

Non-compliance with Quality Assurance Mechanisms in Tanzanian Universities in the Context of Input, Process, and Output Perspective

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Abstract

Globally, the university system emphasises compliance with quality mechanisms to improve education quality. Like other countries, Tanzania is enforcing compliance with quality mechanisms through quality audits. In doing so, non-compliance cases have been observed. This study classified the existing indicators and impacts of non-compliance with quality mechanisms along Tanzanian universities' input, process, and output. The qualitative approach and descriptive design guided the collection and analysis (through content analysis) of articles, theses, and reports to describe such indicators and impacts. The study revealed the input-related indicators, including inadequate funds, unqualified academics, and high academic/physical resource-student ratio, which affect learning environments. The process-related indicators include traditional and non-inclusive teaching approaches, irregular external examinations, and students' examination irregularities that hinder meaningful learning and assessment. The key output-related indicator is irregular and ineffective curricula reviews and tracer studies that compromise the curricula and graduates' quality. These indicators and impacts jeopardise students' academic capability. Thus, national and institutional quality regulatory agencies should take accountability and improvement measures.

Keywords : Input, process, output, university non-compliance, quality assurance mechanisms, Tanzania

Introduction

The world university education system emphasises the setting of and compliance with Quality Assurance (QA) mechanisms to improve the Higher Education (HE) quality and academic capability of graduates (Asiyai, 2020 ; Mgaiwa, 2021a; Mrema et al., 2023). In that vein, external and internal QA agencies have been formulated in various countries to set up effective QA systems for promoting HE quality (Mgaiwa & Ishengoma, 2017). The essence of formulating external (international and national) QA agencies worldwide is to set and supervise external QA mechanisms for promoting the harmonisation of QA activities toward the internationalisation of HE (Oanda & Matiang'i, 2018). Such harmonisation assists in the movement of staff, students, and graduates across various countries for working or studying (Oanda & Matiang'i, 2018). These external QA agencies include intercontinental, continental, regional, and national agencies such as the Francophone University Agency (*Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie-AUF*), Association of African Universities (AAU), Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA), and Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU), respectively (IUCEA, 2014a; TCU, 2019a). Likewise, the internal (institutional) QA agencies have been formulated and granted the power to set and supervise the institutional QA mechanisms for their respective universities without compromising the minimum requirements from the existing external QA mechanisms (IUCEA, 2014a).

The QA mechanisms and QA standards have been used interchangeably, but they are somehow different. The university QA mechanisms refer to the set of standards, principles, guidelines, processes, strategies, and methods to improve HE quality, while the university QA standard is one of the subsets of QA mechanisms that establishes the minimum quality requirements for HE (Asiyai, 2020; Mgaiwa, 2018a; TCU, 2019a). As such, QA processes such as self-assessment and quality audits can enforce compliance with QA standards, such as the maximum academic-student ratio (Mgaiwa, 2018a). All these concepts are combined to form the QA mechanisms.

Generally, QA mechanisms worldwide are grouped into three (3) stages: input, process, and output (Asiyai, 2020; IUCEA, 2014a). The input QA mechanisms control the quantity or quality of human (students and academics), financial, time, and physical resources in the universities (Ntawiha, 2016). They consist of minimum entry criteria for academics and students, maximum ratios of academic/physical resource-student, and requirements for financial, time, and physical resources (UNESCO, 2014). The process QA mechanisms mainly focus on promoting the quality of teaching and learning activities (Asiyai, 2020). The emphasis is dedicated to the inclusive, participatory, and practical teaching approaches, evaluation of the instructors and courses by students, examinations' moderations, and students' assessment and evaluation by the instructors, as well as independent examiners (both internal and external) (Asiyai, 2020; UNESCO, 2014). The output QA mechanisms insist on continuous improvements to enhance the quality of graduates produced yearly (Egesah & Wahome, 2017). They consist of the requirements for needs assessments and market surveys while designing the new university programmes for accreditation (IUCEA, 2014a). Graduate Tracer Studies (GTS) ought to be done by universities to both employers and alumni to evaluate the relevance of the attained curricula when the existing programmes undergo periodical review for reaccreditation (Mgaiwa, 2018a). Such classification of QA mechanisms controls the quality of HE and students from the entrance, academic development, graduation, and post-graduation life (IUCEA, 2014a). Thus, the universities must abide strongly by those QA mechanisms for each QA stage to promote the graduates' academic capability in their lifetime.

Despite the universities' QA agencies and mechanisms, the works of literature worldwide (particularly in Africa) show that many universities are not adhering rigorously to those mechanisms (Akalu, 2017; Asiyai, 2020). Such negligence is associated with the impracticability of some QA mechanisms due to limited stakeholders' involvement while setting such QA mechanisms (Ansah, 2015), weak QA enforcement efforts (Keykha et al., 2021), universities' financial instabilities (Ansah, 2015), and government interference with the QA agencies by forcing students' admission beyond the university capacity (Akalu, 2017). Consequently, African universities have been ranked lower than other universities worldwide in terms of HE quality. For instance, according to the world university rankings by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) in 2023, within the top 1000 world universities, only 11 universities are found in Africa. Of those 11, one is from Tunisia, three are from Egypt, and seven are from South Africa (Top Universities, 2023). Such ranking considers six (6) criteria (connected with input, process, and output QA stages), which are academic reputation, employer

reputation, academic-student ratio, citations, proportion of international academics and proportion of international students (Top Universities, 2023). Such criteria and the lower ranks for most African universities imply that their adherence to the global QA standards along input, process, and output/outcome QA stages is rated internationally unsatisfactory.

In line with such ranking statistics, the empirical studies from African countries reveal the existence of indicators and negative impacts of non-compliance with QA mechanisms among the universities. For instance, in Nigeria, Asiyai (2020) reported that some Private Universities (PrUs) are cheating the national QA agencies by borrowing academics and learning materials from other universities to facilitate quality audits. Consequently, some unqualified PrUs are accredited by the national accreditation agency, which risks the quality of HE provided to students in such PrUs. In Ethiopia, Akalu (2017) found that the Ministry of Education allows students' admission beyond the universities' capacity. As a result, such universities fail to realise meaningful teaching and learning due to inadequate academics and physical resources (i.e., lecture rooms, library, and laboratory resources), hence promoting rote learning. In South Sudan, Kuyok (2017) observed indicators such as university underfunding and the operation of unaccredited PrUs and academic programmes. Consequently, inadequate funds negatively affect academic operations, and unaccredited PrUs offer HE below national and international quality standards. In Uganda, Neema-Abooki (2016) reported the moonlighting of full-time academics and insufficient funds for academic operations in some universities. As a result, the academics' delivery of quality HE and commitment to realise the respective university vision and mission are negatively affected by such moonlighting. Also, inadequate funds in such universities negatively affect employment, retention and development of competent academics. In Rwanda, Otara (2015) reported the existence of incompetent academics, ineffective student assessment procedures, missing practical activities, and negligence of stakeholders' involvement in the curriculum development of some universities. Due to such indicators, the students are victimised by rote learning and irrelevant curricula. As such, Sikubwabo et al. (2020) found that some university students in Rwanda encounter unmarketable academic programmes due to ineffective reviews of academic programmes. Such indicators and negative impacts imply that, in general, most universities in Africa and, in particular, East Africa are facing the problem of non-compliance with the international and national QA mechanisms. Consequently, the graduates' academic capability is questioned due to the existing poor employability (formal and informal) skills, poor post-employment performance, and educational development barriers when interacting with the local and international contexts (Asiyai, 2020; Keykha et al., 2021). Such HE outcomes are contrary to the Capability Theory of Education, which informed this study. The theory advocates strict compliance with university QA mechanisms for promoting graduates' academic capabilities (Robeyns, 2017).

This study was built on the basis that the existing studies have described the indicators and impacts of non-compliance with QA mechanisms without classifying them along the input, process, and output QA stages. Such description limits the HE stakeholders' ability to explicitly understand the scope of those indicators and impacts along

input, process, and output stages where accountability and improvement measures can be taken. Thus, this paper highlighted and classified the existing indicators and impacts of non-compliance with the university QA mechanisms along the input, process, and output QA stages from 2014 to 2022 in Tanzania. The main research question was: What are the existing indicators and impacts of non-compliance with university QA mechanisms along the input, process, and output QA stages from 2014 to 2022 in Tanzania? The sub-research questions were: First, what are the existing indicators and impacts of non-compliance with university QA mechanisms on the input QA stage in Tanzania? Second, what are the existing indicators and impacts of non-compliance with university QA mechanisms on the process QA stage in Tanzania? Third, what are the existing indicators and impacts of non-compliance with university QA mechanisms on the output QA stage in Tanzania? This study contributes to the literature on benchmarking non-compliance indicators and impacts from Tanzania's input, process, and output QA stages.

The Context of Tanzania University Education and its Existing QA Mechanisms

The TCU is the national regulatory, supportive, and advisory organ for the universities, established by the Universities Act No. 7 of 2005 (TCU, 2019a). Currently, it has registered 54 university institutions (TCU, 2023a). In December 2019, the TCU published the 3rd edition of the QA guidebook to replace the 2nd edition published in June 2014 (TCU, 2019a). Such a 3rd edition (current) has the QA mechanisms along the input, process, and output stages.

In the input QA mechanisms, the commission requires a minimum entry Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.5/5.0 from undergraduate studies and 4.0/5.0 from master's level for being employed as a Tutorial Assistant (TA) and an Assistant Lecturer (AL), respectively (TCU, 2019a). These qualifications are similar to those in the 2nd edition, except for the case of being employed in Public Universities (PUs), where the minimum undergraduate GPA was 3.8/5.0 (TCU, 2014). Also, the students admitted to the first degree should have at least two principal level passes (at least a 'D' grade) from the advanced secondary certificate or a GPA of 3.0/5.0 or grade 'B' from the ordinary diploma (TCU, 2019a). Besides, the maximum academic-student ratio ranges from 1:25 (engineering fields) to 1:50 (pure arts fields) and from 1:30 (engineering fields) to 1:120 (pure arts fields) for conventional and distance learning, respectively. In addition, the guidebook has established the specific structures and sizes for the university buildings and their capacities, which the university owners have to comply with. In the process QA mechanisms, the guidebook insists on using learner-centred and inclusive teaching approaches, examination moderation, and independent examiners (TCU, 2019a). For the output QA mechanisms, the guidebook requires needs assessments and market surveys for the accreditation of the new programmes. Meanwhile, during the programme review, the GTS must be conducted after two years following the end of the programme's delivery cycle for reaccreditation (TCU, 2019a). Generally, the 3rd edition's QA mechanisms are slightly similar to the 2nd edition. Thus, the results of enforcing such 2nd and 3rd editions of the TCU quality guidebook informed this study's documentary analysis from 2014 to 2022.

Empirical studies in Tanzania show that some universities do not strictly comply with QA standards (Mgaiwa, 2018a; Nyamwesa et al., 2020). This problem is mostly reported in PrUs compared to PUs (Mgaiwa, 2021b). The TCU has been taking punitive measures from 2015 to 2022 against non-complying universities and individuals. These measures include expelling unqualified students and suspending, closing, or deregistering non-complying universities and programmes (Mrema et al., 2023). Thus, this study highlighted and classified the existing indicators and impacts of non-compliance with university QA mechanisms along the input, process, and output QA stages from 2014 to 2022 in Tanzania. This study informs national and institutional QA agencies, educational policymakers and planners, researchers, and other practitioners on the specific HE quality areas for taking accountability and improvement measures.

Methodology

Research approach and design

This study used a qualitative approach through secondary research to collect, analyse, synthesise, and interpret existing qualitative data from the library sources (Ellis et al., 2011; Grant & Booth, 2009) for highlighting and classifying the existing indicators and impacts of non-compliance with the university QA mechanisms along the input, process, and output QA stages in Tanzania. Besides, the study was guided by descriptive design to collect, analyse, and describe such indicators and impacts along the input, process, and output QA stages (Leavy, 2017).

Data collection

This study collected empirical data from published academic papers (available in the Google Scholar and ERIC databases), unpublished theses (available online), and official government reports (from the TCU and Ministry of Education websites). Such targeted sources were authored between 2014 and 2022. This timeframe entails the period when the 2nd (June 2014) and 3rd (December 2019) editions of the TCU quality guidebook were launched and enforced till the end of last year (i.e., 2022). The inclusion and exclusion of the sources were guided by checking the existence of indicators and impacts of non-compliance with QA mechanisms along the input, process, and output QA stages from 2014 to 2022 in Tanzanian public and private universities. Also, such selection was delimited within the teaching university function due to limited literature for the remaining functions (research and consultancy). Thus, out of 62 sources initially downloaded, 23 were included because they are the most appropriate for this study to highlight and classify such indicators and their impacts along the input, process, and output QA stages.

Data analysis

This study analysed 23 datasets using the five-step content analysis model, as Leavy (2017) advocated. Such steps were immersion into the sources, identifying critical units of analysis, deductive coding, analysing the assigned codes and interpreting the final results. Consequently, the themes corresponding to each research question were developed and presented to achieve the research objective in this study.

Credibility and dependability of the findings

To assure the credibility and dependability of the findings, this study analysed academic papers only from peer-reviewed journals. Besides, during the presentation of data, matching (triangulation) of data from different sources (academic papers, theses, and government reports) was done.

Findings and Discussion

The main research question of this study was: What are the existing indicators and impacts of non-compliance with university QA mechanisms along the input, process, and output QA stages from 2014 to 2022 in Tanzania? From the reviewed documents, this study revealed several indicators and their impacts. The presentation and discussion of such indicators and their impacts have been arranged within the input, process, and output QA stages as follows:

Input-related indicators and impacts of non-compliance with University QA mechanisms in Tanzania

The research question guiding this part was: What are the existing indicators and impacts of non-compliance with university QA mechanisms on the input QA stage in Tanzania? The empirical studies and official reports in Tanzania have revealed several indicators and impacts of non-compliance with input-related QA mechanisms. These indicators and their corresponding impacts in some public and private universities are presented and discussed hereunder:

Inadequate financial resources

Shortage of financial resources is reported to be the critical input-related indicator in most public and private universities in Tanzania (Mgaiwa, 2018b; Mgaiwa & Ishengoma, 2017; Nyamwesa et al., 2020; Peter, 2018; TCU, 2019c). For instance, some universities struggle to recruit and retain competent academics and procure other learning resources (i.e., library, laboratory, and other physical facilities). As such, Nyamwesa et al. (2020) argue that some TCU quality standards have contributed to the financial burden of Tanzanian universities as they strive to comply. Further, scholars in Tanzania have found that while the unreliability and unsustainability of the PUs' finance sources have made the quality of PUs questionable (Mgaiwa, 2018b), the over-dependence of PrUs on the tuition fees as their main finance source has affected their financial stability in complying with QA mechanisms (Mgaiwa & Ishengoma, 2017; Peter, 2018). Consequently, some universities direct the available funds to the prioritised HE areas with TCU compliance pressure, hence neglecting other areas with less pressure (Nyamwesa et al., 2020).

Such findings concur with those from most sub-Saharan Africa and other developing countries, where university activities are highly dependent on tuition fees as unreliable sources of funds (Ansah, 2015; Sikubwabo et al., 2020). As such, university underfunding and high dependence on tuition fees have negatively affected competent

academics' employment, retention and development in South Sudan and Uganda (Kuyok, 2017; Neema-Abooki, 2016). Such a problem implies that most African universities have no multiple and sustainable/reliable fund sources.

Admission of unqualified students to universities

Mgaiwa and Poncian (2016) observed that unqualified students without the required principal pass from secondary education were admitted to some universities. For instance, between the years 2015 and 2016, a total of 53, 290, and 489 admitted students from Saint John's University of Tanzania (PrU), University of Dodoma (PU), and Saint Joseph University in Tanzania (PrU), respectively, were expelled by the TCU and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) for missing the minimum entry criteria (Mgaiwa & Poncian, 2016; MoEST, 2016; TCU, 2015). Owing to that saga, in the year 2016, the president of Tanzania sacked the chairman of the TCU while the minister of education suspended the TCU executive secretary, two directors (responsible for admission and documentation as well as accreditation and quality assurance), and other two senior officials (Machira, 2016). This accountability measure implies mismanagement of the admission process from the universities (as the initial admission approvers) to the TCU (as the final admission approver), which brings unqualified students into some universities. Such mismanagement shows that some universities did not rigorously conduct the admission process.

These unqualified students in Tanzania were observed to increase the government burden by financing their studies through loans (Mgaiwa & Poncian, 2016). Such student loans could be allocated to other qualified students who missed the loans. Unfortunately, there is an assumption that the unqualified students who succeeded in cheating the HE authorities during their admission and registration processes can cheat again in their university examinations and the labour market. Thus, an unidentified number of unqualified university students is a threat to the nation once they graduate and penetrate the sensitive professional labour markets such as education and health.

These cases of admitting unqualified HE students have been mostly reported in other African countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Sudan (Akalu, 2017; Mrema et al., 2023). Besides, there are few reported cases from developed countries, such as The University of California in the USA, which admitted 64 unqualified students between 2013 and 2019 (Watanabe, 2020). The reasons for admitting unqualified students in such countries are unethical practices of some admission officers and loopholes within admission steps (Mrema et al., 2023; Watanabe, 2020). Such students threaten their professional services once they graduate (Akalu, 2017).

Employment of incompetent and unqualified academics

Peter's (2018) study, conducted in 3 PrUs (with a sample size of 390) in Tanzania, found that the academics' recruitment process is not done transparently as requested by the TCU. Such practice has attracted favouritism, and consequently, the selection of the best academic candidates based on their competitive advantages is not observed; hence, some incompetent academics are employed. Further, Peter observed that some academics were forging their

certificates, and some PrU administrators have been colluding with academics to falsify their qualifications to be submitted to the TCU for a compliance inspection. This falsification involves those with bachelor's and master's degrees being recorded to possess masters and PhDs to qualify for teaching undergraduate and postgraduate students, respectively. Besides, Mgaiwa (2021b), Mgaiwa and Poncian (2016) and Peter (2018) reported that some PrUs in Tanzania have been employing unqualified academics with irrelevant academic specialisation and those with less than the required GPAs.

Employing incompetent and unqualified academics in Tanzania is associated with the PrUs' intention to maximise profit through underpayment because such academics lack the required qualifications (Mgaiwa & Poncian, 2016; Peter, 2018). So long as such favouritism, forging, and falsification bring incompetent and unqualified academics into PrUs, the quality of teaching and learning in such universities is at risk (Mgaiwa & Poncian, 2016). Consequently, such PrUs' students receive knowledge and skills below the required HE standards (Peter, 2018).

Similar universities' forgery and falsification cases are also reported in other African countries such as Nigeria, Kenya and Rwanda, where some PrUs borrow academics and learning facilities from other universities during quality audits to get compliance certificates (Asiyai, 2020; Mrema et al., 2023; Odhiambo, 2014). Scholars (Asiyai, 2020; Neema-Abooki, 2016) assert that the quality and quantity of academics and physical resources remarkably affect the quality of teaching and graduates. Thus, universities must possess academic and physical resources of the required quality and quantity to offer students meaningful learning and high-quality education.

High academic/physical resource-student ratios

The academic-student ratio is very high in most social science programmes of both public and private universities in Tanzania (Mgaiwa, 2021b; Mgaiwa & Poncian, 2016; Peter, 2018; TCU, 2018). Besides, the existing academics in some PrUs are also reported to be dominated by many juniors (TAs and ALs) and very few seniors (those with PhD) who create a triangle shape (skew to the top) for academics profile (Mgaiwa & Ishengoma, 2017; Peter, 2018). Due to the shortage of senior academics, some QA tasks, such as internal quality audits and institutional self-assessments, are reported to be done by junior staff, contrary to the TCU requirements (Mgaiwa & Ishengoma, 2017). Also, even effective senior-junior mentorship is hardly observed in such universities (Peter, 2018).

Moreover, because of the serious shortage of academics, specifically in most Tanzanian PrUs, it has been observed that their workloads exceed the maximum requirements set by the TCU (i.e., 5, 7 and 10 class hours per week for TAs, ALs, and lecturers, respectively) (Peter, 2018; TCU, 2019a). Besides, some TAs and ALs have been assigned undergraduate and master's classes to teach, respectively, contrary to their stipulated duties in the TCU quality guidebook (Peter, 2018; TCU, 2019a). Also, the recruitment of part-time academics in such universities to supplement the academics' deficit has been done beyond the required amount (i.e., not more than 30% of the required

academics to run the academic programme) (Mgaiwa & Poncian, 2016; TCU, 2019a). Other academics were also observed to appear on double payrolls as full-time academics, which is prohibited by the TCU (Peter, 2018). All these academics' issues raise the question of the effectiveness of academics in fulfilling all core university functions. The one-on-one consultation time between academics and students is almost nonexistent due to excessive workloads. In addition, such few academics fail to implement learner-centred (participatory) and inclusive teaching and learning approaches for many students (Kabuta, 2014 ; Mgaiwa & Poncian, 2016 ; Peter, 2018).

Also, the physical resource-student ratio has been reported to be very high in some universities in Tanzania. As such, some public and private universities have overcrowded lecture theatres, seminar rooms, libraries, science laboratories, and computers (Mgaiwa, 2021b; Mgaiwa & Poncian, 2016; Peter, 2018; TCU, 2018). Further, such resources have been observed to be very poor in quality for the students and instructors (Peter, 2018). The existing high physical resource-student ratio and dilapidated physical resources negatively affect the students' learning environment, where they scramble for chairs, and some who do not get chairs remain standing throughout the lecture session (Mgaiwa & Poncian, 2016). As a result, such universities fail to offer meaningful learning to students.

The very high academic/physical resource-student ratios in some universities in Tanzania imply that there is no effective quality audit and control on the balance between the required number of students and existing university resources' capacity before opening the admission window. In other African countries, the high academic-student ratio and junior staff domination have also been reported due to the financial inability to employ an adequate mixture of academics (Akalu, 2017; Kuyok, 2017; Neema-Abooki, 2016). Also, Neema-Abooki (2016) observed the moonlight of some full-time academics in Ugandan universities, which negatively affects academics' delivery of quality HE and commitment to realise the respective university vision and mission. Regarding physical resources, Asiyai (2020) asserts that the poor-quality graduates in African countries are the outcome of the existing dilapidated infrastructures and shortage of learning facilities, which results in theoretical teaching approaches and rote learning.

Process-related indicators and impacts of non-compliance with University QA mechanisms in Tanzania

In this part, the research question was: What are the existing indicators and impacts of non-compliance with university QA mechanisms on the process QA stage in Tanzania? The works of literature have revealed the following process-related indicators and their corresponding impacts in some public and private universities of Tanzania:

Traditional and non-inclusive teaching and learning approaches

The empirical studies have revealed the domination of a traditional teaching approach in most public and private universities that is mostly instructor-centred with less involvement of students in learning as opposed to the currently required learner-centred approach (Mgaiwa & Poncian, 2016). This approach is also typified by the shortage or absence of practical learning activities, seminars and tutorials, individualised assessments, and monitoring of students'

learning progress in most universities in Tanzania (Mgaiwa & Poncian, 2016; Milinga et al., 2022). The domination of a traditional teaching approach results from the increasing number of university students who do not match the existing academics and physical learning resources (Mgaiwa & Poncian, 2016). Besides, such an approach is attributed to inadequate academics' awareness of implementing a learner-centred approach, especially those with no background in educational programmes (Milinga et al., 2022 ; Peter, 2018).

Consequently, academics decide to prioritise completion of the modules within the prescribed time over students' learning, provide more group than individual assignments to simplify marking, use more past than new questions to simplify examination setting and set more objective than subjective questions to simplify the marking process, hence promoting rote teaching and learning (Milinga et al., 2022). Thus, since the entire teaching, learning and assessment process is jeopardised, the students receive knowledge and skills below the required national and international quality standards. On top of that, such students are graduating with poor employability (formal and informal) skills and poor post-employment performance in the labour markets because of missing practical skills (Amani, 2017; Anderson, 2017; Mgaiwa, 2021a). They also experience academic-related barriers when undergoing further studies at other universities worldwide (Amani, 2017 ; Mgaiwa, 2021a). Such outcomes are against capability theory, which holds that the university has a key role in preparing academically capable graduates (Robeyns, 2017).

Moreover, while adopting a mixed research approach and sample size of 160, Kabuta (2014) found that the teaching methods used by the instructors in all universities of the Morogoro region of Tanzania are not inclusive to students with physical disabilities. The reported reasons for such non-inclusive teaching methods include fewer instructors than the recommended academic–student ratio and less equipped instructors with adequate knowledge and learning materials for effective inclusive teaching. Such methods were also found dangerous with the ongoing instructor-centred teaching approach, where the instructors prioritise on-time modules' completion over students' learning. The key marginalised group in such teaching methods is the students with disabilities who need special attention as their learning pace is different from those without disabilities (Tungaraza, 2014). Consequently, some students have been underperforming in the class or dropping out of their studies (Kabuta, 2014; Tungaraza, 2014).

Traditional and non-inclusive teaching and learning approaches are also reported in other countries. For instance, in Rwanda, Otara (2015) found that the high academic-student ratio in some universities has led to ineffective students' assessment procedures, hence limiting practical and meaningful learning. In South Norway, Buli-Holmberg and Jeyaprathaban (2016) found that the inability of instructors to choose the pedagogical approach that best fits the students' needs is the main reason for the non-inclusive teaching approach. Thus, it is evident that traditional and non-inclusive teaching approaches in universities are associated with a high academic-student ratio and inadequate pedagogical knowledge among instructors.

Non-regular use of external examiners

While inadequate funds have been reported to be the critical input-related indicator of non-compliance, some PrUs in Tanzania have been struggling to implement some process-related TCU requirements such as an External Examination (EE) (Mgaiwa, 2018a; Mgaiwa & Ishengoma, 2017; Nyamwesa et al., 2020). The EE is highly recommended to be done in universities to complement the Independent Internal Examination (IIE) because some scholars perceive IIE as dysfunctional (i.e., not bias-free) when employed alone (Mwila et al., 2019). The absence of external examiners in some universities in Tanzania puts at risk a regular process of evaluating the quality of examinations, marking, and course delivery by independent academics outside the respective university (Mgaiwa, 2018a). Thus, neither administrators nor academics will receive EE feedback for current and future improvement.

Asiyai (2020) and Odhiambo (2018) assert that EE is useful for overseeing and improving the quality of examinations, marking guides, marking, results processing, research works, and course delivery once used regularly. Also, Odhiambo (2018) found that due to irregular EE in some Kenyan universities, external examiners catch unqualified students who ought to re-do a course or an examination after their graduation has passed. Such findings show that EE must be regularly done in all universities to cross-check students' academic justice and fairness.

Students' examination irregularities

Some universities in Tanzania are reported to encounter students' examination irregularities. Due to such examination irregularities, the universities have been taking punishments against the responsible students. These punishments range from nullifying the examination results to discontinuing the studies. For instance, the statistics from TCU between the 2012/2013 and 2017/2018 academic years show that a total of 107 university students in Tanzania discontinued their studies because of being caught with serious examination irregularity cases (TCU, 2019b). Such cases are still reported up to date in some Tanzanian universities. However, from the 2018/2019 to 2021/2022 academic years, the TCU statistics show students' discontinuation data by combining two sources : examination irregularities and failures (TCU, 2023b). Such statistics would mislead the readers if presented in this context. Such examination irregularities contribute to the existing half-backed students and graduates. Consequently, such half-backed graduates encounter employability (formal and informal employment) challenges, underperform at working places and become risky to their clients once they are employed in sensitive sectors such as health and education, as well as face academic barriers when undergoing further studies across the world (Amani, 2017; Anderson, 2017). Thus, poor academic capability for such graduates can become a lifetime challenge.

Apart from Tanzania, the examination irregularities and corresponding punitive measures from the national QA authorities have also been reported in Rwanda and Kenya, where some students discontinued for examination cheating and attempt to forge marks (Mbonyinshuti & Tembasi, 2021; Mrema et al., 2023; Nganga, 2016). Such practices can cause a mismatch between graduate grades and attained academic capabilities if they go unnoticed.

Output-related indicators and impacts of non-compliance with University QA mechanisms in Tanzania

The quality of inputs informs the quality of processes, and the quality of inputs and processes informs the quality of outputs (Mgaiwa & Poncian, 2016). Besides, the quality of outputs (graduates) depends on complying with the output QA mechanisms. The research question guiding this part was: What are the existing indicators and impacts of non-compliance with university QA mechanisms on the output QA stage in Tanzania? The reviewed documents have revealed one major indicator and its corresponding impacts on public and private universities in Tanzania. This indicator and its corresponding impacts are presented and discussed hereunder:

Irregular and ineffective curricula review and GTS

The TCU requires all universities in Tanzania to conduct needs assessments, market surveys and GTS regularly during academic programmes' accreditation and reaccreditation to improve the relevance of academic programmes and graduates (TCU, 2019a). Despite such requirements, Mosenda (2022) reported that most universities in Tanzania do not conduct GTS due to a lack of know-how. Thus, TCU offers seminars to universities to curb that challenge. Besides, Amani (2017) and Mgaiwa (2018a) found that ineffective and irregular curricula review and GTS exist in academic programmes' reaccreditation for some universities in Tanzania. As a result, the curricula for some public and private universities in Tanzania are criticised for narrow scope coverage (Mwila et al., 2019) and not meeting current societal needs (Amani, 2017; Mgaiwa, 2021a). Based on such a mismatch between TCU quality requirements and the quality of university curricula, it shows some universities have put less priority on complying with output QA requirements during academic programmes' reaccreditation. Consequently, graduates in non-complying universities in Tanzania become the victims of non-compliance to output QA mechanisms. They are encountering a skills mismatch between what they receive (i.e., theoretical and out-of-date content) and what is demanded (i.e., practical and current skills) in the labour market (Amani, 2017 ; Anderson, 2017; Mgaiwa, 2021b).

Scholars assert that ineffective and irregular curricula reviews and GTS in African universities are attributed to inadequate funds and the poor database for graduates' contacts (Mgaiwa, 2018a; Nudzor & Ansah, 2020). In Rwanda, Sikubwabo et al. (2020) found that due to irregular curricula reviews, some PrUs have unmarketable and inflexible programmes which hinder graduates' acquisition of academic capabilities. Otara (2015) adds that some Rwandan universities are not following the due process of high-stakeholder involvement in curriculum development. Such practice leads to unmarketable, inflexible, and irrelevant curricula. Further, Otara (2015) and Sikubwabo et al. (2020) assert that students are less exposed to practical activities due to overcrowded lecture rooms in some Rwandan universities. Consequently, limited graduates' academic capability becomes a lifetime problem as they face educational development barriers, unemployment (formal and informal), and poor post-employment performance once exposed to

local and international contexts (Asiyai, 2020; Keykha et al., 2021; Mgaiwa, 2021a). This academic incapability is in line with IUCEA's (2014b) study, which found in their survey that more than 50% of graduates from the universities of East African countries (including Tanzania) lack the labour market capability. The statistics reveal that Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi Rwanda, and Kenya had 63%, 61%, 55%, and 52%, respectively. Thus, to foster graduates' academic capabilities, universities' strict compliance with the existing QA mechanisms is inevitable as far as the capability theory of education is concerned (Robeyns, 2017).

Conclusion

This study highlighted and classified the indicators and impacts of non-compliance with university QA mechanisms along Tanzania's input, process, and output QA stages from 2014 to 2022. The findings have revealed the input-related indicators, including inadequate funds, unqualified students and academics, and high academic/physical resource-student ratio, which affect learning environments. The process-related indicators include traditional and non-inclusive teaching approaches, irregular external examinations, and students' examination irregularities that hinder meaningful learning and assessment. The key output-related indicator is irregular and ineffective curricula reviews and GTS that compromise the curricula and graduates' quality. Generally, the observed indicators negatively impact the overall HE quality in non-complying public and private universities. Also, the PrUs are most reported for having many indicators and negative impacts of non-compliance compared to PUs. Besides, the students, as the key HE clients, are the victims of such negative impacts as they receive HE below the required national and international quality standards. Thus, such a situation contributes to poor academic capabilities of graduates (i.e., unemployment, poor job performance, and education development barriers) when exposed to local and international contexts.

The main limitation observed in this research was that some documents had no detailed data that the readers would require. For instance, while the readers of this study would be interested in understanding the reasons for each non-compliance indicator, some documents had no such data. The missing data was taken as the proposed area for further studies. Thus, other researchers can explore the reasons for non-compliance cases in HE. Moreover, despite this study focused on classifying the existing indicators and impacts of non-compliance along the input, process, and output QA stages from Tanzanian public and private universities, the readers should note that not all universities have non-compliance cases. The documentary analysis of this study focused on only non-compliance cases instead of both compliance and non-compliance cases. While several compliance cases in Tanzanian universities have not been presented because of being out of the study's focus, such an area can also be taken as another limitation of this study to be addressed by further studies. Thus, other researchers can extend this study by exploring compliance cases or both compliance and non-compliance cases along QA stages to curb that limitation.

Recommendations of the Study

Since the ultimate goal of conducting this study is to inform national and institutional QA agencies, educational policymakers, planners, scholars, and other practitioners on the specific HE quality areas for taking reflection, accountability and improvement measures, this study provides the following recommendations:

- a) It has been observed that financial scarcity is the critical input-related indicator and has several adverse effects on universities' compliance with other QA standards; therefore, universities should look for alternative sources of funds (which are sustainable and reliable) from research projects, other economic projects, and donors instead of depending on the tuition fees only to improve their financial stability for effective compliance to QA standards.
- b) Since it has been found that high ratios in academic-student and physical resource-student are the reasons for the failure to implement most of the process QA mechanisms, the national and institutional QA agencies need rigorous control on the balance between the number of admitted students and the existing university capacity through external and internal quality audits, respectively, before opening new admission window.
- c) To regulate HE quality, the national and institutional QA agencies must conduct quality audits and take the strongest punitive measures against all non-complying universities and university stakeholders.
- d) The national and institutional QA agencies should sensitise university administrators, academics and students on the essence of QA and how best to comply with unfamiliar QA standards such as GTS, learner-centred approach and examination regulations. This sensitisation will reduce their resistance and misconduct caused by inadequate stakeholders' awareness. As such, Alzafari and Kratzer (2019) affirm that the primary purpose of universities to train their QA stakeholders is to reduce their resistance during implementation.
- e) Lastly, since indicators and impacts of non-compliance imply the failure of the institutional QA systems to enforce QA mechanisms, such QA systems should be capacitated regarding QA skills, staff, and finances to enforce compliance with QA mechanisms. This suggestion is based on the existing assumption that strong institutional QA systems lessen the need for external QA systems (Kadhila & Lipumbu, 2019).

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