009 Higher Education Proclamation contains almost all the provisions contained in the 2003 proclamation with additions or modifications on some articles. Article 5 of this proclamation states a public institution financed by the federal government shall be established by regulation of the Council of Ministers. The Ministry of Education grants an institution the status of a university upon fulfillment of the criteria stated under article 11, which includes minimum programs, enrollment capacity, a record of at least four consecutive classes of graduates in degree programs, research capacity, and other national standards. The major additions and modifications in this proclamation include the following.

1. This proclamation grants *academic freedom* and *autonomy* to every institution in pursuit of its mission. This includes the development and implementation of academic programs and curricula, personnel and financial administration, nominating the president, vice presidents and members of the board, and selecting and appointing leaders of academic units and departments (Article 17). According to sub article 3 of article 17, an institution exercises its autonomy in ways that ensure legality, efficiency, fairness, transparency, effectiveness and accountability. The proclamation also entitles the Ministry to establish, whenever

necessary, national panels or councils to coordinate and monitor curricular review, development and implementation involving representatives of the public universities.

2. As stated under article 22 of this proclamation, every higher education institution shall have a reliable *internal system for quality enhancement*. The internal quality enhancement system should provide for clear measures of quality ranging from staff development to courses, teaching learning processes, student evaluation of courses, assessment and grading systems. The quality enhancement system shall also include setting standards, undertaking program evaluation and quality audit. The proclamation has also provisions regarding the role of the Ministry, of HERQA and of HESC in guiding the institutional quality enhancement system. According to this proclamation, public universities are not subject to accreditation. Accreditation concerns private higher education institutions alone.
3. Article 26 of this proclamation allows universities to perform *consultancy* or other supplementary activities in areas that are related to their core mission and competencies. At the same time, the universities are required by this proclamation to issue regulatory directives and ensure that undertaking consultancy by academic staff does not erode their mission or legal and ethical standards. The proclamation has also provision for university-industry partnership and disciplinary measures to be taken for violations of article 26.
4. As stated under article 29, every university shall ensure adequate supply of *academic staff* in quality as well as in quantity based on staff-to-student ratio and additional research requirements. According to this article, graduate assistants may be employed for teaching only under strict circumstances or conditions of transition. Otherwise only staff members within the qualification range of professorship to assistant lecturership are eligible for teaching employment.
5. Prior to 2003, the Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination (ESLCE) was the only single instrument to ascertain students' completion of secondary education and to pick candidates for subsequent tertiary education. But then the national exam was reformed and changed in 2003 G.C into two distinct types—the EGSECE at the end of Grade 10 and the University Entrance Exam (UEE) at the end of preparatory education. According to the proclamation, *admission* to undergraduate programs of any higher education institution shall be based on completion of the preparatory program and on obtaining the necessary pass mark in the university entrance examination (article 39). This proclamation grants the mandate to the Ministry to administer the university entrance examination and to decide on eligibility for admissions to any institution. This indicates that the student admission and placement decisions are centrally controlled.

6. With regard to *governance and management*, article 43 states that a public university shall have governing and advisory bodies that include the board, president, senate, managing council, university council, academic unit council, academic managing council, department assembly, and advisory or specialized committees or councils. The board of a public university is the highest governing body that supervises and ensures that the university operates as per the proclamation. This proclamation has provisions regarding responsibilities of the board, its compositions, meetings and performance self-evaluation. Next to the board, the senate is the highest and leading body at the level of the university responsible for academic matters. The university senate is an assembly of professors and faculty and student representatives. According to the proclamation, departments are the core units in running the actual academic processes of the university. The president of a public university is the chief executive officer of the institution; one who directs and administers with the aim of ensuring the institution's mission. As stated under article 52, the Ministry or head of the appropriate state organ appoints a university president based on nominations from the board. The board or its designees publicly advertises the position of the president in selecting nominees. The board shall appoint, based on merit and through competition, the vice presidents. This suggests that the proclamation requires merit-based selection and appointment of presidents and their assistants.

7. Public universities are funded by the federal government through a block grant system based on strategic plan agreements (article 62). Funding has no link with improvement of the universities' performance. Private higher education institutions are not eligible for public funding except some government subsidy based on strict preconditions (article 86). In relation to this, the government has introduced a cost-sharing scheme in the Ethiopian higher education sector that makes students liable for a small part of the cost of their education. According to this scheme, beneficiaries of public higher education and those who enter an agreement are required to share full costs related to food and accommodation and to a minimum of 15% of tuition cost (Teshome, 2007). In early 2011, there is a move to introduce a different funding formula for the public universities of Ethiopia.

The proclamation has some limitations/gaps in view of enforcing the implementation of internal quality assurance system. One of the shortcomings of the proclamation is lack of provisions regarding higher education financing strategies. There is no precondition for financing higher education institutions. Public universities are eligible for government funding based on student enrolment regardless of the quality of education they provide. The other limitation is absence of provisions that encourage competitions between students and funding among universities. The proclamation does not require public

universities to gain accreditation. On the one hand, the proclamation grants autonomy to universities in pursuit of their mission and on the other hand, the Ministry of Education controls student admission and placement, provides core funding, and coordinates curriculum review and development.

5.5.3 Major Changes in the Ethiopian Higher Education Landscape

The context in which Ethiopian universities operate is changing rapidly. Compared to the period before 2000 G.C, there is an increasing interest and recognition of the role of higher education in economic development. The recognition of higher education as a driver of economic development and social transformation has been reflected in many national conferences and academic fora across the country. For example, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi stated, in his opening speech at the 2006 conference on strategic planning of Addis Ababa University that the universities should be able to produce well-trained graduates capable of fully producing and adapting novel as well as received technologies to the country's economic development. This suggests an increasing interest and expectations of the Ethiopian government from the universities to be responsive to socio-economic needs of the country in terms of providing quality education and research. In correlation, the higher education landscape is changing rapidly in terms of program and enrollment expansion, and in terms of graduate mix programs. This and related issues are briefly discussed in the following sections.

5.5.4 Expansion Policy

The current interest for expansion is a direct result and response to anticipated demand of the growing economy and the push from the expanding lower levels (TVET, Secondary and Primary) that require large numbers of teachers, leaders and educational experts. It is also sparked by the need of the new and expanding higher education institutions for additional teaching and research staff (Teshome, 2007). The pressures from international donor agencies such as the World Bank, consultants and many forums outside the Ministry of Education and the government are other stakeholders that contributed to the increased government interest in expanding access (Amare, 2007). Recently, the higher education system is expanding rapidly and a huge number of students with different backgrounds are joining the higher education institutions. Such expansion rate is also expected to continue over the coming years to meet the goals of the Education Sector Development Program IV (ESDP IV), which covers the period from 2010/11 to 2014/15.

As regards institutional and enrollment expansion, the number of public universities increased from two in 1991/92 to twenty two in 2009/10 at national level and the number of public universities will increase to 33 by the end of 2012/13 (MoE, 2008/09). Private provision of higher education in Ethiopia has also been growing in the last 5 years. Currently, there are 71 diploma and 34 degree offering private higher education institutions, which are pre-accredited and accredited by the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2005).

The annual intake of universities increased from 9,327 in 1997/98 to 76,995 in 2008/09, and the total degree enrollment in both public universities and private higher education institutions (regular, evening and summer programs) increased from 23,320 in 1998/99 to about 309,092 in 2008/09 with an annual average growth rate of 22.3% (MoE, 2008/09). The share of female participation is about 29.7%; still a very low picture. Similarly, the total number of students enrolled in postgraduate programs increased from 864 in 1998/99 to more than 11,125 with annual average growth rate of 29.5%, of which 11.3% are females. In 2008/09 the enrollment in the private higher education institutions accounted for 17.76% (54,900) of the total student enrollment, out of which 35.6% comprised female students (*Ibid*).

The expansion in tertiary education has also brought about an increase in the number of academic staff from 1,835 (1,718 Ethiopian and 117 Expatriate) in 1996/97 to 9,496 (8,881 Ethiopian and 615 Expatriate) in 2004/05 (*Ibid*). However, there is no significant change in pupil teacher ratio from 2004/05 (28.5) to 2008/09 (28).

The current gross higher education rate is still very low when compared to other average of Sub-Saharan countries (6%) and to the demographic characteristics of the country. In Trow's (1973) words, the Ethiopian higher education is still elite (less than 15% enrollment) with enrollment rate of less than 6%. However, higher education is being populated; it has quadrupled within a decade with expectations for continuity over the coming years. Despite the significant increase in the overall enrolment, there remain groups of the society who are underrepresented in higher education. Female students, people with disability, pastoralists and semi-agriculturalist areas such as Afar, Somali, Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz regional states (Teshome, 2007) are exemplary.

Although the progress made so far in terms of structural reform, expansion and enrollment of the higher education sector is very significant, the perception that quality is being compromised in the current effort to expand enrollment is on the rise among all stakeholders including the government.

5.5.5 The Graduate Mix Policy

The Ministry of Education has launched the professional and program mix policy of Ethiopian public higher education in April 2008. The main intention of the policy is to improve the human resource base of the country in science and technology vis-à-vis the country's move from agriculture-based to export-led economy. The policy document contains a conversion plan that focuses on growth of annual intake and general enrollment, and on the professional and program balances of that growth. The policy clearly articulates the 70:30 undergraduate professional mix in favor of science and technology over, generally speaking, humanities and social sciences (MoE, 2008). This means for the consecutive five years (2008/09–2012/13), 70% of the school leaving students will be allocated to the engineering and natural sciences faculties. The remaining 30% will join the faculties of humanities and social sciences. The plan is to reach an annual intake of 212,000 students in engineering and 66,000 in natural and computational sciences by the end of 2013/14. This obviously makes the science and technology faculties to be overcrowded by huge numbers of new entrants, and suffocates the teaching load of instructors.

The major concern about this policy is how to provide quality education under such circumstances. This policy has been a point of debate among stakeholders concerning issues of adequate planning and sufficient time for preparation on the part of the universities.

5.5.6 Business Process Reengineering (BPR)

Universities are currently facing a rapidly changing policy environment. At national level the policy directions for higher education have changed many times and they demand the public universities to engage in reform after reform. Since 2008, all the public universities had engaged in the development and implementation of BPR. BPR is a management technique aimed at making organizations' processes more effective and efficient by redesigning them 'from scratch'. In the Ethiopian public sector, BPR has been taken up as a major reform across all fields of public involvement to make the state apparatus more effective and efficient. BPR as it is implemented in the higher education sector is a top-down reform initiative.

Effective implementation and impact of BPR in the public universities is becoming a concern among stakeholders including the government.

5.6 Quality Assurance

Quality assurance and accreditation policy is a recent phenomenon in the higher education system of Ethiopia. Prior to 2003, there was no fully functional and formal national system of quality assurance in Ethiopia that required higher education institutions to be accountable for their performance in teaching and research (Ashcroft & Rayner, 2004). Cognizant of the gap in this area and the demand for accountability, the government established HERQA in 2003, which since then has been responsible for guiding and regulating quality of higher education in Ethiopia. It is entrusted to ensure a high quality and relevant higher education system in the country and to encourage and assist the growth of an organizational quality culture in Ethiopian higher education (HERQA, 2006). The instruments HERQA employs to achieve its mission include conducting institutional quality audits in all higher education institutions; gathering and disseminating information about the standards and programs of study of foreign higher education institutions, and examining accreditation issues.

In the Ethiopian context, the Higher Education proclamation No.650/2009 (FDRE, 2009) defines one of the objectives of higher education as:

Prepare knowledgeable, skilled, and attitudinally matured graduates in numbers with demand-based proportional balance of fields and disciplines so that the country shall become internationally competitive (p. 4979).

The statement quoted above contains elements of both learning and responsiveness to the trained labor force needs of the country. This suggests that theoretically such objectives of higher education are linked to a blend of the 'fitness for purpose' and the 'transformation' conceptions of quality.

The national quality assurance system follows the model that higher education institutions undertake self-evaluation and submit the evaluation document to HERQA. Then institutional quality audit by external team based on self-evaluation document and publishing quality audit report by HERQA follows. HERQA considers institutional quality audit as an in-depth analysis and assessment of the quality and relevance of programs and of the teaching and learning process. According to HERQA, the main goal of institutional quality audit is to assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of a higher education institution's system of accountability and of its internal review mechanisms to be carried out by each higher education institution based on the ten focal areas specified by HERQA.

Each higher education institution is expected to undertake its institutional self-evaluation based on the ten focal areas and on self-evaluation manual provided by HERQA. The ten focal areas include: *mission, vision 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 graduate outcomes; research and outreach activities; and internal quality assurance (Ibid). This suggests that the universities have no room to identify the evaluation criteria or set their own guiding manuals to undertake self-evaluation. A closer look at the staff profile of HERQA shows that, majority of the staff members lack the requisite qualification in the areas of higher education, public policy and administration, quality management and education areas. Many of the staff members including the Director of HERQA have qualifications in the area of agriculture (e.g. forestry, animal science, soil science, agricultural economic and engineering). Moreover, HERQA is not fully autonomous; it operates under the auspices of the Ministry. It is answerable to the Ministry of Education and the decisions regarding recognition and accreditation made by HERQA are subject to the Ministry's approval. This suggests that the agency is operating within constraints of human resource capacity and lack of autonomy.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to demonstrate that modern higher education in Ethiopia, which was shaped by the influence of western higher education systems, is currently undergoing a rapid change. There is an increasing recognition of the role of higher education to the economic and social transformation of the country. This is reflected in the current government's efforts to expand education in general and higher education in particular.

The high and still increasing number of school leaving students is creating unprecedented demand for higher education. The Ethiopian higher education is amidst rapid program and enrolment expansion as a result of such demand. At present the major challenge of higher education institutions in Ethiopia is to ensure and maintain quality and efficiency under broadening access conditions. The enrollment expansion will continue in the coming years and this in turn would obviously influence the operation of higher education institutions.

The higher education institutions are facing frequent changes in policy environment. Recently, there is a paradigm shift in government policy regarding the focus of the education and training in public universities. Universities are required to ensure a graduate professional mix of 70% in engineering and the natural sciences and the remaining 30% in humanities and social sciences. Also, all public universities are required to make their training programs efficient and effective. Engagement in the implementation of BPR is another point that characterizes the higher education institutions. The legal and regulatory basis for

formal quality assurance is a recent phenomenon in the Ethiopian higher education system. HERQA, which is responsible for guiding and regulating quality of higher education in Ethiopia, operates with constraints of human resource capacity and of lack of full autonomy.

6 State of Education Quality in Ethiopian Universities

6.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with analyses of empirical data pertaining to quality of education in the public universities of Ethiopia. Data obtained from multiple sources at different times will be analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively in order to demonstrate how quality of educational inputs, processes and outputs are constrained and how this influences learning in the public universities. The chapter begins with analyses of data on input quality in section 6.2, followed by the findings of data analyses for process quality in section 6.3. Analysis of data on output quality is presented in section 6.4. Finally, concluding remarks are presented in section 6.5.

6.2 Quality of Educational Inputs

It is assumed that quality education in universities requires investing in the important inputs-human, financial and physical resources. In this study, the preparation (capacity and motivation) of incoming students; quantity and quality (qualification, competence and motivation) of staff; adequacy and accessibility of financial and physical resources are considered as important input elements for universities. The analysis in this section is premised in the assumption that ensuring quality of inputs is a necessary condition for quality learning to happen. This section begins with a critical examination of the state of preparedness of students entering the public universities of Ethiopia and the policies, procedures and instruments that are put in place to determine entry qualification of students. Then analysis of data on staff and resources follows.

6.2.1 Qualification of Incoming Students

The quality of university education is determined to a considerable extent by the abilities of those it admits and retains as students. There is a widespread agreement that success in university education is strongly related to pre-university academic preparation¹ and achievement of students (Kuh, 2007). The extent to which universities select and admit students that qualify for their programs of study has an implication to the enhancement of their mission.

¹ See also chapter 9.

The idea of student preparedness for university education may contain many dimensions and issues. In this study, preparedness of incoming students is viewed in terms of their academic and psychological readiness to face the rigorous of university education. Adequate preparation for higher education is important for students to be successful in their study programs. As clearly indicated in the 1994 Ethiopian Education and Training Policy (ETP), the preparatory schools (Grades 11 and 12) are the places where students are prepared for university Education. Accordingly, those who have completed the two years preparatory studies and have taken the University Entrance Examination (UEE) are eligible to join the public universities of Ethiopia. The policy assumed that studies in school during the preparatory programs would adequately prepare and empower students for courses at the university.

The intention in this section is to test if students are as prepared for the rigor of university study as the policy would have it. The extent to which students have been prepared for university education is to be measured by the University Entrance Examination (UEE). Analysis of students' UEE results in the past four years is summarized in Table 6-1 below.

Table 6-1 Students' UEE Results and their Placement to Universities

Year	Students' Raw Scores (out of 500)			Students Enrolled in Public Universities based on their Entrance Exam Scores
	≤250	251-300	>300	
2005/06(1998EC)	58%	32%	10%	97%
2006/07(1999EC)	46 %	39 %	15%	64%
2007/08(2000EC)	70%	22%	8%	88%
2008/09(2001EC)	63%	27%	10%	86%

Shown in Table 6-1 is that in 2005/06, 2007/08 and 2008/09 students' scores on the majority have fallen to below 50% of the maximum score – 500 points. In 2006/07 too, many scored low. In all four-exam years, the percentage of students enrolled in public universities is larger than the percentage of students scoring above 50% passing grade and except in 2006/2007 the discrepancy was very large. This suggests that many students still join the universities even if their score is evidently below the passing point. Data from the same source show extreme

scores in the different subjects taken on the entrance exam. In 2006/07, results in Mathematics, English and General Sciences were recorded to be below 251 in raw scores for 49%, 81% and 42% of the examinees respectively. Students' average results in the same subjects have been registered to be only 51, 41 and 53 respectively. These low results in UEE again suggest the inadequate preparation of students at this level.

These findings obtained in the preceding discussions could suggest that in the screening tool (which is the UEE) used by the Ministry of Education, many students are joining the public universities irrespective of having inadequate grounding in their academic studies. This problem is even more serious in private higher education institutions. This is in contradiction with what is stated in the Higher Education Proclamation (no. 650/2009, FDRE, 2009), namely that admissions to undergraduate programs of higher education institutions shall be based on completion of the preparatory program and obtaining the necessary pass marks in UEE (article 39, no.1). This raises a serious question into the appropriateness of the admission policies, procedures and criteria that are in use to make placement decision to the public universities.

In the section that follows, results of the data analyses on student admission and admission and placement policies and procedures are presented.

6.2.2 Student Admission and Placement Policies and Procedures

Since the start of higher education in Ethiopia various tools have been put to use to select and assign students into the various higher education institutions. Especially, evidence shows that in the first years of the Addis Ababa University, placements were done on the basis of merit and that the university itself was in charge of the job (Teshome, 1990). This was short-lived (until 1965) as the responsibility was soon taken over by the Ministry of Education, which has been doing it up to this day due to the increasing interest of the government to control higher education. The Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination (ESLCE) was the solitary instrument to ascertain students' completion of secondary education (i.e. Grade 12) and pick candidates for subsequent tertiary education until the national exam was reformed and changed in 2003 G.C to take up two distinct types- the EGSECE at the end of Grade 10 and the UEE at the end of preparatory education.

Entry into the public universities of Ethiopia requires completion of two-year preparatory program with a composite score derived from UEE (70%) and student's performance in five subjects at the preparatory schools (30%). Without any required cut off score, all students who completed the preparatory programs

are entitled to be placed into the different study programs of the public universities based on their composite scores. This has implications to the quality of students' efforts in their preparatory studies.

The whole structure of the process in preparing the entrance exam, marking and scoring and finally deciding on students' transfer to and placement in the higher education institutions is done by three bodies (the Addis Ababa University, National Agency for Examinations (NAE) and the Ministry of Education). This indicates that the whole placement procedure is chopped into parts and distributed over the three bodies; there is no single unit fully in charge of the UEE and placement process in its entirety. The student admission and placement decision to the different universities has been made at central level by the Ministry of Education and recently, whereas the Education and Training Quality Assurance Agency (ETQAA) assumes student recruitment, admission and placement scheme as the mandate of the universities and considers it as one of the ten focus areas/standards set for its institutional quality audit and self-evaluation processes. This stands as a solid mark of not only a breach in the ETP but also of lack of integration and networking between the policies (ETP, the proclamation and HERQA standards) and their implementation.

From the findings discussed above, we can observe that there is a centralized student admission and placement policy in the Ethiopian higher education system. In this context, the public universities do not have the autonomy to decide on the number, readiness, competence, and quality of candidates they want to enroll into their programs. As the majority of the respondents from the three universities reported, these trends disempowered them from recruiting and enrolling capable students in their designed academic program and educate them their set standards. In this connection, the instructors interviewed across the three universities unanimously expressed their concern regarding the drawbacks of the centralized and whole acceptance admission policy. As one of the interviewees put it, 'accepting incoming students without checking their capability by the concerned universities is something like sowing on an unfertile ground' (IA2, 20/11/2009). These findings suggest that the current student enrolment and admission practices are not as intended in the ETP. In such a manner, the current student admission policies and procedures may impinge upon the quality of teaching and learning in the universities.

The next question is to what extent such placement procedures and criteria affect students' preferences of field of study and performance in their courses once they have been accepted and registered as students in the different study programs. The baseline data collected from the 2007 G.C new entry student cohorts of eight faculties in the Addis Ababa University and their first year college GPAs were used for this purpose.

The results show that the majority of the student respondents from the faculties of Medicine (97%), Technology (85%), Law (91%), Business and Economics (64%), Social Sciences (61%), Informatics (56%) joined their current fields of studies based on their choices (see Table1 in Annex1). On the other hand, the majority of the respondents from the College of Education (36%) and the Faculty of Sciences (36%) had joined their fields of study without their choices/by assignment. The students' ratings concerning their choices of fields of study (own choice or by assignment) were analyzed for the two groups of faculties using cross tabs. The results indicated a significant difference in the ratings of students among the different faculties ($\chi^2 = 143.83$, $p < .001$)

The majority of the respondents, except the four faculties (medicine, technology, law, business & economics), chose not out of their love for the profession but for other reasons such as desires for better jobs, better pay and for easily marketable jobs in general. Majority of those assigned in the four faculties chose their field of study out of their keen interest for the profession and looked to be pleased with their placement. Analysis of data concerning the students' UEE results indicate that the UEE average score of those students joining the Faculty of Education (Educ) is the lowest (less than the 50% average score) which goes to back up propositions that these were assigned without their interest and would change their field of study if given opportunities for another preference (see Figure 6-1 below).

The data show that students with relatively low UEE average scores also joined the Faculties of Business and Economics (FBE) and Applied Sciences (ASci). On the other hand, students with relatively better UEE average scores were assigned to areas of studies such as medicine, technology and law based on their choices (see Figure 6-1). This suggests that those faculties with more applicants such as medicine and law are in a better position to enroll students with better UEE results as the students' choices and placement are determined based on their UEE results. On the contrary, areas of studies with fewer applicants such as education face problems of enrolling students with better scores.

The results in Figure 6-1 also show that faculties that admitted students with lower average UEE scores have relatively higher attrition rates and vice versa. The attrition rate is higher in the fields of Education (52%), business and economics (50%), and applied sciences (39%). The same source of data (not included in Figure1) also indicates that the attrition rate is even more serious in some departments such as Physics (65%), English Language (62%), and Economics (50%). Findings of the cross-sectional data also show that the percentage of students with academic deficiencies (failures and dropouts) at the end of first year (2008/9) for Addis Ababa University, Jigjiga University and Mekelle University are 24%, 27% and 24%, respectively.

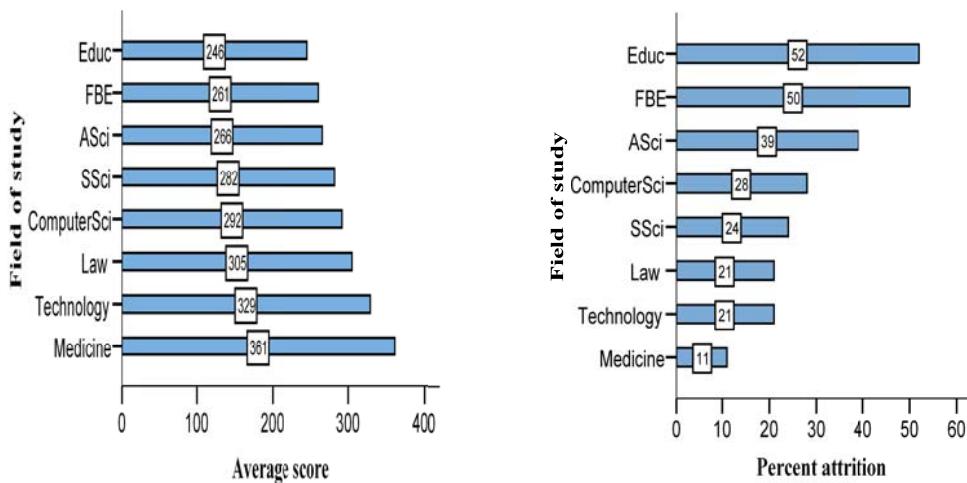


Figure 6-1 UEE average score of students admitted to faculties versus attrition of students at the end of first year (2007/08 G.C).

- Note:**
1. The data for the average scores refers to the UEE scores of the 2007 new entry students of Addis Ababa University
 2. Percentattrition refers to the students who terminated their education at the end of first year 2008/9 G.C in sample field of studies of the Addis Ababa University

From these findings, there is a clear pattern that many students who were enrolled in study programs without adequate grounding ended up with learning difficulties in their first year studies. Overall, the data would seem to suggest the trend that in the departments where students were assigned with better UEE scores and on the basis of own preferences, they face less learning difficulties (dismissal, repeating courses, dropout). While on the other end learning problems are too many in the faculties and departments where students are assigned with low UEE scores and with no preference. This point can be taken further to indicate that it might be very costly/hard for the faculties, like education and applied sciences, to educate and turn out effective professionals from those joining the faculties with lower UEE scores and less or no interest. Even worse, it may be harder to expect such graduates to become productive in their future careers or places of work.

Further analysis of data was conducted to see if there is any relationship between the students' learning (their first year performance as measured by their Grade Point Average) and their UEE score, admission preferences, attitudes, academic

motivation and the value they attach towards their current field of study. The results in Table 6-2 show that the students' first year performance is significantly related with their UEE score, attitude, value orientation, admission preferences and motivation. Their perceived academic competence (academic self-concept) is not significantly related with their first year performance and UEE score, though it is significantly related with the other variables.

Table 6-2 Correlation Matrix of Student Variables (N=480, longitudinal data)

Variables	Variables					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 College GPA	1					
2 UEE Score	.440**	1				
3 Admission	.217**	.055	1			
4 Value orientation	.272**	.178**	.211**	1		
5 Attitude	.380**	.230**	.290**	.663**	1	
6 Motivation	.212**	.063	.209**	.452**	.462**	1
7 Academic self-concept	.045	-.056	.107*	.295**	.313**	.394**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There is also no significant relationship between students' UEE score, their admission preferences, motivation and academic self-concept. Similarly, results of the cross-sectional data indicate that there is a significant relationship ($r = .334$, $p < .01$) between the students' UEE scores and their academic performance (Grade Point Average) across the three universities.

The positive and significant relationship between the students' UEE score and their first year performance suggests that UEE score predicts their first year performance in their studies. At this point, it can be said that the problem may not be necessarily with UEE; rather the placement/admission decision made based on the UEE results seems to be the major problem.

As we have seen in the preceding discussions, many students are allowed to join the public universities without having a passing mark in UEE based on the whole admission policy. These findings prove that the aftermath of such whole admission policy can be attrition of students during their first year education, which is wastage of scarce resources and time in the public universities.

Analysis of the interview data supplements the finding that the practice of admitting many students to universities without adequate grounding not only victimizes the students, but also incurs additional time, cost and energy on the

part of universities to correct the deficiencies of students through remedial classes. In this regard, one of my staff interviewee depicts the challenges facing the universities as follows:

Many students are coming without the proper academic preparation and immediately face with the tough courses. The assumption is that the freshman courses are already studied in the preparatory classes. But, we are feeling that students are not getting the things they should have got. That is what we are facing; we have to redo some of the things we feel they should have done. In 2008/9 many students not only failed but failed disastrously in our faculty. It was then we felt we had to do something. About 30% of the students failed and they got dismissed in the first semester. We arranged remedial classes for these students and ultimately all of them failed again and were dismissed in the second semester (LM3, 29/10/2009).

The impact of the current admission policies and procedures might be more serious in the professional fields of studies such as Engineering, where they require students with adequate background in Mathematics and Physics. In this connection, one of my interviewees describes the situation as follows:

Our performance in the undergraduate program was very good until recently, because we were selecting students we consider competent for the programs. However, today, since students less competent in the natural sciences join the faculty, substantial number of them becomes victims of the first semester. Because of the fact that admission is done centrally quality is affected at last' (LA9, 12/12/2009).

The overall results of the above analyses and related discussion would highlight that the inadequate preparation of students would have an implication on their performance as well as the quality of learning in the university. It is also noticeable that, after the former freshman program had been abandoned since 2003 G.C giving way to the 3 & 4 years degree program, universities have lost academic and structural support systems to identify under-prepared students and provide them due support. In the past, the preparation was in the universities; it was relatively in a better library, a better laboratory and better teachers. In the circumstances where these systems are not in place to provide support and ensure students' competence for tertiary level learning, enrolling those with under-preparation and assigning them straight to study programs/faculties would simply pose a serious challenge to the public universities in assuring quality of their education.

6.2.3 Quantity and Quality of Teaching Staff

The findings discussed above show that students are joining the public universities in great number without adequate preparation and many of them

end- up with one or the other types of learning deficiencies. It is believed that, after joining universities, the academic achievement of students depends largely on what students do with their instructors, although there are many contributing factors. In this regard, the role of teaching staff is central in improving student learning performance through quality teaching. Quality teaching demands academic staff with appropriate qualifications, professional competence (capacity and experience), motivation and commitment that is relevant to the level of programs they are assigned/ appointed.

Analyses of the cross-sectional data indicate that about 50% of the teaching staff in the Addis Ababa University have a Master's Degree as qualification, whereas the proportion of teaching staff with PhD qualification is very small (see Table 6-3). In the case of Mekelle University, a large proportion of the teaching staff is with a qualification of first degree (Bachelor's Degree), whereas the proportion of staff with Master's and above is very small. The problem is more serious in Jigjiga University, where almost all the teaching staff are with a qualification of first degree (Bachelor's Degree).

In both Mekelle and Jigjiga universities, teaching staff with PhD qualification is almost non-existent. This indicates that the qualification of staff teaching in the three universities is far below the standards set by the Ministry of Education, which demands staff qualification mix of 30% PhDs, 50% Masters and 20% Bachelor holders.

According to the standards stipulated in the ETP and adopted by ETQAA, the staff offering courses at universities should have a qualification one level higher than the one on offer (i.e. to teach in undergraduate classes one has to have a second degree qualification). However, the results in Table 6-3 are contrary to this. Many instructors have qualifications below the set standard, especially in the upgraded and newly emerging universities. Similar patterns can be observed concerning the academic rank of the teaching staff. Many inexperienced and novice graduates are teaching in Mekelle and Jigjiga universities. It is evident that the shortage of qualified and experienced staff is a major problem across the three universities, but it is more severe in the upgraded and newly emerging universities. To substantiate this finding, data from both students and instructors were collected and analyzed.

Table 6-3 Qualification of Ethiopian Full Time Staff Teaching in the Three Public Universities*

Year	University	Qualification (%)					Academic Rank (%)					
		BA	Master's	PhD	Total	Prof	Ass Prof	Ast. Prof	Lecturer	Ast. Lecturer	Graduate Ast	
2007/8	AAU	22	52	26	100	3	12	26	41	5	15	102
	MU	65	30	5	100	0	0	5	31	11	51	102
	JU	80	19	1	100	0	0	1	19	0	80	100
2008/9	AAU	22	52	26	100	3	13	28	44	5	7	100
	MU	65	30	5	100	0	0	5	31	12	52	100
	JU	83	15	2	100	0	0	2	15	0	83	100

* Source of data: the Annual Statistical Abstracts of MoE (2007/8 and 2008/9 G.C)

Table 6-4 Students' Satisfaction concerning Professional Competence of their Instructors

University	Satisfaction (%)				Total (N)	χ^2
	Low	Moderate	High	No opinion		
AAU	55	15	22.9	6.7	105	13.13*
JU	41.9	14.9	37.8	6.1	148	
MU	40	24	30.9	4	149	
Total (%)	144.8	18.4	31	5.5	402	

* P < 0.05

From Table 6-4, we can observe that the satisfaction of the majority of the student respondents with the professional competence of their instructors is generally low across the sample universities. There is a significant difference among the universities regarding their ratings, in which the proportion of respondents with low satisfaction is higher in Addis Ababa University than the other two universities. This is paradoxical to the finding that the Addis Ababa University has relatively higher proportion of qualified staff than the other two universities. Further analyses of interview data were conducted to substantiate these findings.

Analyses of interview data indicate that students, instructors and officials from the university and the Ministry of Education are in agreement with the finding that shortage of qualified and competent staff is critical across the public universities, though the problem is more serious with the newly emerging universities. As one of my interviewees from Jigjiga University puts it,

Teachers assigned to the university are fresh graduates and inexperienced and thus unable to transfer knowledge to their full capacity. They provide us just soft copies as lecture notes they had from their university education and they do not properly guide us to make use of the limited available library materials and reference (SJ1, 6/1/2010).

A similar problem can be observed in Mekelle and Addis Ababa Universities. As one of the student interviewees puts it: 'the instructors' knowledge, skill, interest and initiative to teach is very poor' (SM1, 30/10/2009). Another interviewee adds that 'the problems of learning could as well be attributed to our background, but we also saw that there is a quality degradation of teachers' (SA4, 19/11/2009).

Instructors have also similar views regarding the prevailing problems of staff qualification and competence. One of my interviewees from the Addis Ababa University notes that 'we have more Ethiopian staff in all fields and it is very good to see the staff Ethiopianized, but when we see the level of education, ability to teach, conduct research, it is deteriorating from time to time and we are starting to yearn for the education in the past' (IA2, 20/11/2009). Administrators across the three universities also witnessed how quality of education is threatened by shortage of qualified staff.

In our college, we have three local PhD holders and five MSC holders. The rest are Bachelor's degree holders. So you can imagine how this can hinder from assuring the expected quality. This is one of the major challenges we are facing currently in ensuring quality (LM2, 29/10/2009).

These results suggest that quality of education in the three public universities is threatened by shortage of qualified and experienced teaching staff. The problem of professional incompetence of teaching staff goes beyond their under qualification. Their motivation and value orientation are also other problems. Nowadays, the academic staff do not have the motivation to teach due to the low remuneration- a situation where the salary of a full professor is less than 500 USD. In this connection one of my staff interviewees said that 'in some departments graduates of good academic performance (higher GPA) do not join the departments due to the low salary, and eventually, the departments hire people with less zeal for the subjects and this goes on and on affecting quality badly' (IA9, 17/11/2009).

Shortage of teaching staff is a phenomenon across the public universities. As witnessed by many of the staff interviewees, the staff-student ratio is very high, there is shortage of qualified staff for some of the courses and some of the staff members are required to have more teaching loads' (IM1, 27/10/2009). Many of the upgraded and new universities open new programs without ensuring the availability of qualified staff for the courses and ultimately depend on teaching staff from the older established universities, as witnessed by many of the respondents. A senior professor from the Addis Ababa University described the seriousness of the prevailing situation as: 'unless our faculty (Faculty of Technology) members go and teach in other universities, the students would not graduate. At one point 70% of engineering students in Mekelle University were advised by our staff' (IA7, 02/12/2009). Similarly, Jigjiga University depends on its neighboring Haromaya University for teaching staff for many of its programs and courses.

All the officials interviewed from both the universities and the Ministry of Education has also acknowledged the chronic shortage of qualified and experienced staff across the public universities. An interviewee from the senior leadership of Jigjiga University reports that 'one of the serious challenges of the management is that we could not create the mechanism to get competent academic staff to our university' (LJ2, 7/1/2010). Another interviewee from the Addis Ababa University notes on the prevailing practice of approaching the problem of staff shortage.

We have tried to solve the shortage of teachers by inviting expatriates; however, this was not fully attained, as the university's capacity to this regard was limited. We have thus been recruiting local staff that were not competitive enough; we could not recruit matured and senior staff; rather we recruited young staff (LA9, 12/12/2009).

From the results discussed above, it is recognizable that the shortage of qualified teaching staff is a problem across the three universities. The Ministry of Education acknowledges this problem. One of my interviewees from the top leadership of the ministry said that 'as there is an immediate need for teaching staff for the newly emerging public universities; this makes us emphasize more on teachers production' (G1, 26/11/2009).

The findings suggest that the qualification, competence and motivation of the teaching staff across the universities are poor. The new and upgraded universities are operating without ensuring the minimum requirements and standards in terms of quantity, qualification, and teaching experience and skill of staff. It is also noticeable that these universities are engaged in assigning novice graduates to teach senior courses for which they are not fully qualified. In such

circumstance, it is difficult to say that quality education is being provided simply because instructors and students meet in a classroom. The prevailing shortage of qualified and experienced staff obviously impacts on quality of student learning in particular and university education in general. These findings raise a serious question on the quality assurance mechanisms pertaining to teaching staff across the public universities.

6.2.4 Resources

It is very difficult to expect quality of student learning without ensuring the availability of adequate resources at their disposal. Resources may include financial expenditures per student; accessibility of facilities such as libraries, laboratories and equipment and student learning support services and technology. The analysis of financial data in this section refers to the public universities administered by and received their annual budget from the Federal Government. It does not include other sources of funding such as projects, donation and aids.

6.2.4.1 Financial Resources

Analysis of data on financial input indicates that the share of education and training expenditure from the total government/public expenditure rises from 16.7% in 2004/5 to 20% in 2009/10. From the total annual education and training expenditure, the proportion of higher education expenditure increases to 83% in 2009/10 from 79.6% in 2004/5, which is higher than 20% for Africa, 23.4% for OECD and 19.8% for the world (World Bank, 2010). This shows an increasing trend in government expenditure on education and training and the percentage of higher education expenditure from the total education and training expenditure across the years. The higher education public expenditure per GDP ranges from 1.95 in 2004/5 to 1.73 in 2008/9 for the public universities, which is higher than 0.78 for Africa, 1.21 for OECD and 0.84 for the world (World Bank, 2010). Further analysis is conducted to see the allocation of higher education expenditure by budget type as indicated in Figure 6-2 below.

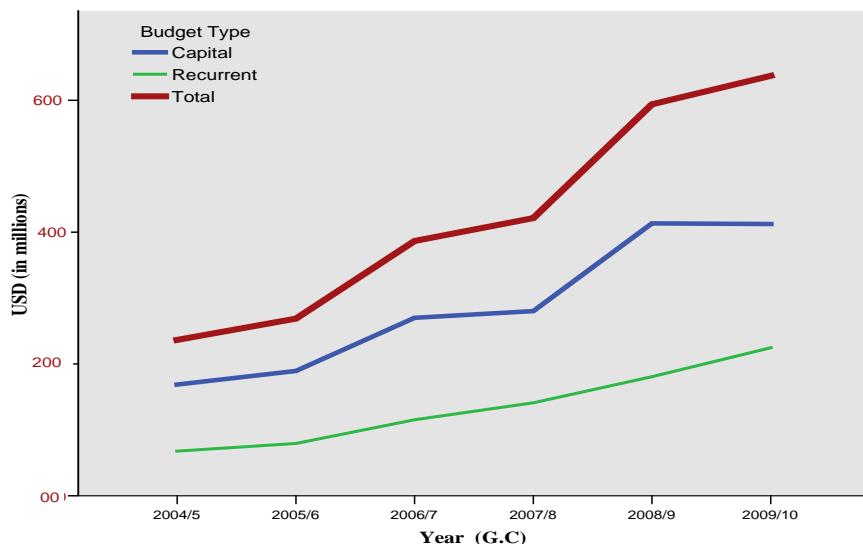


Figure 6-2 Public expenditure on higher education by budget type (2004/5-2009/10)

Note

When calculating the higher education expenditure, consideration has only been taken for public universities and colleges administered by the Federal government where Ministry of Finance and Economic Development is allocating financial budget every fiscal year

The data in Figure 6-2 show an increasing trend on the overall higher education budget across the years. The proportion of recurrent budget is very less compared to the capital budget expenditure. Recurrent budget comprises funding for the key operational aspects such as instruction, research, general management and services, facilities, student support and services and physical plant operations. The same source of data indicates that the proportion of recurrent budget from the total higher education budget rises from 29% in 2004/5 to 35% in 2009/10. This implies that the increase in the higher education budget is more in capital budget-expenditure in the construction of buildings and fixed assets than the recurrent budget.

This may be considered as positive, but the annual recurrent budget (e.g. remuneration of personnel, allowances and benefits, educational facilities, goods and supplies, training services, equipment etc.) is more related with per student expenditure, which may be considered as an indicator for the investment on teaching personnel, facilities and student support services. Further analysis of

recurrent budget was conducted to see the expenditure per student in the public universities. The findings are presented in Figure 6-3 below.

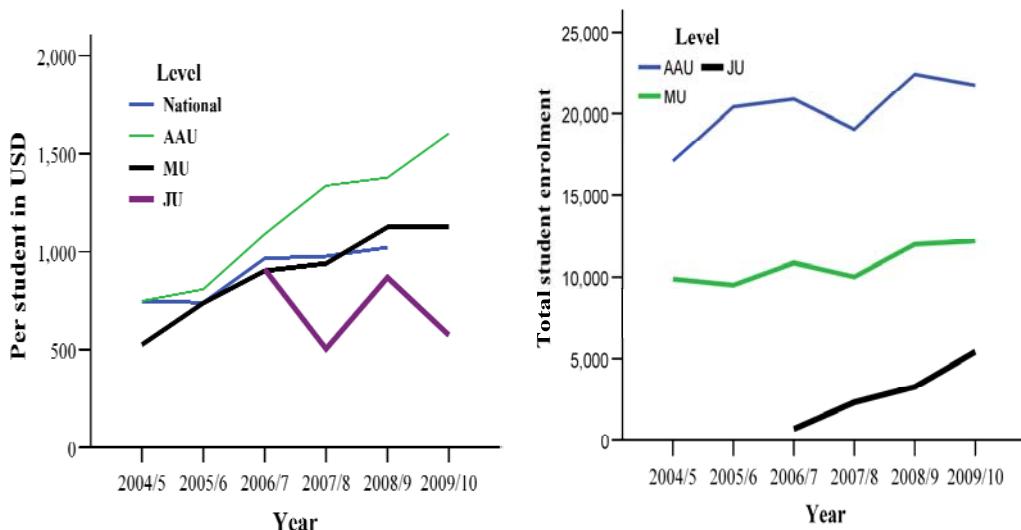


Figure 6-3 Annual expenditure on public universities per student for all services excluding research & development, teaching hospitals & fixed assets versus student enrolment

Notes

1. Nominal annual expenditure, in equivalent USD converted based on exchange rate data collected from the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. Sources of budgetary & enrolment data are the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development (MoFED) and Annual Statistical Abstracts from the Ministry of Education (2004/5-2009/10).
2. When calculating the annual expenditure, consideration has only been taken the government financial resources allocated by MoFED every fiscal year to public universities administered by the federal level has been considered. Other international sources of finance or project funds are not included in the calculation.

Figure 6-3 indicates the trends in per student expenditure vis-à-vis student enrolment in the public universities across the years. From the charts in Figure 6-3, we can observe that there are no apparent parallels between the growing in expenditure per student and an increase in student enrolment across the years. At national level, from 2006/7 to 2008/9 the expenditure per student is more or less stable despite the steadily increasing student population in the public universities for the same years (from 107,960 in 2006/7 to 169,384 in 2008/9). It is

also noticeable that there is fluctuation and variation in per student expenditure across the three public universities and at national level over the years.

A look at Figure 6-3 for the Addis Ababa University shows that there is an overall increasing expenditure per student over the national average across the years. Such a fast growing expenditure per student is not in parallel to the increasing student enrolment over the years. The expenditure per student has increased from 2005/6 to 2007/8, whereas the student enrolment has decreased from 2005/6 to 2007/8 and a similar pattern can be observed from 2008/9 to 2009/10. Expenditure per student has almost remained stable from 2007/8 to 2008/9, while the student enrolment has increased for the same university. A similar fluctuation pattern can be observed in both Jigjiga and Mekelle Universities.

In Mekelle University, the expenditure per student has generally increased over the national average from 2007/09 onwards. Nonetheless, the increasing pattern in expenditure is not consistent with the growing student enrolment of the university. Student enrollment has increased from 2007/8 to 2009/10, while per student expenditure has almost remained stable across these years. In Jigjiga University, the expenditure per student across the years is below the national average and fluctuates across the years, whereas student enrolment has steadily increased over the four years. This evidently shows some irregularity and variability in expenditure per student among the public universities.

These results do not demonstrate a parallel rising in expenditure per student with the increasing student enrolment across the years. This suggests questions concerning the appropriateness of the fund allocation mechanisms and policies at both national and university levels.

6.2.4.2 Accessibility and Adequacy of Facilities and Services

Data on both students and staff perceptions about the accessibility of facilities and student support services in the three public universities were gathered and analyzed. The findings are summarized in Table 6-5 below.

Table 6-5 Adequacies of Facilities and Services as Perceived by Students and Staff

University	Students (%Yes)							
	Library	Laboratory	Equipment	ICT	Course Materials	Remedial Courses	Financial Assistance	Counseling
AAU	90	52	54	66	71	32	40	44
JU	63	17	42	32	45	28	26	47
MU	82	52	46	42	38	83	27	48
Average	77	39	47	44	49	50	30	46
Staff (%Yes)								
AAU	90	81	89	76	50	32	53	27
JU	68	12	50	47	48	41	50	24
MU	79	68	64	71	41	90	64	18
Average	79	57	69	66	46	59	56	23

From Table 6-5, we can observe that facilities such as libraries, laboratories, equipment, ICT and course materials are available in the Addis Ababa University, as reported by the majority of the student and staff respondents. The majority of both student and staff respondents from Mekelle University witnessed the availability of library, laboratory and remedial courses, whereas there is a difference in students and staff ratings concerning the availability of equipment, ICT, course materials and financial assistance. Such a difference in ratings could be due to the fact that what is accessible for staff may not be accessible for students. From the Table, it is evident that the basic facilities and student support services do not exist, except library in Jigjiga University. Financial assistance and counseling services are not available in the three universities, as reported by the majority of the students.

The unavailability of basic facilities and student support services seems to be a very serious problem in Jigjiga University, although the three universities have one or the other type of problems of facility. This indicates that Jigjiga University is running its programs without ensuring the availability of minimum facilities and student support services, and Mekelle University is also characterized by

similar problems. Addis Ababa University seems to be in a relatively better position in terms of putting most of the facilities in place. However, the availability of facilities and services by itself is not sufficient; the adequacy of the available facilities and services should also be considered into account. Further analysis of interview data was conducted to verify the adequacy of the available facilities.

Analysis of the interview data shows that inadequacy of the available facilities and support services is a major problem across the public universities. Library service is obviously central to ensuring effective teaching and student learning in universities. It is important to make sure that the library is equipped with an adequate collection of books and reading materials relevant to the curriculum; students are able to borrow books and get a seat in the library to read and do their assignments and projects. But this seems not to be the case in the public universities. In connection to this, one of the student interviewees from the Addis Ababa University described the existing situation as follows:

Getting up-to-date books and space in the library is one of the major hurdles in our day-to-day learning. There is no enough space in the library. Some times we have to wait for 3 or 4 hours to get space in the library. The library is always overcrowded and there are times where we went back home without getting library service. Most of the available books are outdated, shredded and old enough with many missing pages (SA5, 18/11/2009).

The same is true concerning the adequacy of laboratories. As reported by one of my interviewees, "the laboratory facility either does not exist or there is no one to explain what is there; Internet does not exist." (SA4, 19/12/2009). Staff respondents also share similar views regarding the inadequacy of facilities and services. One of my interviewees from the Addis Ababa University describes the existing situation as follows:

We always hear that there is enough funding to the universities but our libraries are poorly equipped: we do not have current journals, textbooks and similar facilities. Many laboratories and research projects are halted just for not getting reagents and chemicals on time due to the long process in foreign purchasing. This has to be taken seriously. Policies are not just enough. They have to be materialized (IA9, 17/12/2009).

The situation is not different in Mekelle University. There is a mismatch between the available facilities and the increasing student population in the university.

One of our major problems is the limitation of material resource. Whatever facility we have it was built for limited number of students; that is almost 30 students per department, whereas currently we have eight hundred student population. Therefore, you can imagine the increasing number while facilities remained the same and how the quality of education would be affected. Quality is obviously deteriorating. There must be some sort of attempt to balance the student population with the resources (LM2, 29/10/2009)

The problem is more serious in Jigjiga University, where most of the basic facilities are non-existent. The university starts and runs most of its programs without ensuring the availability of basic facilities. A member of the top university leadership described the situation as,

We received our students while buildings were under construction. There were no laboratory, fields, chemistry lab, physics lab, and language lab. Nevertheless, it has to be understood that this does not mean there was no education. We had thought about a way out before hand. We had created faculties and departments in a way that it was possible for the students to go and do their practical internship in colleges and universities surrounding us. We thus had our students work in established laboratories like the Haromaya University in the past three years (LJ2, 7/1/2010).

It is noticeable that students of the natural sciences in the new university are forced to go to neighboring universities and colleges (around 100 Km far away) and stay there for one or two months to do their laboratory based courses. One can imagine the inevitability of logistic problems and the extent to which such arrangements will be sustainable and fruitful in the context of the current rapid program and enrolment expansion across universities. The reasons for the absence of laboratory establishments in Jigjiga University are attributed to the delay in the construction of the planned buildings. During my fieldwork in the Jigjiga University, I had also observed students using temporary toilets built from metal sheets in the open air due to the absence of toilets in the new buildings. This shows that the university opens and runs programs without ensuring the minimum facilities and services. The absence of infrastructure and basic facilities has obviously a repercussion on quality of the teaching learning process in the university.

There are even situations where programs are expanding without making any change in the available facilities and services. As one of the interviewees from the Addis Ababa University describes, the resources and facilities do not develop in parallel with the expansion of new programs and increasing number of students in the universities (IA2, 20/11/2009).

There is a counter argument to the problem of inadequacy of facilities and services in the public universities. Some instructor respondents from the Addis Ababa and Mekelle Universities attributed the problems of inadequacy of facilities and services to the ineffective utilization of the available resources. In this connection, one of my interviewees from the Addis Ababa University argues as follows:

The university teachers were given new computers with Internet service so that they conduct research. To what extent are we using them? Do we not have computers jailed in stores while they could serve students? The problem is not shortage of resources; rather it is unwillingness and inability of the university to prioritize its needs and allocate resources that enhance quality of student learning. A huge amount of money was spent so that the university officials would go to foreign countries and share experience (IA11, 26/11/2009).

Another interviewee from the same university attributes the problem to the misuse and improper manipulation of the available financial resources and goes on to say that

The budget allocated by the government is not appropriately manipulated. Let me tell you my experience; I was a dean six years before and even a year ago. What I see in five-year difference is a bunch of thieves (some administrative staff) are in the system, in which they run for money and money alone. This is perhaps because of the cost of living. Because the government failed to increase the salaries, it lost a great amount of money. The money is being spent in this and that way (IA4, 17/12/2009).

The same interviewee adds that 'it is common to see many Land Cruisers [expensive SUVs—the author] in university campuses, while students are running shortage of facilities and support services and thus it is difficult to curve this situation unless there comes a miracle' (IA6, 19/12/2009). A similar problem can be observed in Mekelle University. As one of my interviewees puts it, 'the government allots the budget; some people are not doing their duties, mainly in the administration and support staff. There is a problem of accountability at all levels and the support staff are not supporting.' As the results in Figure 6-3 indicate the rising per student expenditure for the Addis Ababa University over the years is above the national average and the same is true for Mekelle University in the recent years. The misuse and improper utilization of the available resources could be one of the possible reasons for the prevailing inadequacy and shortage of facilities and services in the universities.

The findings in this section show that the universities have serious problems in making sure that some or all of the minimum learning resources, facilities and services are put in place to start and run their programs. This situation is even

worse in Mekelle and Jigjiga universities. The problem is not only the inaccessibility of the basic facilities and services, but the inadequacy and misuse of some of the existing ones is also a major problem. It is very difficult to expect quality student learning under such circumstances. The findings also raises questions concerning the standards of resource allocation vis-à-vis the current program and enrolment expansion and the extent to which financial resources are channeled to improve basic facilities and the proper utilization of available resources (especially financial resources) to effect quality of students learning.

6.3 Inside the Black Box: Quality of Educational Processes

In the preceding section, we have observed the problems in relation to ensuring the input requirements (human and non-human resources) in the three public universities. It is believed that educational inputs are necessary but not sufficient conditions to bring about high quality learning in universities. The core of student learning experience resides in the educational process. This section deals with data analysis on what is actually happening in the public universities in terms of ensuring process requirements for quality of learning. Analysis of the findings integrates both quantitative and qualitative data drawn from multiple sources. This section starts with the findings on the aspects of teaching, learning and assessment quality including staff development programs, staff and student engagement, followed by results of data analysis on the utilization and quality of facilities, services and technology.

6.3.1 Quality of Teaching and Learning Processes

Teaching and student learning are central to the purposes of higher education institutions. Especially at the undergraduate level, the quality of student learning experience, the breadth and depth of learning attained by students, largely depends on the quality of teaching processes. This section presents findings of quantitative and qualitative data analysis concerning quality of teaching practices at the three public universities.

Teaching and learning process in a university covers an array of activities that are embedded in the university's mission. The university academic calendar, the relevance of courses offered (as perceived by students), the level of intellectual stimulation in courses, variety of learning activities offered to students, and standards of lectures and presentations are believed to be some of the aspects of the teaching and learning process. Both students and teachers were asked about their satisfaction regarding the overall quality of the teaching and learning

aspects in their respective universities. The findings are presented in the Tables below.

Table 6-6 Qualities of Teaching and Learning as Perceived by Students

Aspects of teaching	Universities				χ^2
	AAU	JU	MU	Total	
Implementation of a university calendar	45	46	54	163	6.09
Relevance of the courses offered	52	51	53	180	5.73
Level of intellectual stimulation in courses	41	38	47	194	13.09*
Variety of learning activities provided	36	39	47	207	6.70
Standard of lectures and presentations	48	43	46	163	5.24
Average across all aspects of teaching	44	43	49	907	3.24

The results in Table 6-6 show that the satisfaction of students regarding quality of the different teaching and learning aspects across the three universities is low, except with the relevance of the courses offered. There is no significant difference in respondents' ratings across the three universities, except for the level of intellectual stimulation. Respondents' ratings of their satisfaction regarding the level of intellectual stimulation of courses are significantly greater in Mekelle University than the ratings of respondents in the other two universities. In Mekelle University, the majority of the respondents appear to be pleased with the implementation of a university academic calendar.

It is decipherable that the majority of the respondents from the three universities reported their satisfaction concerning the relevance of the courses offered; this similarity in response pattern among the universities may be attributed to the similarity of the curriculum across all public universities. The curriculum is designed for all programs of the public universities at central level by staff representatives from all public universities under the auspices of the Ministry, as reported by one of the interviewees from the Ministry of Education (G2, 29/11/2009). There is no significant difference in the percentages of satisfied students across the universities regarding the overall aspects of teaching. Instructors were also asked to rate their satisfaction on the overall aspects of teaching.

Table 6- 7 Quality of Teaching and Learning Process as Perceived by Staff

University	Satisfaction (%)			χ^2	Total
	Low	Moderate	High		
AAU	37	35	28		40
JU	64	3	33		30
MU	29	40	31	14.9*	42
Total	46	32	34		112

*P<.005

Staff satisfaction regarding quality of the overall teaching and learning process is not high across the three universities, as shown in Table 6-7. There is a statistically significant difference among the universities regarding their ratings ($\chi^2 = 14.9$, $p < 0.005$). In Jigjiga and Addis Ababa Universities, the satisfaction of majority of the respondents regarding quality of teaching and learning is low, whereas the satisfaction of majority of the respondents in Mekelle University is moderate. The overall findings in Table 6-6 and Table 6-7 indicate that satisfaction level of both students and instructors respondents regarding quality of the teaching and learning aspects is low across the three universities. Further analysis of interview data was conducted to consolidate these findings in the subsequent paragraphs.

Instructor respondents seem to have a strong point with regard to maintaining the standards of teaching and learning practices. It has already become a major challenge to know when the academic calendar begins and ends due to the enrolment expansion across the public universities. As noted by a professor from the Addis Ababa University, the registration is not taken seriously; students can come late and get enrolled, which means even if they miss a substantial amount of the classes, it does not matter (IA9, 17/12/2009). Another interviewee from the same university adds that:

It has been long since the university was proved incapable of running its programs according to its academic calendar. There is an overlap of programs; courses are not being as per the set schedule. Therefore, in my view, quality of teaching and learning in the university is not only declining but the speed of its decline is accelerating (IA2, 20/11/2009).

It has also become a norm among staff and students to begin classes late and end early (IA12, 10/12/2009). Field observations indicate a similar situation where most of the semester classes began in most of the departments of the Addis Ababa

University three or more weeks late from the normal schedule of the university calendar. Academic calendars mean the university's annual legislation, which refers to using one's time properly, and adhering to this is considered as one of the minimum standards for maintaining teaching and learning quality.

The problem is even worse in the new public universities, where they have no control on when to admit their incoming students. A respondent from the top management of Jigjiga University noted that 'registration is not conducted on time because of construction delays, teachers are required by the university to teach in summer (during their break time) to compensate the wasted normal schedule, and this entails payment of additional money which is a lot of cost' (LJ2, 7/1/2010).

Many of the newly assigned students have to wait at home for an unknown length of time (sometimes the whole semester) until they are invited after the completion of buildings in the new universities. We can observe how such a lack of preparation and delay can affect the education of incoming students and their parents. In the case of Mekelle University, problems concerning the implementation of academic calendar are not reported, which goes in line with the findings indicated in Table 6- 7.

What the students learn (the curriculum) in the public universities is also one area of major concern among staff respondents. The way the curriculum is designed, changed and standardized is perceived as a source of problem for teaching and learning at the Addis Ababa University. A professor from the same university describes the current situation as:

There is a discrepancy in the way the curriculum is designed and reviewed by the Ministry of Education. In recent times, the curriculum has been changed two times within a very short period. In the first time, the rationale for change was to introduce the same curriculum across all public universities. In the second time, harmonization of the curriculum is the rationale for introducing curricular change. In fact, staff representatives from all public universities participated in the process. Nevertheless, the way these things are done was mechanical and improper. Most of the representatives were junior and inexperienced staff from the upgraded and new universities; professors and the senior staff were not involved in the curricular changes. I do not think that there was an in-depth discussion in the meetings; the accreditation of the curriculum was made by vote (IA14, 13/112009).

The academic staff at the Addis Ababa University seems to be dubious regarding the effectiveness and legitimacy of the harmonization of curriculum process initiated by the Ministry of Education in recent years. One of my staff interviewees from the same university argues that the current curricular change is

not research based and the extent to which it results in quality of teaching and learning and building centers of excellence across the public universities is not clear and convincing (IA7, 02/12/2009).

However, respondents from the Ministry of Education, Jigjiga and Mekelle Universities perceived the curriculum change initiative as a legitimate and positive step to improve quality of teaching and learning. A senior official from the Ministry argues that the intention of the curricular change is to facilitate harmonization in practice and student mobility; it does not hinder innovation and differentiation in the universities (G2, 26/11/2009). Supporting this opinion, a respondent from Mekelle University noted that the curriculum change initiated by the Ministry helps us to address the content, the mode of delivery and assessment aspects of our courses (LM3, 29/10/2009). A member of the senior management of Jigjiga University also argues that the curriculum harmonization is the product of the joint forum of all public universities that involves staff representatives, department heads, faculty deans and residents, and it helps to provide problem solving based education (LJ1, 5/1/2010).

We can observe that there seems to be lack of cohesion between respondents of the Addis Ababa University and the other two universities as well as the Ministry regarding the appropriateness of the recently initiated curricular changes. This suggests a question on why the respondents from Addis Ababa University are dubious about the curricular changes initiated by the Ministry. We may expect that the Addis Ababa University, as an old and pioneer university, could have its own traditions and values on how curriculum should be reviewed and improved. The university has, however, no documented evidences that support its claims. It does not have documented institution-wide system, policy and strategies on how, when, and by whom study programs/curriculum are designed, reviewed and improved. In its recent history, the university has not demonstrated the leading role in initiating change and reform in its study programs and curriculum other than the few curricular changes initiated by the Ministry. Under such circumstances, the claim of the Addis Ababa University regarding the inappropriateness of the curricular changes initiated by the Ministry can not be considered as valid, rather it may be considered as resistance to top- down change.

With regard to the mode of delivery, staff respondents expressed their views that the teaching and learning is not up-to-date and practice oriented. As one of my interviewees from the Addis Ababa University puts it, 'teaching in the public universities of Ethiopia is not research based; it is conceived as the transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the students' (IA2, 20/11/2009). Obviously, teaching without research is sterile. This problem is attributed to the overall declining of staff quality in undertaking research, which also goes in line with the

findings in section one regarding the under qualification and professional incompetence of teaching staff observed specially in Jigjiga and Mekelle Universities. In relation to this, a respondent from the Addis Ababa University noted the following:

As the quality of the instructor is not in a position to take on broad reading textbooks, doing research; teaching cannot benefit from the research. The staff are not really ready to write teaching materials, they have to depend on materials produced abroad, the text-books do not relate the theories with the specific realities of Ethiopia, the teachers do not help the student to engage in their own thinking, do research, etc. because of class size, because of the library resource, laboratories, practicals, group and field works have stopped step by step over the years. Therefore, students are not trained to stand on their own. This is very bad for university teaching (IA1, 20/11/2009).

Writing senior essays or projects as graduation requirement in the undergraduate programs has almost stopped across the universities due to the increasing number of students and shortage of facilities, as many of the respondents noted. There is no proper advice and follow up to students due to the large class sizes and load of teaching staff (LA5, 26/12/2009). Those sorts of things such as going and making cursory lectures without adequate follow-ups are currently happening in classrooms (LA5, 26/12/2009).

The imbalance between theory and practice in teaching is a problem in the areas of technology, natural sciences and medicine. One of the student interviewees from the Addis Ababa University noted that students are unable to do practical aspects of the courses and the courses are becoming more theoretical due to the mismatch between the available equipment and lab facilities with the increasing number of students (SA3, 30/11/2009). Another student interviewee from the technology field of study adds that 'the classes are boring; we simply learn theory and we are good students in theory, but in terms of practical knowledge we do not feel that we are different from those alien to the field' (SA9, 21/11/2009). One may imagine how such practices can affect quality of students learning in the professional disciplines such engineering, applied and computational sciences, medicine, law and others.

The situation is even worse in Jigjiga University where there are no laboratory facilities, qualified and experienced staff and adequate facilities. An instructor respondent from this university said that 'we are unable to teach our students the practical aspects of the courses due to the absence of laboratory infrastructure, chemicals, teaching materials and library resources, let alone to require them write term papers and research projects' (LJ8, 7/1/2010). The existing mode of delivery in this university encourages students to memorize facts rather than

apply and practice knowledge, which could be due to the lack of teaching experience on the part of instructors and lack of laboratory facilities as indicated in section 6.2. In line with this, one of my interviewees noted that 'all the courses are theoretical; our instructors use rote memorization as a method of teaching and we do the same; we learn the practical aspects equally with our instructors as they are fresh graduates' (SJ4, 7/1/2010). This indicates how the absence of basic facilities and professional incompetence of staff affects quality of teaching and learning in the new university.

In the case of Mekelle University, there has been an initiative to introduce institutionalized approaches that encourage student centered and practice oriented teaching and learning at the course delivery level since 2008. In this university, course and institutional transformation teams that involve student and staff representatives are organized at department level to monitor the teaching and learning process (LM1, 28/11/2009). As one of the interviewees noted, 'university wide efforts are being made to ensure the balance between theory and practice in course delivery' (LM4, 27/11/2009). All staff and the management do not internalize these new initiatives and the departments are not fully practicing it due to shortage of facilities (LM1, 28/10/2009). Student respondents from the same university also share similar view that there is lack of practice oriented teaching and learning due to shortage of equipment and lab facilities.

Staff and student interaction is another area noted by respondents. Problems regarding staff and student relationship seem to exist in the Addis Ababa University. One of the student interviewees describes the situation as

Our mind is not free when we come to classes; we cannot express our views freely in classes, because some instructors harass us. It is very difficult to complain about a teacher because offending instructors might mean losing fair judgment in the rest of the courses the instructor would teach in the future (SA4, 19/11/2009).

Student respondents from Mekelle and Jigjiga Universities do not perceive this as a major problem. This could be due to the age and teaching experience of staff, as majority of the staff are junior or fresh graduates.

Lack of staff and student engagement¹ in the teaching and learning process is also reported as a major problem. One of the student interviewees from the Addis Ababa university noted that 'many instructors begin class too late, come to class for three or four days a semester and towards the end they create chaos by giving us handouts and take-home exams and finally we ended up without learning and knowing the courses' (SA11, 17/11/2009). Frequent absenteeism from class is high

¹ See chapter 9 for detailed discussion.

among the majority of the academic staff. The following quotation describes this situation

There was a teacher who told us so many things about himself: that he was a management member in the university, and that he did his PhD somewhere. The surprise is that he ended up by coming to class for only one week throughout the entire semester. There are also doctors in our department who forgot everything, perhaps including their own names. And the generation is being destroyed because of such people' (SA4, 19/11/2009)

Staff respondents also substantiate the above observations. As one of the interviewees puts it, 'the Addis Ababa University is the oldest and the one with better qualified staff, but the basic problem is that teachers are half-hearted; they want to leave the university, then they hesitate to go because they like the environment' (IA10, 05/1/2009). In such circumstances it is very difficult to expect sustained engagement of students without staff engagement in the teaching and learning process. In relation to this one of the staff interviewees noted that 'you don't see students engaged in matters related to quality of their learning, over the past years most of the students' grievances and protests held at university level reside mainly on side issues such as dormitories, cafeteria, or politics instead of quality of teaching and learning' (IA12, 10/2/2009).

The lack of staff and student engagement indicates the extent to which quality of teaching and learning is compromised in the university. This also poses questions regarding the supervisory role of the university administration regarding the proper conduct of teaching and learning process.

6.3.2 Student Assessment Practices

Student assessment in universities is considered as one of the aspects of assuring quality of teaching and learning. Student assessment that fosters sustained student engagement in learning is believed to enhance quality of student learning experience. Participants were asked about their views concerning quality of the student assessment practices in their respective universities. The findings of both quantitative and qualitative data analyses are presented below.

Table 6-8 Qualities of Assessment Practices as Perceived by Students

University	Variety of assessment methods	Clarity of assessment & marking	Promptness of feedback	Effectiveness of feedback
	Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)
AAU	29	23	27	25
JU	36	34	34	32
MU	49	46	27	28
Total	153	142	112	115
χ^2	11.6**	14.9*	6.6	5.9

*p<0.005 **p<0.05

The results in Table 6-8 indicate that the percentage of satisfied students regarding the variety of assessment methods and clarity of assessment and marking is significantly greater in Mekelle University than the other two universities. It is noticeable that the percentage of satisfied students regarding assessment practices is lower in the Addis Ababa University. The satisfaction level of students regarding quality of assessment practices is lower across the assessment practices of the three universities. These findings purport a question on why the percentage of satisfied students regarding the variety of assessment methods employed and the clarity of the assessment and marking is significantly lower in Addis Ababa University than the other two universities. A further analysis of interview data was conducted to address such a question and substantiate the findings.

In both Mekelle and Jigjiga Universities, the assessment of student performance is grounded in continuous assessment policy. As one of the interviewees explains, the continuous assessment is diagnostic in nature.

We introduced the policy of continuous assessment and changed the grading system from relative to fixed. The teachers give different assignments, quizzes, tests and practical projects. This continuous assessment amounts to 50 %. After passing this continuous assessment, students are allowed to sit for final exam, which otherwise they do not. The assumption is we will provide them all the support in the process. We give exams, we identify those who are weaker and we support them (LM3, 29/10/2009).

In Jigjiga University, student assessment is also embedded in formative/continuous assessment, which is handled by examination and grading

committees as most of the staff members are fresh graduates and inexperienced. The guiding principle of the assessment practice is to make student capable learners (LJ1, 5/1/2010). The current continuous assessment practice is constrained by shortage of resources and facilities across the two universities, as majority of the respondents reported. Poor practices in marking and grading are reported as some of the problem areas in these universities. In Mekelle University, the marking and grading system is not transparent; teachers monopolize grading and some teachers' award marks and grades based on their personal and ethnic relationship with students (SM2, 29/10/2009). A senior officer told the following anecdote from the same university:

There was a management member who once dated a girl to meet him in a hotel. He refrained from passing her grade to the registrar otherwise. And the girl was courageous enough to communicate the case to police and went to the hotel. He was caught red-handed. He was banned from his position since the offence was very critical. Despite the apparent seriousness of the problem, the president and the vice president, however, wrote to him very strong recommendations so that he is now recruited as a teacher in another public university (LM1, 28/10/2009).

This indicates that the unethical practices regarding student assessment go beyond the individual instructor and department. Many respondents from the same university also reported incidents where people from the registrar office changed grades of many undeserved students and let them graduate without the knowledge of the respective departments and the senate. This suggests that the problem is systemic. Respondents from Jigjiga University also share some of these poor practices. A student interviewee from this university witnessed that sometimes grades are awarded based on religion and ethnic relationship with teachers and this affects students moral (SJ2, 6/1/2010).

In the case of Addis Ababa University, issues on student grading and marking are centers of dispute between students, staff and administration. As one of the professors explained, 'students complain a lot about marking and grading, and professors feel they are being asked to be lenient in grading, and students, instead of working hard to pass, they take it up to higher authorities to give instructions to the instructors to give them a passing grade' (IA9, 17/12/2009). The professors perceived the excessive intervention of the central university administration with issues of student assessment and grading as a threat to their academic freedom in particular and quality of education in general. A senior professor at the same university reported the following:

A teacher teaches, administers exams and finally award grades. The grading system is one way of assuring quality. A student earns a passing grade only if he/she is capable of attaining the learning outcomes put for the course. If he/she is not capable of doing this, he/she would be forced to drop out. If this system gave excessive power to the teacher alone, it would be appropriate to correct this. However, in our system, it is difficult to make the evaluation based only on results. In all cases, the administration stands on the students' side. This has a negative impact on the mentality of the teacher. If, a teacher, after awarding grades with all the care, is asked to revise his/her grades, he /she goes declining (IA2, 20/11/2009)

The staff respondents believe that there is no favorable environment, whereby a teacher can bravely declare that a student is not capable of earning a passing grade. As one of my interviewees reported, in some departments there are students who argue for their degree merely because they have spent three years in the university, and there are also instances where such students bring letters from the president of the university and pass to the level they would never pass otherwise (IA9, 17/12/2009).

Students from the same university have a different view regarding poor practices in student assessment and grading. Students attributed such problems of malpractices to the academic staff. One of the interviewees from the Addis Ababa University reports the following

There was an interesting course to which an exceptionally bad teacher was assigned. He gave us three exams suddenly and at holiday eves, just to harm students, and we all scored zero. We complained to the department and filled forms/petition, which resulted in nothing (SA4, 19/11/2009).

Members of the university administration also share the views of students regarding the poor assessment practices. One of my interviewees said that 'some teachers do not even show the marks of the students and even they do not give the grades to the registrar on time or bring the grades on set deadlines' (LA5, 26/12/2009). The respondent goes on to say that the instructors give absolutely no air to students' pains and the students' complaints go even to the university president. This indicates that student assessment and grading practices are centers of the tension among staff, administration and students in the Addis Ababa University. This university has no documented evidence that shows the policies and guidelines that govern the practices of continuous assessment. This could be one of the reasons for the low percentage of satisfied students regarding quality of assessment practices in the Addis Ababa University, as indicated in Table 6-10.

These findings show that student assessment and grading practices at the public universities are constrained by a multitude of complex problems and tensions. One may imagine how these assessment practices affect quality of student learning in the public universities.

6.3.3 Quality of Staff Recruitment and Development Programs

The issues concerning staff recruitment, appointment and development processes were cited by majority of the respondents as the prevailing problems in the public universities. It is believed that getting a certain degree qualification cannot be considered as the only criterion for getting employed as an academic staff; not all qualified people can teach in a university. The respondents from staff and university management believe that a university should be selective and new academic staff members have to be recruited by each university. The existing practice is contrary to this, as reported by many of the interviewees. With the current expansion, 'let alone to do sophisticated searches for would be professors; the Ministry of Education is simply allocating fresh and young graduates to the departments without the universities' consent' (IA9, 17/12/2009).

It is understandable that if the Ministry of Education allows every university to recruit its academic staff, the new universities will be affected, because the best teachers will go to the well-established universities (LM3, 29/10/2009). Supporting the new universities may be considered as positive, but putting restriction over other universities from recruiting their staff is a problem. Because when study programs and departments accept new faculty assigned by the Ministry, they have no guarantee that the candidate coming is with the quality that they require.

Regarding staff development, the Addis Ababa University has been the main source of teaching staff for the upgraded and newly emerging universities since 2007. As one of the higher officials in the Ministry noted, the Addis Ababa University is expected to focus on training of teaching staff for the other universities through the expansion of its graduate programs (Master's and Doctoral programs)' (G1, 26/11/2009). The extent to which it supplies competent and quality teaching staff for the other universities is questionable. As one of the interviewees argues, the problem pertaining to under qualification and incompetence of staff is a vicious circle.

Over the last two, three decades, we have been producing Bachelor degree holders without the ability to read, to write and to think. They are going to the new universities in the regions. See the kind of impact they are going to have. They came to the Master's program. We let them to graduate without giving them the skills to think, to write and to read. Then, we opened a PhD program; the same graduates are coming to it. And these graduates are sent to the universities; it is a vicious circle that cannot be stopped. Addis Ababa University, the senior university, is specializing in the production of professors to the provincial universities; but what kind of professors are we now producing and sending to the other universities... Our graduates who cannot write a single page have become assistant deans, deans in many universities (IA1, 20/11/2009).

This shows the prevailing problems concerning the staff development programs carried out by the Addis Ababa University. As many of the respondents believe, in the existing situation, the production of qualified teaching staff seems to be a challenge for the Addis Ababa University. An interviewee from the top university management noted the following.

To develop the higher education capacity, the basic constraint is shortage of experts. To make the university a postgraduate and research university, our teachers' profile is not sufficient. Teachers who have the final degree are very low; they do not exceed 1/3rd of the general staff. This number has to increase. Unless we do this, we multiply mediocrity instead of quality (LA1, 28/12/2009).

Instructors from the same university also share the prevailing challenge and express their concern regarding the realization of the task given to the Addis Ababa University to produce qualified teachers for the new and upgraded universities. As one of my interviewees puts it, 'first, the number of students enrolled in each graduate program is beyond the capacity of the departments, second, the incoming students (would be university teachers) are not examined whether they are capable of attending postgraduate programs' (IA2, 20/11/2009). The results suggest that the quality of staff recruitment, appointment and development processes is under constraints.

6.3.4 Utilization and Quality of Facilities and Services

The findings revealed problems around the accessibility and adequacy of facilities and student learning support services. In this section, an attempt is made to analyze data on the utilization and quality of the available facilities and services in the public universities. Quality of facilities and services in this regard refers to the extent to which the accessible facilities are relatively up-to-date such as library collections, laboratories, equipment and course materials and the services are efficient enough to enhance quality of student learning. The data in Table 6-9

below show that the percentage of respondents who reported lower utilization of library, laboratories, ICT, remedial courses, financial assistance, and counseling is significantly greater in Jigjiga University than the two universities. The percentage of students who reported higher utilization of remedial courses and counseling services is significantly greater in Mekelle University than the other two universities

The percentage of respondents who reported higher utilization of library, laboratory, ICT, financial assistance is significantly greater in Addis Ababa University than the other two universities. The overall students' opinion regarding the utilization of the available facilities is low across the aspects of facilities and the universities, except library, course materials and remedial courses. It is noticeable that opinion on the use of library is high across the universities, except Jigjiga.

Table 6-9 Utilization and Quality of Educational Facilities and Services as Perceived by Students

University	Utilization of facilities and support services (%High)								
	Library	Laboratory	Equipment	ICT	Course materials	Remedial courses	Financial assistance	Counselling	
AAU	67	29	32	46	57	21	30	27	
JU	32	15	19	15	28	25	16	24	
MU	63	26	25	24	51	59	22	33	
Total	53	23	25	27	45	39	22	28	
χ^2	35.02***	6.99**	4.6	26.11***	2.29	39.9***	19.33***	5.98**	
Quality of facilities and support services (%good)									
AAU	40	40	40	40	55	25	21	23	
JU	14	6	11	9	21	21	12	22	
MU	31	32	29	19	48	61	18	38	
Total	47	26	25	21	41	39	17	28	
χ^2	21.43***	34.72***	22.56***	30.1***	9.3*	44.93***	29.39***	2.74	

*P<.01, **p<.005, ***p<.001

There is problem of utilization of basic facilities in Jigjiga University, which goes in line with the findings regarding the inaccessibility of most of the basic facilities and services in the university.

The percentage of students who perceived the quality of library, laboratory, equipment ICT, course materials, and financial assistance to be high is significantly greater in Addis Ababa University than the others. The percentage regarding students who perceived quality of remedial courses to be high is significantly greater in Mekelle University. The low scores on perceived quality of the basic facilities and services is serious in Jigjiga University. The overall students' perceived quality of facilities is low across the aspects of facilities and universities, except for course materials in Addis Ababa University and remedial courses in Mekelle University. These findings indicate that there are problems in the utilization of the available facilities and services across the three public universities, and the problem is even worse in Jigjiga University. It is also evident from the above Table that quality of the available facilities and services is poor, as the majority of the student respondents reported. Staff respondents were also asked their opinion regarding the utilization and quality of educational facilities and services. A similar response pattern of instructors can be observed in Table 6-10 below.

The results in Table 6-10 below show that opinions on the use of laboratory differ significantly across the three universities, Addis Ababa University highest, Jigjiga University lowest. There is a significant difference in the perceived utilization of course materials and remedial courses across the three universities, Mekelle University highest and Jigjiga University lowest.

There is a problem in the utilization of facilities and services in Jigjiga University. The utilization of facilities and services is low across the aspects of facility and universities, except for library. Opinions on quality of laboratory and equipment differ significantly across the three universities, Addis Ababa University highest, Jigjiga University lowest. There is a significant difference in opinions on quality of ICT and financial assistance across the three universities, Mekelle University highest, Jigjiga University lowest. Quality of facilities and services is a major problem in Jigjiga University. The staff's perception of quality of facilities and services is low across the aspects of facility and universities.

It is evident from the results in Table 6-10 that the ratings of staff respondents regarding quality of the available facilities and services are poor, which is in agreement with the ratings of students. This means that the universities are not providing quality services in terms of libraries equipped with adequate and up-to-date collection of books, journals and learning materials; well-established and equipped laboratories; teaching and learning equipment; efficient ICT support;

relevant course materials; organized and meaningful remedial and counseling services, and sufficient financial support for students. These findings are corroborated by results from the interview data.

Table 6-10 Utilization and Quality of Educational Facilities and Services as Perceived by Staff

Utilization of Facilities and Support Services (%High)									
University	Library	Laboratory	Equipment	ICT	Course materials	Remedial courses	Financial assistance	Counselling	
AAU	53	66	67	55	0	11	45	43	
JU	64	14	36	30	31	21	35	24	
MU	63	34	54	49	28	68	42	16	
Total	60	40	54	45	21	41	41	26	
	1.15	14.05*	5.59	3.98	7.82*	22.45*	.633	5.46	
Quality of Facilities and Support Services (%good)									
AAU	38	38	47	9	11	19	27	0	
JU	19	0	16	4	25	27	13	13	
MU	42	35	38	26	7	41	42	6	
Total	34	27	36	14	14	32	29	7	
	4.22	10.61**	6.41**	8.24**	3.73	2.84	6.02**	2.57	

p<.001, **p<.05

In the case of Addis Ababa University, utilization and quality of the available facilities and services are major problems. As one of my interviewees puts it, 'quality of the teaching materials such as books, journals, internet connection is very poor' (IA13, 11/11/2009). Students also share similar opinions. The utilization of lab facilities, equipment and field work is very low due to the incompatibility of resources with the increasing student number and consequently the learning process is more of theoretical' (SA9, 21/11/2009). Supporting this idea, another student interviewee adds; "our library is not only inadequate, but it is also equipped with outdated and irrelevance collection of reading materials, there are no more updated books and electronic journals that support our learning' (SA11, 25/11/2009).

In the case of Mekelle University, majority of the student respondents replied that there is poor quality and lack of proper utilization of the available facilities and

services such as computer labs, internet facilities, laboratories, books and handouts, instruments and filed trips. A senior officer in the university explained that 'we are not applying the resources we already have. The poverty has its impact; yet we can change a lot with what we have if the university could ensure that the resource is applied in appropriate areas' (LM1, 28/11/2009). A senior official at the Ministry of Education reported that 'shortage of resources is not a serious problem; the major challenge is the proper and efficient utilization of allocated budget at the public universities; most of the universities utilize 60% or 80% of their annual budget' (G2, 26/11/2009).

The situation in Jigjiga University is different where many of the facilities and services such as laboratories and equipment are not in place. In relation to this both staff and student respondents reported that there is a problem regarding the absence and utilization of available facilities and services. In this university, about 3000 students are served in a small library; 'it is not adequately equipped even with old books, let alone to talk about proper utilization and quality' (SJ4, 05/1/2010). Field observations also indicate a similar situation that the library is not up to standard in terms of space for reading and collection of books and journals. It is difficult to talk about proper utilization and quality in the absence of many of the facilities and services in the university.

The findings in this section indicate that students are not getting quality facilities and services that enhance their learning. This has an implication to the quality of education provided especially in the areas of science and technology. This suggests that it is difficult to expect quality student learning without ensuring the proper utilization and quality of the basic facilities and services in the public university. The lack of proper utilization and quality of facilities and services would affect students' learning.

6.4 Quality of Educational Output

The findings in the preceding sections indicate that quality of educational inputs and processes are deficient in terms of enhancing student learning in the public universities. This section presents findings of data analysis concerning quality of educational output. In this study, quality of output is approached in terms of non-completion rate and the learners' perceived changes in their knowledge and skills as measured by their level of satisfaction and staff satisfaction as well. The non-completion rate is considered as quantitative indicator of output, while students' and staff satisfaction as indicator of quality learning. This section presents analysis of data on educational output quality.

6.4.1 Non-completion Rates

The non-completion rate may include those students who transfer from one study program/university to others, withdrawals, dropouts and failures. Non-completion rate in this study refers to the percentage of dropouts and failures due to academic deficiencies at the end of their studies. Data on the percentage of graduating class students compared to initial entry of the 2007 student cohort across the three sample universities are analyzed. The analysis for the Addis Ababa University is based on the longitudinal data for the 2007 entry student cohort of the sample fields of studies, whereas the analysis for Jigjiga and Mekelle Universities is based on the cross-sectional data. The findings are presented in Table 6-11 below.

Table 6-11 Educational Output as Measured by Non-Completion Rate across Universities

University	Non-Completion rate	
	No. of Students at initial Entry 2007/08	Total Attrition rate (%)
Baseline data		
AAU (sample fields of study)		
Physics	26	77
Economics	154	57
Education (English + Mathematics)	233	42
Geography	46	35
Technology	282	29
Information science	110	28
Law	100	25
Medicine	203	11
Total sample fields of studies	1154	33
Cross-sectional Data		
JU	1718	24
MU	3350	29

Notes

1. Total attrition rate refers to the total dropouts until the final year.
2. The study duration for medicine, technology and law is more than three years and the students in these fields of study are not in their final year.
3. Data for 2007 entry student cohorts is collected from the registrar offices of the respective universities

From the results in Table 6-11, it is evident that the percentage of students who reach the final year across the sample fields of study of the Addis Ababa University demands attention, except for medicine. There is clearly a high attrition rate in many of the sample fields of studies such as Physics, Economics and Education in the Addis Ababa University. This implies that a significant number of students are not progressing through their studies until the final year. The attrition rates in Mekelle and Jigjiga Universities are also not small enough to be ignored.

Evidences from the same source of data indicate that the main reason for attrition across the universities is one or the other type of academic deficiency (dismissal, failure and repeat). In the context of Ethiopian universities, academic progress or dismissal of students is determined based on their performances (as measured by their GPAs) in the courses offered in the respective fields of studies.

Many factors could contribute to the learning deficiencies of students in universities. As we have already observed in the preceding sections, the educational inputs and processes for quality student learning are constrained by many problems. These problems include inadequate preparation of incoming students; poor qualification and competence of teaching staff; poor quality of teaching, learning and assessment; inadequacy and poor quality and utilization of facilities and support services. These problems will have their own effect on quality of education in general and student learning in particular.

Further analysis is conducted to see if there is any relationship between completion rate (output as measured by students' CGPA in final year) and the input and process variables so as to get a holistic picture about the issue under discussion. Baseline data were analyzed and the results are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs. For the purpose of this analysis, the input and process variables discussed in the previous chapters are categorized into major components based on inter-item correlation and factor analysis results. Based on the results of the inter-item correlation and factor analysis, the items in the questionnaire were categorized into 12 variables. These are: completion rate as measured by students' CGPA's, entry qualification as measured by UEE results, qualification of teaching staff, accessibility of facilities, accessibility of support services, utilization of facilities, utilization of support services, quality of facilities, quality of support services, teaching and learning, assessment process, and student engagement (see Table 1 in Annex 1).

The findings (see Table 1 in Annex1) indicate that there is a significant and substantial relationship between completion rate as measured by CGPA in final year and the students' entry qualification as measured by their entrance exam score at initial entry, $r = .53$; $p < .01$. The perceived accessibility of facilities (.86);

utilization of facilities (.33); quality of facilities (.24) and accessibility of student learning support services (.21) are also significantly related with completion of study programs (as measured by CGPA), though the correlation coefficients for the last two variables are low. The accessibility of facilities correlates much higher than the utilization, because students rated utilization of facilities based on what is accessible. The rest of the variables are not significantly correlated with completion rate. The findings (see Table1 in Annex 1) also indicate that accessibility of facilities account for about 74% for the variability in completing a study program among students, followed by entry qualification accounts for about 29%, utilization of facilities for about 11%, quality of facilities for about 6%, accessibility of student learning support services for about 4%, and qualification and competence of staff for about 2%. The effect size (R^2) for the rest of the variables is almost zero.

It is also notable that qualification and competence of teaching staff (as rated by students) is significantly related to the perceived good practices of teaching and learning aspects, assessment and student engagement, whereas there is a negative and significant relationship between completing a study program and the qualification and competence of teaching staff. Such negative relation may be related to the fact that it is possible to have qualified staff, but without engagement as it is observed in the Addis Ababa University. The findings of the cross-sectional data analysis for Jigjiga and Mekelle Universities indicate similar patterns that completing a study program (as measured by students CGPA in final year) was significantly correlated with students' entry qualification, $r = .42$, $p < 0.001$, whereas the rest of the variables were not correlated with completion rate. Teaching and learning was significantly related with staff qualification and competence, assessment practices and student engagement, whereas it was negatively correlated with qualification and competence of teaching staff. This shows that results of the longitudinal data are corroborated by findings from the cross-sectional data. We can also observe a certain pattern in the relationships between completing a study program and the input and process variables. This suggests that the problems in the quality of educational inputs and processes have their own influence on students' learning outcomes in the public universities.

It is important to note that completion rate by itself is not sufficient to show output quality unless it is complemented by evidence of students' learning experience. Further analyses of both the longitudinal and cross-sectional data were carried out to see output quality in terms of perceived learning quality. The findings are discussed below.

6.4.2 Students and Staff Satisfaction Concerning Output Quality

For the purpose of this study, data analysis on students' satisfaction is considered important based on the assumption that students are the legitimate evaluators of their learning quality. Accordingly, students were asked on a 5-point scale to rate their level of satisfaction regarding their learning gain on eight competencies. The value 2.5, the mid point of the 5-point scale, is considered as a hypothesized mean against which the mean ratings of students are checked for their significance using the one sample t-test. This means if the mean rating of students is significantly higher than the hypothesized mean (the mid point of the scale), then we assume that the students are satisfied with that particular learning competence and vice versa. Findings of the analysis of longitudinal data collected from the 2007 entry students' cohort of sample fields of studies in AAU are presented in Table 6-12 below.

Table 6-12 One Sample t-test for the Mean Ratings of Students' Satisfaction with their Learning Competencies Gained During their Studies (Longitudinal data)

Learning Competencies	Test value = 2.5				
	Mean rating	Mean Difference	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
7					
Subject matter knowledge	2.86	.361	4.97	280	.000
Problem solving skills	2.44	-.056	-.889	285	.375
Research ability	2.57	.073	1.14	285	.255
Analytical/critical thinking skills	2.43	-.069	-1.177	282	.240
Practical skills	2.44	-.061	-.930	288	.353
Communication skills	2.53	.031	.551	289	.575
Team work skills	2.59	.093	1.659	289	.098
Overall preparation for a professional career	2.55	.049	.944	287	.346

The results in the Table 6-12 indicate that the mean rating of students regarding their satisfaction with 'subject matter knowledge' gained during their studies is 2.86, which is significantly greater than the hypothetical mean 2.5 ($t=4.97$, $p<.001$). We can assume that the students are satisfied with this learning competence. The mean ratings of students with the remaining learning competences are not significantly higher than the hypothesized mean, which indicates that the

students are not satisfied with the quality of their learning competencies. Findings of the cross-sectional data analyses also confirm these results (see Table 6-13 below). The learning competencies listed in Table 6-12 above are classified in one category (as measuring the same thing) based on results of inter-item correlation and factor analysis of data.

Table 6-13 One sample t-test for the Mean Ratings of Students' Satisfaction with the Quality of their Learning Competencies gained during their Studies (Cross-sectional data)*

Universities	Test value =2.5				
	Mean rating	Mean difference	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
JU	2.42	-.08	-1.36	141	.177
MU	2.59	.09	1.49	135	.137
Total	2.54	.04	1.94	374	.233

*Students were asked their general satisfaction concerning quality of their learning.

We can observe from the results in Table 6-13 that the mean ratings of respondents from Jigjiga and Mekelle Universities are not significantly higher than the hypothesized mean for the perceived quality of learning competence. The total mean ratings of students for the two universities are not significantly different from the hypothesized mean for their perceived quality of learning. This indicates that students across the two universities are not satisfied with quality of their learning competencies gained during their studies, which goes inline with the findings of the longitudinal data in Table 6-12.

Both findings from the longitudinal and cross-sectional data analysis imply that the students' perceived meaningfulness of their learning experience in terms of developing generic and specific skills as well as preparation for a professional career is generally low. In both studies most of the student respondents are in their final year and ready for graduation, and the minimum requirement for graduation across the universities is a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 2. This may pose a question regarding the relationship between the students' CGPAs and their perceived quality of learning. Further analysis was conducted to see if there is any relationship between students' grades and their perceived quality of learning. Findings of the longitudinal data analysis show that students' CGPA was not significantly correlated with their perceived quality of learning, except subject matter knowledge, $r = .2$, $p < .05$. A similar pattern can be observed from the findings of cross-sectional data analysis that there is no significant relationship between completing a study program (as measured by

students' CGPAs) and students' perceived quality of their learning competence ($r=.04$). It is evident from these findings that fulfilling a graduation requirement (CGPA) and thereby completing study program does not necessarily indicate quality of student learning (perceived output quality).

Additional analyses of qualitative data were carried out to substantiate these findings in the subsequent paragraphs. The findings show a very high concern among the respondents (students, staff, leadership and MoE) regarding the deterioration of output quality. One of my instructor interviewees from the Addis Ababa University said:

I'm sorry to say so; my level of satisfaction with the quality of student learning is going down every year. May be I enjoy teaching myself very much; I'm convinced; I've enjoyed teaching. But nowadays things are going from bad to worse – things are deteriorating – my level of satisfaction with the competence of our graduates every year going down – the graph is going down. So I am really not very much satisfied (IA13, 11/11/2009).

The response pattern across respondents' shows perceived poor quality of graduates. 'The graduates we produce will become, I fear, substandard, because we are in hurry' (IA7, 02/12/2009). Another respondent added that 'the quality of graduates is deteriorating due to the poor quality of education' (IA9, 17/12/2009).

Quality of graduates (output quality) becomes really important for every stakeholder including students, the institutions, the people and the government. In a situational overview that the Ministry of Education has made in its planning for higher education institutions' capacity building and organizational reform, it has assessed problems of quality as follows

While our higher education system has yet to overcome weaknesses related to equity and growth in enrolment, issues of academic relevance and quality are of serious concern. It has fundamental shortcomings in terms of enrolment rate across the academic programs and fields of study, the curriculum, instructional delivery, students' evaluation and exam systems and standard of overall leadership and management. [Translated from the Amharic version, MoE, 2007]

Quality of learning is also a major concern among students. One student interviewee noted that 'I have good grades, but I don't feel that I am equipped with the knowledge and practical skills required for my future career in my field of study' (SA4, 19/11/2009). These results suggest that the satisfaction of students concerning quality of their learning; the satisfaction of staff and administration about quality of their graduates is low. These results also complement findings of the quantitative data that there is a problem concerning quality of student learning. Completing a study program in this case does not imply high quality student learning (output quality). The three sample universities do not have a

documented evidences concerning quality of student learning experience. The students' performance in courses as measured by their GPAs is the dominantly used evidences in making decisions about study programs and students.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, an attempt was made to analyze data on the state of educational quality in the Ethiopian public universities. The findings indicate that quality of input; process and output are constrained by a number of problems in the universities.

One of the major findings regarding input quality shows that many students transfer from preparatory schools and join the public universities in mass without required standard of academic grounding. The main reasons are: the whole student acceptance admission policy and lack of autonomy of universities to select their students. The existing admission policy is defective in terms of enabling the universities ensure the entry qualification and quality of their incoming students. The public universities do not have the full autonomy, other than those provisions in ETP, to decide on the number, quality of preparation and competence of students eligible for candidacy. They are under pressure and obligation by the Ministry of Education to receive and educate all that the Ministry assigns to them even if this moves against their plans, intake capacity, and availability of resources, directions and interests. This on its own negatively affects the quality of learning in the public universities.

The results also revealed that the academic staff across the public universities is not properly trained, motivated and engaged to face challenges and improve quality of education to the level it should be. Although there are differences in the qualification mix of staff, shortage of qualified and experienced staff is a feature of the three public universities. Many under-qualified and inexperienced staff are teaching especially in the new and upgraded public universities, this is hardly different from peer teaching. The public universities also do not have full autonomy in the recruitment of their staff as per their own set plan and criteria. The Ministry of Education makes all such decisions centrally. This suggests that qualified and experienced teaching personnel, which is considered as fundamental prerequisite for quality student learning and performance is missing in the universities. This suggests that it is very difficult to expect quality of education in the universities in the absence of qualified, experienced and motivated academic staff.

Lack of adequate physical and financial resources to support student learning is also experienced by students and staff as a critical problem across the three universities. The problem is more serious in the new university. It is not difficult

to recognize what it means running programs in the areas of natural sciences, medicine, engineering and technology without putting in place basic facilities such as laboratories, equipment and libraries, and student support services. This shows how difficult it is for the universities to provide quality education in the absence of adequate and quality facilities and services.

The educational process, which is crucial for the transformation of the learner, is constrained by a multitude of problems across the universities. The teaching and learning process lacks integration of theory and practice, which has serious implications to quality of learning in the professions. The teaching, learning and assessment practices are also hindered by lack of staff and student engagement and shortage of resources vis-à-vis the increasing number of students. There are no well-organized, planned and coherent practices of designing and revising curriculum and programs across the universities. These limitations obviously influence quality of education in the universities.

The findings also uncovered serious limitations in quality of the educational output as measured by non-completion rate, and staff and student satisfaction. Non-completion rate is high in those fields of studies where more students joined without adequate preparation. A significantly positive relationship is observed between completing a study program and students' academic preparedness at initial entry, accessibility of facilities and support services, utilization of facilities, quality of facilities, and qualification and competence of staff. However, there is no significant relationship between completing a study program (as measured by students' cumulative GPAs) and students' perceived quality of learning. The findings show that the students' perceived meaningfulness of their learning experience in terms of developing generic and specific skills as well as preparation for a professional career is generally low across the universities. Even those graduating class students with good grades are not satisfied with quality of their learning competencies gained during their studies. Similarly, staff satisfaction with quality of student learning is low. This shows that completing or graduating from a study program is not sufficient to show quality of student learning in universities. This in turn suggests the need to look at quality in terms of students' learning outcomes

The findings in this chapter have shown that the public universities are threatened with problems related to quality of educational input, processes and outputs that influence quality of the core educational processes in the public universities. The conditions necessary to support quality teaching and student learning are either missing or defective in the universities. The existing practices would constrain quality of student learning in the public universities. This poses a critical question on the quality assurance systems and practice claimed by the public universities, which is dealt in the next chapter.

7 The Adoption and Practice of Quality Assurance in Ethiopian Universities

7.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the findings demonstrated that quality of educational inputs, processes and outputs is constrained by a number of problems and thus, that the quality of student learning is generally jeopardized across the three public universities. This puts the adequacy and efficacy of the quality assurance systems and practices in the public universities in question. Hence is the focal point of this chapter to look critically into the actual quality assurance systems and practices of the public universities based on analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data drawn from multiple sources.

Section 7.2 of this chapter begins with a documentary analysis on the historic and present quality assurance practice in Ethiopian universities. The next section presents the findings on the adequacy of the existing quality assurance practice in terms of improving the core educational processes that influence student learning. The fourth section presents the results on effectiveness of quality assurance practice. The findings regarding the convergence or divergence in quality assurance practices across the three public universities and the ensuing theoretical explanations are presented in section 7.5. The last section presents concluding remarks.

7.2 Quality Assurance Practice in Ethiopian Universities: the Past and the Present

It is believed that a functioning quality assurance system with appropriate policies, strategies and structures is vital for universities to maximizing their expertise, resources and efforts and to maintaining and improving quality of their educational provisions. In this section, the description of the past as well as the current quality assurance systems based on document analysis (legal documents, guidelines and reports) is presented. These findings help to understand the extent to which the public universities have developed and introduced policy guidelines; strategies and institutional arrangements to assure quality of their education.

7.2.1 A History of Quality Assurance Practices before 2003

The history of assuring academic quality and standards in the Ethiopian higher education system traced back to the establishment, as the first higher education institution in the country, of Haile Selassie I University (HSIU) in 1950. HSIU was granted a charter in 1961 as an autonomous higher education institution with a power to have control over its internal administrative and academic affairs through its faculty council (senate) and academic commissions (Negarit Gazeta, 1961). Since its foundation as a University College of Addis Ababa, the university was relatively free from Government direct intervention.

As stated in article 15 of the university's charter, the faculty council (senate) had the mandate to determine the general requirement for student admission, staff recruitment and development, study programs and curriculum, the general methods and conditions for teaching, learning and examinations, the general standard for granting degrees, diplomas and certificates, and the internal policy of the university including program review and evaluation (Negarit Gazeta, 1961). The consolidated legislation of the faculty council (senate) was the main legal framework for carrying out academic matters and maintaining academic standards in the university (HSIU, 1973).

The board of governors, faculty council, academic commissions and different committees (board of admissions, academic standards, faculty affairs and promotions, library, student affairs and curriculum committees) were the main actors in assuring academic standards. The academic calendar, staff appointment and development requirements, external examiner system, student admission, progression, examination, grading systems etc. were the main policy instruments for assuring quality (HSIU, 1973). This shows that, though formal quality assurance was not stated, as we perceive it today; the university had internal system for maintaining academic quality and standards of its educational provisions during the emperor period (1950 to 1974). During this time quality was seen as an inherent and internal affair of the university, and hence, the responsibility for ensuring academic quality and standards remained in the hands of the academia and disciplines (tacit norms). The power to determine on academic, financial and administrative matters including program review, evaluation, assessment and improvement resided within the academic community of the university. This resembles the professional self-regulation model of assuring institutional quality and accountability.

Following the repeated opposition of the university apparently led by students, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the university lost its traditional autonomy; and the self-government of the academy was replaced by stiff political controls during the rule of the Revolutionary Marxist Military Regime in the 1974-1991 (Amare,

2007)¹. The collegial atmosphere of the university and powers of the academia regarding academic matters were abandoned and replaced by bureaucratic and central-control model (Negarit Gazeta, 1977). This is a paradigmatic shift from the professional self-regulation model to a bureaucratic and centralized model of institutional accountability. This contradicts with the traditional academic values and approaches for maintaining academic standards in the university. The system of that time seemed not to allow the academic staff to claim any kind of independence from the state in planning and deciding on the contents and methods of their courses, which eventually resulted in the general decline of academic staff's moral and, consequently, academic standards (Amare, 2007).

The internal mechanisms for maintaining academic standards enshrined in the university charter of the emperor's time were weakened or quitted, and quality and standards of education deteriorated throughout this period (MoE, 1997, 2002). There is no documented evidence that shows the presence of legal and regulatory framework for the development and implementation of formal quality assurance mechanisms at both institutional and national levels during this period.

The mounting criticism on higher education regarding its poor quality, inequitable access, inability to meet the trained work force needs of the country had led to the reform of the higher education system following the change in government in 1991 and enactment of the Education and Training Policy in 1994 (Transitional Government of Ethiopia, 1994; HESO, 2004). Since then the higher education system has changed in many ways including the enactment of the higher education proclamation (no 351/2003, FDRE, 2003) in 2003 that provides legal ground for the development and implementation of formal quality assurance in higher education institutions. The following section focuses on the data analysis of the present system of quality assurance.

7.2.2 The Present System of Quality Assurance

The practices of assuring academic quality and standards in the past were criticized for their inadequacy and ineffectiveness in terms of addressing the increasing external demands placed up on the higher education institutions including, among other things, guaranteeing the availability of appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities as well as ensuring quality of outputs in an expanding higher education system (MoE,

¹ The fact that the university housed a strong opposition against the emperor and the suspicion that it will continue to house one gave the military government the lesson that a new type of arrangement should be a matter of course.

2003; World Bank, 2003). This led to the need for the establishment of more systematic, explicit and formal quality assurance system. As per the recommendations of the studies conducted by the Task Force for Higher Education System Improvement (MoE, 2003) and the World Bank (World Bank, 2003), the legal framework for the establishment of national quality assurance system was formally introduced into the higher education system of the country since the enactment of the higher education proclamation 351/2003 and the resultant establishment of Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) in 2003 (FDRE, 2003).

The higher education proclamation, which is amended in 2009 (FDRE, 650/2009), requires each university to establish and implement an internal quality assurance system for the enhancement of quality of its study programs. More specifically, the proclamation states that 1) every institution shall have a reliable internal system for quality enhancement that shall be continuously improved (article 22, No.1), 2) institutions shall develop quality standards, undertake academic audit on a periodic basis, follow-up and rectify the deficiencies revealed by the audit, and maintain appropriate documentation of the audit, activities undertaken and of ensuing results, and submit such documentations regularly to HERQA (article 22, No.4). The formal quality assurance system in the university sector consists of internal and external quality assurance elements. Each institution undertakes self-evaluation and prepares a report in accord with guidelines issued by HERQA, and then HERQA undertakes institutional quality audit based on the self-evaluation document and publishes audit report (HERQA, 2006).

The Ethiopian system of quality assurance is similar to the general model of higher education quality assessment depicted by van Vught and Westerheijden (1994). They have a set of proposed prescriptions: a) a national coordinating body (agency) with legal status and independent of government should direct the quality assessment system; b) self-evaluation by higher education institutions should be carried out by quality assurance personnel and academics; c) external evaluation by peers as well as by external experts is invaluable, and d) publication of a report is worthwhile.

The influence of foreign consultants in the transferability of quality assurance models is the one primary point to illustrate the conformity of the Ethiopian model to that of the authors discussed afore. Documents show that foreign consultants like Professor Kate Ashcroft and Dr. Philip Rayner VSO management advisors to the Ministry of Education, Dr. William Saint from World Bank and others from NPT-Nuffic projects had the leading and influential role in the development of working documents and quality assurance guidelines; establishing and leading HERQA, and then providing training during the initial stages.

HERQA, which has recently changed its name to Education and Training Quality Assurance Agency (ETQAA) due to BPR, is entitled by the proclamation to undertake institutional quality audit and thereby assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of the universities' internal quality assurance systems (HERQA, 2006). However, unlike the European general model of quality assessment portrayed by van Vught and Westerheijden, HERQA is not fully autonomous. As stipulated in article 89 of the higher education proclamation (no.650/2009), HERQA is part of and accountable to the Ministry of Education.

The institutional quality audit approach is at the center of the external quality assurance system adopted by HERQA. According to the higher education proclamation, the public universities financed by the government are established by regulation of the Council of Ministries (article 5) and they are not required for accreditation by HERQA. On the other hand, private higher education institutions are subject to accreditation every three years (article 76). This shows, as far as public universities is concerned; the role of HERQA is limited to making sure that the institutions have internal quality assurance systems in place as per its guidelines and requirements, conducting institutional quality audit and forwarding recommendations for improvement through its published quality audit reports.

In the existing quality assurance framework, the internal quality assurance system in the public universities is considered a foundation for continuous quality improvement of study programs, as stated in article 22 of the revised higher education proclamation (FDRE, 2009). Central to the internal quality assurance system is quality enhancement, i.e., making deliberate and continuous effort to improve quality of the education processes that are supposed to influence quality of student learning in the public universities. These can be enumerated as: study programs, teaching, learning and assessment as well as student support and service opportunities. In this regard, the articulation and proper implementation of the proclamation, and setting mechanisms to ensure the establishment and implementation of quality enhancement processes in universities are responsibilities of HERQA. It is within this legal framework that the public universities are required by proclamation to establish and undertake a system of internal processes to enhance quality of their education.

Findings of the data analysis on the adequacy of the internal quality assurance practice in the public universities are presented in the section that follows.

7.3 Adequacy of the Internal Quality Assurance Practice in Universities

As depicted in the previous section, the universities are required to establish and implement internal quality enhancement processes. In this regard, adequacy of the internal quality assurance depends on the extent to which it focuses on improving quality of education. In this section, data on whether quality assurance policies, institutional arrangements and methods are put in place to improve quality education in the three public universities were analyzed.

7.3.1 *Policies and institutional Arrangements for Internal Quality Assurance*

Internal quality assurance systems include, among other things, clearly articulated policies, strategies and institutional arrangements that delineate responsibilities and accountability for quality at all levels. Documentary data, followed by survey results, are analyzed hereunder to explore existing quality assurance policies and structures across the three universities.

7.3.1.1 Results of Documentary Data analysis

7.3.1.1.1 *Addis Ababa University (AAU)*

Established in 1950, AAU is the pioneer and oldest higher education institution in the country. Analysis of the university legislation shows that Addis Ababa University has no written and formally endorsed quality assurance policy until very recent years. The revised senate legislation of the university (AAU, 2007) provides general policy provisions concerning staff (including roles and responsibility, recruitment and promotion of staff); education (includes academic calendar, student admissions, course offering, academic advising, examinations and grading systems, teaching load), internal academic organization, the university library system, and student affairs and discipline. A critical look at the legislation document indicates that policy directives regarding quality assessment and enhancement as well as quality of student learning are not explicitly incorporated in any one of the titles and articles contained in the legislation. This suggests that the senate legislation cannot be considered to have integrated a sufficient quality assurance policy document vis-à-vis the requirements of the higher education proclamation for formal internal quality assurance system (no. 650/2009).

The issue of formal policy and structure for internal quality assurance was raised towards the end of 2009 in relation to BPR implementation, following the three year study and planning concerning problems of the core processes of the university and preparation of a five-year strategic plan. The university initiated

BPR as a tool with an aim to make its academic and administrative services more efficient, dynamic and productive and thereby accomplish its mission excellence. Efficiency and effectiveness in terms of providing quality services in its core processes (teaching, research and support services) have been articulated as central values of BPR implementation in the university (AAU, 2009). With regard to teaching and learning, the process and organization have been designed, among other things, to attain and maintain high standards and quality through the pursuit of demanding accreditation, which shows that quality assurance is subsumed in BPR.

While launching the implementation of BPR in September 2009, the university introduced the proposed changes in its governance structure to the academic community for discussion and comments in a general staff meeting. Though the participation of majority of the staff members in the meetings was not widespread, some departments and academic staff members submitted written feedbacks on the new academic governance structure to the university management. The academic governance structure proposed by the university management was criticized for being so amorphous, not participatory, top-down and less related to the very essence of BPR. Organizational arrangement for internal quality assurance was also missing in the new proposed governance structure. As one of the participant in the staff meetings and commentator of the structure, the author of this study also provided written feedback including the need to consider institutional quality assurance body in the proposed academic structure of the university during the beginning of 2010¹.

Considering the feedbacks, the university management revised the proposed academic structure and a Center for Academic Standards and Quality Assurance (CASQA) was incorporated into the revised structure in the beginning of 2010. As can be seen in the revised governance structure of the Addis Ababa University, the CASQA is located under and accountable to the chief academic officer who is himself under the office of the vice president for academic affairs. Whether the CASQA has branch offices or standing committees at faculty and department levels is not shown in the revised governance structure. It seems to be logical to argue that the university management considered and incorporated CASQA into the revised academic structure not out of its intrinsic interest for explicit and formal quality assurance, but simply to address the comments forwarded from staff. Had the establishment of explicit internal quality assurance system been a

¹ Visit: http://www.aau.edu.et/change/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=91&Itemid=138.

priority, the university would have included a quality assurance body in the new proposed academic structure.

A closer examination of the revised academic structure of the university indicates that centers for teaching and learning, preparatory programs and skills enhancement, language learning, general education, and student orientation, guidance and counseling that are supposed to support quality education seem to be getting more attention than separate and explicit quality assurance body. The establishment of such organs suggests that Addis Ababa University tends to subsume internal quality assurance as an inherent and implicit part of the educational process, which in turn shows skepticism towards the implementation of formal and explicit quality assurance as required by the proclamation.

During data collection and analysis of this study, the university was just in the process of establishing the CASQA office and preparing quality assurance policy. This shows that the adoption of formal organizational structure and policy for quality assurance is at an early stage.

7.3.1.1.2 Mekelle University (MU)

MU is one of the young universities upgraded from University College in 2000 based on the government blue print. The university has introduced written and formally endorsed quality assurance policy for its institutional quality assessment in 2008. It has also set up quality assurance office led by a director following the implementation of the Business Process Reengineering (BPR) in 2009. The introduction of formal policies and institutional arrangements for quality assurance in MU was driven both by internal and external forces (MU, 2008). The internal forces include high attrition rate and gaps in graduates' competence as revealed by the need assessment. The external forces are related to the increasing demands of stakeholders and the government requirements for accountability.

The quality assurance office, which is located under and answerable to the academic vice president, is organized in such a way that branch offices at college/faculty level and teaching and research teams at department level were set up to monitor quality of academic matters. Analysis of the policy document indicated that different standing committees would be established at all levels with defined duties and responsibilities for quality and standards.

As stipulated in the policy document, the university conceptualizes quality as fitness for purpose. Quality assurance is viewed as a developmental process with a focus on improvement. The quality assessment system of the university is supposed to be based on self-evaluation, peer review and external audit (Mekelle University, 2008). The policy also describes self-assessment and review procedures, performance indicators, desired outcomes and the nature of the

content of self-assessment report. Guideline concerning the description of quality and relevance standards was also developed as part of the policy document. The guideline contains 159 standards for the input dimension that are categorized under the focus areas covering teaching, research and community services; the standards for process dimension defined in terms of internal and external efficiency, and outputs/outcomes. The input dimensions are derivatives of the ten-focus areas/criteria of quality assurance contained in the self-evaluation manual of ETQAA.

A closer examination of the institutional self-assessment policy document indicates that the policy lacks the mechanisms to ensure effective communication, openness, and transparency, and commitment for improved student learning. It also lacks the mechanisms to enforce and evaluate the effective implementation of the quality assurance policy itself. The standards and quality indicators contained in the policy guidelines are too many; input focused and lack clear assumptions regarding applicability, comparability, measurability, causality and point of reference. At this point, it can be inferred that the university has a draft policy document to guide its internal processes to assure quality, though it has some limitations. These findings suggest that MU has established office and introduced draft policy for its internal quality assurance processes, though the system is at its infancy.

7.3.1.1.3 Jigjiga University (JU)

Jigjiga University is one of the new universities established in 2007 based on the Master Plan of MoE. The university has so far no written legislation that is communicated to all staff and other stakeholders. It is in the planning phase to launch the implementation of BPR and open quality assurance office as part of BPR implementation towards the end of 2010. JU has no established institutional arrangement, policy and written legislation for assuring quality of its educational provisions, other than the tacit norms regarding course delivery, examinations and grading. This could be attributed to its low staff profile and capacity, as shown in chapter 6.

It is obvious from the above findings that the traditional (taken for granted) approaches to quality have prevailed until recently in the universities.

7.3.1.2 Results of Survey Data Analysis

In this section, further analysis of data was conducted to see the extent to which the academic staff members are acquainted with the institutional policies and structures for quality assurance in their respective university. The results show that the majority of the staff respondents from MU are familiar with the quality

assurance policy and structures introduced in their university, whereas this is not the case in AAU and JU (see Table 7-1).

Table 7-1 Availability of Quality Assurance Policies & Structures as Perceived by Staff

University	Ratings						
	Quality assurance policy		χ^2	Institutional arrangement for quality assurance		χ^2	
	Yes	Total		Yes	Total		
AAU	12	39	13.91*	8	33	20.68*	
JU	9	21		9	21		
MU	30	42		32	42		
Total	51	102		49	96		

*p<.001

There is a significant difference in ratings of the respondents across the three public universities, which indicates that the academic staff in MU are more aware than others of the newly introduced quality assurance policy and structures. These results corroborate the findings of the documentary analysis in the previous sub-section. Further analysis of interview data was conducted to substantiate these results.

Interviewees from the senior management of AAU hold that the legislation and standing committees such as the academic standards and curriculum review committee, college and department councils/commissions have been used as policy instruments and structures to assure quality, though there are no consolidated and separate quality assurance policies and structures at university level. In the faculty of medicine, for example, the undergraduate commission at department level has been monitoring the proper conduct of courses, the use of external examiners and exchanging feedback at department meetings, and there is also a unit at faculty level that handles staff development, oversees the development and implementation of curriculum and identifies deficiencies for improvement (LA6, 24/12/2009).

The college of commerce has also an established tradition regarding staff recruitment, conducting teaching and learning, designing courses, assurance and continuously reviewing and regulating facilities (IA12, 8/11/2009). These traditional approaches and practices in some faculties of AAU may be considered

as examples of good practice, but yet there is no documented evidence that shows the university has a coherent policy, guidelines and established structures to assure quality of its educational provisions at all levels. This in turn suggests that AAU still depends on implicit and taken-for-granted approaches and tacit norms for quality.

The MU management also shared similar opinion that their university has some prior experiences in quality assurance. The senate quality assurance committee was instrumental and a number of quality related activities such as strategic planning, curriculum revision and change, and institutional self-assessment were undertaken prior to the introduction of formal quality assurance policies and structures (LM1, 28/10/2009). However, such prior practices were not supported by policy directives and structures and evidences for their operation.

The findings in this section suggest that the idea of introducing coherent policies and structures for internal quality assurance is a recent phenomenon in the universities. This however is not to deny that the universities have had some practices. MU has already introduced policy and established structures for its internal quality processes following the implementation of BPR, and it is moving towards institutionalization through the establishment of transformation and course teams at the shop floor level. AAU is in the process of BPR implementation and the establishment of its formal quality assurance is at an early stage of development. JU is at a planning stage to introduce formal quality assurance as part of BPR implementation. This tempts one to conclude that the planning and introduction of systematized and explicit internal quality assurance is linked to the implementation of BPR. What does this mean in terms of the actual experience of the universities in assuring quality of their education? This will be the concern of the next section.

7.3.2 Quality Assurance Methods and Procedures

This section presents data analysis on the experience of the universities in terms of employing quality assurance methods and procedures

A list of possible parameters (in rating scales) was administered to staff and student respondents. The aim of this was to understand the use of quality assurance methods, instruments and procedures in the target universities. Interviews were also conducted with both staff and students. Findings of the quantitative data are presented first in the subsequent tables.

The results in Table 7-2 show that evaluation of teaching quality by students, colleague evaluation, and program/curriculum review and need assessment are reported by majority of the staff respondents as methods for assessing quality in

Mekelle University. On the other hand, respondents from Jigjiga University rated evaluation of teaching quality by students as the most widely used method. In the case of Addis Ababa University, evaluation of teaching quality by students, colleague evaluation, external examiner, need assessment and program/curriculum review were reported as methods for assessing quality (see Table 7-2).

Table 7-2 Utilization of Quality Assurance Methods as Perceived by Staff

Methods	Ratings						
	JU	MU	AAU	χ^2	Yes	Total	
Need Assessment	13	27	26	39	20	39	3.14
Regular program /curriculum review	10	27	22	39	28	40	7.13
Assessment of leaning outcomes	6	27	19	40	12	38	6.45
Institutional self-assessment	8	26	19	40	13	41	9.25
External examiner	0	26	14	40	22	41	24.02***
Peer review	5	25	11	39	15	41	2.91
Colleague evaluation of teaching	12	26	21	39	23	40	1.10
Evaluation of teaching quality by students	21	26	36	39	39	41	10.19*
SWOT analysis	5	26	9	38	9	38	1.26
Consultative meetings with stakeholders	6	27	17	40	12	41	8.67
Exit interviews with graduating students	6	25	12	40	5	40	12.93**
Alumni surveys	4	25	7	40	3	21	8.52

* P<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

The significant differences in ratings for the two items indicate that the use of external examiner is absent in JU, evaluation of teaching by students is greater for Addis Ababa University, and the use of exit interview is greater for Mekelle University, though the rating is low.

A similar response pattern can be observed in students' ratings. Majority of the student respondents across the three universities witnessed that evaluation of teaching quality by students has been utilized as a method of quality assessment (see Table 7-3), which is in agreement with staff ratings in Table 7-2.

Table 7-3 Utilization of Quality Assurance Methods as Perceived by Students

Methods	Ratings				χ^2		
	JU		MU		AAU		
	Yes	Total	Yes	Total	Yes	Total	
Regular program /curriculum review	60	146	71	147	34	105	16.35***
Assessment of learning outcomes	67	147	71	146	36	104	34.80***
Institutional self-assessment	43	146	44	145	24	104	28.44***
External evaluation	28	145	39	144	19	104	14.18**
Evaluation of teaching quality by students	97	146	94	148	61	96	11.83*
Consultative meetings with students	54	144	66	147	43	103	1.65
Interviews of prospective graduates	29	144	49	143	16	105	25.53***
Alumni surveys	15	144	13	143	5	84	8.76

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001,

Except for consultative meetings and alumni surveys, there is a significant difference in ratings of the items among the three universities. This indicates that the ratings of respondents from Mekelle University are significantly higher than the ratings of the other two universities in most of the items. However, this does not lead us to conclude that the utilization of quality assurance methods in Mekelle University is high in an absolute sense. The ratings for the items are only between 49% and 27% (even 9% for alumni surveys, but may be current students are not well informed about alumni activities), except for teaching evaluation (64%). Unlike staff respondents, majority of the student respondents do not rate regular program/curriculum review as the method of quality assessment most used in their respective universities. The reason for this could be the lack of student participation in program/curriculum review processes.

It is evident from the findings in Table 7-2 and 7-3 that evaluation of teaching quality by students is rated as the widely used method of quality assessment across the three universities. We can observe that most staff and student respondents do not rate the methods related to student learning experience. These methods can be enumerated as assessment of learning outcomes, alumni surveys, and exit interviews with graduating students as well as institutional self assessment, peer review, SWOT analysis, and consultative meetings.

Most student respondents from the three universities also noted that there are no mechanisms or procedures such as published rules (38%, N=399) and department policies, regular meetings of students, brochures (15%, N=380) and leaflets (16%, N=352) employed at faculty or department level that help students become aware of their responsibilities and duties in improving quality of education. They only gained orientation programs upon entry. There is no significant difference in students' ratings of the items across the three universities. This suggests that the universities have no established mechanisms or procedures that facilitate student involvement in the educational process.

7.3.3 Institutional Self-evaluation

As the findings in section 7.2 indicated, the universities had some experiences of quality related practices in their earlier stages. In the case of AAU, its earlier self-initiated efforts to address problems of relevance and quality of study programs include: (1) of the 1994 proposal for the establishment of university-wide center for monitoring instructional quality and standards (AAU, 1994); (2) the comprehensive program review conducted in 1999 to evaluate and revise regular programs and curricula based on need assessment of stakeholders (AAU, 1999); (3) the development of the 2002/2003 action plan entitled 'Setting Efficient System: building capacity for a better future' (AAU, 2002) that clearly outlined goals for action plan; followed by the establishment of the office of the vice president for university reform. However, none of these efforts had been successfully implemented. The university has also conducted assessment/SWOT analysis to identify its strengths and weaknesses, which resulted in the development of its five-year strategic plan in 2008 (AAU, 2008).

MU has on its part carried out SWOT analyses to identify its strengths and weaknesses and thereby developed its 20-year strategic plan in 2003. MU's establishment in 2000 was by the merger of two former colleges (MU, 2003). The assessments/SWOT analyses conducted in both AAU and MU revealed the absence of explicit and organized quality assurance system as one of their weaknesses.

The other common episode was the establishment of the Academic Development and Resource Centers (ADRCs) across all public universities in 2005 by a Dutch-funded project (2005-2008) called the Education Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP). This aimed at promoting quality education in the universities through quality assessment, staff training, advice and research (EQUIP, 2008). EQUIP had developed and distributed quality care manual to all the public universities in 2008.

However, there appears to be no documented evidences that show the successful implementation of the earlier initiatives other than a patch of paper work in the universities. A closer examination of the reports and strategic plans available in the universities shows that all the earlier self-initiated efforts to improve quality were characterized by lack of continuity, coherence and malfunction. The ADRCs, for example, were not fully functional from the very beginning and were eventually deserted due to lack of attention and commitment from the respective universities.

Formal institutional self-evaluation is a recent experience in the public universities of Ethiopia. As stipulated in the higher education proclamation (650/2009), the public universities are required to undertake institutional self-evaluation as per the guidelines set by HERQA. The self-evaluation and institutional quality audit is focused on the entire institution and not on specific programs or subject levels. MU and AAU have undertaken institutional self-evaluation based on 10 focus areas, followed by institutional quality audit in 2007 (HERQA, 2008) and 2009 (HERQA, 2009) respectively. JU has, owing to its very young age, not yet conducted self-assessment and quality audit since its establishment in 2007. It is noticeable that self-evaluation and first round institutional quality audit by HERQA were undertaken 5 years (for MU) or 7 years (for AAU) after the enactment of the higher education proclamation and establishment of HERQA in 2003. This shows a time lag in translating the proclamation into action by both HERQA and the institutions. The fundamental question here is that to what extent is the institutional self-evaluation related to the improvement of educational quality.

A critical look at the assessment reports show that the self-evaluation and quality audit reports of AAU and MU are based on a checklist approach that presents a separated description for each of the 10 focus areas. There is no good reason to include student admission; program/ curriculum design and review; vision, mission and educational goals as focus areas of self-evaluation, as the decisions about these aspects are made mainly by MoE. The reports also lack detailed analysis concerning the relationships among the focus areas and qualitative judgments. The reference points used to undertake self-evaluation on the 10 focus areas are dominantly input focused, and they do not encourage the institutions to

undertake a balanced and in-depth analysis of quality of input, process and output of the education provision. This suggests that such reports do not provide a clear and comprehensive picture of educational quality in the universities. Student learning outcomes as a focus area of quality assessment is generally de-emphasized in the institutional self-evaluation reports.

From the findings discussed in this section, it can be said that evaluation of teaching by students is used as a method of assessing quality of teaching across the three universities. Addis Ababa and Mekelle Universities use additional methods such as colleague evaluation; need assessment, regular program/curriculum/course review. The universities have no mechanisms to make students aware of their role in supporting quality improvement efforts. We can also see that majority of staff and student respondents from the three universities are not aware of whether their respective universities employ many of the methods that deemed to be important for assessing improvement of student learning experience. This shows lack of focus on quality of the educational processes that influence student learning, which in turn suggests the inadequacy of the existing quality assurance practices in the universities.

The introduction of policies, structures and methods is not an end by itself to bring improvement in quality education. Rather, how well the existing quality assurance system is operating in terms of improving the core educational processes that influence student learning. Hence, the following section presents findings on the efficacy of the quality assurance systems and practices.

7.4 Efficacy of Quality Assurance Systems and Practices in Universities

In this study, the effectiveness of quality assurance system is viewed in terms of the extent to which it attained the purpose for which it has been established. As stipulated in the higher education proclamation, the purpose of internal quality assurance in Ethiopian universities is quality enhancement. Thus, this section presents findings concerning the effectiveness of the existing quality assurance practices.

7.4.1 *Results of Documentary Data Analysis*

In the case of Addis Ababa University, the legislation depicts the establishment of the senate executive, standing and ad-hoc committees with the function to monitor the implementation of the policies and directives set in the legislation and decisions of the senate. The senate executive committee, with members comprising the university president, vice presidents, representatives from senate members and associate vice presidents as non-voting members, plays a policy

advisory role to the university leadership. The senate executive committee operates through different standing committees including among others the Policy Committee (PC); Academic Standards and Curriculum Review Committee (ASCRC); Admissions and Enrolment Committee (AEC); Research and Publications Committee (RPC); Cultural and Social Affairs Committee (CSAC); Library, Information and Communications Technology, and Museums Committee (LICTMC); Staff Recruitment, Appointment and Promotions Committee (SRAPC), and Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee (ECCC).

However, a closer look at the duties and responsibilities of the senate standing and ad-hoc committees shows that none of them has quality assessment and enhancement and/ or assessment of student learning experience in their remit. Even the role of ASCRC is limited to expert advice on curriculum design, review, approval and revision, which may be considered partly as an aspect of assuring quality. It appears that committee(s) or responsible body in charge of quality assessment and enhancement is not incorporated in the university legislation.

In Mekelle University, the University Quality Assurance Committee (UQAC) with the vice president as chairman, and deans, quality assurance heads, representatives of directors, staff and students is supposed to play advisory role regarding the development and implementation of appropriate policies and strategies for quality and standards. Other standing committees include the teaching learning committee, staff development committee, student service council, research and community service committee, and the institute of pedagogical sciences. There are, however, no documented evidences concerning the functioning of these committees in improving quality of education. Further analyses of survey data were conducted on engagement of the universities in quality enhancement activities.

7.4.2 Survey Results

As far as institutional engagement is concerned, staff members were asked to evaluate the state of implementation of quality assurance activities in their respective university based on a given list of possible parameters (see Table 7-4). Their responses showed that none of the three universities had completely implemented any of the activities. Therefore, the analysis could concentrate on the types of activities being implemented at the moment. On the whole, about two-thirds of respondents of Mekelle University labeled it as active; about half found that Jigjiga University was active, and around one in four staff members in Addis Ababa University found their university active in implementing aspects of quality assurance. These differences were not, however, statistically significant, except for setting institutional structure.

Table 7-4 Implementation of Quality Assurance Activities as Perceived by Staff

Practices	University						χ^2	
	JU		MU		AAU			
	Yes	T	Yes	T	Yes	T		
Setting quality standards for quality teaching & learning	10	20	24	35	4	14	10.09	
Developing quality assessment manuals	7	19	17	35	2	14	8.24	
Setting institutional structure for quality assurance	13	19	27	34	3	14	15.73**	
Guidelines & support for staff to improve quality teaching	13	19	17	34	2	14	10.50	
Conducting regular review of study programs	10	19	21	34	5	14	6.8	
Conducting regular staff meetings on quality issues	13	18	16	34	4	13	9.71	
Using results of programs/course review for improvement	10	18	18	34	3	14	5.87	
Building quality culture and shared values across departments	8	19	12	33	0	14	9.8	

**P<.01,

Students were also asked to rate their department's engagement in quality assurance related activities. About 25% (N=103) from Addis Ababa University, 35% (N=148) from Jigjiga University and 37% (N=149) from Mekelle University rated their university engagement as good. There is no significant difference in the ratings of respondents across the three universities ($\chi^2 = 6.21$, DF=8, p>.05). This suggests that both staff and student respondents perceived that the engagement of their respective university in quality related activities is very limited.

With regard to self-evaluation, academic staff members were asked for their reflection on whether the 10 focus areas set by HERQA are acceptable and implementable in the context of their respective university. Their response is summarized in Table 7-5.

Table 7-5 Acceptance of HERQA's Ten Focus Areas by Staff

University	Response (%)			χ^2
	Yes	No	Total	
AAU	33	67	36	
JU	62	38	21	
MU	44	56	41	4.4*
Total	43	55	98	

*ns.

The results show that majority of the respondents have the view that the 10 focus areas are not acceptable in the context of their respective university, except in JU. The positive response for JU could be due to lack of exposure or ignorance to HERQA's self-evaluation documents.

Staff respondents also rated the possible 10 focus areas/ criteria of quality assurance based on their importance. Majority of the respondents from MU rated teaching, learning and assessment processes as the most important areas/criteria for quality assurance. On the other hand, respondents from JU rated infrastructure and learning resources as most important. In AAU, learning resources is rated as the most important area of quality assurance. This indicates that respondents do not perceive student learning experience, and student progression and graduate employment as most important areas of focus, and there is no significant difference in ratings of the respondents across the three universities. This suggests that a focus on the core educational processes is not a common feature across the universities.

As the findings in section 7.3.2 indicated, evaluation of teaching by staff and students is the widely used method of quality assurance across the universities. Interviewees were conducted to see the effectiveness of this and related methods. In this regard, both staff and student interviewees from the three universities witnessed that they participate in completing teaching evaluation form at the end of every course. However, the student and colleague evaluations of teaching system are not functioning effectively in terms of effecting improvement in quality of courses; professional and academic capacity of staff; teaching, learning and assessment practices. The feedback from such evaluation is 'used only for staff promotion' (IA4, 13/11/2009). Improvement of classroom teaching and student learning are not major concerns.'

The universities also lack well-established and coordinated teaching and course evaluation system that enables them to identify drawbacks and strong points and thereby take corrective measures and reward quality teaching. This was noted in the statement by one of my interviewee who said: 'there is no monitoring system of teaching by which the effective and the ineffective are identified, rewarded and/or penalized' (IA11, 26/11/2009). As one of the student interviewees puts it, the teaching evaluation systems are not vibrant; once one is employed, he or she can survive regardless of his or her ability (SA4, 19/11/2009). These results are in agreement with the findings in section 7.2 that there are no clear and documented policy evidences on teaching, learning and assessment processes across the universities, except the general academic rules, regulations and working procedures indicated in the legislation of the Addis Ababa and Mekelle Universities.

To the corroboration of the documentary data, the interviewees also revealed that institutional self-assessment, followed by institutional quality audit by HERQA was carried out in Mekelle University and in Addis Ababa University (IA10, 25/12/2009). However, this result is not in agreement with the findings in section 7.3.2 that institutional self-assessment was not rated by both staff and students as one of the quality assurance methods. This could be due to the fact that the self-evaluation may not be institutionalized in the universities or due to lack of communication or involvement of staff and students in the self-assessment process.

With regard to curriculum review, different mechanisms and procedures are employed including internal review and approval processes that involve different committees, need assessment and stakeholder involvement in workshops. As one of the interviewees from MU noted, the curriculum revision and change involves a series of steps: conducting need assessment, discussions at departments, clusters and national levels, involvement of employers and other stakeholders in the process (LM1, 28/10/2009). MU has also introduced the team approach, continuous assessment and new form of instructor's assessment that involves students; revised the grading systems; changed the delivery and assessment methods as a result of BPR implementation (LM3, 29/10/2009).

A similar pattern can be observed in the College of Commerce at the Addis Ababa University, where curriculum design and review process involves need assessment; consultations with employing organizations, graduates, experts and even 'peer' foreign partner institutions and comments in workshop that involve internal and external constituents (LA12, 8/11/2009). These may be considered as good practices. There are, however, no documented evidences that show quality of the program and curriculum review processes including predetermined standards, criteria, benchmarking and validation process that enable the

universities to make sound decisions about quality of curriculum and programs. As one of my interviewees argued, the mechanisms and procedures that served as a mirror in improving institutional practices at universities do not exist today (IA12, 10/20/2009).

The overall findings in this section show that the public universities do not have formalized, functioning and effective internal quality assurance system to enhance quality of their educational provisions. This generalization does not, however, deny some of the recent developments in terms of conducting institutional self-evaluation and introducing formal policies and institutional arrangements following the implementation of BPR. As the findings in chapter six indicated, the quality of input, processes and output requirements are constrained by many factors ranging from student admission; adequacy, competence and engagement of staff; facilities and services to teaching, student learning, and assessment. This suggests that the existing informal and implicit practices of assuring quality could not be effective in terms of improving quality of the core educational provisions that influence student learning.

Two fundamental questions are worth raising here: one is why the public universities such as AAU have not yet introduced and implemented effective internal quality assurance systems until recently vis-à-vis their age and requirements of the proclamation. Analyses of data on this and related issues are presented in the following section.

7.5 Convergence or Divergence in Quality Assurance Practices among the Universities

The findings in the preceding sections demonstrated that the three public universities generally do not have adequate and effective internal quality assurance systems apart from the very recent developments in introducing formal quality assurance policies and structures. There is convergence in practice among the universities regarding their lack of engagement in explicit quality assurance activities, and in the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of the traditional approaches and practices that they commonly share.

The self-evaluation conducted by AAU and MU and institutional quality audit undertaken by HERQA were not grounded on a thorough, in-depth and balanced analysis of quality of the conditions and core educational processes (input, process and output) that influence quality of student learning. The self-evaluation carried out by the universities was initiated by HERQA and not focused in criteria that deemed to be related to the improvement of student learning experience.

The difference between the three public universities seems to be in the timing of undertaking institutional self-evaluation and introducing the recent formal quality assurance policies and structures. Mekelle University has recently introduced formal quality assurance policy and structures and conducted institutional self-evaluation earlier than the other two universities. It is advancing towards institutionalization of the policy and structures, which is reflected in the efforts made to involve frontline actors (students and staff) in the course and institutional transformation teams, implementing continuous assessment policy, revising grading systems and changing the course delivery system to student-centered approaches.

In this section, additional analyses of data were conducted to see if there are differences on staff and student perceptions concerning the engagement of their respective university in quality assurance practice. The analysis involves combined scores of staff and students ratings on actual quality assurance practices of their respective universities, documentary and interview data. The combined scores for the perceived engagement of universities in quality assurance activities are derived from the questionnaire items concerning (1) the ratings of staff on the extent to which the existing quality assurance system is communicated among staff and other key stakeholders, helpful in enhancement of quality of teaching and assessment practices, related to quality of student learning and attainment of the overall mission and goals of their faculties, and (2) students' evaluation of their university in setting clear goals for maintaining quality, communicating quality improvement policy to students; promoting shared values about quality among students, demonstrating commitment to provide high quality teaching, and establishing mechanisms that facilitate quality student learning (see staff and student questionnaire in the annexes).

The ANOVA results in Table 7-6 indicates that there was no significant difference among the three universities concerning their actual quality assurance practices, as perceived by staff respondents $F(2, 97) = 2.35$, $p>.05$, $w=.47$, and student respondents $F(2, 382) = .93$, $p>.05$, $w=.909$. The post hoc tests show no significant difference in the mean ratings of both staff and student respondents in the three universities.

Staff respondents were also asked about their opinion about the impact of quality assurance practice. The results showed that about two third of the staff respondents across the three universities rated the impact of the existing quality assurance practices on the improvement of every day teaching and learning processes as very low.

Table 7-6 ANOVA on the Differences of Perceptions of Staff and Students Concerning Quality Assurance Practices among Three Universities

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Staff	Between Groups	111.559	2	55.779	2.354	.100
	Within Groups	2298.231	97	23.693		
	Total	2409.790	99			
Students	Between Groups	62.578	2	31.289	.930	.395
	Within Groups	12845.412	382	33.627		
	Total	12907.990	384			

These findings suggest that there is no significant difference among the universities in terms of the effectiveness of the existing quality assurance activities including the methods and procedures employed. These results are in agreement with the findings discussed in section 7.3 (Table 7-3) and Section 7.4 (Table 7-4). As the findings in section 7.3.3 indicated, the difference among the three universities is in the timing of undertaking self-evaluation and introducing the recent formal policies and structures for assuring quality. This is associated with the implementation of BPR. The possible explanation for the differences in the timing of introducing formal quality assurance policies and structures among the public universities is a question worth considering. The following section deals with it.

7.5.1 Possible Explanations for the Differences in the Timing of Introducing Quality Assurance policy and structures

The three universities have started or planned to introduce formal quality assurance policies and institutional arrangements as part of the BPR implementation. Prior to BPR, none of the universities has introduced or planned systematic and formal quality assurance policies and systems, even after the enactment of the higher education law and establishment of HERQA in 2003. MU has reacted earlier in introducing policies and structures following the introduction and implementation of BPR and the other two are following in a similar pattern. This illustrates the association between the introduction of formal quality assurance policy and structures and the implementation of BPR.

BPR is considered as a policy instrument and reform agenda of the government to improve efficiency and effectiveness in terms of providing quality services across all public organizations. By the same token, each public university is required to

implement it. This suggests that the public universities started to develop and introduce formal quality assurance policy and structure as a response to the requirement of BPR implementation. Therefore, the analysis in this section could concentrate on why the universities differ in the timing of introducing and implementing BPR.

From the findings in the preceding section, it is evident that AAU has lagged behind MU in undertaking institutional self-evaluation and quality audit, in introducing BPR and thereby formal quality assurance policy and structure. This raises a question on why AAU has not introduced formal internal quality assurance system earlier despite its age, capacity and experience. Different possible answers can be given to this and related questions.

AAU pioneered in intellectual, political, and technical knowledge in modern Ethiopia (Amare, 2007). It has developed its own deep-rooted academic values and beliefs regarding the way things should be done. Consequently, it shows reluctance to willingly accept government's top - down policies. As one of the professors from AAU puts it, the government has always the desire to impose its own interests and priorities, which were not always in concurrence with the university's existing reality. This situation set a vista for distrust and conflict between the university and the government (IA15, 18/11/2009). The university has always been seen as a center for counter government activities by governments of the past and the present (IA1, 20/11/2009). This suggests the lack of mutual trust between AAU and the government in implementing top-down reform agendas and government policies.

As stipulated in the higher education proclamation (351/2003), the need to establish formal quality assurance in the universities was government driven. Also, the decision to undertake BPR was driven by politics rather than by the universities' needs. In this regard, we can observe that Mekelle University responded positively and quickly to the demands of the government by undertaking self-assessment in 2007. Jigjiga University has also been undertaking studies to implement BPR since 2008. Currently it is preparing to launch BPR and thereby establishing quality assurance office as an indication of its catching up sooner.

The interviewees from staff and management in MU and JU seem to approve the importance of introducing BPR. Many of the staff interviewees from JU believe that BPR will be an important solution to the problems of the university (LJ3, 6/1/2010). A member of the management in MU said that BPR helped a lot in identifying the university's problems and thus in coming out with solutions. After the implementation of BPR, many changes are being made to improve the current practices (LM1, 28/11/2009). This indicates that MU and JU react

positively to government driven policy and reform agenda; i.e. BPR, whereas most of the staff interviewees in AAU disapproved the introduction of BPR and its implementation process. This, however, makes no difference so far in terms of the adequacy and effectiveness of quality assurance practices across the universities.

In the Addis Ababa University, there still remained to be a tug of war between the university's management and staff. Most of the staff interviewees considered BPR as an undesirable imposition by the government without adequate discussion and debate on the issue. As one of the staff interviewees depicted, 'the upcoming of BPR was accepted in spite of our articulated complaints because it was imposed by the government and because we are all people of the government.' The interviewees in general believed that BPR would not solve the many problems of the university (IA1, 20/11/2009). These findings suggest that there seems to be resistance from the staff of the Addis Ababa University regarding the implementation of top-down and externally imposed policies such as the BPR. An interviewee from the senior university management described this situation as follows:

There is a problem of expressing, planning and coordinating that has been rolling down since the emperor's time to date. Whenever an idea, a plan, a course of action, a package comes, we tend to ask where it came from instead of asking what it was. This has reduced our chance of coming to shared ideas. This culture of ours has dragged us back from working together. I do not mean that all directions must come as a result of deep discussion; there can be decisions that the leaders decide and convince their followers (LA2, 29/10/2009).

It is apparent that the reaction of the university to externally imposed policies and reform agendas has been negative, which may be described in Becher and Kogan's (1992) terms as 'academic conservatism—the hostile reaction of academics, individually and collectively, to top-down pressures for reform'. Results of the SWOT analysis conducted by AAU substantiate the interview results. The university clearly portrayed the problem of resistance to change in its BPR document.

The university's relationship with government has been uneasy and cautious at best, contentious and antagonistic at worst, and it has been losing its grip on a clear sense of direction' (AAU, 2009: 10).

The other source of resistance emanates from purely intellectual point of view that doubts the applicability of a business-reengineering concept to the process of learning and teaching. This stance may emanate from AAU'S experience and relatively better capacity in terms of more qualified and experienced staff as well as the established believes and values of the academia. Most of the interviewed

staff members articulated the possible flaws with the application of BPR in universities.

To amend complaints regarding the university's delivery of services, finance and administration through BPR might be an acceptable approach. However there is a fundamental mistake in thinking that we can improve the teaching-learning situation through BPR. I think it is wrong to decide that a policy must be accepted because it is ordered at the national level (IA2, 20/11/2009)

Another interviewee argues that there is no problem with the BPR as an alternative tool; yet, the view that a system or tool that worked once to another country will work to Ethiopia as well is not acceptable (IA7, 02/12/2009). This shows that the academic staff members in AAU are dubious about the fitness of BPR to the university context. However, this is not the case with MU and JU. These two universities opened their programs based on the blue print provided by the Ministry of Education, which reflects the government's interest. There are no evidences that show visible problems regarding the relationship of the two universities with the government regarding implementation of new reforms such as BPR.

The other possible explanation for the failure of the early self-initiated efforts to improve quality in AAU is related to leadership shakiness. One of my interviewees argued that the lack of mutual trust between the university and the government has been the main reason for the high turnover of university leadership in AAU (IA12, 10/12/2009). Most of the staff interviewees unanimously cited leadership turnover as the main reason for the failure of the university's earlier self-initiated efforts. The university's experience of three university presidents over a three-year period (2001–2003) is a striking example in this regard. There is no tradition of building on what is already existed as a good practice when there is change in university leadership. When a new leadership assumes the office, it tried to start from the grazie and impose its own paradigm. One of the senior professors depicted how leadership turnover affects the earlier self-initiated efforts.

Once, when we were about to implement the BPR we did with professor X (Ex-president of AAU), there came a presidential change. And the new leadership started from the scratch while the entire document was never touched. It would be good to avoid this sort of culture and to start working on what is already started and to add on that (IA7, 02/12/2009).

This suggests that lack of institutional memory is one of the problems in the university. This problem was observed during data collection of this study. The author of this study was unable to access some of the important reports, working documents, minutes and policy documents of the university from the president

and vice-president offices (field note, MN, 2009). Some of the documents were accessed from the hands of individual professors. However, in both MU and JU the senior leadership is relatively stable, where both universities have not made changes of presidents since their establishment.

In this study the university characteristics such as organizational age, size and leadership stability are important variables in explaining the differences in the timing of introducing formal internal quality assurance in the public universities. The findings in this section show that with its historical stance and established beliefs and academic values, it is not easy for AAU to swallow top-down and externally imposed policies such as BPR and formal quality assurance systems. On the contrary, this is not the case for MU and JU. This suggests that the old and large university with greater experience, better staff capacity and deep-rooted believes and academic value is more likely to resist top-down policies and reform initiatives than the young and new ones. This is because the old-large university has greater historical experience and capacity, and the government initiated reforms and policies may not go inline with their established norms and values. Also, a university with high leadership turnover is not in a better position to successfully implement self-initiated efforts towards quality improvement.

The other important question that needs to be explored further in this connection is what theoretical perspectives or models underlie the present quality assurance practice in the universities? This question is addressed in the section that follows.

7.6 Frameworks or Models Underlying the Present Quality Assurance Practices

The findings in the preceding sections demonstrated that the universities have started or planned to introduce formal quality assurance at the same time, as BPR is being implemented or planned. However, it is not clear whether BPR is the underlying model for what is in place in the universities regarding quality related practices. This chapter attempts to discuss the issue regarding the frameworks or models that underlie the present quality assurance practice in the universities. The findings in the preceding chapters are used as a foundation for the analysis and interpretation of the results in this section. Analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data on whether the universities have a predetermined frameworks and/or models underlying their internal quality assurance system is the first point of discussion followed by comparing the actual practices with good practices in quality assurance.

7.6.1 Frameworks or models

Staff respondents were asked whether their respective universities employ specific quality management models to assure quality of their educational provision. The first three models (ISO, TQM and EFQM) were drawn from the quality assurance literature discussed in chapter 2, whereas the fourth one (AQIA) comes from the respondents.

Table 7-7 Application of Quality Management Models in the Target Universities as Perceived by Staff

Model	AAU		JU		MU		χ^2
	Yes	T	Yes	T	Yes	T	
ISO9000	0	40	0	26	0	39	1.12
Total Quality Management (TQM)	1	40	5	27	8	40	8.8
European Forum for Quality Management (EFQM)	0	38	1	25	0	39	4.5
American Quality Institute Award (AQIA)	1	20	0	9	0	17	1.5

The results in Table 7-7 show that none of the universities has predetermined quality management model for its internal quality assurance, as reported by staff respondents. There is no significant difference in staff ratings across the three universities.

Further interview data was analyzed to substantiate the above findings. Results of analysis of the interview data confirm the finding in the fact that the universities do not have specific quality management model for their internal quality assurance. Asked about quality assurance models, a member of the academic staff of Mekelle University reflected the following:

In fact we do not have a specific model we are following. We generally share the ideas set by HERQA; even starting from the definition of quality, fitness for purpose and so on (LM1, 2009).

Another staff member from the same university shares a similar view:

May be we do not know the particular quality assurance models. We undertake self-evaluation. Every unit made its own self-assessment; the group of men came from HERQA and conducted institutional quality audit. We do not know if that fits into a certain model (LM3, 2009).

The academic staff members of the Addis Ababa University and Jigiga Universities also share similar views that there is no established or known formal

quality management model in which their respective university follows. These results show that the three universities do not have specific quality management models, at least to the knowledge of their academic staff.

In spite of this, however, the findings in section 7.3 and 7.4 indicated that the higher education proclamation (no. 650/2009) prescribes a system or model of quality assurance that comprises three stages: a) self-evaluation and report to be undertaken by the institutions, b) institutional quality audit to be conducted by external agency (HERQA) based on the self-evaluation report, and c) publication of a report. In relation to the national quality assurance required by the proclamation, the public universities are expected to retain self-evaluation as an approach for their formal internal quality assurance system. The institutional self-evaluation conducted by universities and the quality audits are initiated by HERQA and the universities are accountable to this agency. In this regard, the national quality assurance model in Ethiopia may be categorized under the bureaucratic approach to quality assurance, which focuses on accountability and compliance purpose rather than improvement.

The findings also show that the public universities have started to introduce and plan formal quality assurance policy and structure as part of BPR implementation. BPR was initiated by the government as a reform agenda in public institutions. The universities have introduced or planned to launch BPR because they are required to do so by the government, which suggests a coercive pressure from a body external to the university. We can see that quality and its assurance are envisaged within the context of BPR implementation. Though the academic staff respondents in the universities do not claim any specific quality management model, BPR seems to be the underlying model for the recent developments of formal quality assurance in the universities. BPR as a change management model requires the commitment and support of top management. In this sense, the implementation of BPR as a quality management model goes in line with the managerial approach to quality.

BPR is one of the quality management models or organizational change initiatives developed as a 'grand concept for radical change in an organization upon total redesign of an organization's process, and taking into account the full power of modern technology' (see Boaden, 1996). It focuses on process improvement in performance measures such as cost, quality, service and speed¹. The important question here is whether the quality assurance system embedded in the assumption and principles of BPR can help universities improve quality of their core educational processes that presumed to influence student learning experience.

¹ See chapter 2 for more discussion about BPR.

The applicability and fitness of quality management concepts borrowed from business such as BPR to the field of higher education is still a controversial issue. Proponents of BPR consider it as a change agent in the transformation of an organization, wherein their argument is based on the premise that every organization needs a sense of direction to build process improvements. Opponents of quality management models consider the application of models such as BPR in higher education as a management fad that may create many problems (Birnbaum, 2000). The argument of the latter is grounded in the philosophical question of what higher education is about. Higher education deals not with goods, but rather with the human beings and uses human production technologies. In this sense, the argument of the opponents of BPR is on whether such change management practices advance and support the core educational values and outcomes of higher education. This raises a point of continuing debate, which actually is beyond the direct focus of this thesis.

As the findings in sections 7.3 and 7.4 of this study show, the public universities have not yet introduced formal quality assurance system prior to the implementation of BPR, and their traditional quality assurance practices were not instrumental in improving quality of their core educational processes. This indicates that lack of a clear sense of direction in terms of improving quality has been an underlying feature of the universities. In this sense, BPR has the potential to set the direction and level of ambition of planned change; motivate and mobilize the university community for such change and thereby to get change processes within the universities started.

As it focuses on process improvement, BPR may also help to bring changes in the management of teaching and learning, research and community services. The successful implementation of the strategic objectives of BPR including quality improvement, however, requires among other things ensuring top leadership commitment and support; staff participation and ownership; shared vision and values; communication and information sharing at all levels (IT); resources, and comprehensive knowledge and expertise in change management. The findings in this study, however, show that many of the conditions necessary to realize the strategic objectives of BPR are not in place in the universities under study. Many of the academic staff members of AAU have concerns regarding the application of BPR in the university setting. One of my interviewees reflected:

Applying BPR to education is a fundamental mistake. If you take a textile industry, for instance, you have your cotton (input). In the center you fluff it up, card it, level it and weave it. At last you get your tissue at the other end of the system. If you liken this procedure to university education, the major input is man. You cannot do with man what you can with cotton: you cannot fluff up, card, level and weave a man. The output is also man himself. You may perhaps

notice physical changes with man, but that is not the ultimate goal. What is needed is behavioral change; change in ways of thinking and perhaps a change in skills. I do not think that it is possible to change man in that (textile) manner (IA2, 20/11/2009).

The academic staff members from AAU have reflected the view that the frontline actors do not own BPR, and the extent to which its implementation is advancing is not clear. The staff perceived BPR as an imposition from the top without adequate debate, participation, communication and sharing ideas among the university community. This seems the basic source of reluctance to BPR by the university academic community.

Over the last decades, staff ownership is lost. For instance we all agree in condemning the university. Now ownership of the program, of the department and of the university is at its lowest. BPR will not change a lot because we have negative tendency to whatever is imposed; as if an enemy has imposed it. People are united to collapse BPR but this is done out of the formal context (IA1, 2009).

This indicates that BPR is not accepted and owned by the very people who own the university and they stand against its implementation. BPR is also constrained by lack of staff and leadership commitment.

The sense of accountability in the academic staff, the management at all levels is lacking. There is no capacity and commitment of the top management at all levels to translate BPR objectives into action. BPR is not internalized in everything we do (LM1, 2009)

The other challenge of BPR implementation in the universities is the change resistant and conservative nature of the academic community:

BPR is a mechanism for working. But that was not our problem. Our problem is the owner, the men. It is of no use to change the tools without changing the mind of the worker. If our people had commitment, the tools could have created no problem (IA3, 2009).

Resource and remuneration system are the other conditions lacking in the implementation of BPR. As one of my interviewees puts it, 'lack of resource is the main hindrance to implement BPR, and it is difficult to bring change without installing much needed resource' (LM3, 2009). These results suggest that the introduction and implementation of BPR is constrained by a multitude of problems.

Further analysis of documentary data also shows that the new governance structure of AAU, which is the outcome of BPR, is unnecessarily expanded (see Fig 7-1). After the introduction of BPR, the president's office stretched out through the creation of ten directors and many experts, and the positions of the

vice president offices of AAU increased from two to five including health sciences. A similar increase in the number of offices can be observed at all levels. Prior to BPR, for example, the Office of Academic Vice President (AVP) used to have four academic staff (the vice president, one program officer and three unit heads) in charge of the tasks of the office. However, the implementation of BPR resulted in the creation of two chief academic officers, twelve directorship and numerous unit head positions under the office of the Academic Vice President. Ten to eleven directorship positions and numerous unit heads are also created under the remaining four vice president offices. Also, directorship positions above faculty and college deans are created without any convincing and clearly defined job specification that is different from the task of the deans. The increase in the number of office holders obviously bureaucratizes the system and entails more administrative overhead cost.

The findings suggest that the improper implementation of BPR at AAU resulted in the redundancy and overgrowth of hierarchical structures that strengthen the executive body and intermediary offices (see Fig 7-1).

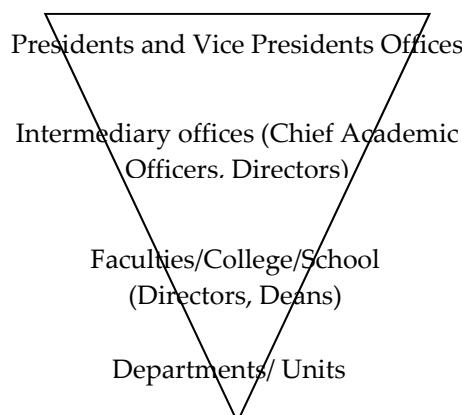


Figure 7-1 The Inverted BPR at AAU

This practice is against the essence and goals of BPR i.e., saving cost, time and energy; making the bureaucracy slim and effective; avoiding over-sophistication; executing as much activity as possible horizontally; bringing discretion and authority closer to the customer and removing non-value added structures and activities.

A closer examination of the newly opened intermediary offices of the university shows that these offices do not have clearly defined links to the core processes of the university or stakeholder expectations. Many of these offices had become idle with no defined work activities for about one year before the moment of my study. The intermediate offices simply duplicate and bureaucratize the efforts

and tasks carried out at faculty/college and department levels. Within the present framework of BPR, it is very difficult to expect successful change and talk about the implementation of formal quality assurance in AAU.

In the case of Mekelle University, the university management and academia seem to be relatively optimistic about the change enshrined in BPR. As one of the interviewees noted that BPR has been designed with good intention to bring quality of education in the university, but its implementation is being constrained by lack of capacity and resources (LM1, 2009). In this connection, another interviewee added that the implementation of BPR resulted in the introduction of student-centered approach, change in examination and grading system, and the creation of transformation and course teams at faculty and course delivery levels (LM2, 2009). The respondents from staff and university management consider the formation of different teams at the course deliver level as a positive outcome of BPR in improving instructional practices.

The new governance structure of MU shows that the structure is not so amorphous compared to AAU. The university management is organized into the president office and three vice president offices (vice president for academics, vice president for support services and vice president for research and community services) and three to four directorship positions under each vice president offices, followed by faculty/college deans. We can observe that, unlike AAU, MU does not have more intermediate offices. This suggests that the attempt by MU to make the structure less hierarchical and establish transformation and course teams at the department levels may be considered positive in terms of meeting the requirements of BPR compared to AAU. However, as the findings in the preceding sections indicated the implementation of BPR in both AAU and MU is constrained by a multitude of problems. Particularly, the problem is more sever in AAU regarding BPR implementation, which includes absence of consent of all the affected stakeholders, leadership and staff commitment, institutional ownership and participation, adequate resources, debate and communication.

The introduction of formal quality assurance policies and structures may be considered a positive outcome of BPR across the universities. However, there is no guarantee regarding the translation of these initiatives into action and the consequent commencement of meaningful change in improving quality of educational provisions in the present circumstances. In this study, the recently introduced formal quality assurance system and implementation of BPR are viewed as merely serving the purpose of symbolic compliance than real improvement of quality in the core educational processes of the respective universities. This indicates decoupling of mission legitimacy from actual quality improvement practice by superficially displaying quality assurance policies and structures to the outsider constituents to get legitimacy.

The issue of comparability of actual practice and with good practice is the focal point of the next section.

7.6.2 Comparing Actual Practices with Good Practices in Quality Assurance

Actual practices refer to the quality assurance activities that are presently carried out by the public universities. Whereas good practices relate to what the quality assurance literature counts as desirable and effective quality assurance practice. As discussed in chapter 2, good practices in quality assurance involve the conditions necessary for a viable internal quality assurance system. These conditions are:

A focus on quality improvement: the focus of an effective internal quality assurance practice should be on improvement of student learning. This, however, is not the case in the existing quality assurance practice of the target universities. The findings in preceding sections indicated that the higher education proclamation (no.351/2003), revised in 2009, required public universities to establish and implement a reliable internal quality assurance system for the enhancement of their internal processes. Quality enhancement is about continuous improvement of the educational processes that directly or indirectly influence quality of student learning experience. In this regard, the higher education proclamation may be considered as adequate in providing policy directives to the higher education quality assurance system. Despite that apparent obligatory demand of the higher education proclamation, the public universities have not yet established formal quality assurance system until recently. This clearly shows a gap between what is intended and what the universities are actually doing in terms of assuring quality of their education.

As depicted in chapter 6, student learning is constrained by many interrelated problems. To substantiate these findings, additional analysis of data on staff perception was conducted, as shown in Table 7-8.

Table 7-8 Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Practice as Perceived by Staff

The extent to which quality assurance is	AAU		JU		MU		χ^2
	High	T	High	T	High	T	
Communicated among staff, students & Stakeholders	5	35	11	28	16	41	11.5
Related to quality of student learning	6	34	11	27	17	40	6.8
Helpful in enhancing quality of teaching & assessment	9	35	13	27	15	41	5.9
Related to attainment of the mission and goals of the university	9	34	14	27	15	41	4.4

*p<.05

From the results in Table 7-8, the existing quality assurance traditions and policies are not communicated to the university community. Also, according to reports by majority of staff respondents across the three universities, the relation of the quality traditions to quality of student learning, the overall attainment of university mission and enhancement of teaching and learning quality is low. There is no significant difference in staff ratings among the three universities. This suggests that the present quality assurance system is not communicated with stakeholders and the practices are not related to improvement of student learning. This in turn implies that the actual practice of the universities is not geared to quality improvement.

Involvement and engagement of leadership, staff and students: Effective quality assurance practice requires the active participation and commitment of all actors. In relation to this, academic staff members were also asked their views regarding leadership, and their commitment for quality assurance. The results show that majority of the respondents reported their dissatisfaction concerning leadership and academic staff commitment for quality education (see Table 7-9). The staff satisfaction is also low regarding the existence of shared responsibilities and structures, and coordination and collaboration in the implementation of quality assurance in their respective universities. There are significant differences in staff ratings in the last two items across the three universities. However, such differences can not be considered for comparison, as the overall ratings are low across the items.

Table 7-9 Staff Satisfaction Regarding Quality Related Issues

Staff satisfaction regarding	AAU		JU		MU		χ^2
	High	T	High	T	High	T	
Leadership commitment for quality	5	39	12	30	11	41	10.1
Academic staff commitment for quality	15	39	17	30	17	41	12.1
Shared responsibilities & structures for quality assurance implementation	4	39	14	30	15	41	15.8*
Coordination & collaboration among different actors	1	38	11	30	10	41	19.7**

**p<.01 *p<.05

These findings indicate that there are gaps between actual and good practices in quality assurance. Leadership and staff involvement and commitment is important for the successful implementation of quality assurance system in the universities. Shared responsibilities, coordination and collaboration among the different actors are also necessary for the effective implementation of quality assurance. The findings show that these conditions are not in place in the public universities.

Students' survey questionnaire data were also analyzed. The results show that majority of the student respondents across the three universities reported that they have never participated in university-wide academic matters such as faculty (77%, N=405) and departmental meetings (72%, N=405), curriculum review (71%, N=365), strategic planning (70%, N=370), institutional self-evaluation (68%, N=402) and studies on student learning experience (60%, N=405). Teaching and program/course evaluation is reported an exception. There is no tradition that departments organize meetings with students to discuss about quality of teaching and learning, as reported by majority of student respondents across the three universities (52%, N=393). The staff respondents also share similar views, in which 26% (N=35) from AAU, 19% (N=16) from JU and 36% (N=42) from MU reported that they have never participated in quality assurance related practices in the last 5 years and there is no significant difference in ratings of respondents across the three universities ($\chi^2 = 1.92$).

A focus on core educational processes: an effective quality assurance focuses on the core educational processes that influence student learning. This is not the case in the existing quality assurance practice of the target universities. The findings in chapter 6 demonstrated that quality of the educational processes: teaching, learning and assessment are defective in terms of improving student learning outcomes. The preceding sections also demonstrated that the existing practices of assuring quality such as evaluation of teaching by staff and students, curriculum/program design and review, and self-evaluation are not functioning well to improve quality. Hence, this condition is missing in the Ethiopian universities.

Adequate resources: effective quality assurance practice requires deployment of reasonable resources. The findings in the preceding sections showed that resources constraints hindered the implementation of some of the change initiatives resulted from BPR (e.g. Mekelle University). The inadequacy of physical, human and financial resources depicted in chapter 6 is also a hindrance for the effective implementation of quality assurance across the universities.

Policy and structure: A coherent quality assurance policy and institutional arrangement is a necessary condition for an effective quality assurance. However, the findings in the preceding sections showed that the introduction of formal quality assurance system, policies and structures in the universities is at an early stage, and there are no well-established committees that have quality assessment as their remit. The universities do not have room to decide on the criteria and methods of self-evaluation, other than the guidelines prescribed by HERQA. The findings in chapter 6 also revealed that the student admission and staff recruitment policies and procedures are not effective in terms of enabling the universities recruit students and staff as per their set criteria and plans. The universities do not have full autonomy to decide on the number, type and qualification of their incoming students and staff as per their strategic plans and resource capacity. They are required to accept staff and enroll many under prepared students that the Ministry assigns. This suggests that functioning policies and structures that support improvement of educational quality are not in place across the universities.

Accountability and transparency: an effective quality assurance involves sharing information with stakeholders concerning quality of the education provision. This may include published reports. Analysis of the available documents indicates that there are no systematized and well-established systems for accountability. Even, the institutional quality audit reports published by HERQA do not reach to wider stakeholders (students, parents and employers). Such reports are not accessible in the web sites or archives of the universities for public consumption.

The overall findings in this section demonstrated that many of the conditions of good practices for quality assurance are not characteristic features of the existing quality assurance practices across the universities. This shows a gap between what the universities are actually doing and the good practices for quality assurance. The findings in chapter 6 and the preceding sections corroborate the finding that the existing quality assurance practice is inadequate and ineffective in effecting improvement in quality of education. Hence, the recently introduced quality assurance system (external and internal) might not have substantial effect on the actual quality improvement across the universities. This may serve the symbolic purpose for the outside stakeholders, mainly the government and employers.

7.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we tried to show the implementation of quality assurance system in the universities. The findings in general indicate that the development and implementation of formal quality assurance is a relatively recent phenomenon in the Ethiopian higher education system. At a national level, the formal quality assurance system consists of both internal and external components. The internal quality assurance is considered as a foundation for continuous quality improvement.

The formal external quality assurance system is analogous with the general model of higher education quality assessment. Unlike the model advocated in the literature, HERQA is not fully autonomous. Institutional self-evaluation by higher education institutions followed by quality audit by HERQA is the feature of the external quality assurance system. In this framework, the public universities are not subject to accreditation by HERQA. Only the private higher education institutions are required to do so.

One of the major findings indicates that despite the apparent requirement of the higher education proclamation (no 351/2003) for internal quality assurance system, the three public universities included in this study have not yet implemented formal and systematized internal quality assurance system, though there are recent developments to introduce formal policies and structures. The universities started to introduce or plan formal policy and structures for their internal quality process as part of BPR implementation.

The findings show that there is no as such significant difference among the public universities in terms of the adequacy and effectiveness of their actual quality assurance practices. The only differences among the universities are in the timing of introducing the recent formal quality assurance policy and structures and in

undertaking institutional self-evaluation, in which the young university (MU) reacts faster than the old one (AAU). Organizational age, size and leadership turnover are found to be the possible explaining variables for the difference in the timing of implementing government reform agenda (BPR) and introducing formal quality assurance policies and structures among the public universities. The old and large university with greater experience; relatively better staff capacity; and deep-rooted beliefs and academic values, and high leadership turnover is more likely to resist top-down policies and reform initiatives than the young and new ones. This is because the old university has greater historical experience, capacity and norms up on which reform initiatives and policies are perceived and valued. While the young and new universities are more likely to accept government initiated reform and policies opportunistically because they have limited historical experience and capacity to resist.

The other major finding demonstrated that there is no specific quality management model or framework that underlies the internal quality assurance practice of the universities other than BPR. BPR is a top-down and government driven reform agenda, which is presently being introduced in the two out of the three universities. It is considered as the model underlying the recently introduced formal quality assurance system. The theoretical perspective for the current practice is grounded in achieving efficiency and effectiveness in terms of cost, quality service and products. But, what is actually happening, particularly at AAU is contrary to this. AAU introduced heavier and complex governance structure that is against the essence of BPR. Also, the implementation of BPR is constrained by a multitude of problems including resource and capacity constraints and lack of commitment. Under such circumstances, it is difficult to expect the successful implementation of the BPR strategic goals, and formal quality assurance system in the public universities.

The findings also demonstrated that there is a gap between the actual quality assurance practices of the universities and the good practices in quality assurance. The universities are not doing what they are expected to do in terms of enhancing quality of their internal processes that influence student learning. The recently introduced quality assurance policy and structures that are embedded in BPR have no relation with the enhancement of quality of the educational provisions in the universities. They are focused outwardly to get legitimacy from outsiders, and they may simply serve the purpose of symbolic compliance for the outside stakeholders (government and employers). This shows how the universities decouple legitimizing their mission with the actual improvement of quality of their core educational processes that influence the actual learning of students.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrated that the present quality assurance practices are not adequate and effective in terms of improving the core

educational processes that influence student learning. This suggests questions concerning the factors that influence the adoption and implementation of adequate and effective quality assurance system in the public universities. This and related questions are addresses in chapter 8.

8 Factors that Enable or Hinder the Practice of Quality Assurance in the Public Universities

8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the influence of key environmental and university specific factors on the adoption and practice of quality assurance in the public universities. The argument put forward in this chapter is that the adoption and implementation of formal quality assurance in universities is a function of the approach to quality assurance, the specific university characteristics, and the organizational environment in which universities operate.

As depicted in our conceptual framework, factors related to university characteristics refer to those elements that differentiate one university from the other. On the other hand, environmental factors are those factors within the domain of the task and institutional environment of the universities. In this chapter, data analyses on university specific factors focus on leadership and governance, resources, academic staff and students, and quality culture. The organizational environmental factors are common to the three universities. These include suppliers, regulators, legal framework, and socio-cultural factors. This chapter provides insights to identifying the pros and cons of those factors. *Apriori* determination/hypothesis is not however intended. Rather, appraisal of their influence on the adoption and practice of quality assurance at the universities is the course of action.

Both quantitative and qualitative data drawn from different sources were used for this purpose. This chapter begins with analyses of survey data for both university specific and environmental factors in the second section. The third section presents the findings of qualitative data analyses on both university specific and environmental factors that influence the adoption and practice of quality assurance in the universities. Finally, the last section presents concluding remarks.

8.2 Results of Survey Data Analyses

This section presents findings of survey data analyses on academic staff's perceived importance of university specific and environmental factors in enabling or hindering the practice of quality assurance in universities. To this end, academic staff members were asked about their views regarding the university specific and environmental factors that either enable or hinder the adoption and

implementation of formal quality assurance mechanisms in their respective universities. They rated among a list of factors on a five point rating scale (hindrance=1-2, not important=3, facilitator=4-5). Then mean scores were compared with the 'not important value' to determine the respondents' perceived importance of each factor. If a mean score on the perceived importance of a factor is not significantly different from the value 3, then that factor is considered as not important (neither an enabler nor a hindrance). Table 8-1 presents the results for academic staff's perception of university specific factors and then followed by results of staff perceptions on environmental factors in Table 8-2.

The results in Table 8-1 show that the academic staff across the three universities perceived the commitment and support of staff as enabler for the implementation of quality assurance at public universities. However, this is not the case with the university governance, leadership and management and resources (see Table 8-1 below). This means that the presence of committed and engaged staff seem to be essential for the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms in universities.

Table 8-1 University Specific Factors that Enable or Hinder the Practice of Quality Assurance as Perceived by Staff

Internal factors	Test Value=3									
	AAU			JU			MU			
	Mean	SD	t-test	Mean	SD	t-test	Mean	SD	t-test	
1 University governance	2.76	1.50	-.98	3.42	1.55	.139	3.32	1.45	1.34	
2 University leadership	2.87	1.51	.37	3.11	1.48	.39	3.26	1.48	1.09	
3 Resources (e.g. finance & expertise)	3.20	1.55	-.54	3.04	1.61	.12	2.97	1.71	-.10	
4 Commitment & support of staff for quality	3.80	1.16	4.09***	3.89	1.37	3.38**	3.65	1.27	3.10**	
5 Commitment & engagement of students	3.59	1.26	2.88**	3.75	1.18	3.38**	3.41	1.50	1.71	

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

The results also indicated that the commitment and engagement of students is perceived by staff as enabler in AAU and JU. In other words, the fact that a

university has well-prepared, motivated and engaged students has implications for its quality assurance practices.

The results indicate that there is variation in the perception of academic staff regarding the university specific factors. The factor on the commitment and support of staff for quality is an exception to this. The respondents across the three universities have positive perception about their commitment and support for quality. However, this could be because of the lack of critical view of the staff on themselves. University governance, leadership and resources are not perceived as important by the academic staff across the three universities.

The results in Table 8-2 show the staff from both JU and MU viewed the legal framework as enabler, whereas the staff respondents from AAU do not. While, the academic staff from AAU perceived the enrolment expansion and graduate mixes policies as hindrances. These policies are perceived to be enablers by the academic staff from JU. However, this is not the case with the staff from MU. BPR is perceived by the staff from MU and JU as an enabler for the implementation of quality assurance. This suggests that the implementation of BPR in the universities has implications for the introduction and implementation of quality assurance policies and mechanisms in the universities. This is in consonance with the findings in chapter 7.

Table 8-2 External Environmental Factors that Enable or Hinder the Practice of Quality Assurance as Perceived by Staff

Factors	Test Value=3									
	AAU			JU			MU			t-test
	Mean	SD	t-test	Mean	SD	t-test	Mean	SD	t-test	
1 Legal Framework	3.29	1.36	1.24	4.00	1.16	4.58***	3.51	1.17	2.67**	
2 Enrolment expansion policy	2.05	1.00	-	3.59	1.34	2.30*	2.94	1.51	-.22	
3 Graduate mix policy	2.47	1.08	-2.86**	3.73	1.28	2.91**	2.92	1.32	-.38	
6 Business Process Reengineering (BPR)	2.94	1.17	-.30	3.73	1.43	2.61**	3.49	1.47	2.07*	
4 Regulators (HERQA)	3.63	1.01	3.51***	4.04	1.14	4.58***	3.67	1.02	3.75***	
5 Suppliers (preparatory schools)	3.09	1.40	.36	3.46	1.27	1.85	3.00	1.55	.00	

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Similarly, the existence of regulators is perceived as an enabler for quality assurance practice across the three universities.

These results show that the academic staff respondents across the three universities differ in their perceptions regarding the contribution of external environmental factors for quality assurance implementation. The academic preparation of incoming students is not viewed as an important factor by the academic staff across the three universities. Such variations in academic staff perception across the universities are expected, as the three universities differ in the context in which they operate. The variations in staff perceptions about BPR across the three universities are expected owing to the specificity of the organizational contexts in which the universities operate. For example, as the findings in chapter seven indicated, the young university (MU) implemented BPR earlier than the old one (AAU). Moreover, this section reveals the fact that the staff of the former perceived BPR as an enabler. This indicates that the variation in staff perception is attributed to the specific context of the two universities.

The overall findings in this section showed that university specific factors such as resources, university leadership and governance are not perceived by staff as important factors, whereas having engaged and committed staff and students are considered as enablers for quality assurance practice. Having legal framework and regulators and BPR are perceived by staff as enabler, whereas the policies related to enrollment expansion and graduate mix programs are perceived by staff as hindrances for quality assurance practices.

Further analysis of interview and documentary data were conducted to corroborate these findings. The interview data are analyzed thematically across the three universities in the section that follows.

8.3 Results of Interview and Documentary Data Analyses

In this section, interviews and documentary data are analyzed. A thematic approach was followed to present the results. The themes are drawn from the variables contained in the conceptual framework of the study.

8.3.1. University Specific Factors

Academic staff and university management were asked about their views concerning which university specific factors hinder or facilitate the adoption and implementation of quality assurance in their respective universities. Also, documents were consulted to substantiate the findings. The results are presented hereunder.

8.3.1.1. University Leadership and Governance

Governance and management in the Ethiopian public universities is based on the corporate governance models, as stipulated in the 2009 higher education proclamation. The governance and management of a public university is a formula of three different and hierarchical bodies: legislative, executive and supervision. Recently, there is a paradigm shift in the appointment of university presidency; deanship and department headship from elected to executive appointment posts following the revised higher education proclamation (no.650/2009).

According to the proclamation, the president of a public university is the chief executive officer of the organization. With regard to quality assurance, the president and his management members are required by the proclamation to 'ensure that their respective university produces high quality graduates in as many numbers and fields consistent with the needs of the country' (article 53). This suggests that the university management is responsible for setting up and implementation of internal quality assurance mechanisms. Theoretically, this is related to what we call the managerial approach to quality assurance.

However, problems related to the leadership and management capacity in the Ethiopian universities have been articulated in many government documents over the past years. In the Higher Education System Overhaul (HESO) document (2004), for example, lack of the necessary leadership skills, competence, experience and commitment on the part of university management was articulated as one of the major bottlenecks for improvement of quality education. In connection with this, the academic staff interviewees from the three universities were asked about their opinion regarding the role of university leadership and governance in the healthy operation of the universities, and in developing and implementing quality assurance policies and mechanisms. The analysis is presented as follows.

8.3.1.1.1. Addis Ababa University

AAU is the oldest and largest university in the country. Both staff and the management believe that AAU is not only a pioneer in higher education, it is the one the footsteps of it the other universities follow in terms of establishment, curriculum, books, teacher recruitment, and et cetera. It was expected that the university would produce something that can change the country for better; however, it was argued that it did not change itself; let alone the country. As many of the interviewees from the staff and the university management noted, viewing at its present condition, it becomes difficult to conclude that AAU is

playing its leading role. One of the staff interviewees rightly expressed this situation as follows:

The Addis Ababa University, not only failed to play its role in leadership but it is keeping on going down to a point of being like one of the new universities. It has reduced itself from being the leading institution to being one of the new universities. Worse, it is now becoming a follower of the others (IA3, 2009).

It is evident in this study that AAU is recently lagging behind the young universities in terms of introducing formal quality assurance policies and structures, undertaking institutional self-evaluation and quality audit and implementing BPR. The question as to why AAU has failed to be the leading vis-à-vis its historical legacies and age gets resolved by the lack of dynamism in university leadership and governance system; to mention one.

Its history shows that the university has leadership and governance system that comprises three elements: execution, legislation, and supervision. The executive body, which comprises the leadership from the university president to the department/unit head, implements laws produced by the legislative body (the senate). The supervisory body includes all the assemblies that provide advice to the executive. These three bodies were strong and played important role in regulating the smooth functioning of the university including quality care in the early years (LA2, 2009). However, the interview results suggest that the three regulatory bodies of the university have not been working well over the past years. As one of the interviewees from the senior leadership noted:

The executive body became stronger and stronger and the assemblies were reduced to meetings. The university governance system has been eroded over the past thirty years to a point that only the skeleton of the senate is remaining today. Even some of the meetings are called on if the president; dean or department heads liked it. The president, the dean and the department head kept on becoming strong and strong, which led to the creation of military like environment (LA2, 2009).

This seems to suggest the fragility of the university leadership and governance structure. Many of the staff interviewees share the idea that the university leadership and governance system is weakening and going down from time to time, and even the system that has been established in the past is eroded and destroyed. The university board and academic commissions, which used to be the strong institutions of quality assurance, are now nominal (IA9, 2009). The staff interviewees attributed this problem to the poor quality of the top leadership. As one of the staff interviewees puts it, the university leadership has failed to perform its role; it has a big problem of putting clear mission and direction for the university. The university community does not understand the very existence of

these missions (IA3, 2009). Many of the staff interviewees characterize the university as experiencing hibernation both in leadership and implementation. Asked about the university leadership, one of the staff interviewees said the following:

In the university, collective leadership has left its way to autocracy. We could say the university has laws and regulations that everybody is supposed to follow. But these days, nobody cares about these rules and regulations. The legislation has been vulnerable to instant changes at the will of the leaders. They accept or refuse somebody at will (IA2, 2009).

This indicates that there is a problem in properly executing laws and regulations by the top university leadership. As one of the staff members puts in a written comment of the university leadership:

The president is the university. He runs the university like his own private estate and family fief. People who assume positions in important offices of the university are not employed on the basis of merit. Nepotism, corruption and patronage are wide spread. The abuse of meager university resources including housing, finance, vehicles and fuel is the hallmark of the present leadership. There is no accountability to public money (IA10, 2009).

The other manifestation of the leadership incapacity is lack of cohesiveness at all levels in enforcing the university legislation and other policies and laws that are deemed to enhance quality of educational provisions. The interviewees from staff and the senior management agree that, there is no proper link and shared vision among the university board, presidents, deans, directors and department heads and staff. As one of them indicated, most of the time the people at the leadership positions quarrel each other (IA8, 04/12.2009). Even majority of the staff believed that the university leadership has gone melting. In this regard, one of the interviewees said the following:

The leadership does not work together at all levels. When there is any attempt for change from above, it will not be effective as far as the leadership is divided and always in wars. The leadership mirrors the problems down in every faculty/college (LA5, 2009).

A number of reasons were mentioned by the interviewees for the failure of the leadership and management in properly running the university. These include capacity of the leaders and how they are assigned, lack of full autonomy, and readiness of the academic community for change. Most of the staff interviewees agree that the major problem is lack of capability, credibility and legitimacy of the leaders assigned by the government. As one of them puts it, the people the government assigns for the administration are questionably capable and they are merely political appointees, and consequently the university has not found

efficient leaders in spite of its long time experience (IA4, 2009). There is no tenure system for university presidents; they can stay longer than ten years despite their inefficiency and misdeeds. The university has recently introduced amorphous and hierarchical governance structure as part of BPR implementation without much change in the people at the senior leadership positions. Focusing on the legitimacy of the existing leadership, one of the staff interviewees said the following:

In the past, the people who assume the position of the administration of the university were those who passed through the system. However, today, the people we see in the leadership are people referred to as Diaspora; people who do not know the culture of the university; and even worse, these are people who do not have stake in the university. These are people who wish to do what they need here and go somewhere else. They take advantages of the university. This shakes the university off its roots (IA2, 2009).

This shows that the academic staff members have their view on who should be in leadership position and they are also questioning the legitimacy of people from outside of the university who assume leadership positions. Others relate the problems with the autonomy of the university. One of the staff interviews explained the situation as:

The external bodies (Ministry of Education) refrain from owning the university because there is an argument of autonomy; that the university condemns interference. Of course, autonomy is important for an institution in order only to effectively run; the autonomy should entail accountability. Autonomy must be given to institutions that work effectively, who have missions and objectives. You trust them if they are effective. But the university administration is not toiling as expected and the university is standing at a crossroad (IA3, 2009).

The argument given above suggests that the interference of government in the university leadership is minimal, and hence the main issue is not lack of autonomy¹ on the part of the university leadership; per se. The staff interviewees believe that the government bodies (e.g. MoE and the University Board) have not played their supervisory role to correct the prevailing problems related to governance and leadership of the university. Looking at the university board, it is composed of senior government officials (Ministers) who are very busy with their own regular jobs, which make it difficult for them to closely follow up the smooth

¹ In this particular context, the present university president is autonomous to do whatever he likes to do; thanks to his strong personal relationship with the government leaders (IA7, 2009). However, this does not reflect the autonomy of the university in its real sense. The relation of the university leadership with the academic staff is heteronymous.

operation of the university. Most of them are also members of boards in more than one organization, and they have no attachment to the faculties and staff of the university. Most of the interviewees witnessed that they don't know who the members of the board are, what they are doing and the very existence of the board itself. This suggests that the board is nominal, and it is not playing its role in setting the goals and maintaining standards of the university.

On the other hand, the interviewees from the university management attribute the problem to the lack of readiness of the academic community to undertake their responsibilities. One of them described the situation as follows;

Why the Addis Ababa University fails to change itself is the result of problems accumulated in long years. There is a sickness in the academic community that says: "we know it". Leaders may come with vision, but they frustrate and fail at last, because of lack of readiness on the part of the owners of the university (academics). So, Mr. Y's going and Mr. X's coming is not the case. The academic community must be ready to examine itself. Otherwise, stagnation is inevitable at a certain point (LA5, 009).

This seems to suggest that the academic community has also its own contribution for the failure of the university leadership and governance system. As one of the staff interviewees puts it, the academic community has no sense of ownership of the university, and they are becoming part of the problem (IA3, 2009). There are no mechanisms to check whether things are in order and going well including whether the academic staff is teaching and researching and whether the students are learning. The number of academic staff members that do not regularly attend classes either out of frustration or indifference is increasing (IA10). This has an implication to the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms in the university. As one of my interviewees noted:

The internal challenges facing the university are not to quality assurance alone; but they also challenge the very survival of the university. Therefore, at this time the basic agenda of the Addis Ababa University is not quality assurance; rather it is survival (LA5, 2009).

The arguments discussed above suggest that the university is operating in the absence of good governance and management system that create an enabling environment for the development and implementation of viable quality assurance system in the university. This finding corroborates with findings of the quantitative data. It does appear that the university leadership could not be instrumental in enforcing what is stipulated in the higher education proclamation in terms of establishing and implementing reliable internal quality assurance mechanisms.

The arguments discussed above also reflect a complaint culture among the academic staff and university leadership. Under such circumstances, it is very difficult to conclude that the leadership and governance system is an enabler for the university to develop and implement quality assurance mechanisms. The delay in introducing formal quality assurance policies and structure and the implementation of BPR at the Addis Ababa University are reflections of the lack of commitment of the university leadership for change and quality. Unless the university leadership takes the initiative to develop and introduce quality assurance mechanisms, the commitment and engagement of staff would not follow. This is contrary to what is expected from a university leadership and governance as stipulated in the higher education proclamation of the country. This shows that the managerial approach to quality assurance, as depicted by Brennan and Shah (2000) and Luckett (2006), is not working in the Addis Ababa University. The results suggest that the existence of leadership and governance system is considered an enabler for quality assurance as far as it creates an enabling environment for the development and implementation of policies and mechanisms for assuring quality in the university.

8.3.1.1.2. Mekelle University

MU is one of the young universities in Ethiopia. The university has introduced and implemented new governance structure following the implementation of BPR. The leadership and governance system comprises the board, the senate, the executive (processes owners), and university council. In this new structure, the president is the business owner or chief executive officer of the university. The same president has led the university since its establishment as a university college in 1993. How presidents and vice presidents are selected and appointed is contrary to what is required by the higher education proclamation.

Asked about their opinion on the university leadership and governance, the interviewees from staff and management agreed that there is lack of leadership commitment at all levels, which includes corruption, lack of transparency, networking and absence of follow up and proper evaluation of employers. As one of the interviewees puts it, the capacity and legitimacy of the leadership is questionable; the governance system is corrupted, and the support staff is not supporting (LM1, 2009). This indicates problems in accountability of the leadership. The university board is not functioning well. As most of the staff interviewees noted, the board lacks commitment. It has no mechanism of checking, and the university is going out of its mandate. One of the interviewees elaborates the situation as:

The board plays the role of killing the fire than strategic change. Everything depends on the agreement of the board and the management. University president works to please the chairman of the board in order to reign for long. You can almost say there is no unnecessary intervention. The presidents can do whatever pleased them (LM1, 2009).

Most of the staff interviewees believed that commitment for implementing quality assurance is lacking from both the board and the top university leadership, which is in agreement with the findings in Table 8-1. As one of the interviewees argues, the intention is there to assure quality in terms of introducing policy and establishing quality assurance office, but in real terms the policy is not translated into action. Head of the quality assurance office of the university also shares similar views:

The quality assurance office is a one-man office. It is not yet equipped with the required staff and resources to operate properly. We propose so many things to resume the quality assurance practice, but the top management is not responding. We say departments have to be decentralized and empowered, teams and the individual instructors have to be empowered, but this is not materialized due to lack of support and commitment from the top management. Our office simply proposes things, but it is not empowered to undertake its duties (LM1, 2009).

The arguments above suggest that the position of quality assurance in the internal governance structure of the university is not strong enough to effect meaningful change in quality assurance practices. In such circumstances, implementation of quality assurance proposals depends on the good will of the top leadership.

The focus of the arguments of the staff and head of the quality assurance is on issues of translating policies into action. However, the interviewees from the deans believe that there is commitment from the top management. One of the interviewees noted that the empowerment of teaching and learning transformation teams, the implementation of BPR, the introduction of policy and establishment of office for quality assurance are indicators of the commitment of the university leadership for quality assurance (LM3, 2009). Installing policies and structures for quality assurance may be considered an important step and can indicate commitment, but this by itself is not sufficient to effect change in quality of education. The policies have to be translated into action and the quality assurance office should be empowered to properly undertake its duties and responsibilities. In this sense, the argument of staff and the head of quality assurance office seem to be valid.

As the findings in chapter seven indicated, this university has undertaken institutional self-evaluation, introduced BPR and formal quality assurance policy and structure relatively earlier than the others. However, there is no significant

difference in actual practice between the old and new universities. It is interesting to note here that introducing policies and establishing offices without ensuring their actual implementation and functioning may serve the purpose of impressionistic compliance rather than actual improvement in quality. This suggests that the university leadership and governance system may be considered enabler as far as it demonstrates commitment in ensuring the actual implementation of quality assurance policy and mechanisms. Theoretically, the initiatives of the university leadership to introduce policies and structures for quality assurance go in line with the managerial approach to quality assurance depicted in chapter 2.

8.3.1.1.3. Jigjiga University

This is one of the newly emerging universities, which is only four years old. Both the staff and administration of the university are very young. This university operates under the patronage of the Ministry of Education in matters related to planning, budgeting and staff recruitment. Similar to the young university, the leadership and governance system of the university comprises of the board, the senate, the executive bodies and academic commissions. With regard to the university leadership, the interviewees from both staff and the management agreed that there is lack of experience in the university leadership at all levels of the university. An interviewee from the senior management described this situation as:

From the president to the department head, and in like manner, in the administrative sector, lack of experience is a major constraint. Most of our deans and department heads have directly come from high schools teachers; they are immediately assigned to the posts. Almost all deans, department heads, coordinators do not have knowledge on education and management. We have a serious problem training these deans (LJ2, 2009).

This indicates that lack of capacity across the administration and academic staff is the major challenge for the university in smoothly running its programs. In this context, the staff members were asked about their perception regarding the university management. Their responses indicate that the university management follows the 'open door policy' for staff and students. As one of the staff interviewees noted, the top management provides a supportive environment to facilitate the activities being undertaken at the department and faculty levels to ensure the attainment of the objectives. There is also collegial relationship and trust between staff and the university management (LJ3, 2009).

The staff respondents also believe that establishment of examination and grading committees, tutorial programs and language improvement center, pedagogical

training for novice instructors, and higher diploma programs are manifestations of commitment of the university leadership. These are considered essential for quality improvement, although the university has not yet introduced formal quality assurance system. In practice, this type of university management is close to the collegial approach, although the proclamation tends to prescribe the managerial/ corporate approach to be applied in the universities. In spite of this, however, many of the minimum requirements to run a university education such as leadership and staff capacity, facilities and learning support services are not in place in the university.¹ This raises fundamental questions on how the university can assure quality under such circumstances; even more on how it would be possible for the university to run its programs without ensuring minimum staff, leadership and resource (facilities) requirements. This leads to the argument that it is difficult to talk about quality assurance in a context where the operation of the university is constrained by the absence of minimum human and material resources. This suggests that commitment of leadership alone cannot be considered as a sufficient condition for the development and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms in the university, unless the minimum staff and material requirements are fulfilled.

8.3.1.2. Commitment and Engagement of Academic Staff and Students

It is believed that ensuring high quality teaching and learning in universities requires commitment and sustained engagement of staff and students. Qualitative data on these and related issues were analyzed and the findings are presented in the subsequent sections.

8.3.1.2.1. Competence without Engagement: the case of AAU

As depicted in chapter 6, the staff profile of Addis Ababa University is relatively better than the other two universities. However, both staff and management interviewees cited lack of staff commitment and engagement as a serious problem in adopting and implementing quality assurance mechanisms in AAU. Majority of the academic staff members of the university are engaged in *moonlighting* to generate additional income without the knowledge of the employer university. Both staff and the management respondents agree on idea that the significant numbers of the academia are lawless regarding their jobs. One of the interviewees elaborated this situation as follows:

¹ See also chapter 6 on facilities and staff qualification.

The teachers' behavior is deteriorating. Teachers use the name of the university as an emblem to work outside; without owning his/her primary job. There is no mechanism to check this. Is he/she teaching? Is he/she researching? Is he/she handling students fairly? Since this is not checked, the teacher is in a comfortable situation; to do what he/she likes. I say comfortable in the negative sense. The university has become a jungle for the lawless. Because the teacher is engaged in matters outside the university, because they do not do what they are recruited to do, quality of work, of education is at its worst (IA3, 20/11/2009).

The staff members are viewing the university's job as their part-time job. For instance, many university professors open their private colleges and even lobby that students should join their colleges instead of the university' (IA7, 02/12/2009). This indicates the lack of accountability to jobs, which in turn suggests lack of commitment & support of academic staff for quality education. As the staff and management responded, motivation and commitment of the staff is one of the critical factors that limit the introduction and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms in the university.

Many reasons are mentioned for the current malpractice, which include low remuneration, culture or erosion of academic values, and absence of reward mechanisms. Staff remuneration is very poor, and as a result teachers work part time and have consultancy jobs outside of the university in order to secure their financial needs and support their livelihood. The issue is not about providing the staff with luxurious life. It simply has become difficult for instructors and professors to live on the salary they are paid (IA9, 17/12/2009). As one of my interviewees puts it,

The academic staff are not properly paid. As a result they spend half of their time (sometimes most of it) trying to get additional income to support their livelihood. Under such circumstances, it is very difficult to talk about quality of education when most of the academic staff is not fully engaged. Even though the number may not be big, there are highly qualified professionals in the university who are not nearly half paid as expatriates. This is demoralizing to some extent and these staff members feel they are not properly handled. Professors who have served the university for over thirty years do not make more than 500 US Dollars, which by any standard is not commensurate with the services they render (IA9, 17/12/2009).

The existing remuneration scale, professors believe is defamatory; Ethiopian professors get less than half of what the Indian professors are paid in Ethiopia. As noted by one of the respondents, this is frustrating for Ethiopian professors, because there are people who can perform better than the expatriates; but they say that they are not equally paid as those of the expatriates (IA8, 04/12/2009). Another interviewee from the same university remarked that 'with the poverty I

am in, I cannot listen to you if you tell me to be obsessed with quality of education; this is what many people can tell you' (IA10, 05/1/2009).

The university management also shares similar views concerning low salary scale of staff as the main cause for moonlighting. One of them argues that it is difficult to control and stop moonlighting with the existing remuneration and incentive system of the university, because attempting to do so will result in the loss of many experienced staff (LA5, 2009). These results suggest that there is no well-established remuneration standard and system that ensures the same wage for the same type of job in the Ethiopian public university. This may affect staff motivation and engagement in teaching and quality assurance practices.

However, the prevailing practice is contrary to what is stipulated in the higher education proclamation regarding consultancy (no.650/2009). It states that 'public institutions shall ensure the undertaking of consultancy or other supplementary activities by academic staff shall not in any way compromise the quality, extent, and availability of activities for the implementation of which the public institutions are established' (article 26, p. 4991). This indicates that the university is required to enforce the requirements set by the proclamation regarding consultancy through the design and implementation of internal rules and regulations, but this is not what is happening in the university.

The other reason for disengagement is the absence of an incentive and reward system for academic staff. As one of the professors from the Addis Ababa University puts it, there is no reward for those who perform well and no penalty for those who do bad things, and the lack of incentives, the indifference toward good deeds made the spirit of the staff run off the university (IA7, 02/12/2009). In such a university system, people who do their jobs are punished while those who do not do their jobs are rewarded; this killed the commitment and engagement of many people and they were made careless in their assignments. We can imagine that quite a substantial number of the academic staff would not stay in the university if they had better jobs elsewhere.

Others attributed the current problem of engagement to deterioration and erosion of academic values of staff. This is manifested through the lack of cohesiveness among the academic community to stand for common academic values including quality. Most of the academic staff members are divided between different ideological lines and those staff members with intrinsic interest in the university are very few.

The engagement of staff in moonlighting will obviously compromise the quality assurance practices in the university. Implementation of quality assurance policies in universities demands the commitment and full time engagement of the staff. In this sense, it is very difficult to talk about quality assurance practices and

improvement of quality of education in a circumstance where most of the academic staff members are intricate by criteria other than academic values. This suggests that the availability of qualified and experienced staff in a university is considered as enabler for the development and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms as far as it is followed by staff commitment and engagement.

With regard to student engagement, it is believed that engagement and commitment of staff will be followed by engagement of students. Many students join the Ethiopian universities without adequate academic grounding. Such students need more academic guidance, support and follow-up from their teachers so as to be fully engaged in the teaching and learning process. Nevertheless, the commitment and engagement of staff for quality assurance is lacking. In these circumstances, it is very difficult to expect sustained commitment and engagement of students in quality assurance practices without the commitment and engagement of their teachers. As one of my interviewees, a professor at the Addis Ababa University puts it, 'If you bring teachers who do not want to teach and students who do not want to learn, education cannot happen' (IA12, 10/1/2010). This shows the lack of commitment and support of students for quality assurance initiatives.

In this regard, the university student union is expected to play crucial role in ensuring active participation of students in the development and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms. However, the responses of heads of the student union show that the union is mostly preoccupied in working against ethnic conflicts very prone to erupt. A great deal of the students' learning time has been wasted due to such conflicts and the ensuing student protests. One of the interviewees from the student union explained the situation as:

One of the objectives of the student union is to collaboratively work with the university community (administration, staff and students) in ensuring quality of the education provided to students. However, the union could not go long way in this regard, due to its frequent engagement in routine student affairs such as resolving disputes between and among students, staff and administration; the less attention given by the top administration and delay in responding to the union's queries (SUA1, 28/12/2009).

The arguments above suggest that the students are not playing their role in ensuring quality of their learning. In this sense, it is difficult to conclude that the academic readiness, engagement and motivation of students do enable the university to implement quality assurance mechanisms. In fact it toils to produce quality graduates who were in the first place not as competent as they should be.

The overall findings suggest that staff and student commitment and engagement is missing, though the university has a relatively better mix of qualified and competent staff. This obviously affects the adoption and implementation of effective quality assurance in this university.

8.3.1.2.2. Engagement without Competence: the case of JU and MU

As the findings in chapter 6 indicated, a great majority of the academic staff in *JU* and *MU* is composed of young and fresh graduates. The respondents consider this as an advantage for staff engagement in the universities.

In the case of *JU*, most of the interviewees from staff and leadership agree to the fact that there is staff commitment and support for quality assurance despite limitations in the qualification and experience of the staff. As one of the interviewees from the top management puts it, many of the academic staff members are young and novice teachers who have the commitment and engagement to support their students (LJ4, 2010). The academic staff members are highly enthusiastic, energetic, motivated and fully engaged in teaching, though they have limitations in competence and experience (LJ1, 5/1/2010). The question here is that what do the staff members provide to their students in terms of quality teaching if they are lacking professional competence and experience. In this regard, the major challenge cited by most of the academic staff is that they do not even have the knowledge about what quality assurance is; let alone practicing it. Such knowledge gap and lack of competence and experience will evidently affect the adoption and practice of quality assurance in the university.

Like AAU, lack of incentives such as hardship allowances, transportation, housing, health and other services are mentioned as problems by both the university administration and staff respondents. The incentive mechanism does not consider the location of the university in terms of attracting qualified and experienced teaching staff¹. This also affects the motivation of the existing staff. The academic staff members believe that the remuneration scale is low and that it affects their work motivation and attitude. As one of the interviewees puts its, most of the academic staff joined the university to get employment and they do not want to stay long (LJ7, 5/1/2010). This indicates that like AAU, the academic staff members in *JU* are not satisfied with the existing remuneration and incentive mechanisms. One can imagine what the academic staff in *JU* would have done, had there been opportunities for consultancy works and part time jobs like AAU

¹ It is naturally expected for a university in a remote rural area to introduce an attractive incentive in order both to attract qualified personnel and retain what it once achieved to recruit.

in their surroundings. The staff members in JU have to fully engage themselves in teaching and learning, because they do not have other possibility or options to generate additional income through part-time job and consultancies.

In the case of MU, both staff and management members believe that active participation of staff in transformational teams at department and course delivery levels, course revision at unit levels, continuous assessment of students and remedial courses are indicators of staff engagement in quality assurance activities. The university has introduced new system to facilitate the engagement of staff and in practices that deemed to assure quality of teaching and learning. However, the new system is not fully functioning.

We say departments have to be empowered; they have to be decentralized. Teams, the individual instructors have to be empowered but in real terms we are not fully practicing it due to resource and incentive constraints. Many instructors are missing classes and the sense of accountability in the academic staff, the management at all levels is lacking (LM1, 28/11/2009).

The new system has implication to quality improvement in the university, though it is not fully implemented. Thus, compared to AAU, the engagement of staff in this university is relatively better. The introduction of the new system may be considered as enabler for the adoption and implementation of quality assurance policies.

There is also agreement among staff and management respondents of MU in pointing out the low remuneration of staff and lack of incentives and reward mechanisms as major problems. One of the interviewees from the university management noted that:

The finance and the remuneration part is one big problem. Because the salary paid is low and teachers undertake additional duties; and the amount we pay them for additional load is smaller than what other universities pay and this is becoming a hindrance to ensure staff engagement and thereby enhance quality of teaching and learning (LM3, 29/10/2009).

Most of the staff respondents also reflected that it is becoming practically impossible to live on the salary they are paid. At the moment, compared to the AAU, moonlighting is not mentioned as a serious problem in MU. However, given the staff dissatisfaction with the remuneration and incentive schemes and the expansion of private higher education institutions to the region where this university is located, moonlighting will soon be inevitable. This suggests that the difference between MU and AAU regarding moonlighting is a matter of the opportunity and accessibility of part time jobs and consultancy for staff; and not in any type of positive measure from the respective university.

With regard to student engagement, the respondents from JU noted that students come to class not because of the interest and love they have for the science and knowledge; rather they read and study to pass exams and ultimately get their degrees. Student interviewees in MU also reported that there are problems with some instructors such as carelessness and lack of initiative and preparation for class, missing classes and lack of support for students. This is contrary to staff responses that they are highly engaged in teaching including tutorial for students. This indicates that the overall engagement of staff and the intention to ensure student engagement through an established system are there in MU. This is also an indication that the university management is using its supervisory role in institutionalizing a system that helps to facilitate staff and student engagement, though it is in an early stage.

From these findings, it is noticeable that either commitment and engagement or competence alone is not sufficient condition for the adoption and practice of effective quality assurance in universities. Commitment and engagement of staff may be considered as an opportunity to adopt and implement quality assurance mechanisms, as far as the required level of staff expertise and experience accompanies it. In other words, ensuring high quality learning is probable in a situation where staff competence is followed by sustained and active staff and student engagement and commitment in the teaching and learning process. Similarly, it is a challenge for the universities to implement quality assurance mechanisms in a situation where there is low level of academic preparedness, engagement and commitment of students.

8.3.1.3. Resources for Quality Assurance

The development and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms in universities entails human, physical and financial resources. Availability of these critical resources is considered necessary but not sufficient condition to ensure quality education. As the findings in chapter 6 indicated, the universities in Ethiopia have one or the other type of resource constraints. However, analysis of the quantitative data in section 9.1 shows that the academic staff perceived resources as neither enabler nor hindrance for the implementation of quality assurance in their respective universities. In this section, further analysis of the interview data is conducted to validate findings of the quantitative data.

In the case of *Addis Ababa University*, many of the academic staff and the university leadership believe that shortage of resources is a hindrance to implement policies and mechanisms that help assure quality of educational provision. One of the interviewees from the leadership admitted that there is still shortage of learning resources and facilities in the university despite the increase

in government budget (LA4, 2009). The available resource is not in parallel to the student intake, which makes it difficult to implement policies for assuring education quality and standards. As one of the staff interviewees noted, the academic staff is expected to assure quality of education without having the necessary facilities and materials (IA8, 2009). It is always announced by the government that there is enough funding to assure quality in universities. However, the classrooms are crowded, libraries poorly equipped: devoid of current journals, textbooks, computers and similar facilities. Many researches are put on halt just for not getting a simple reagent in time (IA9, 2009). These circumstances evidently influence the implementation of quality assurance initiatives.

Others, however, argued that the problem is not shortage of funding, but rather lack of proper utilization of the available resources and expertise to ensure improvement in quality. One of the staff interviewees said:

The government devotes a great deal of money to the universities; however, they have not been able to use that money appropriately. Especially the top officials start to run at the end of the year, at the time of auditing budgets. This shows failure of the management in their work (IA4, 2009).

Another interviewee who was an ex-member of the university administration provided an extended story on how the university community abuses resources due to inefficient and unrealistic planning.

AAU was once asked to propose for whatever infrastructural facilities that it needed to assure and improve its educational quality. This was communicated to the department heads and deans. The result was that they asked for extremely exaggerated utilities even beyond what they actually use. The departments required millions of Birr especially for electronic materials i.e. computer and duplication machine, and some of them requested for 50 or 60 heavyweight duplication machines. This highly inflated request, without any question was directly sent to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry accepted the request in full and brought all the requested machines and transported them to the university by trucks. The university was not able to receive the trucks at that time. It said 'where would I put this? (IA11, 2009).

The anecdote above shows, on the one hand the governments' commitment to address the university's request for resources and on the other hand, resource abuse due to failure in adequate planning on the part of both the university and the Ministry. We can also notice the university and the Ministry inability to identify and prioritize critical resources needed for assuring quality. This may be attributed to the limitations in knowledge and expertise in planning in general and quality assurance in particular.

In the context of the Addis Ababa University, the challenges for the implementation of quality assurance are not only the shortage of resources, but incapacity to properly utilize the available resources. The problem of resource utilization seems to be more serious for the implementation of quality assurance in this university. Under such circumstances, it is very difficult to expect effective implementation of quality assurance mechanisms in the university.

In the case of *Mekelle University*, there is agreement among the staff and the leadership regarding the impact of resources on the realization of the new quality assurance policy. The interviewees in this university indicated that the quality assurance initiatives of the university are constrained by shortage of resources. As one of the interviewees from the management noted, the available facilities and infrastructure were built for limited number of students. Inversely, the number of students has currently increased by 70% (LM2, 2009). This makes it difficult to implement the standards and indicators set by the new quality assurance office. There is also shortage of resources, for example, to undertake continuous assessment and tutorial classes. This calls for a demand of additional learning resources and support materials (LM3, 2009).

The academic staff members believe that the problem is not only shortage of resources. There is also lack of proper utilization of the allotted budget, especially around the support staff. With regard to human resources, as already indicated in chapter 6, the university has shortage of qualified and experienced teaching staff.

The findings discussed above demonstrate that both the inadequacy and misuse of resources is a challenge for the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms in this university.

In *Jigjiga University*, shortage of resources, especially human and physical, is a serious problem. The infrastructure and facilities (buildings, libraries, laboratories and equipment etc.) necessary to facilitate quality education are not yet properly installed. It is, for example, difficult to implement the standards for quality education such as classrooms, class size, laboratories, libraries, students support services and staff qualification and experience under the existing condition. The absence of critical resources is more serious in this university to develop and implement quality assurance initiatives.

The arguments discussed in this section suggest that the availability and proper utilization of resources may be considered enabler for the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms.

8.3.1.4. Institutional Quality Culture

The findings in the previous chapters of this study demonstrated that student learning is constrained by a multitude of problems. Many of the conditions necessary for assuring quality of student learning are missing in the universities. The universities open programs without ensuring many of the conditions necessary for quality learning. The academic staff members lack engagement in and motivation towards teaching. Many of the academic staff is engaged in moonlighting, and leadership commitment for quality is lacking, particularly at AAU. These results suggest that quality of student learning is not valued across the universities. As one of my interviewees, a professor at AAU noted, 'the current condition is assignment-oriented in that both the teacher and the students try to fulfill their duties and take their credentials. This is a severe constraint to quality' (IA12, 10/1/2010).

Student respondents also revealed that both teachers and students work for grades only; they do not care whether students properly learn and know the courses (SJ2, 6/1/2010). We can observe that exam-oriented engagement in teaching and learning is prevailing in the universities. The colleague and student evaluation system, which is presumed to improve teaching, is not working properly. There are also no committees that have student assessment, teaching evaluation and enhancement as their remit. These findings suggest that quality of learning is not valued and shared across the universities.

Despite the requirements of the higher education proclamation, the target universities could not implement internal quality enhancement system, and conduct self-evaluation until recently. Also, implementation of BPR as an approach to quality assurance has failed due to lack of support, ownership, and consensus among staff and leadership. These suggest that installing laws and tools is not sufficient to affect quality assurance practice in universities in the absence of a professional culture that values quality of student learning. The adoption and practice of effective quality assurance practice requires shared values, beliefs, ownership and expectations of quality among all those involved in the educational process.

What is happening in the target universities in terms of introducing quality assurance policies and structures has no relation to improvement of quality learning. It may be considered as a practice of addressing the expectations of compliance, which resembles the ideal of a responsive quality culture depicted by Harvey and Stensaker (2008).

8.3.2. External Environmental Factors

This section presents findings of data analyses concerning the influence of external environmental factors on the adoption and practice of quality assurance across the target universities. Interviews with staff and management, and documentary data analyses were conducted. The results are presented in the subsequent sub-sections.

8.3.2.1. The Legal Framework

Legal frameworks are designed by governments to serve as primary factors in steering the behaviors of higher education system in a country. This determines the nature of the relationship between the state and the higher education institutions. The two major mechanisms of the government legal framework include legislative and regulative components. Legislative component refers to those government policies and laws upon which the higher education institutions are expected to follow. The regulative components include all the issues related to quality assurance, accreditation and other related aspects. How the legislative and regulative frameworks influence the quality assurance practices at the public universities is explored in the subsequent sections.

8.3.2.1.1. The Higher Education Proclamation

The 2003 higher education proclamation (FDRE, 2003), which was modified in 2009 (no. 650/2009, FDRE, 2009), is the legal framework for the operation of the higher education system in the country. This proclamation sets all the requirements, principles and laws for the establishment and functioning of a higher education institution in Ethiopia. With regard to quality assurance, the proclamation demands the establishment of a national quality assurance system as well as internal quality assurance mechanisms at a university level. The question here is how the higher education proclamation influences the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms in the universities, as perceived by both staff and the university management.

In the case of the *Addis Ababa University*, majority of the staff and the leadership believe that the problem is not with the proclamation, but rather that of enforcing what is stated by the proclamation. As one of the interviewees argues,

The laws and regulations stipulated in the proclamation are not properly translated and implemented. Instead, individuals are becoming laws. Legislations are being violated. There is no protection unless the law is respected. The laws protect the institutions. When individual persons become law, everything depends on their favor (IA8, 2009).

Many of the staff and management from *Mekelle* and *Jigjiga* Universities also share similar views that the problem is lack of enforcement of the laws and rules provided by the proclamation. As one of the interviewees from Mekelle University pointed out, higher education proclamation puts certain acts as how university presidents and vice presidents are elected, but the practice is totally contrary (LM1, 2009). A similar pattern can be observed in the recent BPR implementation at AAU.

This suggests that the problem is not inherent to the proclamation itself; rather it is lack of commitment on the part of all actors to properly translate the laws into action. In this sense, the higher education law is perceived as an enabler for the development and implementation of internal quality assurance system in the universities, as it requires university to do so. Besides the law, the government has been implementing various higher education reform policies to address access and equity. The influence of such policies on the adoption and practice of quality assurance are discussed in the subsequent sub sections.

8.3.2.1.2. Higher Education Reform Policies

The higher education system has been reformed several times over the past years. The major reform agendas include: improving access, maintaining the undergraduate professional mix program, and BPR. The issue of quality is a preamble in almost all the reform agendas. In this section, we focus our discussion on how the three major reform policies of the government, enrolment and institutional expansion and undergraduate professional mix policies and BPR influence the implementation of quality assurance in the universities.

8.3.2.1.2.1. Enrolment Expansion Policy

The higher education enrolment has been expanding rapidly since 2003 G.C (see Table 8-3 below). This rapid expansion has become a point of debate among different stakeholders in terms of ensuring quality of the education provided.

Table 8-3 Total Undergraduate Enrolment Rate in Higher Education

Year	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Enrolment	34,556	58,026	98,404	138,159	173,901	203,399	263,001	309,092

The debate focuses on the issue that the rapid expansion constrains the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms in the universities. This section presents a brief discussion on how the staff and university leadership perceived the current enrolment expansion vis-à-vis ensuring quality of education.

In the case of *Addis Ababa University*, there is agreement among staff and the university management regarding the need to expand higher education enrolment in the country. The concern of academic staff is on how the quantitative expansion can be managed without compromising quality of education. It is argued that quantity and quality are usually inversely related. Focusing on quantitative expansion without installing the required resources and motivated staff would obviously affect the quality of education in the universities. Both the academic staff and university leadership believe that the recent expansion has come without sufficient resources, which is creating pressure on the university in ensuring quality of education based on the available resources, facilities and teaching personnel.

As one of the interviewees argues, one of the factors that affect implementation of quality assurance mechanisms is related to the mismatch between student population and the available resources.

Making higher education accessible to many is not bad. However in my view, the expansion of higher education cannot correlate the creation story. The bible says, "He ordered there should be light and there was light". However, we cannot say to a building to be a university. And merely because we enroll students does not mean there is quality education. Therefore though the decision is good, it is not consonant with the reality of the country (IA2, 2009).

The main issue is the capacity of the institutions to accommodate the increasing number of students. As the university enrolls beyond its capacity, there is always a question about how to ensure quality. One of the interviewees noted that to expand enrolment beyond the capacity of the university is merely to spend the scarce resources in vain (IA4, 2009).

Others focus on lack of adequate planning and preparation for expansion. One of the interviewees pointed out:

The major source of the problem is the expansion with out adequate planning. Let it expand. However, its rate of expansion should consider our capacity. By capacity I do not mean the financial element alone. There are things you would not buy even though you have money. You cannot produce teachers over night because you have money (IA4, 2009).

The above arguments suggest that the expansion should be conscious and based on adequate planning and preparation on the part of the enrolling university though what is actually happening is contrary to this. The university enrolls many students that are beyond its infrastructural and boarding capacity. This obviously has a negative influence on its quality assurance activities

The graduates we produce will become, I fear, substandard. This is because we are hurrying. Every thing is top-down. The only thing you can say is "I do not have dormitories." You cannot use quality of education as a reason to refuse students beyond your capacity (IA7, 2009).

Excessive student enrolment has an influence on ensuring quality of input in terms of class size, teacher student ratio, support services, libraries, laboratories etc.

Concerning teaching and learning, it has expanded up to a point that it is difficult to control and to understand what the relationship between teachers and students looks like etc. Teaching has reached a point where it is hopeless unless delivered by some kind of change (LA5, 2009).

Another interviewee, a professor at AAU, argues as follows:

What is discouraging is the government's order to open programs it desires without sufficient preparation. But it is sad to order the universities without giving room to discussing the staff profile and overall preparations. As a policy, it is correct for the government to say "I need 10 engineering faculties." But when these should be changed into practice should be left to the university (IA7, 2009).

These suggest that it is inevitable for quality assurance practice to be compromised in a situation where there is rapid expansion with out adequate resources.

Both the respondents from *Mekelle* and *Jigjiga* Universities share similar views. As an interviewee from Mekelle University argues, without putting all the required resources in place, if the number of students is increased, quality will obviously be compromised (LM2, 2009).

It is clear that enrolment expansion policy is perceived as a hindrance for the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms across the three universities. This suggests that the enrolment expansion, which is state-driven policy change, would be more coercive unless it is accepted and owned by the universities. State-driven change helps to see directions. But the bottom is important to maintain followers.

8.3.2.1.2.2. Graduate Mix Policy

This is a government driven policy with the objective to increase graduates in science and technology at the undergraduate level. Its basic assumption is that the undergraduate professional mix of public universities should be 70% in the areas of science and technology and 30% in the humanities and social sciences. The plan is ambitious that intends to ensure intake capacity in engineering from 36,000 in 2009 to 212,000 in 2013.

In the case of the *Addis Ababa University* there is agreement between staff and the university management regarding the need to give more attention to the fields of science and technology. The question is on how to go about it without compromising the assurance of quality. Both staff and the management believe that the government pressurizes the university to implement this policy without adequate time for preparation and planning. One of them described the situation as

We did not accept the 70/30 formula because it came on us suddenly; without debate and discussion on the national level. In fact the government did organized discussion inviting its own people and some others in the last minute. The principle of giving priority to the sciences is acceptable to develop the country. Where we differ is on the way we prioritize. We could point out in different ways (IA1, 2009).

The other major limitation of such policies concerns the lack of consultations and negotiations with the universities on the part of the government.

The Addis Ababa University could have given research findings to the policy makers themselves regarding the usefulness of 70/30. It has this capacity. However, because policies come from above, or because there is no discussion here as a stakeholder, because policies are conceived as impositions, this discordance affects the university (LA5, 2009).

The arguments above shows that such top-driven policies that demand prompt action on the part of the university would obviously have influence on its quality assurance practices. Increasing student population in the areas of science and technology demands expanding or establishing labs and purchasing more equipment, and this by itself takes long time. As one of the interviewees noted, Addis Ababa University functions in the public's finance thus it becomes difficult for it to refuse what is being asked in the name of the people, but this makes the condition of the university unfavorable in ensuring quality of education (LA5, 2009).

In the case of *Mekelle University*, the respondents complain that there is lack of adequate preparation in terms of infrastructure and equipment. As one of the interviewees said, the expansion of programs in science and technology is being done without ensuring the minimum requirements in terms of infrastructure, equipment, facilities and trained staff, in which this adversely affects the efforts to assure quality of education (LM3, 2009). Many of the staff and leadership agree that such ad hoc decisions should be avoided altogether, because such plans cannot be handled with the resources allocated to the university.

The staff and leadership from *Jigjiga University* also share similar views, although the university does not open programs in science and technology. The

recently introduced policy of professional mix for the undergraduate programs is perceived by the university as a hindrance to implement quality assurance activities.

It is, however, interesting to see that in a country where the higher education participation rate is the lowest in the Sub-Saharan countries, the rapid enrolment expansion in higher education is inescapable. The question here should not be to stop the current expansion; but rather it is about how to do this without compromising quality of education in the universities.

8.3.2.1.2.3. Business Process Reengineering (BPR) as Approach to Quality Assurance

As indicated in chapter 7, BPR is a government-driven tool, which is considered as the framework or approach that underlies the recent introduction of formal quality assurance across the universities. Analysis of empirical data about the introduction and implementation of BPR and how it influences the introduction of formal quality assurance policies and structures in the universities is sufficiently discussed in chapter 7. The intention here is to briefly look at whether the academic staff and the university management perceive BPR as enabler or hindrance to the adoption and implementation of quality assurance in their respective universities.

(a) Change without Change: Old Business Process Reinforcement (OBPR) /the Reversed BPR/ at AAU

The implementation of BPR across the universities is state-driven. The very essence of BPR is efficiency and effectiveness. This involves more work with fewer resources and making the bureaucracy slim, i.e., streamlining the processes, resources and flat structure that empower the frontline actors. However, the implementation of BPR in this university is the reverse. A brief discussion on how this has happened is presented below.

The main thrust of BPR was fundamental change in the core processes of the university. There are unclear views among staff and the university management regarding the importance of BPR in bringing fundamental change in quality of education. Those respondents who are in favor of BPR argue that change is needed for the university and BPR is instrumental in this regard. Others argue that BPR is not the right instrument to bring about fundamental change in quality of education. They hold that it may help improve the service aspects of the university. Each of these views is analyzed as follows.

The staff members who hold reservations toward BPR argue that it is not correct to introduce change without examining the pros and cons of an existing system. Change for the sake of change is not what BPR is supposed to do. Proponents of

BPR, on their part agree to the necessity of implementing BPR in the university. As one of them puts it:

It is high time to undertake change in the university. Wherever you go you hear hearsays but you never see teachers who read in libraries, who mark their students' papers etc. So what I suggest is that there should be change that addresses the university's essential problems. BPR enables to bring such a change (LA5, 2009).

Many of the academic staff members share similar views that the university has a multitude of problems that necessitate fundamental change. However, the issues on how the problems are conceptualized, who controls the change processes, capacity and resources are the main concerns regarding BPR implementation in the university. One of the processes owners of BPR study said:

I have no doubt the BPR would better the teaching learning quality, if it is properly implemented. The problem is the university's lack of capacity to work from the beginning to the end. The university administration did not devote full commitment to the BPR; the university administration had given its back to it (IA5, 2009).

This shows that there were problems throughout the whole BPR process starting from its inception to its implementation. The issues about who were the people involved and how they were elected and who elected them for the BPR were not clear to the university community. Many members hold that there ought to be criteria. The process of selecting people was part of the problem. BPR was not criticized and debated by the public and the university did not provide sufficient resources necessary for the change. It is now suspected that the university administration, after working with it for a specific time, has put all the documents on a shelf (IA5, 2009) without further action.

The expectation that there would be betterment in quality assurance practices is now questionable. In the BPR process, the issue of quality assurance was not emphasized and thoroughly discussed as an overarching domain compared to other issues of efficiency and effectiveness. The institutional arrangement for quality assurance was missing in the original organizational structure, though it was incorporated latter. Even the implementation of the modular and block teaching approaches that are considered as strong outcomes of the BPR are being eroded, because the academic community does not seem to feel at ease with them. This shows the extent to which the purpose of BPR is defeated. As one of the interviewees puts it, the absence of committed and capable leadership, resources and time constraints and lack of staff ownership and participation, and the change resistant and conservative nature of the university community made BPR fall short of success (IA6, 2009).

The new organizational structure appears to be amorphous and hierarchical; a fact in discordance to the very essence of BPR. It is not difficult to see that the old ways win out in the whole process of BPR study and implementation. Thus, what is currently happening is what might be called the Old Business Process Reinforcement (OBPR), which is the reverse of BPR. OBPR, for purposes of this study, refers to strengthening of the old ways of thinking and doing things including quality assurance practices.

Most of the staff and management believe that the old ways of thinking have got strong hold on the governance structure, the selection and appointment of the president and vice presidents as well as other key officers of the university. In fact, the selection process of university leaders including the criteria and procedures was not transparent and this is against what is stipulated in article 52 of the higher education proclamation (no. 650/2009, p 4015) that requires merit-based competition for the posts. A university wide steering committee was set up to select and appoint the senior leadership and senior officers of the university. As most of the staff interviewees witnessed, the committee was composed of handpicked individuals who have no integrity, merit, collegial support and professional legitimacy to determine the fate of the university. Nepotism, social and political networking rather than competition and criteria of professional competence and merit dominate in the selection and placement of leaders and senior officers of the university (IA12, 10/1/2010). This shows the role of the academia in reversing the intention of BPR implementation.

From the arguments above, we can observe that BPR has been aborted. Many of the academic staff members are collaborating with the university leadership in beating and abusing BPR. One of the interviewees described this situation as follows:

Everybody is engaged in garbling resources and gather his/her likes ethnically or politically or on other criteria. Individuals take any position merely to partake of the resource. People who target themselves to get cars, houses, fuel etc. as a result of their assuming a position are produced, but the actual work is not there (IA8, 04/12/2009).

This suggests that in practice BPR implementation is not becoming successful in the Addis Ababa University, although it enables the university to introduce formal quality assurance policies and structures. It is also interesting to note how the kind of people and working culture influence the implementation of top-down reform initiatives (in this case BPR and quality assurance) in the university. This implies that introducing tools such as BPR without changing the minds or ensuring the commitment and ownership of the academic staff and leadership will not turnout in meaningful change in quality of education. In this study, the

implementation of BPR has become a hindrance to the assurance and improvement of teaching and learning quality in AAU.

(b) In the case of *Mekelle University* almost all the staff and management believe that BPR has its own input in ensuring quality of education. It is argued that if there is commitment at all levels, BPR will bring radical change in quality assurance practices in the university (LM1, 2009). As one of the interviewees argues, the university leadership has started implementation of quality assurance by establishing teaching transformation teams at department and course levels; implementing continuous assessment, changing the grading system from norm-referenced to criterion-referenced, and modifying the teaching evaluation system (LM2, 2009). Such practices are deemed to improve cooperative learning and engagement among students. In this university BPR is perceived as an enabler for the introduction and implementation of quality assurance.

(c) *Jigjiga University* has not yet implemented BPR. It was in the planning stage. The analysis of the interview data indicates that the staff and management have high expectation to bring change in quality assurance practices through the implementation of BPR. At the moment, it is very difficult to talk about the proper conduct of teaching and learning in JU, let alone quality assurance approaches and model in the absence of minimum human and physical resources.

8.3.2.2. Regulators

Institutional quality audit based on institutional self-evaluation is the feature of the national quality assurance system of Ethiopia, i.e. universities undertake self-evaluation, and then quality audit by HERQA based on self-evaluation results, which results in a report. Self-evaluation is at the center in the national quality assurance system. In this framework, neither are the public universities subject to accreditation nor are the results of the quality audit linked to funding or any other sanctions. This approach seems to be similar in many ways to the bureaucratic approach to quality assurance, where a government agency controls the quality assurance process. In this framework, HERQA's major task is designing strategies and coordinating implementation in collaboration with higher education institutions and professional associations. The public universities are required to undertake self-evaluation as per the criteria and guidelines set by HERQA and report the self-evaluation results to the agency. The universities are expected to implement the recommendations of the agency. This indicates the nature of accountability and power relations between the government and the universities. The question here is to what extent the external

quality assurance (HERQA) influences the adoption and practice of internal quality enhancement at universities.

In the case of the *Addis Ababa University*, majority of the academic staff either do not accept the requirements of HERQA or do not know what these requirements are. As the interviewees from the university leadership noted, the very existence of HERQA was noticed during the conduct of the self-evaluation in 2009. This shows the inability of HERQA to establish acceptance, credibility and legitimacy in the university community. In this university, the academic staff members believe that quality cannot be improved through external quality assurance mechanisms. They attach more meaning to quality as excellence and to the role of the academic staff in improving quality of education in the university, which is related to the self-evident view of quality.

As the findings in chapter 7 indicated, most of the public universities started to introduce formal policies and structures for quality assurance in recent times following the implementation of BPR. Still, a systematized and organized internal quality assurance is not well developed in the public universities. Asked the reasons for this, the HERQA officials said the following.

HERQA could not be instrumental in stimulating the establishment of internal quality assurance in the universities due to three reasons. One, the agency is not fully autonomous from the government in carrying out its duties and its focus has been the institution rather than programs. Second, the public universities are not subject to accreditation and the audit report has no link with funding and/or other reward or punishment. Third, the agency has limitations in capacity in terms of manpower and expertise to cover all higher education institutions. Its main engagement has been in accrediting the private institutions. These hinder HERQA from enforcing the requirements indicated in the proclamation (G3, 2009).

This suggests the inability of HERQA to stimulate timely implementation of internal quality assurance mechanisms, especially the conduct of institutional self-evaluation in the public universities. In this connection, an interviewee from the top officials of the Ministry of Education also admitted the inefficiency of the government regulatory body as follows.

The Agency was supposed to follow up the implementation of the quality regulation laws indicated in the proclamation and take timely corrective measures for lack of implementation. However, HERQA has no the competence and implementation capacity to closely follow-up and ensure quality of educational services in all higher education institutions and thereby realize its mandate stipulated in the Proclamation (G2, 2009).

Moreover, a review of the performance reports of HERQA shows that it has been dependent on foreign consultants and VSOs in accomplishing almost all of its

core activities including writing audit reports, development of its strategic plans, preparation of institutional quality audit and self-evaluation guidelines and manuals. The same is true with the other regulatory agency (HESC) that deals with relevance of programs and curriculum of higher education institutions. Involving consultants may be considered important in terms of sharing international experience and building internal capacity. However, the agency is still talking about staff capacity building after almost a decade of its operation. In relation to this one of my interviews noted the following

As a coping mechanism, the agency out sources all of its expert activities including designing strategies and coordinating tasks, which likens it to a machine that allows consultants to process inputs and deliver their outputs for reporting. The very existence of the agency is not clear in this regard (IA9, 17/ 12/2009).

These results suggest questions on why the external quality regulatory system is not functioning as expected. To address such questions, further analysis of data was conducted concerning the staff profile of HERQA (see Table 8-4).

Table 8-4: HERQA's Core Academic Staff Profile

Specialization	Quantity	%	Remark
Agriculture (e.g. forestry, animal science, soil science etc.)	6	40%	1 PhD , 5 M. Sc.
Education and related fields	5	33.33	M.A
Others (Biology, chemistry, electrical engineering and demography)	4	26.67	M.Sc./M.A
Total	15	100.00	9.

From Table 8-4, we can observe that the staff qualification mix of HERQA is dominated by specializations in the areas of agriculture and other related fields. The proportion of the staff that specialize in education and related fields (management, planning and evaluation) accounts for about 33% only. The review of the staff profile of the agency also shows that about 99% of the senior leadership & core expert positions are occupied by experts specialized in the field of agriculture. These people are not relevant to the position that they are assigned to lead since they are too far away from their field of specialization. In essence, leaders and experts specialize in forestry and animal science do not have the educational theoretical framework to critically think and initiate strategies and mechanisms to address problems related to quality and quality assurance of

education in Ethiopia. HERQA's mission is to ensure quality and relevance of the education provided in Ethiopian higher education institutions. It is very difficult to expect enforcement of laws and regulations concerning quality and relevance through national regulatory agency (HERQA) that is filled and led by professionally irrelevant experts and leaders.

Overall, the findings in this section indicate that HERQA has not been instrumental in enforcing the duties and responsibilities ascribed to it by the proclamation due to many constraining factors. This in turn suggests that the bureaucratic approach to quality assurance did not work in stimulating the development and implementation of internal quality enhancement practices at the university level.

8.2.2.3. Suppliers/Preparatory schools

The findings in section 6.2.1 of chapter 6 demonstrated that many students are allowed to join the public universities of Ethiopia without having a passing mark in university entrance examination based on the whole admission policy. This has implication to the quality of education provided at the lower tiers of the education system. This section presents the results of analyses of additional data concerning quality of preparation of students joining higher education institutions.

It is believed that quality of students' learning shall be determined not through efforts made within a single cycle or classroom of learning but as an outcome of the competencies in the aggregate processes throughout the education system. Quality in higher education institutions is closely linked to the quality of learning within the lower tiers of the education system. Where quality has not been taken care of within these lower cycles, the repercussion is inevitable upon the quality assurance of learning in the higher education levels.

For the purpose of this study, two sets of data were analyzed. The first set of data deals with the results of the Ethiopian National Learning Assessments (ENLA) conducted at the end of upper primary education (Grade 8), general secondary education (Grade 10) and preparatory education programs (Grade 12). National learning assessment refers to the exercise designed to explain the level of achievement of an education system in terms of student learning. ENLA employs standardized test instruments, administration and scoring. The purpose of ENLA is to generate data and provide information to different stakeholders on the extent to which students learn and attain predefined educational standards. The MoE and the government consider results of the ENLA as important indicators of quality education as measured by students' achievement levels at the end of each educational tier. The second set of data comprises results of the Ethiopian General

Secondary Education Certificate Examination (EGSECE) that is used by the Ministry to ensure students' preparation and make decisions on students' transfer from secondary to preparatory high schools. Results of analyses of the two sets of data are presented in the subsequent tables.

Table 8-5 National average Results of Students Learning Assessment at the End of the Three Educational Levels (Mean Scores in Percent out of 100 Points by Subject)

Subjects	End of Grade 8 ^a			End of Grade 10 ^b	End of Grade 12 ^b
	1 st round 2001	2 nd round 2004	3 rd round 2008	1 st round 2010	1 st round 2010
English	39	42	38	37	43
Mathematics	38	41	34	35	54
Biology	47	41	38	40	56
Chemistry	40	40	35	36	49
Physics	-	35	32	31	37
Average	41	40	36	36	48
Percent of students scored ≥ 50%	-	10	10	14	35

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Sources: ^aNational Agency for Examinations (2001, 2004, 2008)

^bNational Agency for Examinations (2010)

The national learning assessment conducted at the end of Grades 8, 10 and 12 indicates that average results were scored markedly below the 50% average set in the ETP document at the three educational levels (see Table 8-4). The student cohort participated in the Grade 10 national learning assessment are those students who sat for the 3rd round national learning assessment for grade 8 and the results are similar across the subjects for the two grade levels. The Table also shows that average results were below the minimum 50% expected score for all subjects at the three educational levels, except for Mathematics and Biology in Grade 12. The percentage of students who scored a mean score of greater than 50% in Grades 8, 10 and 12 are 10%, 14% and 35%, respectively.

The data in the Table shows a decreasing trend in the total average results of students across the three rounds of national learning assessments for Grade 8. The results for Grade 8 were scored under circumstances, in which school learning is conducted in students' mother tongue, and the exams had to be set in

the same mother tongue and questions on the tests appeared in multiple choice. One could realize how much lower the results would have turned had the tests been constructed to require students to compose their answers in writing and to show their problem solving skills.

These low results in the national learning assessments would indicate that students at the three educational levels have low academic preparation and the majority of those students transferring from one educational level to the next tier are without adequate grounding in terms of requisite academic achievement levels.

The second set of data i.e. students' results of the Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination (EGSECE) were analyzed to substantiate the findings in the preceding paragraphs. In the Ethiopian context, entry of students into higher education is determined at the end of Grade 10 based on results of EGSECE. This national exam serves the purpose to ensure learners' preparation during their general secondary education and recruit and have them placed within the subsequent tier of preparatory learning to tertiary level studies. The academic grounding learners achieved in their studies at the general secondary education (Grade 9-10) could be noticed in an analysis made of the raw scores recorded in 9 school subjects (Amharic, English, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Geography, History, and Civics) in the 1999 EC (2007) and 2000 EC (2008) exams.

Table 8-6 Analyses of Students' Scores in EGSECE

Year	Students' Results in Raw Scores (out of 100%)				Students' Average Results in Subject Areas				Weighted mean scores
	≤25	26-50	≥ 50	>75	English	Mathematics	N. Science	S. Science	
2007	44%	49%	8%	0.01%	34	19	27	32	29
2008	58%	37%	3%	0.07%	29	18	23	27	25

Note: The computed results are rounded to the nearest digit

The students' weighted mean results in all 9 subjects are 29 and 25 in 2007 and 2008 respectively, for the same subjects (see Table 8-5 above). Both scores stand far below the 50% passing score set by the Education & Training Policy (ETP) and the results show a decreasing trend across the two years. The analysis also shows that a significant proportion of students have achieved only below 25% raw score and this in its own may be taken to be anything lower than the 25% possibilities of students' guesswork results out of the four-options multiple-choice exams. Subject wise, students' average scores have been shown to be 15 in Physics (the

same source of data), 19 in Mathematics, 34 in English for the year 2007 while it went down to 13 in Physics, 18 in Mathematics and 29 in English for the following year 2008. These low results in EGSECE prove the same faltering student preparation in general secondary education as depicted by the national learning assessment.

These low results suggest that many students who have been under prepared in primary education (as shown in Table 8-4) correspondingly perform less when transferred to the secondary level. At the same time, one could understand that students who are not adequately prepared in all subjects in the primary cycle and yet learning with low English proficiency (see Table 8-4) suffer serious challenges while performing all subjects in secondary and post secondary education. Hence, "mumps upon goiter", in the old Ethiopian adage.

What seem to matter at this stage is that, in all three cycles of education, students' results are low in almost all subjects. These low scores in the indicated subjects illustrate that students' preparation in the respective subjects across the three educational levels has been markedly low. One could observe how such inadequacy of preparedness negatively impacts on the 2008 G.C government's new policy initiatives to enroll and train as many students in the universities in the fields of science and technology as well as quality of the teaching and learning in the universities.

A lot of factors could be identified in allusion to these problems that surfaced in low students results. However, the ineffectiveness of the instruments to measure students' learning cannot be taken as a main reason for the low scores noticed so far, because the students' results are consistently low across all the test instruments. Instead, the lack of preparation could be accountable for this, as it can be understood in that students could transfer from primary to secondary; from secondary to preparatory education and from there to universities regardless of their insufficient academic grounding for the level. It is this truth that is conveyed through the results of the national learning assessments and EGSECE that the Ministry of Education used to make decision on the transfer of students from one level to the next and to ascertain their qualification and readiness for the level.

The views of most of the students and staff members interviewed can be corroborated by these findings. Student respondents across the three universities reported that quality of their preparatory education was not up to the required standard in terms of quality teaching, professional competence of instructors, educational facilities and services. Most of the instructors also attributed the students' learning problems in universities to their ill preparation in the lower tiers of educational programs. As one of the staff members interviewed in the

Addis Ababa University noted, 'the incoming students are ill-prepared, for some of them the programs are beyond their capabilities' (LA12, 8/11/2009). As elaborated by one of the professors interviewed from the same university, the problem is system wide.

The deterioration of quality starts from the kindergarten. Unless we produce competent students in the elementary and high schools, it shows on universities. The students we have are so amazing that they cannot properly write their names let alone to converse, compose their ideas and solve problems (IA4, 17/12/2009).

Similar views can be discussed from most of the staff members interviewed in Jigjiga and Mekelle Universities. As one of the interviewees puts it:

'There is a wide gap among students in terms of their academic, social and economic backgrounds, which is becoming a great challenge to maintain minimum standards and quality of education at the university level' (LJ3, 6/1/2010);

Another interviewee adds that it is impossible to say that the preparatory schools gave students sufficient ability to join universities (LM2 10/1/2010). These findings complement the proposition that from primary through to the preparatory level, the preparation of students is not at a required level. This suggests the overall inability of the education system to capacitate and build students readiness for higher education.

8.2.2.4. Socio-cultural factors

In this section, how the broader socio-cultural context influences the adoption and practice of quality assurance in universities is briefly discussed. Analyses of interview data together with findings from the previous sections are used for this purpose.

The rapid institutional and enrolment expansion, resulting from pressure of the increasing secondary school student population, is one of the social factors that influence the Ethiopia higher education system. As the previous sections of this chapter indicated, the higher education system is expanding without adequate resources, which resulted in student diversity, and mismatch between student population and available resources (physical and human). This obviously affects the practice of quality assurance in the universities. The practice of expanding higher education without installing minimum resources suggests that quality of learning is not valued. What seems to be important to the government is the quantity of graduates produced by universities, rather than the knowledge and abilities attained by students. The lack of a supportive professional culture for quality, depicted in the preceding sections of this chapter, is a reflection of the

value attached to knowledge in the wider society. This is demonstrated in the interviewees conducted with staff respondents.

Many staff interviewees attributed the lack of staff and student engagement in teaching and learning to the absence of work culture. Most of academic staff members consider the professional/academic activity as subsidiary, and engaged in moonlighting to earn additional income. As one of the staff interviewees puts it,

Bad culture is dominating because the true intellectuals are not only disempowered but are being blurred, dominated, and their lives humiliated. This group is invisible, its opinion is not valued, and is already regarded as unfashionable (IA12, 10/1/2010).

This shows the extent to which the value attached to knowledge and profession is deteriorating across the target universities. This is illustrated by one of my interviewees as follows:

Now the new paradigm is that people become self-centered. They are engaged more in economic competition than in academic. Professional pride gave way to money. Money has become very important. This has led us to the extent of deprofessionalization (IA12, 10/12/2009).

The above arguments suggest that material gain is prevailing in the value and belief system of the academia across the universities. This is a reflection of the existing value and belief systems in the wider society. In relation to this, one of my interviewees noted that:

You don't see people respected, recognized and promoted by society because of their academic excellence, competence and hard work. Individuals get social recognition not because of their merit, but based on their material gain, social networking and political power (IA9, 17/ 12/2009).

It is noticeable that the intrinsic interest towards knowledge, competence and excellence gives way to primacy of financial /material interest. This indicates the extent to which the universities have stopped to be a place for pursuing academic interests. Such value system also permeates to students' values, which is briefly discussed in the sub-section below.

8.2.2.5.1 Gowns and Degrees

The fact that students lack the engagement in and commitment towards their learning is demonstrated in the previous sections. This is related to their value orientation concerning knowledge and learning. In the Ethiopian context, certificates, diplomas and degrees are more important for employment than professional competence. As a result, when students join universities, they are

interested more with getting diplomas and degrees, regardless of the extent and quality of their learning. One of the staff interviewees described this situation as:

The student, in addition to its academic weakness, also has a cultural problem. If you ask them whether they simply needed their certificates sooner or later of the courses, I guess a substantial number of them would simply ask for their degrees at hand (IA8, 04/12/2009).

This suggests that students give more value to the gowns and degrees, no matter how much they learn. There are many evidences that demonstrate the extent to which the society demands degrees and diplomas more than knowledge, professional competence and specialization. Except medicine, law, and technology, an individual who has degree or diploma in any field can be employed and work in any occupation, regardless of his or her professional specialization and competence.

The education sector is a good example in this regard. As indicated in section 8.2.2.2 above, most of the key leadership and expert positions of the Ministry of Education and its key strategic centers are manned by persons with occupational specialization in the field of agriculture (e.g. forestry, animal science, plant science, soil science and other related fields). However, the specialization of the agricultural people has nothing to do with the manpower requirements of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry is entrusted with the task of ensuring access, relevance and quality of education provided at all levels. This task requires leaders and experts who have relevant specialization, professional competence and sufficient theoretical and research orientation in education and related fields. Obviously, people who specialize in forestry and animal science may have the comparative advantage if they are placed in the Ministry of Agriculture. A similar pattern can be observed in the public universities. As one of my interviewees puts it, "the appointment and recruitment of presidents and key officers of public universities is not based on the criteria of professional competence, relevance, specialization, experience and merit" (IA9, 17/ 12/2009). The selection and appointment of leaders and officers for the regulatory agencies and public universities is characterized by social and political networking. This was demonstrated in the previous sections of this chapter on how the AAU leadership was selected and appointed vis-à-vis the higher education proclamation. These practices indicate the extent to which specialization and professional competence are not valued in assigning and placing people to different occupational positions.

The overall findings in this section suggest that the existing socio-cultural context of universities influence the value orientation of staff and students concerning quality of education. Quality of education in universities is about learning,

achievement, competence and excellence. However, in a society where knowledge, professional competence, specialization and merit are not valued, it is very difficult to expect the design and successful implementation of quality assurance policies and mechanisms in universities.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to explore the influence of key external environmental and university specific factors on the adoption and practice of quality assurance in the target universities. Survey, interview and documentary data drawn from different sources were analyzed based on the presumed factors.

One of the major findings in this chapter demonstrated that most of the university specific factors that are considered enablers for the adoption and practice of quality assurance in universities are missing in the Ethiopian context. Internally, the findings have indicated that the leadership and governance system of the universities could not be instrumental in enforcing actual implementation of internal quality enhancement mechanisms, as required by proclamation. Lack of capability, credibility, commitment and legitimacy is a hallmark of the leadership across the universities. There is no proper link and shared vision among the university board, presidents, directors/deans and department heads in terms of setting directions and goals to ensure quality. The board, which is composed of senior government officials who are busy with their regular jobs, is nominal. This shows that the leadership and governance system in the universities is not functioning well in terms of initiating and implementing quality assurance policies and strategies as stipulated in the proclamation.

Implementation of quality assurance system requires the capacity, engagement and commitment of staff and students. However, the results in this chapter are contrary to this. The universities are characterized by either staff 'competence without engagement' (AAU) or 'engagement without competence' (JU and MU). This suggests that it is a challenge for the universities to implement internal quality enhancement processes in a situation where engagement and commitment of staff is not followed by competence and vice versa. Resource is the other factor that hinders the implementation of quality assurance initiatives in the universities. The improper utilization/misuse of resources, if not inadequacy of resources for implementation of quality assurance is the major challenge across the universities. This problem may be related to the limitations in leadership and governance of the universities.

The findings also indicated that the universities do not have an established framework or quality management model, other than BPR. More recently, BPR is

considered as an approach to quality assurance in the universities. The main thrust of BPR was to bring efficiency, effectiveness and betterment in quality assurance practices in the universities. However, the purpose and very essence of BPR are defeated due to lack of capable and committed leadership, inadequacy of resources, and absence of staff ownership and participation. What the universities are actually doing is the reverse of BPR. The old ways of thinking and doing things have got prominence starting from the inception to the implementation of BPR. The quality assurance policies and structures introduced as a result of BPR are not functioning. Hence, the reversed BPR implementation has become a hindrance in improving and assuring quality of teaching and learning. This suggests that the existing approach to quality assurance (BPR) would not work in the context of Ethiopian universities.

An effective quality assurance practice in universities requires a supportive professional culture that values quality learning, but this is not the case in the Ethiopian universities. The findings indicated that an institutional quality culture that values quality of student learning is missing in the universities. This is reflected in how the academic staff compromise quality of student learning by engaging in moonlighting. This suggests that the adoption and implementation of laws and tools such as BPR, quality assurance etc. without changing the minds of the people involved will not result in meaningful change.

The other major finding in this chapter demonstrated that the adoption and practice of quality assurance in the universities is influenced by external environmental factors. With regard to the legal framework, the higher education proclamation is perceived as enabler for it requires the introduction and implementation of internal quality enhancement processes in the universities. The major challenge is lack of properly translating and enforcing the laws and expectations stipulated in the proclamation. With regard to government reform initiatives, implementation of the enrollment and graduate mix policies are perceived as hindrances to the practice of quality assurance across the universities. Absence of sound planning and preparation, leadership incompetence and lack of adequate resources are explored as major challenges for the implementation of government reform initiatives (BPR, expansion and graduate mix policies) in universities.

The problems of translating and enforcing laws and policies are also attributed to the absence of robust, vibrant and strong regulatory body for ensuring quality education. HERQA, which is in charge of the national quality assurance system, could not be instrumental in stimulating the development and implementation of internal quality enhancement in the universities. It lacks the organizational capacity, leadership and staff competence in establishing credibility, legitimacy and acceptance as well as executing its duties as stipulated in the proclamation.

Most of the people assigned in the core leadership and senior staff positions of HERQA are not relevant to the occupational/job requirements of the agency since they are too far away from their field of specialization. These findings in turn suggest that the bureaucratic approach to quality assurance is not working well in terms of enabling the enforcement of the laws and expectations of the proclamation.

The other external factor influencing the practice of quality assurance in universities is the quality of education provided at the lower tiers of the education system. Obviously, the practice of quality assurance by universities alone cannot make significant difference, unless the education system at all levels capacitates and prepares students for university education. The findings in this study demonstrated the inability of the suppliers (lower tiers of the education system) in preparing students to a required level. This suggests that the poor quality education at the lower tiers of the education system is a hindrance to the quality assurance practice at universities.

Finally, the practice of quality assurance in universities is influenced not only by the legal framework, regulators, suppliers, and government reform policies, but also by the broader socio-cultural factors. The socio-cultural context of the universities influences the value and belief systems of the academic community concerning quality assurance. The findings in this study demonstrated that professional competence, achievement, merit and specialization are not valued in the Ethiopian context. Gowns and degrees are more important than learning. This shows that there is no supportive socio-cultural context for effective quality assurance practice in universities.

The overall findings in this chapter suggest that in the absence of an enabling internal and external environment, it is very difficult to expect the adoption and successful implementation of quality assurance in universities.

9 Summary and Conclusions

9.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the major findings and conclusions of the study. The first section of the chapter begins with a brief overview of the research agenda and conceptual framework of the study, followed by summary of the empirical findings (in section 9.3) vis-à-vis the research questions posed in chapter 1. Section 9.4 presents the methodological reflections: reliability, validity, and limitations of the study. Finally, conclusions, further reflections and implications of the study for improved quality assurance policy and practice are drawn and discussed in section 9.5.

9.2. The Research Agenda

Despite its widespread application in higher education and the range of studies conducted on it, there are many unanswered questions about the extent to which quality assurance improves the core processes of higher education that influence student learning. This study has attempted to examine quality and quality assurance in Ethiopian public universities. More specifically, the main research problem that guided the study was: 'how and under what circumstances do the public Universities in Ethiopia assure quality of their education, and what contextual factors influence their current quality assurance systems and practices?' To guide data collection and analysis, the main research problem of the study was broken down into the following specific research questions:

- (1) What is already known about the issues on quality and its assurance in higher education institutions? And what theories can be used to explain quality assurance implementation at universities?
- (2) What are the Ethiopian universities actually doing in terms of improving quality of education? What is known about the quality of their educational input, process and output vis-à-vis student learning? How do they know that they provide quality education? What are their current quality assurance policies, structures and instruments?
- (3) Are there differences among the Universities regarding their quality assurance practices? What are the possible explanations for such differences?
- (4) What are the framework conditions and/or models that underlie the quality assurance in place at the Universities? How is the situation comparable with good practices in quality assurance?
- (5) What are the possible factors that enable or hinder the adoption and practice of formal quality assurance system at the Universities?

(6) Considering the gaps between actual practices and good practices, what is needed for improvement? And how can that be implemented?

The first research question was addressed based on a critical review of the quality assurance literature in chapter 2 and the organizational theories, particularly the contingency and institutional theories, in chapter 3. Chapter 2 demonstrated that the idea of student learning is implicitly or explicitly contained in the various interpretations of quality, although there is no universally agreed meaning of the term. It is proposed that a quality assurance system becomes effective when it focuses on the conditions and core processes of higher education that affect quality of student learning. In this regard, quality assurance is conceptualized as the totality of the policies, values, procedures, structures, resources and actions devoted to ensure continuous improvement of the core educational processes.

Good practices in quality assurance were drawn from the literature review to serve the purpose of this study. Accordingly, it is argued that a formal quality assurance system leads to improvement of student learning when the universities own it (collegial or managerial) and when the external quality assurance system plays a supportive (facilitative) role. It was also explicated that an effective quality assurance model in higher education is one that focuses on quality of the core educational inputs, processes and outputs that influence student learning. In this regard, good practices in quality assurance require a focus on the core educational processes and improvement in student learning; commitment and involvement of leadership, staff and students; reasonably adequate resources; policy and structure, and accountability and transparency. The input, process and output domains were used in this study as bases for the analysis of the actual quality assurance practices in the universities.

The study employed key concepts from contingency and institutional theories to understand and explain how the internal and external organizational environment of universities influences their actual quality assurance practices. Contingency theory provides an understanding of how organizations operate under varying conditions and in specific circumstances. It holds the assumption that the best practices depend on the contingencies of the situation, implying that there is no one best way for all organizations. It focuses on the task environment of organizations.

Institutional theory maintains that the institutional environment exerts enormous influence on how organizations operate and undertake their tasks. Institutional perspectives emphasize the importance of the institutional environment, which consists of the larger social and political frameworks of expectations, norms, values, policies, myths, laws and regulations. One of the key concepts of institutional theory is that organizations compete, not just for technical efficiency,

but for legitimacy as well. The other key concept of institutional theory is that decoupling of legitimizing mission from actual technical practice increases an organization's chances of survival.

The conceptual framework of the study was developed based on the quality assurance literature and key concepts of the contingency and institutional theories as discussed in chapter 3 and operationalized in chapter 4. It comprises: university specific and external environmental factors drawn from the main elements of the institutional and contingency theories and the elements concerning quality of education, actual and good practices in quality assurance.

Quality assurance practice in universities is the dependent variable of the study, which is operationalized in terms of its adequacy and efficacy in ensuring quality of education. Quality of education in universities is envisaged in terms of quality of educational inputs, processes and outputs that influence student learning. The university specific and external environmental factors comprise the independent variables of the study. They are: leadership and governance, staff and students, organizational age and size, and institutional quality culture. The legal framework, regulators, suppliers and socio-cultural factors form the external environmental variables.

This study employed a mixed methods design based on the premise that quality assurance in higher education is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that involves the perspectives of different actors and requires the collection and analysis of data drawn from different sources using different methods. The quantitative approach was used to generate and analyze data on respondents' knowledge and experience about quality assurance, whereas the qualitative approach was employed to get deeper explanations about the reasons and possible factors underlie existing quality assurance practices. Three public universities namely, the Addis Ababa University as the largest and the only old university, Mekelle University from the young and medium size Universities, and Jigjiga University from the newly emerging and small universities were included in this study. Questionnaires, interviews, documents and a review of the scholarly literature were employed to gather data for this study. The university is the unit of analysis in this study. SPSS 15 was used to analyze the quantitative data. The major empirical findings of the study are summarized in the subsequent sections.

9.3. Summary of the Empirical Findings

Each of the five empirical research questions is answered in this section based on the findings from data analysis and interpretation presented in the preceding chapters.

9.3.1. *Adequacy and efficacy of the quality assurance practices*

The second research question of the study was about the existing practices of ensuring quality of education, and how this influences student learning in the universities. The summary in this section focuses on the major findings concerning the state of education quality in Ethiopian public universities, the adoption and practice of formal quality assurance and the frameworks underlying existing quality assurance practices.

The findings obtained in this study demonstrated that quality of education, particularly student learning, is threatened by problems abounding quality of educational inputs, processes and outputs in the three universities. With regard to input quality, many students join the universities without adequate preparation and required academic grounding due to the whole admission policy. Also, shortage of qualified and motivated teaching staff, and inadequacy and improper utilization of physical and financial resources to support quality learning are major challenges across the universities. The problem is more serious in the new and young universities, where many novice staff members teach courses for which they are not fully qualified and new programs are opened without ensuring minimum physical and human resources. The universities do not have the autonomy to decide on the size and quality of their incoming students, and recruit their staff as per their set plans and criteria. Such contravention would obviously jeopardize the quality of education in the universities.

Quality of educational processes is also constrained by problems related to lack of staff and student engagement; mismatch of available resources with the increasing student population; lack of integration of theory and practice; absence of reward mechanisms, and well planned and coherent curriculum design and review processes. These have an adverse effect on quality of education, particularly in the natural sciences and professional disciplines.

Quality of output (graduates) is also poor as measured by non-completion rate, staff and student satisfaction and the students' perceived meaningfulness of their learning. The qualification of students upon entry was found to be the most important predictor of non-completion rate in the universities. This finding is in agreement with previous studies that demonstrated a positive relationship between students' pre-university preparation and their performance in

universities (e.g. Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Astin, 1993, and Dill and Soo, 2005). A similar positive relationship was observed between non-completion rate and students' perceived accessibility, utilization and quality of facilities and support services. This shows the extent to which quality of student learning is influenced by quality of educational inputs and processes. The study also showed that staff satisfaction and perceived meaningfulness of learning by students is generally low. Even those students with good grades are not satisfied with quality of the learning competencies gained during their studies. This suggests that completing a study program in the Ethiopian context does not necessarily indicate quality of student learning: change in knowledge and skills. The universities do not have established mechanisms to monitor quality of their educational outputs/learning outcomes, other than the college CGPA used as requirement for graduation.

The problems abounded to quality of education in the universities, as demonstrated by this study, are also attributed to the lack of a well organized and functioning internal quality assurance system with appropriate policies, structures, methods and instruments. The three universities still rely on the traditional ways, implicit and taken for granted internal practices of assuring quality. These internal practices are, however, found to be ineffective in improving quality of the core educational processes of the universities. The findings showed that even the program/curriculum review processes, student and colleague evaluation of teaching and external examiner system, which the universities claim as quality assurance methods are not working well. There are no mechanisms that encourage or require universities to focus on quality of learning outcomes. This suggests that the implicit and taken for granted internal quality assurance mechanisms couldn't be instrumental in the Ethiopian universities; rather the existing educational practices became threats to quality of education.

The adoption of formal and explicit quality assurance system is a relatively recent phenomenon in the Ethiopian higher education. The higher education proclamation, which was adopted in 2003 and amended in 2009, provides the legal framework for the establishment of formal quality assurance at both national and institutional levels. The quality assurance system comprises both internal and external components, in which the former is considered as the foundation for continuous improvement. HERQA, a non-autonomous government organization, is mandated by proclamation with the task of undertaking external quality assurance and stimulating the practice of internal quality enhancement in universities. Central to the external quality assurance system is a quality audit based on institutional self-evaluation and its report by the universities. In this framework, unlike the private higher education

institutions, the public universities are not subject to accreditation. The national quality assurance system resembles in many ways the general model of national quality assessment depicted by van Vught and Westerheijden (1994). This suggests the transfer of quality assurance models across countries through the influence of foreign consultants.

Despite the provisions of the higher education proclamation, the universities included in this study have not yet implemented explicit internal quality assurance systems. It is only recently that MU and AAU conducted institutional self-evaluation, and started to introduce formal quality assurance policies and structures as part of BPR implementation. In terms of power relations, the external quality assurance is fully controlled by HERQA/MoE, which resembles the bureaucratic approach to quality assurance. The institutional self-evaluation and quality audit conducted in recent times are input focused and more bureaucratic in approach. They lack follow up, and have no relation to the improvement of internal educational practices that influence quality of student learning in the universities. These findings demonstrated that the adoption and practice of a formal quality assurance system is at an early stage across the three universities.

With regard to the third research question, the findings in this study showed that there is no significant difference among the three universities in terms of the adequacy and effectiveness of their internal quality assurance systems in improving quality of student learning. The only difference is in the timing of conducting institutional self-evaluation and introducing formal quality assurance policies and structures as part of BPR implementation. Such differences are attributed to the university specific factors such as age and size. The young and medium university (MU) conducted institutional self-evaluation, started to implement BPR and thereby introduced formal quality assurance policies and structures earlier than the old and large university (AAU). This suggests that the old and large university is more likely to resist the adoption of externally driven reform agendas and policies than the young and new ones. This is because the old university has greater historical experience, capacity and strength to challenge policies that may not go in line with its deep-rooted norms, values and beliefs. While the young and new universities with limited historical experience and capacity may flexibly and opportunistically accept and comply with externally driven reform initiatives faster than the old.

This study also suggests that the leadership turnover in the old and large university, which may result in uncertainty in terms of changes in organizational intention and priority, is likely to hinder the adoption and implementation of quality assurance systems. These findings are in line with the assumptions of contingency theory. From the contingency perspective, the timing in the adoption

of externally driven reform initiatives and policies depends on the situation at a particular university (in this case age, size and leadership).

The findings that addressed the fourth research question of this study indicated that the universities (AAU and MU) have recently started to introduce BPR as a quality management model. The underlying assumption of BPR is grounded in the instrumental view of higher education, in which the focus is in achieving efficiency and effectiveness. However, the very essence and purpose of BPR are defeated due to lack of resource, ownership, capacity and commitment on the part of the university leadership and academic staff. The old ways of thinking and doing things has gained prominence in BPR implementation despite all outcries for improvement and radical change in the core processes of the universities. The existing external quality assurance system, which is premised in a bureaucratic approach, could not be instrumental in improving quality of the core educational processes in the context of Ethiopian universities. This suggests that the framework that underlies formal quality assurance practices in the Ethiopian universities is embedded in accountability and symbolic compliance rather than improvement in internal organizational practices.

The findings underscored that the introduction of BPR and the formal quality assurance policies and structures have no relation to the actual quality assurance practices in the universities. The universities are not doing what they are required to do as enshrined in policies and laws in terms of quality enhancement. This shows a gap between policy intentions and actual practices. Compared to good practices in quality assurance, the universities are not doing well in terms of ensuring continuous improvement in their internal core processes and student learning outcomes. Most of the elements of good practices in quality assurance depicted in the conceptual framework of this study are missing. From the perspectives of institutional theories, such a gap refers to the decoupling between the technical and symbolic aspects of organizational practices.

The universities formally adopted BPR and introduced formal quality assurance policies and structures to address government requirements. This suggests that the introduction of policies and structures by the universities serve the purpose of strategic compliance and thereby getting legitimacy from the outside stakeholders, particularly the state. The findings support the arguments of institutional theory that organizations design their formal structures, based on the prescriptions of myths and norms of the institutional environment, to get legitimacy that ensures their survival (e.g. Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Meyer and Rowan, 1991). The findings in this study also support the theoretical arguments that externally driven quality assurance initiatives may encourage a culture of compliance or concealment, and universities may exhibit resistance when the

initiatives are not aligned with their deep-rooted values, beliefs and traditions (e.g. Brennan *et al.*, 1995; Newton, 2002, etc.).

Overall, the findings in this study have suggested that an adequate and effective quality assurance system is missing in the Ethiopian public universities. This is attributed to the university specific and external environmental factors, which are elaborated in the subsequent sections.

9.3.2. University Specific and External Environmental Factors

The fifth research question of the study concentrates on the possible factors that either enable or hinder the adoption and practice of adequate and effective quality assurance system in the Ethiopian public universities.

The findings in this study demonstrated that both university specific and external environmental factors influence the adoption and practice of quality assurance across the universities. Internally, incompetence in university leadership and governance; lack of staff and student capacity; absence of staff and student engagement and commitment; inadequacy and improper utilization of resources, and absence of a supportive professional quality culture are the major hindrances for the practice of quality assurance across the universities. The university governance and management system, particularly at AAU is characterized by autocracy that marginalizes a large proportion of the academic staff.

The leadership across the universities could not be instrumental in initiating systems, policies and structures, and creating critical mass and an enabling environment for internal quality enhancement practices. The university boards are also not proactive in playing their supervisory role and in stimulating the implementation of the provisions of the proclamation concerning quality enhancement. The academic staff lacks either capacity or engagement. Most of the academic staff in the new and young universities lacks the required qualification and professional experience, and moonlighting is a serious problem in the old university. The lack of staff capacity, motivation, engagement and commitment in turn affects the engagement and commitment of students in their learning. These problems are exacerbated by the absence of professionally strong and capable leadership, poor quality culture, and lack of remuneration and reward system. The universities are also facing shortage and improper utilization of critical learning resources, facilities and staffing to run their programs despite the increase in government budget. These factors obviously hinder the adoption and practice of internal quality assurance mechanisms across the universities.

Externally, absence of a robust and strong regulatory body that stimulates and facilitates internal quality enhancement processes; government reform policies;

poor student preparation at the lower education tiers; and absence of a supportive socio-cultural context are major hindrances. The main problem is not inherent to the legal framework itself, but to lack of translating and enforcing the laws and expectations stipulated in the higher education proclamation. The proclamation provides the legal basis for the establishment and implementation of internal quality enhancement system in universities. The universities, however, could not implement the provisions of the proclamation concerning quality assurance due to different constraining factors.

The inability to enforce the quality assurance requirements contained in the proclamation is attributed to the incompetence and inefficiency of the external quality assurance system (HERQA). HERQA could not play its role in stimulating internal quality enhancement processes in the universities due to lack of professionally competent leadership and capable core staff. Also, an incentive mechanism is missing that could serve as policy instrument to encourage the adoption and implementation of internal quality assurance policies in universities. The public universities receive a huge sum of government funds and enroll students beyond their capacity regardless of proof of evidence about quality of their educational provision (i.e., learning outcomes). It does not matter whether the universities implement internal quality enhancement system or not to receive government funding and attract incoming students. In such circumstances, it is very difficult to enforce the provisions of the higher education proclamations or laws concerning quality assurance at universities. These findings support the argument that external quality assurance cannot in itself bring improvements in quality of education, particularly quality of student learning experience, but it rather encourages compliance (e.g. Askling, 1997; Stensaker, 2003; Harvey and Newton, 2004; Harvey, 2006; and Stensaker, *et al.*, 2010).

Government reform policies, such as expanding enrolment, implementing undergraduate mix policy and BPR without adequate consultations, preparation and planning are also major constraints for quality assurance practice. Expanding and opening programs in the areas of science and technology without ensuring minimum resource requirements (infrastructure, qualified staff, labs, equipment and machineries) would obviously hinder the internal quality assurance practices in the universities. Also, the whole process of BPR bears no significant meaning beyond mere rhetoric. Nothing has changed in reality in the core functions of the universities as a result of BPR implementation, which might be described as 'change without change.' This suggests that BPR could not be instrumental in enabling the public universities improve quality of their quality assurance practices. Hence, it could not be considered as enabler.

The poor quality of education provided at preparatory high schools and the broader socio-cultural context are also constraints for the practice of quality assurance in the public universities. The findings suggested that enrolling many under-prepared students to universities without ensuring minimum human and physical resources and absence of quality culture are reflections of the problems in the wider socio-cultural context. There is no supportive socio-cultural context that values knowledge, merit, specialization, competence and quality learning. The gowns and degrees are more important to students and the society at large.

The overall findings in this study suggest that most of the enabling internal and external factors for quality assurance are missing in the Ethiopian higher education context. In such circumstances, it is very difficult to expect successful implementation of quality assurance in universities. In other words, provision of legal and regulatory frameworks without ensuring capable and committed leadership and a supportive environment for quality assurance is not sufficient to bring improvements in quality education.

9.4. Methodological reflections: reliability, validity, and limitations

In this section, I reflect on my theoretical framework and the use of mixed methods in this study. This study employed theory to frame the approach, data analysis, interpretation and discussion of the findings. The conceptual framework of the study, which was developed based on the main concepts and assumptions of contingency theory and institutional theory together with quality assurance literature contributed towards an understanding of how the university specific and external environmental factors influenced the adoption and practice of quality assurance at universities. It is supported by the empirical findings of this study.

The input, process and output approaches to quality were useful to analyze and understand the effectiveness of actual quality assurance practices in improving student learning. The university specific factors accounted for some variations in the timing of introducing formal quality assurance policies and structures in the public universities. While the external environmental factors were important to explain how the macro level conditions (legal and regulatory frameworks, suppliers and socio-cultural factors) influence internal quality assurance practices. However, the magnitude of the relationship between the university specific and environmental factors and the effectiveness of quality assurance practice is not clear. Internally, the empirical evidences seem to suggest that the leadership and governance system is a serious hindrance for the implementation of adequate and effective quality assurance system. Externally, the poor quality of incoming students and absence of strong regulatory framework coupled with lack

of a supportive socio-cultural context are major challenges for quality assurance practice in the context of Ethiopian universities.

Due to the complexity of the topic under study, the use of mixed methods design was appropriate for the purpose of this study. The mixed methods, which involves the collection of data drawn from different sources and at different time points, and analyzed through different methods both quantitative and qualitative, enables us to get comprehensive insights about the topic under study.

In essence, the use of mixed methods research is to improve validity of theoretical propositions and obtain a more complete picture of the phenomenon under study (Webb, *et al.*, 1966; Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006). In the mixed methods literature, authors prefer to use the term legitimization. The term legitimization is used by authors of mixed methods to refer to the credibility (replacement for quantitative concept of internal validity), transferability (replacement for quantitative concept of external validity), dependability (replacement for quantitative concept of reliability), and confirmability (replacement for quantitative concept of objectivity) of findings and inferences (See Lincoln & Guba, 1990, 2005; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Four types of legitimization were considered in this study: sample integration, inside-outside validation, weakness minimization legitimization and paradigmatic mixing legitimization. Selecting and involving identical and relatively representative samples for both quantitative and qualitative components of the study maintained the first legitimization type. The selection of the three public universities from the old, young and new universities provides an important insight about the study's topic in the Ethiopian public universities. Quantitative data drawn from large random samples of students and staff were integrated with qualitative data collected from a subset of these samples.

With regard to the second legitimatization type, an attempt was made to accurately present and utilize the views and perceptions of all participants concerning the topic under study. Presenting preliminary findings to peers in a conference and discussions with colleagues about the conceptualizations, interpretations and conclusions being made from the data were used to ensure the insider-outsider legitimization of the study. Careful and systematic combination of quantitative and qualitative components of the study in analyzing, weighting and interpreting the results enables to ensure the minimization of weaknesses regarding this legitimization type. Also, data from different sources and methods were triangulated to compensate the weakness of one method by the strength of the other and thereby improve interpretation of results. In this study, inter-subjective approach to knowledge generation and complementarity of methods are the bases of the paradigm assumption for the

use of mixed methods design (see Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006). Piloting quantitative data collection instruments, designing systematic interview questions, establishing rapport with interviewees, recording and accurate transcription of interviews have also contributed to improve reliability in this study.

This study has several limitations that might suggest future research. First, the study focuses on public universities. The private higher education sector is not treated in this study for reasons that public universities cover the largest proportion of student enrollment in the undergraduate program. The focus is on micro level data analysis, particularly organizational level practices.

Second, some limitations are inherent in the measurement of variables related to student learning experience. The study employed proxy indicators such as non-completion rate, student performance in college as measured by their GPA, and students' perceived meaningfulness about their learning as well as staff satisfaction regarding quality of students learning. Hence, the findings limit our understanding to micro level quality assurance systems and practices in the Ethiopian context. These limitations point to future research.

9.5. Conclusions and Implications of the Study

The findings in this study provided useful insights regarding the adoption and practice of internal quality assurance at universities. The first theoretically relevant insight emerged in this study is that establishing quality assurance mechanisms and policies could not guarantee a solution to quality problems of the Ethiopian higher education because most of the enabling factors in both the internal and external environment was absent. That is, the adoption and practice of quality assurance system at universities would remain a slogan or rhetoric in a situation where the enabling conditions are not met.

The conceptual model of this study was based on two major assumptions concerning the adoption and implementation of quality assurance. First, enhancing quality of education in general and student learning in particular is the primary responsibility of universities and this is influenced directly by the specific organizational context of each university. Second, the external environment plays a significant role in creating the conditions that facilitate internal quality assurance practices. This may include setting and enforcing laws and regulations through regulatory bodies and policy instruments/incentives that affect organizational processes (leadership, student admission, staffing and resources). The findings in this study show that the major challenge for the adoption and implementation of internal quality assurance at universities is not

lack of laws, policies and structures, but rather lack of professional capacity, integrity and commitment in the human element is the major problem. This suggests that initiating and introducing laws and regulatory bodies are necessary but not sufficient conditions to effect quality assurance practices in universities, unless there is a supportive environmental context. In this study, both the university specific and external environmental factors play a significant role in hindering the practice of internal quality assurance, particularly quality of student learning across the universities.

Internally, this study has demonstrated that absence of professionally capable, motivated and committed leadership is the major challenge in the Ethiopian universities. This is accompanied by lack of competent, motivated and engaged faculty; ill preparation of incoming students, lack of reasonably adequate resources, and absence of a supportive professional culture for quality education. So far, the universities do not have systematic and functioning internal quality assurance systems geared towards improving learning outcomes. The traditional quality assuring mechanisms are not functioning well and many of the academic staff members lack competence or engagement/commitment in their jobs. These problems are attributed to leadership ineffectiveness. These internal constraints in turn are reflections of the problems in the external environment of the Ethiopian universities.

Externally, absence of a robust and stimulating regulatory framework, inability of the education system to capacitate and build students' readiness in required ways, and lack of sound planning and adequate preparation in implementing government reform initiatives are major hindrances to the practice of quality assurance in Ethiopian universities. This study explored that the Ministry of Education and its strategic centers (HERQA & HESC), which set the rules and regulations and decide on resources have failed to play their facilitative role in stimulating the adoption and implementation of quality assurance policies and structures across the universities. The Ministry decides on student admission, makes under-prepared students enter universities, assigns professionally incapable university leaders, initiates and imposes reform agendas (BPR, expansion and graduate mix policies) on universities without adequate planning, consultation, preparation and supporting policies. This is again attributed to lack professionally competent and committed leadership at central level. This obviously affects the internal operation of universities regarding quality assurance. These problems are reflections of the problems in the wider socio-cultural context of the higher education system where knowledge, quality of student learning, accountability, transparency, academic merit, professional specialization, achievement and competence are not valued. For example, assigning professionally incompetent leaders and staff to the regulatory agencies

and universities; program and enrolment expansion without adequate planning and preparation; enrolling ill-prepared students and engagement of the academia in moonlighting reflect the absence of a supportive socio-cultural context in the Ethiopian higher education. This, in turn, suggests that the cultural imperatives cannot be ignored in understanding the quality assurance systems and practices of universities in a particular context.

The second theoretical insight is that efficiency (producing more graduates with less cost and time) seems to be the intention behind the introduction and implementation of government reform initiative (BPR, enrollment expansion and graduate mix policies) in the universities. The findings in this study underscored that the current priority of the Ethiopian government is to address the low participation rate in higher education and under-representation of science and technology in the curriculum through rapid program and enrolment expansion. In this context, ensuring access is the legitimizing factor for the Ethiopian universities. This suggests that the Ethiopian universities are currently implementing the expansion and undergraduate mix policies, BPR and other externally driven reform initiatives to demonstrate their legitimacy as social institutions, particularly to the state through strategic compliance, regardless of quality of student learning. It may be argued that in view of the rapidly growing school age population and the high demand for higher education enrolment, rapid expansion is inescapable for the Ethiopian universities. The question here is how the universities can address access without compromising quality of education, which is one of their inherited values. The institutional decoupling demonstrated by the quality gap between actual quality assurance practices and good practices in quality assurance suggests a problem regarding the implementation of the externally driven laws and policies as intended. This leads to serious doubts regarding the successful implementation of the current expansion and graduate mix policies and other reform initiatives in terms of ensuring quality education. It should, however, be noted that the current expansion would be of value if students were made to gain learning knowledge, skills and capability with learning delivered in quality ways. This requires a planned and quality-conscious expansion of higher education and ensuring capable and committed leadership and faculty, the accessibility and adequacy of learning resources that enhances quality of student learning.

Overall, the findings in this study show that many of the necessary conditions for quality assurance to effectively function are missing in the context of the Ethiopian universities. This leads to the argument that enforcing the implementation of aspirations, laws, regulations and policies to effect quality improvement is difficult in the absence of a supportive internal and external environment. This, in turn, suggests an overarching theoretical insight that

quality assurance in higher education is context bound. That is the theoretical assumptions concerning effective quality assurance practice are not universal across countries. The assumptions working in one context may not equally work in another context. The adoption and implementation of quality assurance systems should take into account the specific context of universities. This suggests the importance of considering organizational context in understanding and explaining the quality assurance systems of universities in a particular country.

The findings of this study discussed above suggested several implications for improved quality assurance practices at universities, which are briefly presented as follows.

Implications of the Study for Improved Quality Assurance Practice

Overall, the study has demonstrated that many of the internal and external enabling conditions for quality assurance practices are missing in the context of Ethiopian universities. There is a quality gap between the intended and actual quality assurance practices, and quality of education, particularly student learning is constrained by a multitude of interrelated problems from both the internal and external environment of the universities. This calls for a closer attention of the existing quality assurance systems and practices. In accordance with the findings, the implications and suggestions for improved quality assurance practices at universities are presented as follows.

One of the implications of this study is that the adoption and implementation of quality assurance for improvement is unlikely in the absence of an enabling and supportive environment (internal and external). Externally, the government should:

- (1) Strengthen its legal and quality regulatory frameworks to stimulate and facilitate the adoption and implementation of internal quality enhancement in universities
- (2) Ensure that the higher education sector, its strategic centers (HERQA & HESC) and the public universities are led and staffed by professionally competent, relevant, accountable and committed leaders and experts. This suggests the need to ensure that the higher education sector, the regulatory agencies and the universities are well managed and led in terms of accomplishing their core tasks. This requires: 1) ensuring that the selection and appointment of leaders and technical staff is based on transparent and sound criteria that is grounded in relevance and professional competence (e.g. integrity, specialization, merit and research orientation) rather than mere social and political networking; 2) building

the capacity of leaders and staff of the higher education sector and the universities through training in relevant areas of higher education. This may enable them to initiate and implement quality assurance policies and procedures, and promote a culture of continuous improvement. The Ministry of Education should ensure that there is sufficient consultation with universities before the implementation of government initiated reform agendas. This necessitates ensuring that the current program and enrollment expansion including the undergraduate mix program policy matches the infrastructure and resource capacity of the universities. This requires adequate and sound planning to ensure minimum resource requirements in terms of staff qualification, infrastructure, facilities and learning support services.

- (3) Devise mechanisms that encourage a supportive professional culture that values relevance, specialization, competence and merit in job placement through code of conduct.
- (4) Facilitate the introduction and implementation of systems that require higher education institutions present evidences on learning outcomes. This may involve developing and employing standardized instruments to collect and analyze information concerning quality of student learning at the end of training programs. This encourages higher education institutions to examine, maintain and improve quality of their educational programs based on periodic feedback.

The second implication of the study is that strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks and ensuring competence and commitment of leadership at all levels alone could not guarantee successful implementation of quality assurance policies, unless there are well-prepared students; capable, motivated and committed staff; reasonably adequate resources and a supportive culture for student learning. This necessitates ensuring that:

- (5) Universities enroll capable candidates as per their set standards, human and material resource capacity and strategic plans. Adequate preparation of students requires ensuring a coherent, connected curriculum from primary up to tertiary levels, clear performance standards that are aligned from level to level and focus on readiness to the next educational level. Also, capacity and competence of incoming students should be ensured and checked through well-designed entrance exams. This requires competent and committed leadership.
- (6) The quality assurance system is institutionalized, and accepted and owned by the academia. This requires professionally competent leadership that enhances the active participation of the academia in the

development and implementation of quality assurance policies and structures. Also, discouraging moonlighting through established remuneration and incentive systems that motivate staff members to devote their full time and engage in their regular jobs. The ownership and acceptance of quality assurance can also be enhanced through shared leadership among the board, top leadership and academic staff.

The findings in this study imply that an external quality assurance system that is based on a bureaucratic approach does not help much in effecting improvement of quality through the establishment and implementation of internal quality assurance system at universities. This suggests the need to revisit the role of the Ministry of Education and its strategic centers (HERQA & HESC), and establish a robust and capable national quality assurance body that plays a facilitative role in enforcing the establishment of strong quality enhancement system at universities, as stipulated in the higher education proclamation. Also, improvement of quality at universities is possible, when there is capable, engaged and competent leadership, and the external regulatory bodies (MoE, HERQA and HESC) play a facilitative role in terms of creating an enabling environment and policy instruments that encourage competition for quality education among universities.

Nederlandstalige samenvatting

De onderzoeksvraag

Hoewel kwaliteitszorg wijd en zijd wordt gebruikt en vaak onderwerp van onderzoek is, blijven vele vragen onbeantwoord over de mate waarin kwaliteitszorg de kernprocessen in hoger onderwijs verbeteren die leereffecten op studenten hebben. Deze studie poogt dergelijke vragen te beantwoorden in de context van publieke universiteiten in Ethiopië. Daartoe werden de volgende onderzoeksvragen geformuleerd:

1. Wat is reeds bekend over kwaliteit en kwaliteitszorg in hogeronderwijsinstellingen? Welke theorieën kunnen gebruikt worden om de implementatie van kwaliteitszorg in universiteiten te verklaren?
2. Wat doen Ethiopische universiteiten feitelijk om de kwaliteit van hun onderwijs te verbeteren? Wat is bekend over de kwaliteit van hun input, proces en output met betrekking tot leeruitkomsten? Hoe weten ze of ze onderwijs van hoge kwaliteit leveren? Wat zijn hun huidige kwaliteitsbeleid, -structuren en -instrumenten?
3. Zijn er verschillen tussen de Ethiopische universiteiten met betrekking tot hun kwaliteitszorgpraktijken? Wat zou eventuele verschillen kunnen verklaren?
4. Wat zijn de omstandigheden voor kwaliteitszorg en welke modellen gebruiken de universiteiten eventueel? Hoe is dit vergelijkbaar met 'good practices' in kwaliteitszorg?
5. Welke factoren stimuleren dan wel hinderen het invoeren en praktiseren van formele kwaliteitszorg aan de onderzochte universiteiten?
6. Het verschil tussen feitelijke praktijken en 'good practices' in ogenschouw nemend, wat is nodig om tot verbetering te komen? En hoe kan dat worden geïmplementeerd?

De eerste onderzoeksvraag werd benaderd via een kritisch overzicht van de literatuur over kwaliteitszorg en organisatietheorieën, met name *contingency theory* en institutionele theorieën. De literatuur over kwaliteitszorg toonde aan dat leeruitkomsten expliciet of impliciet in de diverse concepties van kwaliteit is opgenomen, al is er geen algemeen aanvaarde definitie van de term. Daarvan afgeleid werd geponeerd dat kwaliteitszorg effectief is indien het gericht is op de kernprocessen van hoger onderwijs die te maken hebben met leeruitkomsten.

Kwaliteitszorg wordt in dit kader gedefinieerd als het totaal van beleid, waarden, procedures, structuren, middelen en activiteiten gericht op continue verbetering van de kern van onderwijsprocessen.

'Good practices' ten aanzien van kwaliteitszorg werden aan de literatuur ontleend. Daaruit werd afgeleid dat kwaliteitszorgsysteem tot verbetering van leerprocessen leiden als universiteiten zich als eigenaar van het systeem beschouwen (afzonderlijk dan wel collectief) en als het externe kwaliteitsbewakingssysteem een ondersteunende (faciliterende) rol speelt. Kwaliteitszorg vereist focus op de kern van onderwijs- en leerprocessen; betrokkenheid van instellingsleiders, staf en studenten; voldoende middelen; beleid en structuur; transparantie en afleggen van rekenschap. Verdeling over input, proces en output werd in deze studie gebruikt als basis voor de analyse van praktijken van kwaliteitszorg in de universiteiten.

Contingency theory gaat uit van de assumptie dat 'best practice' verschilt naar gelang de omstandigheden en dat er geen beste methode voor alle omstandigheden bestaat. Ze legt de nadruk op de taakomgeving van organisaties.

In institutionele theorieën wordt de nadruk gelegd op de institutionele omgeving, die bestaat uit sociale en politieke raamwerken gevormd uit verwachtingen, normen, beleid, mythen, wetten en regelingen. Een kernbegrip is dat organisaties niet alleen concurreren om technische efficiëntie, maar ook om legitimiteit. Een ander kernbegrip is dat ontkoppeling van legitimatie en de feitelijke technische praktijk de kans vergroot dat een organisatie blijft voortbestaan.

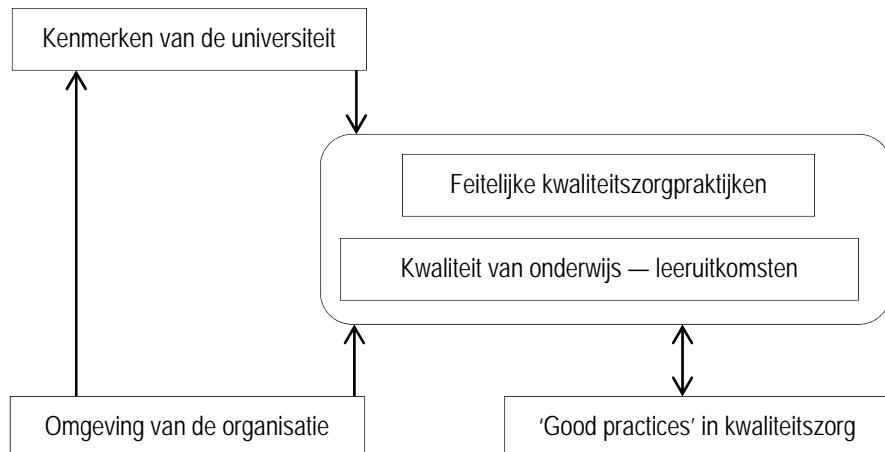
Conceptueel model

Het conceptuele model, afgeleid uit de genoemde concepten uit *contingency* en institutionele theorieën in combinatie met de literatuur over kwaliteitszorg is samengevat in Figuur 1.

Methodologie

De studie maakte gebruik van een 'mixed methods' ontwerp, overwegend dat kwaliteitszorg in het hoger onderwijs een complex fenomeen is, waarin de perspectieven van diverse actoren meespelen. Dit vereist verzameling en analyse van gegevens vanuit diverse bronnen, via verschillende methoden. Kwantitatieve benaderingen werden gebruikt om kennis van en ervaringen met kwaliteitszorg van respondenten. Kwalitatieve benaderingen dienden om diepere verklaringen te krijgen over de redenen en factoren die aan bestaande kwaliteitszorgpraktijken ten grondslag liggen. Drie universiteiten werden voor de studie geselecteerd:

Addis Ababa University (AAU), de grootste en enige oude universiteit van het land, Mekelle University (MU) als representant van de jonge en middelgrote instellingen en Jigjiga University (JU) als een van de nieuw-gevestigde, kleine universiteiten.



Figuur 1 Conceptueel model van de studie

Enquêtes, interviews en documentanalyse werden gebruikt om data te verzamelen. De universiteit is de eenheid van analyse. Kwantitatieve analyses werden uitgevoerd met behulp van SPSS 15.

Empirische resultaten

Bestaande kwaliteitszorg

De tweede onderzoeksvraag betrof de bestaande kwaliteitszorg en de invloed ervan op leerprocessen. De studie toonde aan dat de kwaliteit van het onderwijs en dan vooral de leerprocessen, bedreigd worden door problemen ten aanzien van inputs, processen en outputs in de drie universiteiten. Wat inputs betreft, beginnen vele studenten hun studie zonder adequaat academisch niveau, als gevolg van het gehele toelatingsbeleid. Verder is er sprake van een tekort aan gekwalificeerde en gemotiveerde docenten en gebrek aan en onjuist gebruik van fysieke en financiële hulpbronnen. Deze problemen betreffen de jonge universiteiten het sterkst, waar vele nieuwe stafleden onderwijs geven waarvoor zij niet voldoende gekwalificeerd zijn en waar nieuwe studieprogramma's van start gaan zonder voldoende docenten en faciliteiten. De universiteiten hebben

geen autonomie met betrekking tot aantal en kwaliteit van de inkomende studenten, noch met betrekking tot benoeming van docenten.

Onderwijskwaliteit in de procesfase wordt tevens bedreigd door gebrek aan betrokkenheid onder docenten en studenten, door achterblijven van groei van middelen bij de groei van studentenaantallen, door gebrek aan integratie tussen theorie en praktijk, door afwezigheid van beloningsmechanismen, en door afwezigheid van degelijke en samenhangende ontwerp- en evaluatieprocessen voor curricula. Deze bedreigingen zijn het zwaarst voor studies in de natuurwetenschappen en de professies.

De kwaliteit van de output (afgestudeerden) is eveneens laag, gemeten aan de hoge studie-uitval, lage tevredenheid van docenten en studenten en de lage score ten aanzien van het nut van de studie volgens studenten. Zelfs studenten die hoge cijfers behaalden, waren ontevreden over de competenties die zij tijdens hun studie hadden verworven. De kwalificatie van studenten bij aanvang van de studie bleek de belangrijkste voorspeller van studieuitval. Andere correlaties werden gevonden met de perceptie van studenten over hun toegang, gebruik en de kwaliteit van faciliteiten en ondersteuning. Een en ander suggereert dat voltooiing van een studie in Ethiopische universiteiten niet noodzakelijk leeruitkomsten van hoge kwaliteit betekent, dat wil zeggen toename van kennis en kunde. De universiteiten in de studie beschikken niet over operationele mechanismen om de kwaliteit van hun onderwijsuitkomsten te monitoren, behalve via de cijfers van examens (CGPA), die een voorwaarde voor afstuderen zijn.

De problemen met de onderwijskwaliteit in de drie universiteiten kunnen mede worden toegeschreven aan het gebrek aan goed georganiseerde interne kwaliteitszorg, met een beleid, structuren, methoden en instrumenten. De universiteiten vertrouwden nog steeds op traditionele, veelal impliciete manieren om hun kwaliteit te garanderen. De studie toonde aan dat de processen voor curriculumherziening, evaluatie-instrumenten onder studenten en staf en het systeem van externe examinatoren die de universiteiten claimen te gebruiken, niet goed functioneren. Er zijn geen mechanismen die universiteiten stimuleren of verplichten om te letten op de kwaliteit van de leeruitkomsten.

Introductie van formele en expliciete kwaliteitszorg is een vrij recent fenomeen in Ethiopië. De Proclamatie op het Hoger Onderwijs van 2003, gepromulgueerd in 2009, vormt de wettelijke basis ervoor, zowel in de instellingen als op nationaal niveau. Het systeem omvat externe en interne elementen, de laatste worden beschouwd als de fundering voor continue kwaliteitsverbetering. HERQA, een niet-autonome overheidsorganisatie, is gemanageerd om externe kwaliteitsbewaking uit te voeren en om instellingen bij hun interne kwaliteitsverbetering te

stimuleren. In de externe kwaliteitsbewaking staat een instellingsaudit centraal, gebaseerd op zelfevaluatie door de instelling. In tegenstelling tot private universiteiten behoeven publieke universiteiten geen accreditatie door HERQA.

Ondanks de voorschriften in de Proclamatie beschikten de drie onderzochte universiteiten niet over een intern kwaliteitszorgsysteem. Recent voerden MU en AAU zelfevaluaties uit op instellingsniveau en begonnen zij formele interne kwaliteitszorg in te voeren, als onderdeel van een andere aan de instellingen opgelegde overheidshervorming, namelijk *business process re-engineering* (BPR).

In termen van macht, is de externe kwaliteitsbewaking volledig onder controle van HERQA en het ministerie van onderwijs, wat een bureaucratische benadering van kwaliteitszorg indiceert. De vereiste zelfevaluatie door instellingen en de externe kwaliteitsaudit zijn inputgericht en bureaucratisch in hun benadering. Er is niet voorzien in follow up en er is geen relatie met kwaliteitsverbetering van onderwijsprocessen. Kortom, kwaliteitszorg in de drie onderzochte universiteiten bevindt zich in een vroeg stadium van invoering.

Wat de derde onderzoeksvraag aangaat, toonde de studie aan dat er geen significante verschillen waren tussen de drie universiteiten voor wat betreft adequaatheid en effectiviteit van hun interne kwaliteitszorg om leeruitkomsten te verbeteren. De enige verschillen betreffen de timing van ze zelf-evaluatie en de invoering van formele kwaliteitszorgsysteem in het kader van BPR. De jonge, medium-grootte universiteit (MU) was met dit alles eerder dan de grote, oude (AAU). Dit suggereert dat AAU meer geneigd is om zich tegen externe eisen en hervormingen te verzetten dan jonge universiteiten. Redenen kunnen zijn de historische ervaring van de grote instelling, en de capaciteit en macht om beleid te weerstaan die net overeenstemmen met de diepgewortelde gewoonten, waarden en overtuigingen in AAU.

De studie suggereerde ook aan dat de vele wisselingen in leiderschap in de grote, oude universiteit geresulteerd hebben in periodes van onzekerheid met betrekking tot organisatorische intenties en prioriteiten, wat de invoering van kwaliteitszorg kan hebben gehinderd. Deze bevinding komt overeen met de redenering van de *contingency theory*.

De resultaten die te maken hadden met de vierde onderzoeksvraag, betroffen dat AAU en MU recentelijk BPR zijn gaan gebruiken als kwaliteitszorgmodel. BPR is gevestigd op instrumentele perspectieven op hoger onderwijs, die de nadruk leggen op effectiviteit en efficiëntie. Die bedoelingen met BPR worden echter volledig teniet gedaan door gebrek aan middelen, eigenaarschap, capaciteit en betrokkenheid aan de kant van leiderschap en academici in de universiteiten. Dit suggereert dat de formele kwaliteitszorg het best verklaard kan worden als gericht op afleggen van rekenschap en als symbolische naleving van

voorschriften in plaats van kwaliteitsverbetering van interne processen, ofte wel er is sprake van ontkoppeling tussen technische en symbolische aspecten van de organisatie.

Dit onderstreept dat BPR en formele kwaliteitszorgsystemen geen relatie hebben met feitelijke kwaliteitszorg in de drie universiteiten. Er gaapt een kloof tussen beleidsintenties in feitelijke implementatie. Ten opzichte van ‘good practices’ in kwaliteitszorg, presteren de drie universiteiten evenmin goed in termen van continue verbetering van onderwijs- en leerprocessen.

Factoren in interne en externe omgeving

De vijfde onderzoeksvraag betrof de factoren die eventueel invoering van adequate en effectieve kwaliteitszorg zouden stimuleren dan wel hinderen. De studie toonde aan dat zowel interne als externe omgevingsfactoren een rol speelden. Intern ging het vooral om incompetente leiderschap en *governance* van de universiteiten; gebrek aan capaciteit bij staf en studenten; gebrek aan betrokkenheid bij staf en studenten; inadequaat en onjuist ingezette hulpbronnen; en gebrek aan een stimulerende kwaliteitscultuur. Het universitaire managementsysteem werd, vooral in AAU, gekarakteriseerd door autocratie, waardoor een groot deel van de staf zich gemarginaliseerd voelde.

Het leiderschap in de instellingen bleek niet leidend bij het invoeren van systemen, beleid of structuren, noch bij het creëren van draagvlak en een stimulerende omgeving voor interne kwaliteitszorg. Universiteitsraden bleken evenmin proactief in hun toezicht. Academici misten ofwel capaciteit ofwel betrokkenheid. Het merendeel van de staf in de jonge en nieuwe universiteiten bleek gebrekkig gekwalificeerd en onervaren, terwijl bijbanen (zwartwerk) een serieus probleem vormden in de oude universiteit. Dit alles had zijn weerslag op de betrokkenheid van studenten bij hun leerproces. De problemen werden versterkt door de afwezigheid van capabel leiderschap, van een stimulerende kwaliteitscultuur en van salariëring en beloningssystemen. De universiteiten werden bovendien geconfronteerd met tekorten aan en inefficiënt gebruik van kritieke onderwijsmiddelen, -faciliteiten en -staf, ook al groeide het overheidsbudget enigszins.

Extern bleken belangrijke hinderpalen: de afwezigheid van een robuuste en sterke agentuur die interne kwaliteitsverbetering stimuleerde; overheidsbeleid ten aanzien van hervormingen van de publieke sector; slechte voorbereiding van studenten op hun academische studie in primair en secundair onderwijs; en het gebrek aan ondersteuning vanuit de sociaal-culturele context. Het probleem ligt niet inherent aan de regulering, maar zijn te wijten aan de gebrekkige vertaling

van wettelijke regelingen in de realiteit en aan gebrekkige handhaving. De Proclamatie gaf de wettelijke basis voor kwaliteitszorg, maar de universiteiten konden deze niet implementeren ten gevolge van diverse factoren.

Dat het niet lukte om de kwaliteitsbepalingen in de Proclamatie te realiseren wordt tevens geweten aan de incompetente en inefficiënte van het externe kwaliteitsbewakingssysteem. HERQA bleek niet interne kwaliteitszorg te stimuleren door gebrek aan professioneel competent leiderschap en capabele staf. Ook ontbreekt een mechanisme om invoering van interne kwaliteitszorg te belonen. Bewezen kwaliteit speelt geen rol in de bekostiging door de overheid. Dit alles ondersteunt het argument dat externe kwaliteitsbewaking op zichzelf geen kwaliteitsverbetering tot stand kan brengen, maar eerder (oppervlakkige) navolging aanmoedigt.

Beleidshervormingen, zoals uitbreiding van studentenaantallen, toedeling van studenten aan studierichtingen en BPR, zonder voldoende overleg, voorbereiding en planning, vormen eveneens grote hindernissen voor kwaliteitszorg. Ook de slechte kwaliteit van het secundair onderwijs dat op universitaire studie behoort voor te bereiden en de wijdere sociaal-culturele context (waarin de uiterlijke tekenen van hoger onderwijs meer worden gewaardeerd dan de inhoud ervan) worden als beperkingen ervaren.

Al met al toont deze studie aan dat het grote merendeel van stimulerende factoren voor kwaliteitszorg in het Ethiopische hoger onderwijs ontbreken. Het is daarom niet te verwachten dat kwaliteitszorgsysteem met succes zullen worden geïmplementeerd in universiteiten.

Conclusies en implicaties van de studie

Het eerste theoretisch relevante inzicht dat uit deze studie gedestilleerd kan worden, is dat kwaliteitszorgmechanismen en -beleid geen oplossing van de kwaliteitsproblemen met zich mee brachten, omdat de meeste stimulerende factoren in de interne en externe omgeving ontbraken. Zonder deze blijft kwaliteitszorg een slogan of retoriek.

De grootste uitdagingen voor de invoering van daadwerkelijke kwaliteitszorg zijn niet de regelingen, structuren of beleid, maar professionele capaciteit, integriteit en betrokkenheid onder de betrokkenen.

Een tweede inzicht dat opkomt is dat de intentie achter invoering van hervormingen door de overheid (zoals BPR en de vergroting van instroom) vooral efficiëntie is (meer afgestudeerden tegen lagere kosten en in minder tijd). Dit suggereert dat de Ethiopische universiteiten op dit moment allerlei

hervormingen invoeren om hun legitimiteit als sociale instituties aan te tonen, door middel van strategische navolging, maar zonder de kwaliteit van leeruitkomsten serieus te nemen. Men kan stellen dat met het oog op de snelle groei van de bevolking en de groeiende vraag naar hoger onderwijs het noodzakelijk is om het systeem snel te laten groeien. Maar hoe kan tegelijkertijd de kwaliteit hoog gehouden worden? De institutionele ontkoppeling die blijkt uit de kloof tussen de feitelijke kwaliteitszorgpraktijken en ‘good practices’ op dit gebied doet twijfel rijzen over hoe extern opgelegde wetten en beleid zullen worden uitgevoerd.

De studie toonde aan dat vele noodzakelijke voorwaarden voor effectieve kwaliteitszorg ontbraken in het Ethiopische hoger onderwijs. Implementatie van aspiraties, beleid, wetten en regelingen blijkt moeizaam zonder een stimulerende interne en externe context. Dit onderbouwt het algemene inzicht dat kwaliteitszorg in hoger onderwijs context-afhankelijk is: assumpties die in de ene context goed werken, hoeven dat in een andere context niet te doen.

Aanbevelingen die uit deze conclusies voortvloeien kunnen in de eerste plaats gericht worden aan de overheid:

1. Wettelijke en kwaliteitsregulerende raamwerken versterken om invoering van interne kwaliteitszorg te stimuleren.
2. Bestaffing van de hogeronderwijssector, strategische centra (HERQA en HESC) en publieke universiteiten versterken. Professioneel competent, betrokken en verantwoordelijke leiders en experts zijn nodig om deze organisaties goed te managen. Daartoe is nodig:
 - a. Transparante en doelgerichte criteria gebaseerd op relevantie en professionele competentie (bijvoorbeeld integriteit, specialisatie, verdienste en onderzoeksoriëntatie) in plaats van alleen sociale en politieke netwerken
 - b. Capaciteitsopbouw onder leiders en staf in de hogeronderwijs-sector en in de universiteiten door training. Dit zou hen in staat moeten stellen kwaliteitszorg te initiëren en een cultuur van continue kwaliteitsverbetering te promoten.
3. Mechanismen ontwerpen die een ondersteunende professionele cultuur stimuleren die waardering geeft aan relevantie, specialisatie, competentie en verdienste. Een kernmechanisme daarbij zou een geragscode kunnen zijn.
4. Introductie en implementatie faciliteren van systemen die hogeronderwijsinstellingen verplichten zicht te geven op leeruitkomsten. Dit

kan mede betreffen ontwerp en gebruik van gestandaardiseerde instrumenten om leeruitkomsten aan het eind van studieprogramma's vast te stellen. Dit moedigt instellingen aan om de kwaliteit van hun studieprogramma's te onderzoeken, handhaven en verbeteren op basis van periodieke feedback.

Aan instellingen voor hoger onderwijs zouden de volgende aanbevelingen kunnen worden gericht:

1. Universiteiten laten capabele kandidaten toe, op basis van de standaarden van de instelling en in overeenstemming met hun personele en materiële hulpbronnen en met hun strategische plan. Dit vereist onder meer een coherent curriculum van primair tot en met tertiair onderwijs, heldere standaarden voor prestaties die van niveau tot niveau onderling verbonden zijn en die gericht zijn op voorbereiding op het volgende niveau. Daarnaast moeten capaciteit en competentie van aankomende studenten worden vastgesteld in goed-ontworpen toelatingsexamens. Competent en betrokken leiderschap is nodig om deze situatie te bereiken.
2. Het kwaliteitszorgsysteem is geïnstitutionaliseerd, en aanvaard door academici, die zich ook als eigenaars van het systeem beschouwen. Ook dit vereist competent en betrokken leiderschap dat actieve participatie door academici aanmoedigt. Tegelijkertijd dienen bijbaantjes ontmoedigd te worden door zodanige salariëring en beloningssystemen dat stafleden hun volle tijd en aandacht aan hun reguliere baan gaan besteden. Acceptatie en eigenaarschap van kwaliteitszorg kan eveneens versterkt door gedeeld leiderschap tussen toezichtsraad, top leiderschap en academische staf.

De studie impliceert dat externe kwaliteitsbewaking gebaseerd op een bureaucratische benadering niet helpt om kwaliteitsverbetering tot stand te brengen. Het lijkt daarom nodig de rollen van het Ministerie van Onderwijs, HERQA en HESC opnieuw te bezien, en om een robuuste en capabele nationale kwaliteitsbewakingsagentuur tot stand te brengen dat kwaliteitsverbetering kan stimuleren zoals dat door de Proclamatie Hoger Onderwijs wordt beoogd. Kwaliteitsverbetering is mogelijk in universiteiten mits er sprake is van capabel, betrokken en competent leiderschap. Tevens dienen de externe regulators (Ministerie van Onderwijs, HERQA en HESC) een faciliterende rol te spelen door een positieve context te creëren met beleidsinstrumenten die competitie voor onderwijskwaliteit tussen hogeronderwijsinstellingen aanmoedigen.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Additional Table

Table 6-14 Correlation Matrix of Input, Process and Output Variables

Variables	Variables											
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1 Completion rate (CGPA Year III)	.53**	-.15*	.86**	.21**	.00	.01	-.04	.33**	-.03	.24**	.12	
N	291	286	246	229	253	273	256	198	160	200	164	
2 Entry qualification of students		-.15*	.49**	.24**	.04	.02	.04	.29**	-.08	.19**	.12	
N		276	236	218	245	263	246	190	152	192	157	
3 Qualification of teaching staff			-.03	.01	.46**	.32**	.29**	.05	.09	.15*	.23**	
N			251	232	258	280	262	200	162	202	168	
4 Accessibility of facilities				.24**	.17**	.13*	.04	.33**	-.01	.29**	.14	
N				210	226	239	226	200	150	199	155	
5 Accessibility of support services					.05	.12	.22**	.09	.35**	.05	.33**	
N					208	224	212	172	157	171	161	
6 Teaching and learning processes						.66**	.26**	.07	.14	.13	.30**	
N						248	230	180	149	182	153	
7 Assessment practices							.19**	-.04	.13	.02	.32**	
N							252	189	157	192	162	
8 Students engagement								.08	.09	.12	.22**	
N								181	148	184	151	
9 Utilization of facilities									.14	.74**	.32**	
N									134	197	143	
10 Utilization of support services										.15	.54**	
N										134	154	
11 Quality of facilities											.44**	
N											145	
12 Quality of support services											1	
N											168	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Appendix 2 Interview Guide for Key Informants

1. What do you understand about the concept quality? How do you think should quality of education be assured?

Which values do you think should underlie quality of education in universities?

2. How does your faculty/department demonstrate that it provides high quality education?

3. What models, methods and procedures are in place to ensure quality of academic offerings in your faculty/department?

If your university has adopted quality assurance models and methods, who do you think take the initiative and for what purpose? To what extent are such models and procedures related to quality of student learning?

4. Has your university/faculty/department been engaged in quality assurance exercises (institutional self-evaluation, quality audit) in recent years?

Have you been consulted by your university or other organizations (e.g. HERQA) during the development of the quality assurance policies and systems?

5. How do you evaluate quality of education in general and the effectiveness of the quality assurance practice in particular in your faculty/department?

To what extent do you believe that the BPR is valid and implementable in terms of improving quality of educational processes?

6. What is the level of your satisfaction with regard to the current performance of the public universities in enhancing quality of education? What are their major problems in terms of policy environment, governance and leadership and resources?

7. What do you think are the most important challenges and constraints at national and institutional levels in terms of enhancing quality of education?

8. What do you think are the necessary conditions and resources required for the effective implementation of quality assurance system that really effect change in the quality of teaching and student learning in your university/faculty/department?

In what ways do you think can the current quality assurance practices be improved?

Appendix 3 Questionnaire for Instructors

PURPOSE

This questionnaire is designed to collect relevant information about your views on the systems and practices of assuring quality of education in your faculty/college in particular and the university in general. Your response to the items of this questionnaire will remain confidential and the results will be used to examine the existing quality practice systems and practices at the public universities of Ethiopia. We hope you will be able to take time and carefully complete this questionnaire. You can use a “✓” mark to indicate your responses for items with alternative responses. Please briefly state your responses for the open-ended items.

Thank you for your time

The Researcher

I. GENERAL

1.1. University_____

1.2. Faculty/College_____

1.3. Department _____

1.4. Sex Male Female

1.5. Educational qualification

Diploma BA/B.Sc./MD MA/M.Sc.

PhD Others (specify) _____

1.6. Academic rank

Graduate Assistant Assistant Lecturer

Lecturer MD specialty

Assistant Professor Associate Professor

Professor Others (please specify) _____

1.7. Area of specialization _____

1.8. Year/s of service in University _____

II. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS & PRACTICES

Policies and Institutional Arrangements

2.1. To what extent do you find the following concepts of quality important?	Not important at all 1				Very important 5	I don't Know
	2	3	4			
Quality as fitness for purpose	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality as value for money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality as excellence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality as perfection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality as transformation of the learner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.2. To what extent do you think the following actors play important role in assuring quality of education in your institution?	To a lesser extent 1				To a higher extent 5
	2	3	4		
HERQA	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The university management	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Faculties	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Departments	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Academic staff	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Students	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Employers	<input type="checkbox"/>				

2.3. Does your faculty/university have quality assurance policies?

- Yes. Please state the major policies guidelines for maintaining and ensuring quality of education in your faculty:

What do you think are the institutional values and purpose that underpin the quality assurance policy? _____

- No ⇒ Please go to question 2.5.

2.4. Is there a responsible body for the implementation of quality assurance policy in your faculty/university?

- Yes. Please state the responsible body/section_____
- No, why? _____

2.5. Did you participate in any quality assurance related activities in your faculty/university in the last 10 years?

- Yes. Please mention some of the recent activities you have been participating

- No.

2.6.If there is a quality assurance system in your faculty, please evaluate the state of art of implementation of quality assurance in your institution:	Yes we have implemented	We are currently implementing	We are planning to implement	We don't have
Setting quality indicators/ standards for teaching and learning across all programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing quality assessment manual/guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Setting institutional structure and responsibility for quality improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing guidelines, procedures and support to academic staff to ensure quality of their teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conducting regular review of study programs& curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conducting regular staff meetings to discuss about quality of education and student learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using results of program/course review for improvement of student learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Building quality culture and shared values across departments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Methods and Procedures

2.7. Does your faculty/university employ one or more of the following as methods/ tools of quality assurance?	Yes	No
Need assessment for program/curriculum design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regular program/curriculum evaluation/review	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assessment of learning outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consultative meetings with key stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institutional self-assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
External examiner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alumni surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exit Interviews with prospective graduates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Colleague evaluation of teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SWOT analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.8. How important are the following areas for quality assurance of your institution?	Not at all important 1	2	3	4	Very important 5
Institutional mission and educational goals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Governance & management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning environment (Infrastructure & learning resources)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Program relevance & curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching, learning and assessment processes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student admission and support services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student progression	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic and support staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student learning experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Graduates employment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Others (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>				
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2.9. Does your institution follow one or more of the following quality management models?	Yes	No
ISO9000	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total Quality Management (TQM)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EFQM	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.10. To what extent is the existing quality assurance system(policy, models, guidelines, methods and instruments) in your faculty ...	Not at all 1	2	3	4	To a great extent 5
	<input type="checkbox"/>				
...Communicated among staff members, students and other key stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>				
...Related to quality of student learning	<input type="checkbox"/>				
...Helpful in enhancement of the quality of teaching and assessment practices	<input type="checkbox"/>				
...related to student learning	<input type="checkbox"/>				
...Related to the attainment of the overall mission and goals of your faculty/department	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Effectiveness of the Existing Quality Assurance System

2.11. How do you evaluate the impact of quality assurance practices on the improvement of every day teaching and learning in your faculty	Very Low 1	2	3	4	Very High 5
	<input type="checkbox"/>				

2.12. Do you think that the requirements of the quality assurance system set by HERQA are acceptable and implementable in the context of your university/faculty? Yes No

What do you think are the major deficiencies & gaps of the HERQA quality assurance system? _____

2.14. How do you evaluate the following educational resources and facilities in your institution?	Accessibility		Utilization		Quality	
	Yes	No	high	Low	Good	Poor
Facilities						
Library resources	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Laboratories	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Equipment (e.g. computers, medical or science)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
ICT (internet connection)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Student learning support services						
Counselling	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Remedial courses	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Course materials	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Financial assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>					

2.15. How do you think that students are affected by quality assurance practices in the following issues?	Not at all 1	2	3	4	Very much affected 5
Academic preparedness	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Motivation to learn	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Self-confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Interest towards the courses you teach	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Attitude towards their field of study	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Value orientation towards quality learning	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Engagement & commitment on their studies	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Academic competence	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Problem solving skills	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Critical/analytical thinking skills	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Communication skills	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Teamwork skills	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Time orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Relevance of study programs for later career of students	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>				

2.16. From your point of view what hinders/facilitates the implementation of quality assurance in your institution?	Hindrance		Not important	Facilitator	
	1	2	3	4	5
Government intervention in internal affairs of institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Political stability	<input type="checkbox"/>				
External quality regulation (HERQA) requirements and expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Higher education law	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Business Processes Reengineering (BPR)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Institutional and student enrolment expansion policy	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Graduate mix policy	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Institutional commitment and support for quality	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Commitment and support of academic community for quality	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Resources (e.g. finance and expertise, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Commitment and engagement of students for their learning	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Preparation of incoming students	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Others(please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>				

2.17. Overall, please list down the major factors that you think affect the development and implementation of quality assurance in your faculty/university

Internal (institutional) factors _____

External factors _____

- 2.18. In what ways do you think can the current quality assurance practices be improved? Please state your suggestions for improvement _____

Appendix 4 Questionnaire for Students

PURPOSE

This questionnaire is designed to collect information about your experience with the systems and practices of assuring quality of the education in the public universities of Ethiopia. Your response to the items of this questionnaire will remain confidential and the data will be used to examine the existing quality assurance systems and practices at the public universities of Ethiopia. We hope you will be able to take time and carefully complete this questionnaire. You can use a “✓” mark to indicate your responses for items with alternative responses.

Thank you for your time

The researcher

L. GENERAL.

University

Faculty/College

Department

Sex Male Female

Age

Third Fourth Fifth

Your Current field of Study

Your stream in preparatory schools: Science Social sciences

Your parents' residence area

Rural

Urban

Your total score in college entrance exam _____

Your current cumulative G.P.A in the department _____

II. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES

2.1. Your placement to the department is:

- Based on your own first or second choice
- By assignment
- Others, please specify _____

2.2. How do you evaluate your self in the following issues?

	Very poor 1	2	3	4	Very good 5
Academic preparedness to pursue your study	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Attitude towards your current field of study	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Interest towards the courses you have attended	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Motivation for learning	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Level of engagement in the courses you have taken	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Time management skills	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Academic competence	<input type="checkbox"/>				

2.3. Have you been involved in any of the following activities during your stay in the university?

	Yes	No
Departmental meetings on quality of educational provision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Faculty meetings on issues related to quality of education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
University wide meetings to discuss about academic matters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completing questionnaires on student learning experience and related issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completing questionnaires on program/course evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completing questionnaires on effectiveness of teaching and	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

assessment		
Curriculum review	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institutional self evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
External evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others (please specify)_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.4. Which of the following methods are employed in your department/ faculty to help you become aware of your support to improve quality of the education? (You can mark more than one option)

- Orientation programs
- Regular meetings of students
- Published rules and policies of the department
- Brochures
- Leaflets
- Others(please specify)_____

2.5. How often does your department conduct meetings with students to discuss about the quality of the teaching and learning?

- Once every two years
- Once every year
- Once every semester
- There is no such tradition
- Other(please specify)_____
- Don't know

2.6. Does your department/faculty employ one or more of the following as methods/ tools improve quality of teaching and learning	Yes	No
Regular program/curriculum evaluation/review	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assessment of learning outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institutional self-assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Consultative meetings with students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
External evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Alumni surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Interviews of prospective graduates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Evaluation of teaching by students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Others (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

2.9. How do you evaluate the following educational resources and facilities in your institution?	Accessibility		Utilization		Quality	
	Yes	No	high	low	Good	Poor
Facilities						
Library resources	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Laboratories	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Equipment (e.g. computers, medical or science)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
ICT (internet connection)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Student learning support services						
Counselling	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Remedial courses	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Course materials	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Financial assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>					

2.10. How satisfied are you with the competencies gained during your study?	Very Dissatisfied 1	2	3	4	Very Satisfied 5
Subject matter knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Problem solving skills	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Analytical /critical thinking skills	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Practical skills	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Communication skills	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Team work skills	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Research ability	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Your overall preparation for a professional career	<input type="checkbox"/>				

2.11. From your point of view what hinders/facilitates the introduction of quality assurance in your institution?	Hindrance		Not important	Facilitator	
	1	2	3	4	5
Political stability	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Higher education law	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Higher education enrolment expansion policy	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Graduate mix policy	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Business Processes Reengineering (BPR)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
University leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Institutional Policy environment	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Lack of institutional commitment and support for quality	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Low commitment and support of academic community for quality	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Lack of resources(e.g. finance and expertise, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Low commitment and engagement of students for their learning	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Academic preparation of incoming students	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Others (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>				

2.12. Overall, please list down the major factors that you think affect the quality of your learning in the department/faculty

Internal factors _____

External factors _____

2.13 . In what ways do you think quality of the current educational processes be improved? Please state your suggestions for improvement_____
