

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE

ABSTRACT

Using the University of Durban-Westville as an illustrative case study, the study examines quality assurance policies and their implementation in the South African higher education system. The scope of the study covers a wide-ranging analysis of discourses underpinning quality assurance and a focused analysis of institutional policies. As one of its central aims, the dissertation investigates the tension between quality assurance as it is conventionally understood and quality assurance conceived as continuous organizational improvement based on the principles of total quality management.

The study has two fairly distinct dimensions: a literature survey focusing on global trends and practices, and an empirical investigation focusing on the University of Durban-Westville. The literature study looks global systems, trends and practices, and provides a suitable point of departure for a contextual analysis of quality management in the South African higher education system. Relying on a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews as research instruments, the study's empirical component investigates the attitudes and perceptions of academic managers at UDW towards national and institutional quality assurance policies and mechanisms.

The study's findings all point to a preference for a decentralised system of quality management with the government playing a peripheral monitoring role rather than a central policing role. This study also demonstrates that the distinction between academic development and quality assurance is a spurious one and should only be made for analytical purposes.

Key words

Higher education

Quality assurance

Efficiency

Quality enhancement

Corporate enterprise ideology

Assessment

Evaluation

Academic development

Total quality management