

ASSESSING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY IN

ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that Assessing the Implementation of Quality Assurance Policy in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions is my own work and all sources that I have quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



Date: 24, September 2022

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my family. To my parents, Abera Shamelu, who passed away at an early point of my studies, and Mulunesh Madebo, who always believed in and exhibited the duty we all must change our world, and who have supported me throughout my life in everything I have strived to achieve. To my wife, Alemitu Selgen, for many big sacrifices that enabled me to achieve this objective, for her ongoing support, and for her pride in my successes, and to my children, Eden, Tsion, and Kidist, who offer joy and meaning to my life every day and give me purpose in all I do.

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ABSTRACT

In Ethiopia, quality assurance in higher education is one of the government's top priorities, just like in other developing nations. This thesis assesses the implementation of quality assurance (QA) policies in Ethiopian public higher education. More specifically, it concentrates on determining the effectiveness of quality assurance practices and identifying implementation gaps in line with HERQA/ETA focus areas. The key research questions were: 'how and under what conditions do public universities in Ethiopia execute ETA quality assurance policies, and what contextual factors influence QA policy implementation?' The study is based on the concept that student learning is at the heart of universities' educational purpose, and that focusing on the key educational processes and situations that impact student learning quality makes QA procedures more successful.

The study was based on a conceptual framework comprising important concepts in contingency and institutional theories, as well as quality assurance approaches. Two organisational theories, contingency theory, and neo-institutional theory were used to provide a theoretical lens for explaining how internal and external organisational settings impact the implementation of QA policies at HEIs. The study employed a qualitative research approach, which included semi-structured interviews, textual open-ended questions, and document analysis. Purposive sampling was used to choose four public institutions as data sources. The ETA and MoE were also added at the macro level to analyse the impact of institutional contexts on institutional quality audit practices.

The findings show that the implementation of QA policies was not conceptualised in public higher education at large and that reality on the ground differs from the literature generated on the science of QA, instead being applied partially in public institutions. They lack proper QA structures, processes, and documented policies. The QA initiatives were carried out without a clear sense of direction and objectives, resulting in ineffective coordination. Self-evaluations were held symbolically at higher levels of institutions, and the outcomes of the evaluations were seldom used in an organised manner to enhance teaching-learning, faculty decision-making and planning processes. It might be inferred that the ETA's quality assurance policies appear to be disconnected from internal quality improvement programmes in HEIs.

It is suggested that HEIs design institutional quality QA policies, mobilise resources for institutional quality development, construct fully-fledged QA structures at all levels, and staff the structures with the appropriate human resources.

HEIs should begin and carry out effective self- assessment of their operations, own it, and strive towards achieving their stated goals. It is critical that the ETA creates accreditation mechanisms for public HEIs, particularly at the institutional level. The ETA should be more independent, with greater autonomy and adequate resources to become a sustainable professional agency supporting the HE sectors.

Key words: Higher education institutions; Quality; quality assurance; quality assurance policies; policy, policy implementation.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAU	Addis Ababa university
ABET	Accreditation board of engineering and technology
AC	Academic Commission
ADRC	Academic development and resource center
BU	Bonga university
CBC	Competency based curriculum
CEPU	Consortium of Ethiopian public universities
CSA	Central statistics agency
EFQM	European foundation for quality management
ENQA	European association for quality assurance in higher education
EQA	External quality audit
ETA	Education and training agency
ETP	Education and training policy
FDRE	Federal democratic republic of Ethiopia
FGDs	Focus group discussions
GDP	Gross domestic production
GPI	Gender parity index
GTP.II	Growth and transformation program II
HDP	Higher diploma program
HE	Higher education
HEIs	Higher education institutions
HEP	Higher education proclamation
HEQC	Higher education quality committee of South Africa
HERQA	Higher education relevance and quality agency
HESC	Higher education strategy center
ICT	Information communication technology
IMF	International monetary fund
ISO	International organisation for standardisation
IUCEA	Inter University Council for East Africa
JU	Jimma university

KEU	Kotebe education university
KPIs	Key performance indicators
MOE	Ministry of education
MOFED	Ministry of finance and economic development
MOH	Ministry of health
MOI	Ministry of information
MOSHE	Ministry of science and higher education
MOST	Ministry of science and technology
MPSMS	Modern public sector management system
NER	Net enrolment rate
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NSTI	National Standard technology Institute
ODL	Open- distance learning
PDRA	Plan, Do, Review, Act
PhD	Philosophy of doctor
PIER	Planning, implementation, Evaluation and review
PHEIs	Public higher education institutions
QA	Quality assurance
QC	Quality conformity
QD	Quality design
QP	Quality performance
RI	Research institutions
SDGs	Sustainable development goals
SDP	Staff development plan
SED	Self-evaluationdocument
SER	Self-evaluation report
SIDA	Swedish international development authority
SNNP	Southern nations, nationalities, and peoples
STI	Science and technology institutions
SPD	Strategic plan document
SRD	Scientific research development
SQAA	Scotland quality assurance agency

TQM	Total quality Management
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and training
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, scientific, and cultural organization
UNICEF	United nations international children's emergency fund
USA	United states of America
USAID	United states agency for international development
WSU	Wolaita Sodo university

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This research aims to assess the execution of quality assurance policies in Ethiopian higher education institutions (HEIs). It starts with a short explanation of implementation, policy implementation, quality, and quality assurance. It also offers an evaluation of how and why quality, quality assurance (QA), and quality implementation have become important agenda items for HEIs around the world, with a special focus on Ethiopia.

Khan (2016:4) noted that implementation is a process of mutual adaptation in which policies and programmes adapt to and improve each other's environment. It requires the transformation of policy priorities into tangible reality. It also involves the transformation of physical, economic, and intellectual capital into services and facilities. Similarly, Khan (2016:3) defines policy implementation as the process of turning inputs (financial, data, technical and human materials) into outputs (goods and services).

Quality may refer to a variety of things. Quality of higher education, according to Love and Horn (2021:204), is multifaceted and includes all roles and activities of universities, including instruction, academic programmes, study and grants, hiring, faculty, buildings, infrastructure, resources, and the academic climate.

Quality assurance also refers to a methodically organised and continuous quality process in terms of quality maintenance and development (Tolmachew, et.al.2021:7). In the sense of HEIs, quality assurance is a mechanism oriented towards knowledge to make informed decisions as to whether there is improvement in achieving educational objectives through supervision (Dawit, 2006:10).

According to Aliyari, Ashrafi and Ahmed (2022), QA and reassurance processes in higher education have attracted a lot of attention both locally and globally. At the end of the 1990s, there was a worldwide concern about the quality and its standards. To that end, different forms of

quality assurance protocols were developed based on governmental measures for measuring success in terms of indicators.

The main cause for expanded quality assurance management initiatives is the massification of HE, which has resulted in a shortage of public funding to support this growth. In this regard, Zhang., et. al. (2022), argued that rapid changes in educational massification, greater diversity in resource provision, alignment of programmes with labour market demands, decreased funding, increased transparency, and indirect governance of HE driven by political, economic, and socio-cultural forces, have created concern for quality. Furthermore, according to Newton (2007:14), all these developments and transformation processes in HE is intimately related to a “... increasing interest in quality, needs for accountability, and the establishment of national quality agencies”.

As a result, more formal (explicit and systematised) QA processes are needed than at traditional elite universities. Quality is increasingly making the difference between success and failure in education. In this regard, Jacob, et.al., (2021:36) stated that QA is becoming an increasingly fundamental feature of HEIs in developing nations, as evidenced by the development of national and institutional policies, structures and frameworks. Policymakers regard the implementation of a QA policy as closely linked to the outcomes of university education and it reflects an increase in university managerialism. As a result, some nations, including Ethiopia, have implemented official quality assurance procedures to legalise and improve the performance of their HEIs.

The “quality assurance” or the emergence of an “audit culture” threatened developing countries in the 1990s (Brennan & Shah, 2000a:346). As a result, quality and the question of quality assurance are at the forefront of HE today and are assessed through a variety of national quality assurance processes and handled along academic discipline lines (Twomey,2021). Quality assurance is related to a set of principles that are based on a common understanding, such as standardised rules and regulations (Lim,2018).

In Ethiopia, quality assurance began in 2003 with the establishment of the HE Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA), currently known as the FDRE Education and Training Authority (ETA) by Proclamation no.351/2003, which was set up to resolve the complex problems of educational relevance and quality. The ETA has developed various quality assurance policies to ensure quality education in HEIs, since its inception in 2003 (Semela, 2011:1).

These policies serve as a mechanism for maintaining high standards in teaching and science, as well as motivating HEIs to enforce quality assurance policies. HEIs were required to conduct and maintain their quality assurance using HERQA-organised internal and external frameworks. However, Geda (2014:12) noted that quality assurance policies have not been fully implemented in Ethiopia for the past eleven years.

To address this gap, the emphasis of this study is on the implementation of QA policies in Ethiopian higher education institutions. It seeks to explore identify gaps and limitations and to identify circumstantial factors influencing the execution of QA policies in HEIs. This thesis also aims to identify theoretical justifications for the implementation of QA policies and to recognise priority areas for development in Ethiopian HEIs.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Ethiopia, a landlocked country on the Horn of Africa, has a 1 700-year history of elite education anchored in the Orthodox Church (Saint, 2004). However, secular HE did not begin until 1950, with the foundation of the University College of Addis Ababa. Ethiopia, on the other hand, has aggressively expanded its higher education provision over the last thirty years, prompted by an educational system reform in the 1990s with the declared goal of massification to decrease poverty and improve the country's economic status.

Accordingly, the number of public colleges increased from 2 to 46, while private higher education institutions increased from 0 to 280. As a result, overall undergraduate enrolment increased dramatically from 67 682 in 1999/2000 to 825 003 in 2019/2020, with an average growth rate of 26.1% 26.1% (MoSHE, 2019/2020). This dramatic expansion of the country's HE sectors in a few decades is likely to continue in the coming years.

However, such rapid development has raised serious questions about educational quality, among other things. As the sector developed, funding, academic personnel, governance and leadership, physical resources, infrastructure and facilities, graduate employability, and other factors all came under the pressure of constraints (Ashcroft & Rayner, 2012). Because of the confluence of these challenges, there is increased concern regarding educational quality.

Consequently, numerous internal and external stakeholders have come to agree on the notion of worsening quality. Likewise, Kahsay (2012:160) said unequivocally that public universities are threatened with challenges relating to the quality of educational input, procedures, and outputs, all of which impact the quality of the fundamental educational process. In this context, Ethiopia HE system has confronted the challenging job of boosting the quality of teaching and research inside institutions while simultaneously increasing access for disadvantaged segments within society.

In response, Ethiopia promulgated a quality assurance mechanism in HE at both the national and institutional levels. The HE Proclamation (No.351/2003) created the HERQA, now ETA, at the national level, an autonomous agency empowered to defend and improve the relevance and quality of HE in the country (FDRE, 2003, Article 78–85). This was an attempt to guarantee that any HEIs programmes are aligned to the country’s economic and social development.

For the past decade, the ETA has handled accreditation licences, evaluations, institutional standards supervision, and collection and dissemination of information on the state of quality. The most important statutory framework that laid the groundwork for QA in Ethiopian HEIs was the 2009 Higher Education Proclamation (No.650/2009) and the 2018 revised Proclamation (No.1152/2018).

During evaluations, the ETA had found that many of the country’s HEIs lagged in adopting QA policies and constructing efficient mechanisms that encourage an institutional culture of continual quality improvement. This necessitated the establishment of an ever improving and dependable internal quality assurance system at each institution (FDRE, 2018, Article 21).

In addition to the creditable efforts of ETA and the Ministry of Education (MoE), HEIs are now taking on the responsibility of ensuring the quality of various aspects of university education such as academic staff professional development, course content, teaching-learning processes, student assessment, and grading systems. Since 2009, public HEIs have been working to develop structures, with a focus on quality assurance.

The establishment of the ETA was a watershed moment in the history of Ethiopia HE to assure quality because it introduced an overhaul of internal QA practices in addition to the primary external ones. Since its inception, the ETA has created a variety of quality assurance policies, including the ETA institutional audit procedure, areas of focus for institutional quality audits, the

ETA institutional audit profile, institutional self-evaluation documents, preparing for self-evaluation, and programme evaluation guidelines among others (Tadesse, 2015; Semela, 2011).

Investigating the implementation of quality assurance policies at HEIs has thus become critical to understanding how the proclamations' provisions and policies developed by ETA since 2009 have been implemented and translated into action by HEIs. As a result, the focus of this research is on assessing the implementation of these quality assurance policies, intending to enhance and sustain the quality and relevance of HE to meet the needs of stakeholders.

Therefore, this research investigates the implementation of QA policies at national and organisational levels in the light of the government's envisioned policies and the strategies that are being executed in the HEIs in Ethiopia.

1.3 THE RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

In Ethiopia, in the nation's development and poverty alleviation HE is part of the vision to improve the quality and employability of university graduates. It is undeniable that QA is critical to the achievement of the HE system's growth goals and contributes to the achievement of the national developmental agenda (MoE, 2010:25).

Because of this, the quality of HE and its assurance is at the forefront of all vital focus areas in the setting of growing appreciation of the function of HEIs for the national growth of a developing country like Ethiopia. Accordingly, to improve the quality of education in HEIs the following five essentials should be considered. These are the lecturers, students, the range of courses, procedures, orders, and directives. These can be associated with student achievements, the way how to teach (methodologies), the staff professional development programme, instructional improvement, and the culture of the HEIs (Harvey & Green, 1993:26). It is understood only two public HEIs in Ethiopia existed over the past sixty years eras. However, since 1990 the government has built additional HEIs aimed at improving the accessibility of higher education for prospective students to get admission to tertiary education at different levels. Although Ethiopia has made great strides in expanding access to higher education, there are problems with quality outcomes.

As a result, MoE organised an evaluative forum with partners to evaluate the outcome of the implementation of successive policies. The debate pointed out the decline of quality education in higher education in Ethiopia. Based on the feedback from the forum, MoE established the ETA as the regulatory quality assurance body for higher education in the country. The ETA has developed different policy approaches and procedures to measure quality in the HEIs in Ethiopia (Teshome, 2015:12).

An audit reports for the years 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2018 have revealed that HEIs have been attentive to the importance of quality assurance in their institutions, but quality management has not been fully implemented. The reports showed that the HEIs do not have a comprehensive QA management system for can be effectively evaluated. Furthermore, the quality inspections carried out by ETA in 2019 show that there is a gap between the intended results of the strategy and established QA schemes (ETA, 2019:86).

Scholars such as Abebe (2016), Teshome (2015), and Kedir (2018) have found that graduates' performance has deteriorated even after 18 years of ETA establishment to assure quality in HEIs. According to them, graduates perform poorly as a result of poor educational quality, and there is also a knowledge and skill gap in terms of technological advancement. They also discovered that students' grades did not improve despite their poor performance. This suggests that the use of ETA quality assurance procedures in higher education institutions should be assessed.

In addition, before conducting this study at the MOSHE, I worked as a senior policy and planning expert for higher education. The MOSHE was merged with the MoE in 2021 and from this point forward, I therefore refer to the MoE, except in referencing documents published before 2021. My work at the MoE has given me a better awareness of the state of QA policies at Ethiopian HEIs. Because of this knowledge and experience, the researcher chose to do research on the functioning and general dynamics of the quality assurance system that might assist the MoE and HEIs.

Accordingly, the researcher was interested in studying the issue of the implementation of QA policies primarily since there has been mounting public concern about the quality of HE in Ethiopia which shows that a more complete understanding of the working and general dynamics of quality assurance policy could support MoE and HEIs.

Thus, even 18 years after the founding of ETA and the drafting of its quality assurance regulations, the above-mentioned recent research has repeatedly revealed that there is still a shortage of quality education in Ethiopian HEIs. Second, the research stated above did not reveal the extent to which Ethiopian public universities have implemented measures to address the issue of quality education. The researcher also found that most earlier studies, including those by Abebe (2016), Kedir (2018) and Teshome (2015), among others, focused on QA in private HE rather than public institutions. These difficulties motivated the researcher to conduct this study to assess the implementation of QA policies in Ethiopian public HEIs. The research, thus, pursues a critical assessment of how ETA's quality assurance policies have been implemented to ensure the provision of excellent education at Ethiopian public institutions.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Following the collapse of the Marxist Derg regime in 1991, the Government of Ethiopia articulated different approaches to restructuring all public sector industries including the education sector. In this regard, in 1994, the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Ethiopia launched a new policy on education and training aimed at solving complex problems that hinder the education system. The education and training policy clearly states that the country's education system is complicated by multifaceted issues of relevance, quality, accessibility, and equity (ETP, 1994:3).

In response, Ethiopia used a range of proclamations to implement a quality assurance system in higher education at both the national and institutional levels. At the national level, the Higher Education Proclamation (No.351/2003) established the HERQA, now the ETA, which was an autonomous organisation established to sustain and enhance the quality and relevance of HE in the country (FDRE, 2003, article 78–85). This was an attempt to ensure that HE provided by any institution was consistent with the country's economic and social policies.

As the previous proclamation was found to be deficient, the MoE revised the Proclamation of Higher Education No. 650/2009 and launched Proclamation No. 1152/2019 to create an appropriate legal framework to ensure relevance and quality of HE and to ensure that HEIs are the centre of excellence in teaching and learning, research, and community involvement (FDRE, 2019:11445).

Furthermore, HEIs are highly concerned with QA and have a high level of responsibility and autonomy. The Higher Education Proclamation 1152/2019 also emphasises the function of the HEIs in that concern. Specifically, Proclamation 1152/2019 specifies that HEIs should implement a dependable internal structure of quality augmentation including observable and inclusive actions of quality covering continuous professional development of teachers, course content, methodological aspects, the assessment and grading system, and educational modalities (FDRE, 2009:4988).

Although new policies have been put in place by the MoE and periodic national Growth and Transformation Plans (GTP I and GTP II) have been put in place by the government, there are still gaps in implementation to promote synergy in the execution of QA policies in the HEIs. Furthermore, there is emerging research information on the effectiveness of HEI quality assurance practices that indicates the challenges in implementing QA.

Woldemariam's (2008:149) analysis of the methodology and processes used revealed that the leaders of several Ethiopian HEIs were not committed to organisational audits. Accrediting public HEIs has little to do with institutional QA. Therefore, none of the public HEIs or the programmes they offered were accredited.

Adamu (2012:75) indicated that "accreditation of programmes and institution" and "institutional audit" are the primary forms of QA in Ethiopia. In the private sector, there is a preference for "evaluation of programmes" and "institutional audit". There is also a propensity to carry out "quality control" in private HEIs and "quality enhancement" in public HEIs. However, public HEIs did not carry out recommendations of audit findings, and ETA carried out no monitoring operations. Furthermore, no public HEIs were included on the ETA's list for pre-accreditation, accreditation, or re-accreditation. Neither were evaluation audits performed at a granular level. The ETA also does not conduct programme evaluation which demonstrates why there will be competitiveness problems in Ethiopian higher education in the future.

Kahsay (2012:256) mentioned that the key problems for the execution of internal quality assurance at public HEIs are the absence of clear guidelines, rules, policies, structures, lack of knowledge and skills to execute QA policies, integrity, and the commitment of educational

leaders. Similarly, the implementation of QA for improvement is questionable in the absence of empowering and supportive settings.

In research concentrating on quality management of education in HEIs in Ethiopia, Biruk (2014:137) contended that the QA method is not operative in the majority of Ethiopian public HEIs. As a result, there is a failure to raise knowledge of the perspectives of various policies among all parties concerned, notably learners and academic personnel. In addition, there is a gap in using QA policies as helpful tools in their day-to-day operations to improve educational quality.

Geda (2014:324) advised that there is insufficient data on self-originated quality improvement initiatives in public HEIs which lack suitable structures, procedures, and defined strategies to assure quality. The QA efforts lacked genuine or necessary direction. In this regard, Geda (2014), noted that the quality assurance methods designed by the ETA appear to be disconnected from internal attempts to improve quality in HEIs.

Similarly, Tadesse (2015:147) indicated that QA has a comparatively weak impact on improving quality because, though it discloses deficiencies, it does not follow procedures and proficiency to notify responses.

According to these studies, “public universities are at risk of issues related to the quality of educational inputs, procedures, and outputs that influence the quality of essential educational processes” (Tadesse, 2015). One of the most significant challenges influencing the application of QA at HEIs was the lack of a clear policy for implementation. Other variables influencing the execution of QA in Ethiopian HEIs include a lack of leadership expertise and abilities, as well as the honesty and passion of leaders. Similarly, the application of QA rules for enhancement is uncertain because of a lack of supportive and enabling conditions. None of the previous research focused solely on the execution of QA policies in Ethiopian HEIs.

To this end, Teshome (2015:5) highlighted that suitable research on the evaluation of the execution of QA policies in HEIs was not carried out effectively. Unlike in other contexts, there is a scarcity of data on the institutionalisation of QA in HE. There is also an absence of evidence on the state of essential items needed for the process and the stage attained by current institutional quality-audit efforts. Because of these ambiguities, there is more space for fresh research to be done on this topic, to illuminate the issues concerning the execution of QA policies in Ethiopian public HEIs and to find

solutions to these issues. This study is, therefore, dedicated to investigating the national and institutional perspectives on the effective implementation of QA policies in selected HEIs in Ethiopia to ensure quality education. Because of the problems mentioned above, the four specific research questions listed below were addressed.

1. What are the national and international perspectives on the introduction of quality assurance policies?

The first research question (RQ1) is to grasp why the Ethiopia government introduced QA policies in Ethiopia HE system, and the national and institutional perspectives on the implementation of QA policies, as well as to identify the underpinning and features of Ethiopia's quality assurance system. This question will be answered through the perspectives, opinions, and ideas of interviewees, as well as a review of the literature, an evaluation of relevant QA papers, and the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2. The theoretical inputs came from several sources, but specific consideration is devoted to the application of models and ideas to Sub-Saharan Africa, principally Ethiopia. The study's conceptual underpinning is founded on research into QA literature and organisational theories, and it serves as a springboard for the empirical analysis that follows. The first RQ examines national and worldwide perspectives for the implementation of existing QA policies at universities to improve the conditions necessary for high-quality education.

2. How do the selected HEIs go about implementing quality assurance policies?

The second question seeks information on "how" the selected HEIs execute the QA policies created by the ETA in response to ETA regulations, specifically how key personnel perceive that the QA system has influenced them. Thus, Semi-structured interviews were conducted with university vice presidents, college deans, department heads, internal quality assurance experts, and staff from four institutions that have been severely impacted by the QA system to address the question. Also, RQ2 addressed by reviewing relevant documents.

3. What are the fundamental elements, specific approaches and mechanisms used by HEIs to assure the quality of higher education?

The third research question aims at identifying the fundamental elements, specific approaches, and mechanisms used by HEIs to assure the quality of HE. Therefore, the research question was addressed by employing semi-structured interviews with university vice presidents, college deans, department heads, internal quality assurance experts, and staff from four institutions that have been severely impacted by the QA system to address the question and by reviewing relevant documents.

4. What are the challenges facing the HEIs in implementing the QA policies?

The fourth question is intended to elicit information about the problems that HEIs face while establishing quality assurance programmes. The issue focuses on identifying problems and practical consequences for enhanced quality assurance processes at Ethiopia's public institutions. Therefore, RQ4 was addressed through the conceptual lens originated from contingency and neo-institutional theories which was discussed in chapter two. Finally, it addresses or highlights potential solutions to issues related to the execution of quality assurance methods. The investigation addresses bridging the gap between real and good behaviours, what is necessary for change, and how it may be accomplished by using the responses from key informants and reviewing relevant documents.

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study aim conveys the purpose or intent of the research. Objectives identify results that are required to achieve the goal (Sanders et al. 2022:54). The research aim explains what the intentions of the researcher are and what the researcher aims to accomplish or to achieve. It regulates the scope, complexity, and overall direction of the research and responds to the fundamental questions of the research. Objectives are a guarantee to the reader that something positive will be achieved by the researcher. It is usually seen as a declaration of intent (Duan, 2020). In this section, the aims and objectives are delineated.

1.5.1 Aim of the Study

The study aims to assess how selected Ethiopian HEIs implement quality assurance policies and leverage the findings to establish a strategic framework for the effective implementation of quality assurance policies.

1.5.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the national and institutional perspectives on the effective implementation of quality assurance policies.
2. To analyse how the selected Ethiopian higher education institutions implement quality assurance policies.
3. To examine which fundamental elements and approaches of the quality assurance policies are effectively implemented in HEIs.
4. To investigate participants' perspectives on the challenges that the HEIs face in implementing the QA policies.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In the educational system, quality assurance evaluates the fitness of educational systems to meet defined goals and objectives for achieving comparative standards. Ashfaq and Tatlah, (2022:13) stressed that education quality assurance has become an all-encompassing concern affecting policies, processes, and actions by which the quality of education provided is developed, sustained, and maintained. Teshome and Kassa (2008:5) revealed that adequate research has not been performed on the execution of quality assurance policies in HEIs. The study seeks to reflect both the theoretical and the real-world facts on how HEIs use QA policies to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process.

Hypothetically, in the sense of sub-Saharan countries, including Ethiopia, this research is expected to fill a research gap concerning QA in HEIs. It aims to bring value to the field of research by assisting in the identification of mechanisms to improve the execution of QA policies in Ethiopian public HEIs. Furthermore, this study can provide a basis for further studies on the implementation of QA policies in Ethiopia's HEIs.

Practically, the study may be a starting point for the development of QA in HE in Ethiopia. It may provide relevant and up-to-date information on the prevailing QA practices in the HEIs and the public sector. The study also aims at increasing the awareness of stakeholders concerning the challenges in the implementation of QA policies.

The study may provide valuable evidence at the national and organisational levels for policymakers, administrators, and QA experts to enhance the standard of HE in Ethiopia. As such, the study is expected to be a valuable source for informed decision-making on the quality assurance strategy in Ethiopia. In conclusion, the results of the study may also serve as a guideline for further HE studies in Ethiopia.

1.7 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Delimitations refer to what the researcher is not going to do. They are the features that set a boundary for the scope of the study. It clarifies exceptions and reservations inherent in any study. Leedy and (Peel, 2020:2), described demarcating factors as the choice of objectives, the study's vital questions, variables of interest, theoretical viewpoints adopted, and the topic chosen by the researcher. According to Seyfried, M., and Pohlenz, P. (2018), one of the most critical current issues in educational management is quality assurance, so this study focuses on suggesting ways to improve higher education governance that improve QA, as well as developing effective HEI performance indicators and improving academic staff employment conditions, to improve higher education quality in Ethiopia.

As indicated in the scope of the study section below, the study is confined to four of the 46 public universities because of the vastness and diverse nature of higher education, to make it manageable within the capacity of the researcher's financial, material and time resources. It was also delimited to the assessment of the execution of QA policies that are designed by the ETA to guarantee the provision of quality education.

1.7.1 Scope of the Study

Herma, N.A., (2022:12) claimed that the research boundary defines the limitations of the study in terms of content, sample size, beneficiary groups and topographical location. Based on this view, the limitations of this study are restricted to examining the execution of QA policies in Ethiopia's public HEIs. Four public universities were selected for study based on their level, type, and profile, namely applied research, comprehensive universities, and specialist or science and technology universities (MoSHE, 2019:10). The study focused on public universities since ETA is one of the MoE's sub-sectors and is a regulatory agency that promotes and supports the growth of HEs' institutional culture in Ethiopia, ensuring quality in both public and private HEIs.

The proposed research was confined to the quality of education, which is rooted in teaching and learning at the bachelor's degree level. Thus, the additional core activities of HEIs such as research and community engagement were not a part of this study.

Finally, the participants in this study were presidents/vice-presidents of the targeted colleges, college deans, heads of faculty, department heads, professors, ETA senior officials, MoE senior officials, and members of the student union. The key reason for this selection was that the presidents and lecturers at the university were the implementers of the quality assurance policies, while higher officials of the related HE and ETA and MoE were responsible representatives for verbalising the policies and tracking and evaluating the execution of HEIs policies. More significantly, the university student unions are the representative of the beneficiaries of the execution of the QA policies in their corresponding universities.

1.7.2 Conceptualisation and Operationalisation of Key Concepts

Conceptualisation is a process of deciding how the researchers describe the concepts used in the analysis (Babatunde, et.al.,2022). Likewise, Ransom, Knepler, and Zapata-Gietl (2018:33) outlined conceptualisation as the method of idea creation and description. The following notions were therefore established to allow readers to understand the research problem: assessing, higher education institutions, quality, quality assurance, quality assurance policies, policy, and policy implementation.

1.7.2.1 Assessing

The Oxford English Dictionary (1993) describes “assessing” as something that allows a decision to be made about someone or something’s nature or quality. Also, assessing is specified by Merriam Webster (2002) as judging something about its importance or significance. ‘Assessing’ is seen in this study as a very careful judgement on the execution of the QA policies at selected HEIs in Ethiopia.

1.7.2.2 Higher education institutions

The Proclamation No.1152/2019 on the HE of Ethiopia defines higher education institutions inclusively. According to the proclamation, “Higher education” means education in arts, social sciences, and science and technology programmes open to undergraduates and graduates who

enter various degree programmes through different educational modalities, while “institutions” are public or private institutions offering higher education (FDRE, 1152:11446).

1.7.2.3 Quality

In everyday life, quality pronounces the degree of satisfaction with the process. Quality indicates the indispensable characteristics of something. Subjectively and holistically, people perceive no difference between the concept of “quality” and the connotation of quality in HE. Concerning HE, it demonstrates the positive effects of ‘highly good’, ‘good practice’, ‘wellbeing’ etc. (Broday, 2022). Furthermore, Dicker, et.al., (2019:26) correlates HEs’ quality with both the essence of educational progress and the achievement of students. Some philosophical scholars claim that in literature, the meaning of “quality” lacks an accepted description. However, quality is described by Gough (2021) as fitness for function.

Wheelaham and Moodie (2021:212) suggested that a sets of four values, such as input, output, value-added and method, should form the basis for a widespread and useful definition of quality in HE. According to him, the four values must be used to formulate a precise definition of quality in HEIs. The Inter University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) (2008a) presents quality as the effective and efficient achievement of goals, assuming that the goals appropriately reflect the needs of all the stakeholders involved.

1.7.2.4 Quality assurance

According to Lawal et.al., (2021:235), quality assurance is “a methodological and prearranged practice that continues to attract attention in terms of protection and enhancement of quality”. UNESCO (2004) noted QA as a rational study of educational programmes to safeguard the preservation of enduring standards of education, learning and educational facilities. Mussawy and Rossman (2018:2) was of the view that QA is a shared practice by which the HEIs ensure that the excellence of educational programmes is preserved through acceptable values and infrastructures.

According to Lawal et.al., (2021:235), the higher education sector is viewed as the final alumna dispensation era for labour market demands. This means that adequate quality assurance policies need to be planned and enforced by HEIs to ensure that graduates are efficiently prepared to assemble manpower requirements and become good citizens of their countries for students, the political authorities, parents, and investors.

1.7.2.5. Quality assurance policies

Quality assurance policies are a method for the collection of criteria for commonly accepted standards as specified by quality assurance authorities or relevant educational and specialist communities (Chikazhe, et.al., 2022:1-2). A quality assurance strategy, on the other hand, is an assessment mechanism conducted by countries or universities to solve quality issues and ensure the high utility value of goods (Yeung, et.al., 2019:1-6). According to Newton (2007:14), organisational challenges and situations would constantly overburden any QA system pretentious. An HEI QA strategy is based on the core values and the legal, social, and cultural foundations of the organisational system set up by institutional bodies.

1.7.2.6. Policy

Heiden (2020:6) defined policy as an objective course of action pursued by a person or a group of role players in dealing with a problem or a concern. The policy necessitates a wide statement of priorities and activities, as well as a discussion of the forms and methods for attaining them. In HE, it is a system of government activity that encompasses a wide variety of activities. Similarly, Haddad and Demsky (1995:18) defined policy as an explicit or implicit choice of a set of decisions that may influence future decisions, begin, or delay activities, or direct future execution of earlier decisions. Policies differ in terms of breadth, complexity, decision-making atmosphere, choice, and decision-making criteria.

1.7.2.7. Policy implementation

Implementation is a significant step in the policymaking process. Many researchers have described the term policy implementation from different perspectives. Stewart, et.al., (2008) defined policy implementation as the application of legislation in which different stakeholders, agencies, mechanisms, and strategies work together to enact policies to achieve policy objectives. Khan, (2016:11) described implementation as a process, a performance, and a result, which involves a variety of control role players, organisations, and techniques. To achieve the objectives, Chigudu, (2015:7-13) considered implementation as the application of the policy through government administrative tools. Policy implementation explicitly includes all acts by public and private individuals intended at realising the goals set out in policy decisions (Meter & Horn, 1975:445). Implementation needs to be monitored by focusing on both progress and failure. It aids in drawing

policymakers' and implementers' attention to the processes that influence and determine the outcomes of public policy (George and Bula, 2021:81).

1.7.2.8. Education and Training Authority (ETA)

The ETA is an independent and autonomous authority that monitors and evaluates the relevance and quality of education and training provided by any institution to grant accreditation and renew accreditation. It is an authority that assesses whether an institution's relevance and quality enhancement system can ensure quality. Furthermore, ETA ensures that the education and training provided at any institution are consistent with Ethiopia's economic, social, and national development policies (ETA, 2022: 6).

1.7.3 Theoretical Framework

Theories are a systematic, coherent, and accurate description and prediction of relationships between variables based on different concepts (Braidotti,2019:31). According to Hanu et al. (2020:21), the theories on public policy aim to establish a connection between the making of public policy, its implementation, and its consequences. Therefore, public policy theories ultimately explain how the design of public policy influences the application of public policy. This implies that assumptions affect the application of public policy whether it follows a top-down approach, a bottom-up strategy, or a mixture of both. Moreover, theories concentrate on a context and make clear observations that an analyst wants to diagnose a phenomenon, describe its mechanisms, and forecast results (Collins and Stockman,2018).

Theories are designed to explain, anticipate, and identify phenomena and to question and encompass prevailing information within the limits of bounded expectations (Kivunia,2018:44). Also, theories display the specific philosophies, concepts and thoughts that are important to the participants of a study and that represent the larger areas of truths/facts pondered (Collins and Stockman,2018).

The theoretical context, however, is the framework that gives a philosophical perspective to the continuing research. It familiarises and describes the philosophy that explains why the ongoing study research issue occurs (Kivunia,2018:44). Furthermore, Muthukrihuna and Henrich, (2019:222) revealed that a theoretical structure includes principles and definitions and

orientation of a dominant theory for a particular study arising from scholarly works. To restrict the limits of relevant data, the theoretical structure is implemented by stressing variables and points of view that the researcher will take to evaluate the data to be obtained. It also helps us to understand ideas and variables by confirming or questioning hypothetical expectations according to stated explanations and shapes new information.

There are two institutional philosophies: contingency and neo-institutional theories. The theory of contingency is about institutional efficiency which depends on specific circumstances. However, the ambiguity of the system in which the organisation communicates is stressed by institutional theory. The difference between the two theories is whether institutions adapt to the real needs of reality (Kahsay, 2012:26).

According to institutionalism, the implementation of quality assurance policies is characterised, as a representation of organisational values. The development mechanisms of quality assurance are not seen as simply logical and instrumental targets. (Peters, 2022:323) suggested that the way in which they are arranged reflect institutional actions.

Furthermore, institutional theories note that both external and internal settings of public HEIs (organisational environment) are complicated as the institutions' stakeholders are various and their requirements and demands are often plentiful. Some of the external environmental variables are politicians, lawmakers, boards of directors, the community, and parents, while the internal environment includes teachers, staff, and faculty (Osinubi, 2020).

The neo-institutional theory considers organisational processes, services and regulations derived from the needs of the public and stakeholders and government laws. In neo-institutionalism, credibility is a crucial element in ensuring endurance and sustainability which can be accomplished through the self-assurance and interdependency of the internal and external parties (Peters, 2022:323).

Both theories were therefore applied in this study to provide information about how the organisation's internal and external settings impact the achievement of QA in HEIs. Furthermore, in this analysis, both theories are used in parallel to offer a clear understanding of organisational practices in terms of operational and contextual environments. The principle of contingency is used

to explain that the operation of the QA scheme depends on a university's unique environment. (Cai, and Mehari, 2015), similarly, explained that institutional theory claims that real organisational practices are loosely related to how they are legitimised externally.

Therefore, this study analyses the factors affecting the institutional environment and the impact of the characteristics of the HEIs on the implementation of QA practices and discusses all the driving forces within the institutional environment. The study also assesses the best performers in QA to determine the differences between the goal and the actual execution.

1.7.4 Assumptions

Assumptions are researchers' beliefs, norms and values that guide the study (Khan, 2016:28). Therefore, this research uses the framework of interpretivist/constructivism to presume a subjectivist epistemology, a relativist ontology, a naturalist methodology, and balanced axiology, as discussed below.

The assumption of subjectivist epistemology is that the researcher makes sense of their data through their reasoning and cognitive analysis of the data guided by their experiences with the participants (Al-Ababneh, 2020:75). The assumption of a relativistic ontology is that the situation under analysis has many role players and that they can be examined and interpreted or rebuilt by human experiences between the researcher and the participants. (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020:39-43).

The researcher's naturalistic methodology, on the other hand, collects evidence through interviews, speeches, text mails, and reflection periods, with the researcher acting as a participant- observer (Cutler and Sim, 2022). Finally, axiology presupposes that the study findings will reflect the researcher's views to offer a balanced account of the findings.

The four assumptions are applied to deliver valuable ideas for institutional transformation and sustainability in general as well as in HEIs. The study considers the environmental and organisational settings to recognise their influence on the QA practices at HEIs. The environmental setting is assumed as the circumstances within which the institutions operate, which directly affects the outcomes of an institution's endeavour (Martin, 2018:6-10).

Moreover, the study contends that organisational features determine the implementation of QA policies in HEIs in Ethiopia. Institutional components, namely managers' dedication, the way the

organisation assures quality, decision-making procedures, and organisational characteristics specific to HEIs have consequences for ensuring quality in universities.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations are possible problems typically beyond the control of the researcher such as the lack of funds, the ability to choose the right research design, statistical prototypical constraints, time, or other role players. Furthermore, a restriction is a limitation on research that cannot be rationally terminated and can impact research design (Peel, 2020:2).

The research was therefore confined exclusively to four public HEIs. Therefore, it might not be easy to generalise the results to other HEIs. It is very rare in Ethiopia to have access to written materials and other QA tools. However, the researcher sought to deploy and embrace all suitable, accessible, and newly published journals on QA policies in Ethiopian universities. If it had been carried out by considering the views of an adequate number of education managers, lecturers, students, and others, this study would have been broader and more definitive. However, considering the views of university presidents and other officials at HEIs in Ethiopia, provides a platform for exploring the management of quality education.

Another limitation of this research is that it only focuses on the standard of education offered at the bachelor's degree level, and the other core activities of HEIs, namely research and community involvement, are not included in this analysis. Also, during conversations, some interviewees may not be willing to be recorded. There may, thus, be a shortage of certain valuable ideas.

1.9 METHODOLOGICAL ACCOUNT

Mishra and Alok (2022:6) defined research methodology as a science of discovery that involves sampling techniques for research design and approaches, data-collection tools, and analysis. It is a subsection of epistemology (the science of information), namely, how researchers establish their knowledge rights based on the characteristics of the fundamental research questions (Mishra and Alok, 2022:6). Likewise, Singh, K., (2022) described methodology as a research aspect that includes a study's research design, research location, sampling techniques, methodological constraints, and data gathering and analysis procedures and instruments. The

“research methodology” in this study denotes how the researcher did the research and its logical arrangement.

Thus, this section emphasises the research methodology of the study. It discusses the worldview, methodology and research design. In addition, the study locations, population and sampling, data-collection processes, data-gathering tools and procedures, and data processing and interpretation techniques are discussed.

1.9.1 Research Paradigm

Paradigm refers to a comprehensive framework that provides perspectives, perceptions, and points of view of the various theories and methods used to perform an analysis (Kamal,2019; Pham, 2018:49). It is used in educational research to describe the conceptual orientation of a researcher. Inherently, it reflects the beliefs and values of the researcher that form how a researcher sees the world, how the study should be done and how they interpret the research findings (Grant, A, 2022:3). Similarly, Morgan (2019:49) defined the paradigm as an all-encompassing approach to comprehending and thinking about the environment, including spiritual, ethical, and aesthetic convictions. Furthermore, Schratz (2020) contended that there are four paradigms (worldviews) used to comprehend reality: positivist, interpretivist/constructivist, transformative and pragmatic worldviews.

The positivist paradigm designates a viewpoint of study that is centered on an empirical technique of inquiry of research methodologies. It is used to look for naturally occurring cause-and-effect linkages. It is chosen as the perfect worldview for research that tries to understand observations in terms of quantifiable items (Junjie and Yingxin, 2022:21). To reach a conclusion, the positivist paradigm employs deductive reasoning, the development and testing of hypotheses, the offering of functional explanations and mathematical comparisons, computations, extrapolations, and statements.

According to Prochaska (2017:132), the positivist paradigm is typically justified using four criteria: internal validity, external validity, dependability, and objectivity. Internal validity is the degree to which the study’s results are ascribed to an independent variable that describes their existence rather than their relationship to other variables. External validity refers to the degree to which the study’s results may be applied to other situations. Similarly, dependability is described

as “the extent to which outcomes may be consistently consistent across time”. Objectivity in research refers to the extent to which a researcher employs exact tools and methodologies without prejudice or dishonesty, while remaining open to recommendations from study subjects. The positivist paradigm frequently employs experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational, causal-comparative, randomised control trials and survey research approaches.

The interpretivist/constructivist paradigm describes how to perceive the ambiguous world of human experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:77). The central belief of interpretivism as a theory is that truth is socially produced (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998:29). Furthermore, Modica., (2022) suggested that the interpretivist/constructivist theory observes a phenomenon rather than predetermining it, as it is founded on evidence collected and analysed in accordance with grounded theory.

According to Guba & Lincoln (1989:78), four trustworthiness and authenticity standards, including integrity, dependability, conformability, and transferability, are routinely confirmed in interpretivist research. According to him, the integrity criteria is employed in interpretivist research relate to the degree to which data and data analysis are dependable, trustworthy, or legitimate, whereas the reliability criterion refers to the capacity to see the same outcome or detect comparable conditions. The confirmability criterion relates to the degree to which research findings can be tested by others in the area. The transferability criterion indicates the researcher’s attempts to confirm that appropriate circumstantial information about their study is provided so that readers of their results may apply those findings to their settings. The interpretivist paradigm also uses different methodologies such as naturalistic, narrative investigation, case study, grounded theory, phenomenology, hermeneutics, ethnography, action research, and exploratory inquiry.

The transformative paradigm is often referred to as a paradigm that situates its study in social justice concerns and aims to overcome the political, social, and economic problems that contribute to social injustice, conflict, and power structures at whatever level they may occur. This paradigm implies a transactional epistemology in which the researcher interacts with the participants; an ontology of historical realism, particularly about coercion; a dialogical method; and an axiology that recognises cultural customs and values.

Several studies conducted under the transformative model employed neo-Marxist methods, feminist theories, cultural studies, critical race theory, Freirean studies, participatory emancipation, postcolonial/indigenous methodology, queer theory, and disability theories.

The pragmatic paradigm does not rely solely on the single empirical approach offered by the positivist paradigm, nor does it evaluate social reality as produced by the interpretivist paradigm (Ugwu, 2021). The pragmatic model proponents use various ways to analyse human behaviour in a realistic manner. A pragmatic paradigm promotes relational epistemology (the belief that research relationships are better defined by what the researcher considers appropriate for that specific study), a non-singular ontology of reality (the belief that there is no single reality and that all individuals have their own and unique conceptions of reality), and a mixed methods methodology (the use of quantitative and qualitative research approaches) and investigating things that benefit people. It encourages the use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods as appropriate, based on approaches from both domains. It employs “what works?” as a criterion to choose which approach is used to answer a certain question (Martin, 2018:11-19).

The methodological effects of paradigm selection include the research questions, subject selection, data-collecting procedures, and data analysis. The paradigm used influences what constitutes reliable data and how the data are examined. The use of the interpretivist paradigm is related to qualitative data collection and analysis procedures and techniques (Pham, 2018:39). Thus, the interpretivism paradigm was adopted in this study and the data-gathering technique employs a grounded theory method that is appropriate for developing theories of real-life occurrences that characterise social processes.

When the study is interpretive and tries to comprehend the experiences of a diverse set of role players, the capacity to explain their experiences becomes a critical procedural aspect (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984:8–9). Furthermore, the use of the interpretivist paradigm sheds light on the link between the paradigm and the selection of a research approach. For example, to comprehend the lecturers’ experience of participating in the implementation of QA policies at educational institutions, the researcher might employ the interpretivist paradigm, which ontology implies that there is no single reality.

This study will necessitate an epistemology that allows for the interpretation of the subjects' personal views of their realities. In this scenario, an interpretivist epistemology is ideal since it supports the notion that meaning, or knowledge cannot be discovered but must be individually or socially constructed. Furthermore, the paradigmatic viewpoint would address questions such, "How can I learn about the participants' real experiences?" or "How can I learn about their views of their experiences?" The case study was the ideal approach for answering these concerns since it aims at comprehending, explaining, and interpreting human behaviour. One of its essential components is the description of people's experiences (Hancock, 2021:123).

To summarise the arguments presented above about how the researcher perceives the world and how the research problem should be approached, as well as how different schools of thought interpret the study findings, readers should understand that truth theories such as epistemological (what is worth knowing), ontological, and axiological viewpoints have a noteworthy influence on the approach to be used in the research (Morgan, 2019). Because each paradigm is based on distinct expectations, as explained above, selecting a paradigm for the study signals that the research will be nested in a particular epistemology, ontology, and axiology, and that these characteristics will therefore drive the approach adopted. As a result, choosing a paradigm implies a high level of certainty regarding the precise procedures that arise from that paradigm.

As a result, this research is relevant to the constructivist paradigm. The primary focus of constructivism is on the production of reality and individuals' subjective meanings of social activities, their experiences and reliance on contributors' judgements of the phenomenon being investigated (Schratz, 2020).

1.9.2 Research Approach

The research approach is a strategy to conduct research. According to Schratz (2020:131), there are three potential approaches. These are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches.

The quantitative research approach deals with arithmetic, statistics and uses closed-ended questions while the qualitative research approach deals with words, expressions, meanings and uses open-ended questions. The qualitative approach focuses on the opinions, experiences and feelings of the participants and targets small groups whereas the quantitative approach explains phenomena by

collecting arithmetical facts that are examined using statistical analysis. The mixed-method approach encompasses essentials of both qualitative and quantitative (Schratz,2020:131).

Mazhar, et.al., (2021:7) explained that the design and approach of the research strategy is built on the purpose of the research. This study uses a qualitative research approach since studying the implementation of QA policies in the setting of public HEIs in Ethiopia relies on participants' opinions to investigate general and broad questions, to collect data containing predominantly participant oral clarification, to discuss and evaluate those words for topics and to conduct the analysis. Furthermore, the qualitative approach is based on various connotations that the research subjects attribute to their practices, their personal views, and their confidence in managing educational quality. Similarly, the qualitative approach to analysis has been implemented since it is necessary to analyse procedures, processes, and issues found in organisational quality audits (Schratz,2020:131),

1.9.3 Research Design

Williams, et.al (2022:59) defined the research design as the methods that the researcher selects to conduct the research logically and rationally. It establishes how the researcher plans to gather, measure, analyse and interpret data. According to Collin, C.S and Stockton, (2018), each research design has peculiar advantages and disadvantages depending upon the conditions, the type of research questions, the control an investigator has over actual behavioural events and the focus on contemporary as opposed to historical phenomena. As a result, Qualitative research method was chosen which has different study designs such as phenomenology (study experience of individuals), ethnography (understanding the broad culture-sharing behaviour of certain groups), grounded theory (formulation of new theory from phenomena), and case study (the in-depth inclusive study of individual cases) (Creswell, 2013:118). Among, the four types of qualitative research method case study design were employed because it has an advantages in data collection and analysis within the context of phenomenon, integration of qualitative data in data analysis, and the ability to capture complexities of real-life situations so that the phenomenon can be studied in greater levels of depth ((Harrison et al., 2017:20).

According to Creswell (2013:119), this study employs an explanatory case study design because explanatory case studies aim to answer 'how' or 'why' questions with little control over the occurrence

of events on the part of the researcher. Similarly, (Harrison et al., 2017:20; Yin, 2009:16) asserts that explanatory case study design examines phenomena in the context of real-world situations. This study employed by using an explanatory case study characterised by gaining a comprehensive, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-world setting (Yin, 2021). The case selection aims to provide a diverse and all-inclusive explanation for supporting a phenomenon (Rezigalla, 2020). It also best fits the research questions in this study because it helps to explain conflicting and complementary results from multiple institutions.

Therefore, four public universities in Ethiopia were selected for the research. The selection of universities was based on educational specialisation, location, organisational characteristics, and their practices in the execution of QA policies. In exercising quality assurance policies at their respective universities, these four public universities allowed the researcher to understand the issues from different perspectives.

1.9.4 Research Sites, Population, and Sampling

A population can be articulated as all participants, objects, research components or any entity with the characteristics that the researcher wishes to investigate. In comparison, sampling refers to the statistical method of selecting a topic of interest to assemble a sample (Gupta and Gupta, 2022). Furthermore, Mishra and Alok (2022:11) claimed that sampling is the method of selecting an appropriate population to categorise the entire population to provide rich information on the phenomenon of interest. In terms of their adequacy and appropriateness, qualitative sampling techniques may be evaluated.

Currently, in Ethiopia, 46 public universities are categorised based on their level, type, profile, namely research universities, applied universities, Education Universities, comprehensive universities, and specialist or science and technology universities (MoSHE, 2019:10). From 46 public universities, four universities were selected. Therefore, the source of data comprised four sample public universities, one from each category. The selection of universities was based on educational specialisation, site, organisational characteristics, and their practices in managing and implementing quality assurance policies. As a result, the selection of four universities from public institutions gave the researcher the opportunity to carry out the analysis the implementation of QA policies of the HEIs in Ethiopia. Therefore, to draw a representative sample from the above population various sampling methods were applied to ensure an equal level of representation to each of the same

universities. The participants as a source of data for this study were higher officials of the targeted universities, college deans, faculty heads, department heads, instructors, Institutional quality audit senior experts, ETA senior experts, and MoE officials, as well as students' unions.

The purposive sampling procedure was used to include higher officials, while the multistage sampling method was used to choose the college deans, lecturers, teachers, and representatives from the students' unions of the universities. Furthermore, the available sampling technique was applied to include internal quality assurance audit experts. The MoE and ETA officials were comprised by purposive sampling as an information basis to observe the influence of the organisational settings on interior quality assurance practices. Thus, 50 key informants from different institutions were encompassed in the study (Please refer table 5.1).

1.9.5 Data-Collection Methods, Instruments and Procedures

According to Moser and Korstjens (2018:11), the most commonly used data-gathering approaches in qualitative research are observation, questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). Participant observation is a technique of data gathering through the involvement and observation of a group of persons over a prolonged time. A qualitative questionnaire is a device that requires a set of questions envisioned to obtain answers from participants in a structured way, while in-depth interviews are a personalised form of data-collection directed by skilled interviewers using an interview guide. Interviews help the researcher to elicit the participants' practices, insights, and state of mind about the issue under study (Gupta and Gupta, 2022). On the other hand, an FGD is an interview with a small group of individuals who discuss the agreed theme, typically directed by a researcher based on specific questions about a phenomenon. It helps to explore diverse practices, insights, opinion, and attitudes among many contributors (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:12)

Mazhar, et.al., (2021:7) pointed out that the choice of data-collection tools is determined mainly by the rationale of the study, the access to resources and the ability of the researcher to use them. Thus, multiple sources of information were employed because a single source of information fails to provide a comprehensive perspective on the study. Based on the conceptual and theoretical arrangement of the research, the open-ended survey questionnaires, in-depth

interviews, and documents analysis were used to generate data about the characteristics, outlooks, and insights of a broad range of contributors regarding the exercise of QA.

The purpose of the questionnaire aimed at attaining pertinent information about the contributors' viewpoints, connotations, views, values, and beliefs concerning the execution of QA in their perspective HEIs, while the semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to obtain additional clarification about the issues under deliberation. The interview questions were designed based on the thoughts, concepts, values, and practices obtained from the literature. Furthermore, the document for HE declaration which contributed to the delivery for the establishment of ETA, and the consequent policies, strategies, and procedures designed by the ETA associated with organisational QA were analysed in the research. Document analysis was used to determine how quality assurance plans and strategies can support QA in the HE system.

1.9.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis is a tool for organising data so that conclusions can be reached, and the research questions can be answered (Singh, K.K., 2022). To put it succinctly, data analysis is a robust and innovative technique that relies on the researcher's intimate association with the participants and the data generated. Younas and Inayat, (2021) defined data analysis as "the process of putting order to data, organising what is in it into patterns, categories, and descriptive units, and seeking for a relationship between them". Data analysis will be carried out to unearth the uniqueness of each respondent's life experience while also allowing for an understanding of the phenomenon, as a whole (Azungah,2018)

This study aims at assessing the implementation of QA policies in HEIs in Ethiopia. Therefore, different methods of data analysis relevant to various samples were employed to analyses qualitative responses. The data collected through questionnaires, and other data sets were entered, automated, coded and analysed using the Excel 2007 and research software (ATLAS.ti8). The qualitative information was transcribed and analysed thematically, hence a meta-narrative approach was applied to review and synthesis the literature (Kahsay, 2012:157). The premises for data analysis were obtained from a conceptual outline of the research that is based on the main research question.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research ethics is defined as undertaking what is ethically and lawfully correct in investigation or study. It indicates the moral principles that govern a researcher's behaviour. There are rules for conduct that differentiate between correct and incorrect, and tolerable and intolerable behaviour. In other words, ethics are the researcher's accountability to consider the wellbeing, respect, comfort, and welfare of the participants (Creswell, 2013:21).

Leung, et.al., (2021: 504) argued that the researcher must protect the rights and wellbeing of the subjects in the study. Based on the suggestion from Schoch, (2020:245), the major ethical considerations are "confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy". Confidentiality is the state of avoiding disclosing information that would harm participants. Anonymity means protecting an individual's identity. On the other hand, privacy is the state not being exposed to interference by others. All participants (higher officials, teachers, students, and others) were notified of the aims and objectives, approaches, and timeline of the research because it is immoral in terms of human relations to carry out a study on any topic without informing participants of the real purpose of the study. Kamal (2019) advised that the only reason for a research dialogue is to gather information not to change people. Thus, the researcher considered the advice of Patton and informed interviewees to participate freely without feeling coerced, that they can pull out from contribution at any time and did not need to respond to any questions that they did not want to answer. Furthermore, by taking the principle of informed consent into account, the participants were made aware that they could contribute without feeling pressurised and were free to extract themselves from involvement at any time.

1.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness in qualitative research addresses how the qualitative researcher establishes that the research results are consistent, verifiable, and reliable (Frey, 2018:43). The drive for trustworthiness in a qualitative study is ensure that the study's results are valuable. Stahl and King, (2020:26-28) designed a consistent set of principles for evaluating the trustworthiness of qualitative study, such as credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability. The criteria outlined are explained below.

1.11.1 Credibility

Credibility illustrates the extent to which the qualitative researcher is confident about the research results (Rheinhardt et al., 2018). It is a way to ensure that the study findings are realistic and truthful. The qualitative researcher applies triangulation to show that the research results are trustworthy. As a result, the items of the questionnaire were reviewed by the supervisor of the study for their credibility.

1.11.2 Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which the qualitative researcher can show that the study's results can be applied to other settings, conditions, and states (Rheinhardt et al., 2018). Qualitative researchers apply transferability as an optional way of delivering the subject of external rationality. Transferability emphasises the degree to which "the conclusions/results could be relocated to the other examples" rather than "their reality/presence in other instances" (Chigora, et.al.,2022:179). Transferability can be realised by sampling subjects through "judgement sampling", and by offering "extensive clarification of the state, subjects & research design" (Chigora, et.al., 2022:179).

1.11.3 Conformability

Conformability defined is as the extent of impartiality in the research findings. To make it brief, conformability shows that the results are based on participants' replies and are not impacted by the possible prejudice or personal aspirations of the researcher. To establish confirmability, qualitative researchers can provide an audit trail, which emphasises each phase of data analysis that was made to justify the conclusions made. This encourages the qualitative researcher to establish the study's results by truthfully narrating participants' replies (Frey, 2018:44). Additionally, conformability is shown in the setting of "inter-subjectivity, i.e., if the participants of the study have the same opinion with the conclusions desired by the researcher (Agustin, et.al, 2022:59).

1.11.4 Dependability

Dependability is the extent to which the research could be repeated by other researchers and that the conclusions would be reliable (Rheinhardt et al., 2018). Even more, it is the reliability of information or facts over time and conditions. Dependability is assumed if different researchers can separately evaluate the identical set of evidence and reach the same conclusions as the

original researcher. A qualitative researcher can use an academic examiner check to create dependability, which needs an outside individual to analyse and explore the study procedures and the data analysis to ensure that the results are reliable (Frey, 2018:43).

1.11.5 Plagiarism

The Oxford English Dictionary (2009) defines plagiarism as the activity or instance of using or fully replicating, without consent, the language and opinions of another scholar and representing the work of that writer as one's own. In literature, plagiarism is maintained as a procedure of maintaining intellectual integrity and unlawful use of another' intellectual property. (Dar, et.al., 2022:21) and avoiding “academic deceit” (Carruthers, 2019:1). As a student researcher, in this study, I applied academic writing skills such as paraphrasing the views of scholars to avoid plagiarism. Moreover, I acknowledged all references in the report, quoted the law and policy issues properly and ensured that these documents were referenced appropriately, listed all sources used in the reference list, and lastly ran the report through the Turnitin programme.

1.12 THE STRUCTURE OF THE FINAL RESEARCH REPORT

The thesis comprises seven chapters. The preliminary chapter provides the background, statement of the problem, the specification of the research question, objectives, scope, limitation, and delimitation of the study. It presents the methodological account of the study, the descriptions of key concepts used in the research, and ethical considerations.

The literature review provides the conceptual and hypothetical framework for the study and is presented in Chapter 2. It also offers a conceptual and theoretical framework for categorising and analysing diverse methods to QA in HEIs. Moreover, it gives insight into a review of the literature from different scholars concerning quality and the execution of QA policies in HEIs. Chapter 3 of the thesis outlines the historical development of the Ethiopian HE system including its socioeconomic, demographic, and QA practices in the Ethiopian HEIs.

The research methodology is presented in Chapter 4. The chapter illustrates the paradigm, research design and methods, and instruments employed to collect data and analyse and interpret data for the practical attributes of the study. Chapter 4 gives insight into the actual QA challenges and opportunities in the targeted HEIs.

Likewise, Chapter 5 discusses the information drawn from an analysis of facts, interview information from crucial participants, and textual open-ended questionnaires. Chapter 6 reviews and synthesises the main result and argue the suggestions resulting from findings, conclusions, and finally, Chapter 7 presents the recommendations based on the study findings.

1.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The preliminary section of the research sets the stage by introducing the reader to the context of the study. It outlines the declaration of the problem, the main study inquiries, the aim and objectives of the research, and the purpose of the study. Similarly, the chapter discusses the significance, delimitations, and limitations of the study. This chapter also illustrates the scope of the study, the conceptualisation of key terms, the theoretical outline of the study as an examination of managing QA procedures in Ethiopian HEIs, and the assumptions of the researcher. The chapter also highlights the methodological account including the paradigm, approach, design, sites, population and sampling, data-gathering methods, instruments and procedures, and data analysis and interpretations of the research. It also elaborates on the trustworthiness and research ethics. The next chapter presents the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the context of higher education, this chapter aims to provide a synthesis of the literature on identifying policy, policy implementation, and QA. Section 2.1 introduces the chapter in detail. Section 2.2. illustrates conceptual consideration of the study precisely focusing on the concept policy and its execution, debates in defining quality, and the concept quality in HE. Section 2.3 illustrates the introduction of QA in Ethiopian HE. Section 2.4. describes the purpose of QA. Section 2.5 focuses on the approaches to QA. Section 2.6. elaborates performance indicators to measure quality assurance in HE. Section 2.7. elaborates approaches to quality management, while 2.8. also provides a synthesis of QA models built for and reflected in higher education. Section 2.9. discusses the quality management models in education. Additionally, Section 2.10. illustrates the reflection on the quality management models. Section 2.11 deals with QA experiences of some selected countries. Section 2.12 also deals on theoretical outline of the study. Organisational theory on quality assurance in higher education research illustrated in Section 2.13, whereas the conceptual framework is discussed in section 2.14. Section 2.15. of the chapter also focuses on explaining the QA implementation practices in HE. Section 2.16 examines the ETA model of QA in Ethiopia Finally, Section 2.17 summarises the chapter.

2.2. CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATION

This section delves into the philosophy of policy and policy implementation in detail, including concepts, mechanisms, and determinants, and suggests a method for interpretation and intervention. Its aim is to explain what education policy and policy enforcement means in a diverse educational environment. It also focuses primarily on debates in defining quality. It aims to define what quality means in a higher education setting. Finally, it conceptualises the idea of higher education quality assurance. It places a greater focus on addressing the different notions of quality management articulated by various scholars.

2.2.1 Conceptualising the Concept Policy and Policy Implementation

A policy is a broad statement of prospective priorities, goals, and activities, as well as the methods and means to attain them. It is a government action system that incorporates a wide

variety of practices. Policy, according to Heiden, B (2020), is a planned course of action adopted by a person or group of role players to address a problem or subject of concern.

De Jesus, et al. (2021), on the other hand, described policy as a sequence of government actions aimed at resolving certain social problems. Any policy designed to address social issues must be put into action. The effectiveness of a public policy depends on how well it is applied. Furthermore, a well-designed policy is worthless if it is not effectively or correctly executed. One of the issues with effective policy enforcement is a lack of proper guidance or instructions on how to carry it out.

Khan (2016:4) stated that implementation as a process of mutual adaptation in which policies and programmes adapt to and improve each other's environment. Implementation requires the transformation of policy priorities into tangible reality. It also requires the transformation of physical, economic, and intellectual capital into services in the form of facilities and services. This implies that implementation is the most important of all the other stages in the life cycle of policy. Furthermore, De Jesus, et al. (2021) stated that implementation is the process by which different stakeholders and organisations collaborate to bring procedures, strategies, and policies into effect to achieve policy objectives. As a result, it may be understood as a process, an output and a conclusion involving several participants.

Similarly, Khan (2016:3) defined policy implementation as the process of turning inputs (financial, data, technical and human materials, etc.) into outputs (goods and services). It is the process of converting a policy into actions and guidelines into outcomes via numerous programmes.

Therefore, education policy implementation is described as a deliberate and multidirectional reform mechanism that aims to operationalize a particular policy and has a potential beneficial effect on education system on multiple levels (Khan, 2016:3). It is purposeful in the sense that the mechanism is intended to improve curriculum in accordance with certain policy goals. It is multidirectional in the sense that it can be affected by role players at different points in the educational system. It is contextualised in the sense that structures and social shocks and developments i.e., in society, demography, governance, and economy influence the education system and the ways in which policies are influenced and implemented in the education system.

It is important to analyse the spectrum of determinants that impede or promote the implementation process to make the concept more meaningful, useful, and actionable. In this regard, Viennet and Pont (2017:8) suggested a generic framework for forming determinants across four scopes, each of which should be considered for the effectiveness of education policy execution.

Smart policy development: An acceptable policy that gives a rational and viable resolution to the policy problem will determine if and how it can be realised. For example, if a new curriculum demands the use of high-tech equipment that Ethiopian universities cannot acquire, the policy may fail to be implemented unless a budget is made accessible at the nationwide or local level.

Inclusive role players' involvement: Actor's inclusion is crucial to policy implementation progress in terms of where and how key role players are familiar with and active in the implementation process. Involving academic staff and their unions in negotiations early in the reform process, for example, would have long-term benefits.

A favourable organisational policy and societal environment: A good policy formulation process considers the present policy climate, the HEIs governance and institutional arrangements, as well as the external backdrop.

A well-coordinated execution approach for reaching institutions: The plan outlines clear strategies for bringing all the determinants together in a cohesive way to make the policy operational at the institutional level.

In this regard, Gurría (2015:6) observed that education policies are often not implemented as expected, or with the intended results, due to planning issues, inadequacy of organisational capital, role players' capability or reactions to changes, the dynamic nature of the education sector, and diverse and optimistic needs of education stakeholders.

2.2.2 Debates in Defining Quality

Ball (1985) inquired, "What is quality inferno"? The definition of quality is somewhat vague since it defines a relative, but a clear difference between one item and another. Relative words such as "better" "superior" "acceptable" are used to illustrate quality.

According to Laura et al. (2015:1), there are significant barriers to defining quality. First and foremost, quality is a nebulous concept. There are several interpretations based on the perspectives of the various parties. When assessing quality, four role players must be addressed, according to Laura et al. (2015:1): (1) Suppliers (e.g., funders and governments, taxpayers); (2) users of products (e.g., students); (3) users of outputs (e.g., companies); and (4) sector workers (e.g., teaching staff, supportive staff, and leaders/managers). Each category offers a unique perspective on quality. As a result, to recognise quality and foster a quality culture in HE, all role players must participate in the debate to guarantee that varied perspectives and demands are considered (Savga and kyrychenko, 2018:32).

The second issue is that quality is a multifaceted phenomenon (Laura et al., 2015:1). As a result, limiting the phrase to a one-sentence description is hard. The third problem is that quality is a dynamic, ever-changing pursuit of perfection that must be viewed within the setting of a wider educational, economic, political, and social environment (Savga and kyrychenko, 2018:32).

Based on the difficulties in describing quality mentioned above, there are several different meanings in the literature. Harvey and Green (1993:10–11) describe quality as a slippery and value-laden term, i.e., it is not easy to define or put it into effect. Becher (as cited in Newton, 2007:14) associates' quality with the formation of political perspectives. Accordingly, Laura et al. (2015:2) noted two techniques to define quality. The first technique is to create a broad concept such as achieving a particular goal or vision (Prakish, 2018:732; Harvey & Green, 1993:11). According to them, certain concepts are standards-driven, converge on meeting the predefined collection of criteria, provisions, and conditions, or concentrate on excellence in the search for perfection and exclusiveness (Cheng & Tam, 1997:134). Other concepts are mainly guided by stakeholders, focusing on group responsibility, or offering a transformative learning practice to assist students and employees (Prakish, 2018:732; Harvey, 2005:25).

Laura et al. (2015:5) provided a second technique for determining quality as identifying detailed indicators that indicate expected inputs (e.g., responsive faculty personnel or educational materials that are accessible to students) and outcomes (e.g., graduate employment). Student performance is mainly concerned with outputs, such as learning improvements which indicate trends and are used by regulatory authorities to monitor student results as an indicator of quality (Tam, 2014:34).

Kang, et.al. (2022:4) argued two schools of thought in his writings on higher education change. The first school of thought attributes quality to a context and a result, where quality is expressive of that context. The second school of thought concerns an actor-specific context. Here, quality is reflected as an assortment of stakeholder interests in higher education and highlights the significance and value of quality considerations from a range of role players' perspectives.

Furthermore, Harvey and Green (1993:11) and Harvey and Knight (1996:69) identified the nature of quality in HE settings and recognised five quality-thinking methods. These five ways to excellent thinking are explained in further detail below.

2.2.2.1 Quality as exceptional

Harvey and Green (1993:11) suggested that quality can be described as something that is distinctive, exclusive, or excellent. This view of quality is a somewhat out-dated notion of quality, typically implemented as achievement of extremely high academic results. The emphasis of the exceptional view is on high-quality input. It is linked to the idea of delivering a service that is exclusive and exceptional, reflecting prestige on the part of the holder or the customer. In the context of HE, an organization that has extremely high values is said to be a quality organization (Pigozzi, 2006:10).

2.2.2.2 Quality as consistency

The notion of consistency of quality is analogous to the outdated notion of excellence in several complementary components. This view emphasises the procedure and sets out provisions that are intended to be met without fail (Harvey, 2007:6). The reliability method, or the right approach, or compliance with a specification shows that quality means a deficiency of errors where once the strategy has been recognised by the creator, any non-compliance with it means a decrease in quality (Harvey & Steinaker, 2008:433). According to Yong and Wilkinson (2002:103), a consistent concept of quality is a production-based viewpoint.

2.2.2.3 Quality as fitness for purpose

Quality is also known as fitness for function or service. Fitness for function implies quality as the degree to which the product or service suits its specified need. Fitness for function is equal to the performance of the specification or the results specified. This fitness for function is distinct from the notion of quality as somewhat unique, elitist, or difficult to achieve.

It is more a pragmatic concept of quality than an outstanding one. Harvey (2007:6) maintained that the specific determination may be actor-defined as meeting the needs; for example, in education, achieving the organisational mission or the purposes of a course.

Fitness for function is of course, founded on the competence of the organisation to fulfil its mission and goal. Empirical research in HE has a focused on the consistency with which an organisation meets predetermined standards of achievement. This understanding of quality proposes a basis for independent evaluation of how HEIs carry out their goals, objectives, and tasks (Asiimwe, C. 2022). Similarly, Tien and Jose (2021) claimed that fitness for purpose is widely accepted and practised worldwide as a criterion for evaluating quality.

Furthermore, Vlăsceanu, Grünberg and Pârlea (2004:47) defined “fitness for purpose” as “the demand to meet or comply with widely accepted requirements, such as those established by the accreditation or QA body, with a focus on the effectiveness of the processes at work in the organisation or package in achieving the intended aims and mission”.

2.2.2.4 Quality as value-for-money

Harvey (2006:10) described value for money as the notion that the quality of the provision, process or outcome is judged by the monetary (open and hidden) expense of making the provision, performing the process, or achieving the results. Harvey and Green (1993:11) also pointed out that quality as “value for money” is defined in terms of asset or accomplishment yielded through productivity and efficiency. This definition emphasises quality and efficacy, comparing outputs against inputs. As Zhuo and Wang (2022) stated, “value for money is a concept used to determine whether or not an entity has achieved the full profit from the properties and facilities it both acquires and offers within the resources accessible to it”.

Erlandson also pointed out that the value of such elements can be difficult to calculate since they are ambiguous or intangible. External judgement is, therefore, necessary when determining value for money. From this viewpoint, quality is connected to the view of public accountability. The increasing tendency of governments to keep higher education accountable reflects the value-for-money process, whereas students, parents and higher education funding agencies consider their assets to be “value for money” which they expect to be used for their intended purpose (Campbell & Rozsnyai, 2002:19).

2.2.2.5 Quality as transformation

The concept of quality as transformation recognises quality as “qualitative change”. A transformation is a complete change from one state to another that adds value. However, metamorphosis entails more than just visual or physical alteration; it also entails cognitive transcendence. According to Harvey (1998:244), transformation in the sense of quality education means accumulating value to students by increasing their quality. It is also about authorising them to be serious, thoughtful, and transformative. Harvey and Green (1993:11) argued that transformation in education denotes the development and empowerment of students or the advancement of knowledge and skills.

Quality as transformation entails strengthening and enabling the democratisation of the process, rather than just the outputs. Transformation is thus based on the goal of improving students by providing them with knowledge and skills (Campbell & Rozsnyai, 2002:21; IUCEA, 2008:9). To this end, Alderman, L. (2022) argued that transformation in the sense of education is a continuous process of change that involves empowerment and enhancement of students who may be regarded as clients of higher education. In addition, Campbell and Rozsnyai (2002:20–21) maintained that quality as transformation places a strong focus on the students. However, Vlăsceanu et al. (2004:46) tended to speak about quality as transformation as change or improvement rather than transformation.

2.2.2.6 Quality as conformance to standards

The concept of quality as conformance or compliance to a requirement or standard derives from the concept of quality control in industry, where quality is defined as “zero defects”. Harvey and Green (1993:27) argued that this view regards consistency in providing flawless results as an indicator of quality. It is therefore a root cause, an impartial concept used to designate a critical feature of a good

or service (Green, 1994:13). Perfection stresses zero flaws, getting things right the first time. The definition of quality as compliance to a specification or standard focuses on the process rather than the inputs and results. This term “democratises” the concept of quality, because if consistency can be achieved, quality can be achieved. In this context, the improvement of education will necessitate provision based on a zero-defect system and a quality culture. The restrictions, however, are dependent on the adoption of standards that are acceptable to the role players (Alderman, L., 2022).

To finalise the discussion about the term “quality” in education, the exceptional view of quality emphasises the maintenance of academic values through the summative /collective judgement of knowledge. The method believes in an inherent and normative view both for learning and for research (Harvey, 1998:15). Furthermore, the perfection approach evaluates quality in terms of how well products/services fulfil their stated purpose. The notion emphasises the need for adhering to commonly recognised values, such as those established by an accrediting or quality assurance authority. The emphasis is on the institution or programme in achieving its goals and mission. The fitness-for-purpose technique, on the other hand, connects ideals to declared purpose-linked aims. This necessitates a criterion-referenced evaluation of students. The value-for-money method focuses on the client and requires an improvement in academic standards, graduate competencies, and research output while the transformational approach maintains that institutional goods and services must have a beneficial impact on student learning (affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains), as well as individual and professional development (Biggs, 2001:78). The conformity to standards method assesses students’ progress in terms of academic information as well as a broader range of transformational talents such as exploration, analysis, critical thinking, creativity, and announcement.

However, according to Kang, et.al., (2022:4), the dimensions of quality as perfection is not viable because HE does not strive to generate defect-free graduates. According to Lomas (1999:61), the two most applicable definitions of quality are suitability for purpose and transformation. However, defining quality in the setting of HE continues to pose significant problems. An examination of the literature by many experts reveals that there is still no consensus on the concept of quality.

2.2.3 Conceptualising the Concept of Quality Assurance in Higher Education

The definition, vocabulary and methodology of quality assurance have been largely borrowed by higher education from industry and manufacturing sectors. Scholars articulate the notion of QA in different ways (Avci, E., 2017:201). This suggests that the concept of QA encompasses multiple points of view and contexts. Quality assurance, according to Martin and Stella (2007:34), is the supreme management goal that regulates and applies quality practices. According to them, either the government or funders can perform quality improvement audits on organisations.

According to Kang, et.al, (2022:3), the word QA denotes “systematic, organised and continuous consideration to quality in terms of quality enhancement and development”. In addition, Kang et al., (2022:4) argued that QA is an effective means by which the HEIs can confirm that the values and quality of their educational delivery are preserved and improved, with purpose and determination.

In the same way, Smout (2001:20) described QA as the progression of quality monitoring for continuous development. For example, if quality is expressed as fitness for purpose, then QA would be expressed as examining the level of fitness for purpose. Therefore, QA involves ensuring that the organisation maintains its promise to its clients in terms of the quality of the qualifications it offers with respect to knowledge, understanding and work-related skills.

In educational settings, QA encompasses both designed and scientifically executed activities that are directly relevant to the preservation and enhancement of educational quality. As a result, quality assurance encompasses all procedures, measures, and codes of conduct, as well as defined frameworks or systemic standards intended to ensure quality (Avci, E., 2017:201).

Ifedili (2015:9) defined QA as the process of safeguarding those educational outputs (students) are processed with the necessary staffs and quality programmes, services, and resources to fulfil the universal standard. Also, Hanu et al. (2020:19) described QA as a method of putting in place necessary structures, laws, monitoring of educational institution employees, and other resources to achieve and preserve the defined minimum standards in education. In this regard, Williams, and Harvey (2015:506) stated that QA is a broad concept that encompasses not only evaluation but also the achievement of development-oriented goals. The main aspects of this example are the evaluation or evaluation of departments, schools, fields of study and organisations, while the clients are those

people and associations that have received the most recognition in the HEIs or schemes and their accomplishments.

Williams, and Harvey (2015:506) outlined QA in HE as systematic management and evaluation processes approved by HEIs to monitor results against targets and ensure the achievement of quality outputs and quality improvements. Harman pointed out that the objective of QA schemes is to provide appropriate support for the authentication of ideas on quality and thus to foster confidence among the main role players in the management of quality and the level at which results are realised.

Furthermore, quality assurance, according to the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (2008:23), is an ongoing method of monitoring, reviewing, evaluating, ensuring, and enhancing the quality of a university's core functions. In this sense, QA refers to the systematic and structured actions carried out in a quality system to guarantee that the quality standards of outcomes or provision are satisfied. It is a process oriented toward gathering information to make informed decisions about whether instructional objectives are being met. Dawit (2006:45) supported this viewpoint, stating that judgements are regarding steps needed for change. As a result, the main goals of QA are progress and transparency.

The aim of QA in higher education is to safeguard those standards and to ensure that the quality of HE continues to change to satisfy the demands of students, employers, and financiers (Nguyen, et.al., 2021: 625). QA can enhance student success and learning outcomes as well as the openness of higher education to societal needs. Thus, QA for improvement means using a formative approach, with the emphasis on maximising quality rather than controlling it.

According to Tumlovskaja (2022:12), high educational expectations have resulted in good outcomes in the HE schemes. Setting performance expectations is vital at all stages of education. They claim that appropriate success expectations are the product of a consensus among experienced educators, parents, and students.

Komotar (2020:78 defined QA as “the systems, procedures, processes, and activities that donate to the attainment, maintenance, monitoring, and enhancement of quality.” It is a continual internal process to identify how the HEIs' objectives will be met. Furthermore, Harvey and

Green (1993:41) described QA as “devices and activities aimed to reassure the many participants in higher education that organisations place a high premium on adopting processes designed to sustain and improve institutional performance”. Similarly, Lim (2018:5) defined QA as the process through which an organisation may assure, with certainty and confidence, that the principles and quality of its educational delivery are preserved and enhanced.

The South African Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC, 2006:149) defined QA as a practice to protect the values and quality of its educational delivery. Quality assurance is defined by the Scotland Quality Assurance Agency (SQAA) as “the mechanism through which a HEIs assures and resolves the situations that are put in place for students to attain the values specified by it or by another normative framework” (SQAA, 2004:1).

Accordingly, Elken and Stensaker (2018:189) argued that QA is a prearranged and systematic event that is essential to the ensuring that a product or facility can fulfil expected demands for quality. Avci, E., (2017:9) agreed. According to him, QA is a deliberate and methodological evaluation technique for an institution or programme to control whether appropriate principles of teaching, studentship and arrangement are met, retained, and strengthened. Avci, E., (2017) also pointed out that HE is only as good as the standard of its academic staff. Teachers are at the heart of the organisation and generate their students, their research products, and their contribution to the organisation, the public and the community (Avci, E., 2017).

Vlăsceanu et al. (2007:74) included a more comprehensive explanation of the quality assurance concept. For them, QA is a term that denotes an involved, ongoing form of assessing the quality of HE systems, institutions, or facilities. They stated that quality improvement actions are dependent on the presence of mandatory structures and are consistent with a strong quality culture.

In addition, Kanpinit (2008:20) noted that HEIs use quality assurance as a benchmark to ensure that they carry out their duties as organisations providing quality education. QA is concerned with presenting evidence to the stakeholders involved (both internal and external) that HEIs have mechanisms in place to ensure that there is a commitment to quality refining. According to Green (1994:45), quality assurance focuses on priorities, objectives, the creation of criteria, the verification of valuation methods, the provision of support systems to support and augment quality and the revision of all quality issues.

Luckett (2005:45) highlighted the distinction between QA and quality management. According to him, “QA” is a procedure that is carried out before and during the event to prevent errors from happening in the first place. On the other hand, quality management focuses on reviewing the how the process is carried out. In the same way, QA is about strengthening the quality in a procedure to ensure that the product is produced according to the prearranged stipulations (Jonathan, 2000:53).

QA is thus a way of delivering value-free goods and is about fulfilling the service specifications in a consistent manner or “getting things right the first time, every time”.

Brennan and Shah (2000a) also maintained that QA is a framework that recommends specifically how development or service delivery should take place and which requirements and arrangements are included in the quality assurance system. Quality standards must be maintained in compliance with the specified quality assurance techniques. It is also important to point out that HEIs should comply with QA requirements in the sense that education is delivered to satisfy the demands of the regulatory authorities (Brennan & Shah, 2000a:77).

According to Martin and Stella (2007:34), QA may be disassociated from both internal and external QA. Internal QA denotes the procedures and methods put in place in an organisation to ensure that the organisation or programme achieves its objectives and the values of HE in general or the vocation or discipline in general. External QA, on the other hand, denotes the activities of an external entity that assesses the processes of an organisation or its programme to determine whether the organisation or programme satisfies the defined criteria.

Therefore, HEIs must guarantee a sound, meaningful and high-quality learning environment for their students. If an organisation is unable to ensure that what it does is important and is carried out in an accepted way, it cannot prove its worth easily (Campbell, 2008). The spectrum of activities designed to enhance, track, and provide successful education is to guarantee quality and hence refers to any policy, mechanism, or intervention of HEIs and ETA that sustain and improve HE quality.

2.3 THE INTRODUCTION OF QA IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Certainly, quality assurance has existed indirectly in all walks of life, from manufacturing, service centers and hospitals to education. Quality assurance became a dominant market practice

in the western world in the 1950s and early 1960s. Newton (2007:14) noted that the concern for quality and standards was global by the end of the 1990s. As a result of the rising need for high-quality HE among students and role players, HEIs came under the same stresses that businesses have been under for decades. Van Damme (2000:11) explained the reasons why the movement towards quality assurance was apparent in higher education.

The key reason for an improvement in the need for quality assurance in HEIs is to maintain public trust in the quality of education provisions and to help ensure that the future academic standards in higher education are safeguarded and improved. Van Damme (2000:11) maintained that there has been concern about a possible deterioration in academic performance due to massification in education. Contemporary quality improvement programmes are expected to be offered by all levels of HE institutions, leading to a large rise in student enrolment, which as, unfortunately been accompanied by a lack long-term financial and infrastructure issues for national governments. This has intensified the government's pressure to pay more attention to cost efficiencies, to be accountable for quality, and to ensure that allocated resources are well spent. In contrast, increased learning admissions have also raised concerns as to whether academic requirements are being met in periods of accelerated learning (Harman, 2011:38).

Second, the QA movement has been fueled by the influence of internationalisation of HE, which has resulted in increased global competitiveness, the need to improve skilled labour mobility, and the demand for better accountability by public organisations, all of which have emerged since the beginning of the move to evaluation. Furthermore, the growth in the number of private HE institutions, as well as the stress on companies and professions to make university courses more relevant to workplace demands, have aroused interest in quality assurance. QA has been an essential component of HE schemes that have embraced a self-regulation structure for government-to-HEI connections.

Third, the adoption of the neoliberal strategy and the incorporation of financial and managerial innovations in the modern public sector management system have similarly led to the advancement of QA with great emphasis on the attainment of skills and increased competition and markets. Nations have become increasingly involved in HE, particularly public HE.

Fourth, with the rise of knowledge-based economic drivers that rely heavily on evidence and communication technology, as well as enlarged competition in global trade, there is growing concern about the necessity for a significant number of young people to become highly skilled professionals able to meet labour-market demands. As a result, universities and colleges are under increased pressure to produce alumni with adequate knowledge and skills. QA is also an important technique for ensuring that alumni develop technology-oriented skills that meets the expectations of companies (Santiago et al., 2008:50).

Fifth, as higher education has become more internationalised and student and professional mobility has increased, QA has become more important. Internationalisation has resulted in a greater emphasis on properly regulating the courses of overseas students, as well as an increase in the integration of HE systems. Professional organisations have been encouraged to strive toward the creation of universal national standards for professional accreditation and to promote graduate positions in other nations (Williams and Harvey ,2015).

Finally, Williams and Harvey, (2015) noted that the formation of a QA system was required by increased competitiveness and variations in the educational arena, both nationally and worldwide. The rapid deterioration of classical student enrolment networks, increased mobility of students, professionals and scholars, the pressure and growth of private HEIs, amplified use of Open Distance Learning (ODL) and the growth of transnational education, comprising the establishment of branch sites by international educational institutions, all contribute to this. All these trends and transition processes in HE is connected to a growing interest in quality, a desire for transparency, and the formation of national QA bodies.

2.4 PURPOSE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

Contemporary universal quality assurance research has set a broad target for QA in higher education. According to Brennan and Shah (2000a:70), QA creates HEIs to provide the public with a guarantee on the accomplishment of the acceptable general level of quality. It also defines the efficacy and provides transparency as to whether the institutional and programme goals are being met at an appropriate level and allows choices (programmes) to be made by the organisations about government subsidies.

2.4.1 Accountability

Accountability, in general, denotes the sharing of explanations for behaviour (Yu, 2021). It explains why or how something happened. To that aim, Alderman, L (2022:12) claimed that for HE schemes to maintain a minimal standard of quality, whether through stringent licensing systems or other procedures, it is always obligatory for the institution to tell its consumers of the quality of its contributions. Furthermore, the institution needs to be accountable for the resources which it acquires from the government through public funding, from students through fees, or from other stakeholders.

Furthermore, according to Lim, (2018), the main purpose of QA is to give consumers precise, reliable information on the extent to which a HEI is actually realising its promise. Similarly, the organisation must be certain that its alumni are meeting the expectations of their academic programmes.

According to Nieminen, J.H., (2022), QA systems examine an organisation or programme in terms of its goals and stated criteria, and then give public affirmation of its quality, highlighting quality as being capable of achieving both goals and standards. Nieminen, J.H., (2022) further contended that assessments and their values serve as the “tail of the dog”, assisting in the development of the system until it is finalized by the QA agency.

As cited in Alderman, (2022:2), Alderman, (2014), developed the continuous learning framework for quality in higher education which includes four elements of quality education such as accountability, improvement, performance, and investment. Thus, the following figure shows the four quality elements of higher education in detail.

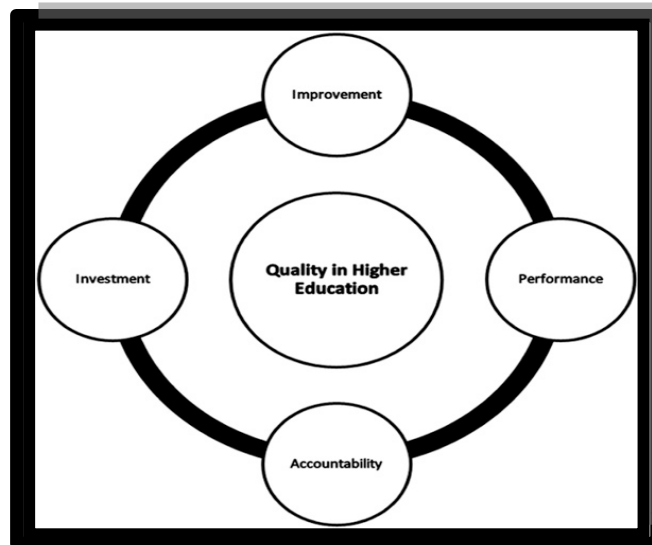


Figure 2.1 : Alderman four elements of quality in higher education (2014)

2.4.2 Continuous Improvement

Alderman (2022:5) assert that the improvement element refers to the aspects aimed at improving the quality within the higher education sector. It describes the quality assessment period as a beneficial stage of QA that leads to continuous improvement of quality. According to Alderman (2022:5) MoSHE systems maintain that their purpose is to promote efficiency, even though this involves iterations. Quality management distinguishes between the obligation for quality and the HEIs. In addition, QA stresses the capability of HEIs to establish and enforce successful strategies and processes, both for self-regulation and continued growth towards quality (Tamrat,2022:443).

Alderman (2022:5) contended that the audit is a QA technique that is directly related to quality improvement. The audit is an assessment process that focuses on institutional objects, on how an organisation can view its poor areas of operation to make the required adjustments to improve its performance.

Similarly, Visscher (2009:34) observed that the proliferation of QA systems in HE is increasingly detrimental to the notion of continuous improvement based on the Deming Quality Cycle model (DQC). Deming proposed the DQC in 1982 which entails four steps, namely Plan, Do, Review, and Act (PDRA).

Deming's PDRA methodology initially focused on continuous quality management cycles in both enterprise and manufacturing organisations. Later, the model was modified to allow for its use in the services industry/sector, such as higher education. According to Brennan and Shah (2000a:70), the revised version of the DQC is known as Planning, Implementation, Evaluation and Review (PIER). Both models are similar in that aims are defined, and every effort is made to accomplish those goals. Furthermore, Visscher (2009:35) contended that "the prior three stages are only valuable if phase four is effectively completed". Although the model allows HEIs to take care of efficiency-related characteristics, it does not contain any direction as to how organisations should function.

2.4.3. Performance

The performance component allows you to assess where the higher education sector stands in terms of certain areas of good practice. This took the form of grants, reviews, awards, evaluations, and confirmation of good practice through performance grants for universities, annual review processes for national initiatives, excellence awards for higher education staff, and encouragement for collaboration in this application.

2.4.4 Investment

Through the placement of value and resources, the investment component reflects the higher education sector's commitment to future practice. In this case, the investment was made through grants, collaborations, fellowships, policy, and capacity building, including investments in future researchers and researchers, policy, auditor training, and embedding evaluation into all grant schemes.

2.5 APPROACHES TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

Over several decades, wide-ranging global research has been undertaken into QA and the enhancement of HEIs. The literature reporting these innovations/approaches refers to several techniques and methods for QA. Mursidi (2022) noted that QA approaches can be classified into four forms, namely, accreditation, institutional audit, assessment, and external inspection or external standards. However, Martin, M., (2018:30) classified the approaches to QA into three groups, namely, accreditation, evaluation, and audit. QA agencies may implement one or more of

these in accordance with various education schemes and backgrounds. Thus, this subsection discusses the Mursidi (2022) approach to quality that can be applied to QA systems in HEIs.

2.5.1 Accreditation

Acevedo and Rondinel, (2022:189) described accreditation as a tool used by administrative or private bodies to measure the standard of HEIs as a whole or as a comprehensive educational curriculum to be officially known such that the educational programme follows certain predetermined minimum principles. The result of this process is used on a regular basis for granting accreditation and sometimes for providing a licence to function with a time-restricted validity.

In addition, Huq, et.al., (2021:3) described accreditation as a procedure of self-evaluation and external quality assessment carried out in, HE to review the quality standards of organisations and their curricula and as a prerequisite for quality improvement. The process is developed by an outsider such as a government agency or professional body. The process generally includes self-assessment, peer review and site visits. Burns, Harvey, and Aragón (2012:3) defined accreditation as the “... creation of the position, legality or relevance of an institution, programme, or segment of research ...” and is assured for a certain time before a re-accreditation procedure is necessary.

More specifically, Mursidi (2022:12) described accreditation as an indicator of whether an institution or programme meets expectations and succeeds in achieving a certain standard. It is focused on evaluation and appraisal approaches that allow for an objective decision to be made as to whether a curriculum or company meets basic quality requirements. Accreditation therefore necessarily requires a certain form of benchmarking and a set of up-to-date standards.

The emphasis on accreditation is detailed in the investigation of the mission, programmes, and methods of higher education (Dill, 2000:187). Accreditation is often followed by permission to act; it is regularly referred to as licensing or registration based on comparable outputs. Specialised or technical accreditation is the determination of whether an organisation or a course/programme effectively prepares alumni for jobs in a particular area (Martin, 2018:33). Westerheijen (2001:70) however, commented that a criticism of the accreditation process is that national accreditation

requirements are aimed at national conformity rather than diversity. Nonetheless, they are aimed at preventing problems with both academic and managerial honesty.

2.5.2 Audit

Audits are a relatively contemporary practice and there is a strong movement towards audits. The Analytical Quality Glossary by Harvey (2004–2012:1) defines audit in the context of HE as “practice for assessing methods designed to ensure quality, truthfulness, or values of service and performance.”

An audit involves the evaluation of an institution to determine where its programme, its personnel and its set-up meet specific goals and objectives. For the most part, external evaluators observe the success of the company in achieving its own objectives. The audit deals with the transparency of organisations and curricula and regularly incorporates self-study, peer review and site visits. The main differences between an audit and accreditation are that the accreditation emphasises values are generally global and external to the organisation and the evaluation of the organisation in terms of those principles, while audits check the standards and priorities of an organisation and its performance in achieving them (Kolli, C,2019:3). Quality audits may be carried out to achieve organisational or peripheral objectives, and the result of the audit must be reported (an external audit).

The audit evaluates the extent to which the company meets its own specific or inherent goals. When an HEI sets its goals, it predicts “what it will do”. Academic audits are undertaken at the organisational level. Accreditation and evaluation audits do not involve an evaluation of the results and stages of the HEI or programme, nor do they explicitly assess the quality of teaching or learning. Instead, auditing focuses on the procedures adopted by higher education institutions to ensure and advance the standards of education and training (Jamoliddinovich.,2022).

2.5.3 Assessment

Assessment is a “... universal notion that holds all mechanisms to decide the performance of an individual, team, or institute” (Harvey, 2004–2012:1). Assessment is an appraisal that sorts out confidential quality judgements. In this regard, it goes beyond the accreditation which creates a dual decision (Jamoliddinovich, 2022). The evaluation would include answers to the enquiry,

“how good are your outputs?” The outcome of the assessment is an observable decision, resulting in a rating with number, verbatim, or expressive). Output may or may not be a pass/fail judgement/decision taken within the rating range (Martin, M.2018). Quality assessment in various cases is known as evaluation or appraisal. Quality evaluation shall evaluate the authentic method for the external assessment (review) of the quality of HEIs and programmes. It contains certain approaches, tools and acts that have been ratified by the outdoors to determine the standard of HE procedures, activities, programmes, and services. According to Vlăsceanu, et.al, (2007:74), assessment is primarily concerned with (i)the context (national, institutional); (ii) the procedures (self-assessment, peer-review, field visits); (iii) the levels (system, organisation, unit, individual); (iv) the frameworks (prizes, policies, schemes, beliefs); (v) some quality principles associated with the quality assessment. (vi) educational values; (focusing on faculty and their abilities to impart lessons for students and the way they manage lecturer rooms) ;(vii) management values (focus on processes and practices) (viii) job principles (emphasis on graduate performance features and learning outcomes).

Despite the varying goals of the assessment and the number of various types of organisations, the approaches implemented are consistent. Approaches to higher education assessment are based on three fundamental elements: self-assessment; peer evaluation; and statistical or performance metrics.

On the other hand, Brennan and Shah’s introduced conceptual model which describes as being one of assessment, but it could equally well be applied to a quality assurance approach (Temple, 2014). Originally, assessment specifically refers to the measurement of how well a university is doing in an academic area and is accompanied by scores or grades that can be used in comparisons with the same academic field in other universities. When applied to the quality assurance approach, Brennan and Shah’s conceptual model is used to assess universities’ own processes to see if these are well designed and implemented.

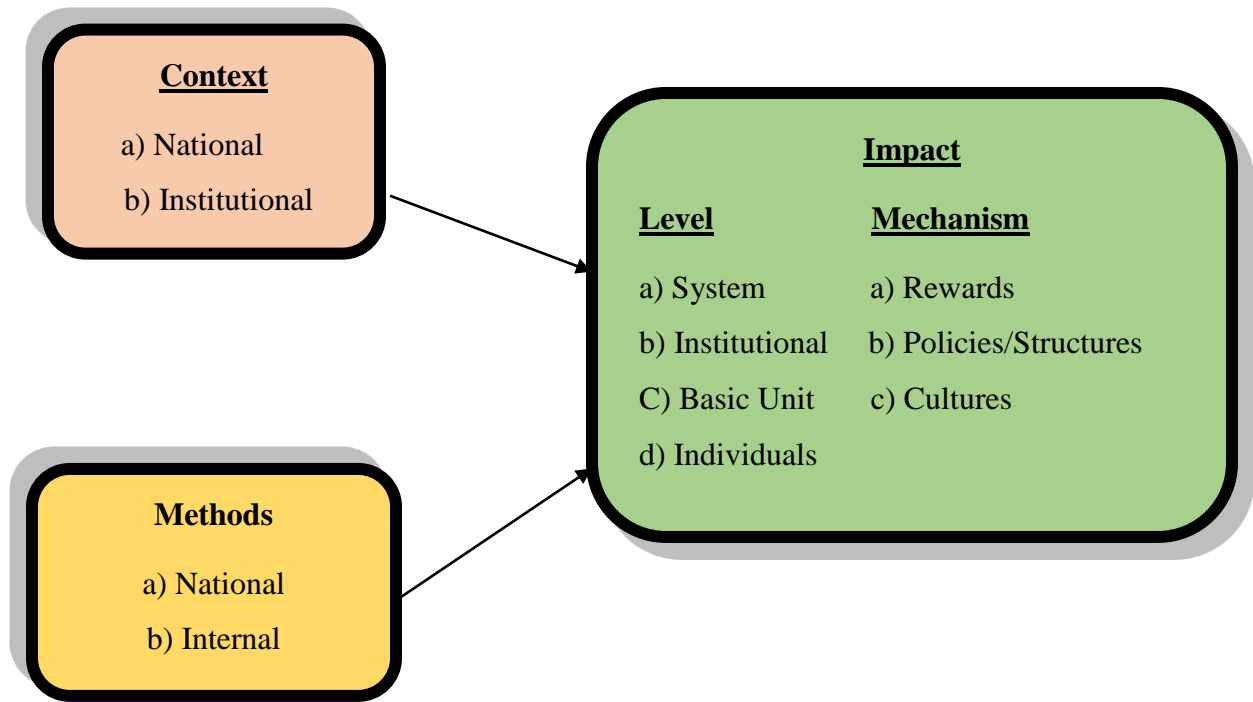


Figure 2.2 Brennan and shah (2000) Conceptual Model for QA

Brennan and shah’s conceptual model describe the impact of quality assurance as a function of two things such as the methods used and the national and institutional contexts in which they are used. A major aim of the model is to explain the extent to which differences in method and context determine the impact of QA systems underlying the operation of the model are issues of power. Brennan and shah (2000) argue that the model reflects the responses of HEIs to external requirements and a re-balancing of interests within institutions in response to diverse national and institutional contexts. The conclusion of the study by Brennan and shah is that the impact of QA systems all depends on the meaning that the benefit and threats from QA differ depending on what context and what purpose.

2.6. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS TO MEASURE QUALITY

The Oxford English Dictionary defines key performance indicators (KPI) as quantitative indicators used to assess the effectiveness of an organisation, an employee, etc. in achieving performance objectives. Performance indicators or, more generally, KPIs are a set of measurable dimensions employed to analyse an organisation’s all-inclusive long-term success. KPIs assist in determining a business’s plans, fund allocations and functional accomplishments, particularly

when associated with those of other organisations in the same industry. Performance indicators focuses on the measurement of a specific activity factor. The operation can have four elements: input, output, power, and process. The mechanism is something that allows an operation to operate, or to execute the elements, either person or machine. Consequently, the use of performance metrics and the selection of acceptable quality measures are discussed in depth below in this subsection.

Harrison et.al., (2022:81) argued that performance indicators allow for objective quality assessment and comparability that are important to the government. According to him, success metrics or indicators are seen as valuable resources both for accountability drives and for notifying policy and decision-making. Performance metrics aim to create understood accountability standards for the government and designated personnel by presenting a clear collection of publicly accessible performance information. Furthermore, the performance measure provides decision makers with a general view of what is going on in a certain organisation or framework, which may be used to steer policy discussions.

According to Miller (2022), the primary role of QA in education is to gather trustworthy evidence on the success of HEIs and to offer unbiased quality performance. Performance indicators enable the government to calculate or quantify and evaluate the impact of public strategies on quality, demonstrating that the standards are attainable.

Similarly, Harrison et.al., (2022:81), asserted that the use of performance indicators has an impact on transformation. He suggested that the use of KPIs may lead organisations to quality management and operational improvement by creating an analytical basis for decision making. In order to achieve those expectations, KPIs are deliberately used to help HEIs to improve their development.

However, several scholars have disagreed with the increasing use of performance indicators. Leiber, (2022:120) maintained that success indicators are reductive, imprecise, and unnecessarily burdensome. Similarly, Arcinas, et.al., (2021) contended that prevalent discourse often includes insignificant comparisons, focuses on just one or two elements, oversimplifies them, and pays no attention to whether the characteristics are proportionate. In addition, Harvey (2002) maintained that the use of performance indicators may encourage manipulation of the HEI data in an attempt to reach

the goals. Beerkens, (2022:29), also asserted that the summary evaluation of student performance data is untrustworthy and mis-manipulated on a regular basis.

Another critique of performance indicator is that there is no important connection between performance indicators and efficiency. Salemans and Buildings (2022:337) argued that the relationship between performance indicators and efficiency is not clear. According to him, quality is about far more than output steps, it is also about inputs, including the quality of teaching personnel, and the quality of the infrastructure and testing laboratory accessible inside the HEIs.

Several scholars have suggested that one of the key problems in the QA process is to examine the quality of teaching and learning. (Beerkens, M. 2022:29) asks a question “does the question arise as to whether a high rate of achievement in education is an indication of quality or does it reflect a decline in standards”? Or is the total number of publications a valid indicator of research quality? However, he concludes that the assessment and comparison of research output still seems to be less questionable than that of teaching and learning.

In addition, Beerkens, M. (2022:29) argues that there should be a difference between qualitative and quantitative measures. Quantitative performance indicators are mostly simple statistics (e.g., student numbers, staff numbers, drop-out rates) and do not tell us much about performance. Qualitative performance measures, on the other hand, are basic variables that determine quality; characteristics that must be considered.

Similarly, Beerkens, M. (2022:29) ended by emphasising the significance of defining success metrics. The concept of “performance indicators” is said to have generated a serious discussion of objectivity and subjectivity, as well as the function of performance indicators and peer review. Quality indicators will never tell us all we need to know on their own, thus they must be defined by specialists. According to Hou et al. (2022), performance indicators are never actually measured and are only useful after a contextualisation process.

Despite the difficulty in defining performance indicators, it is thought that their attempts at quality assurance would be effective if the applicable regulations were followed. According to Leiber (2022:120), to be efficient in measuring and enlightening educational quality, “it is not

the KPIs that establish the major challenge, but the circumstances in which they may be employed". In general, additional research is needed to determine how performance indicators contribute to the QA process.

2.7 APPROACHES TO QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Brennan and Shah (2000a:14) maintained that quality assurance has been questionable because it contradicts academic standards and ideas on what constitutes high quality, HE. The ongoing discussion about the acceptability and application of industrially developed quality management approaches in the field of HE demonstrates that no single QA model can be established for broad acceptance and appropriateness. This suggests that the choice of a quality management method, as well as a quality evaluation approach, is dependent on quality standards and definitions of what constitutes high quality in HE. Brennan and Shah (2000a:14) identified four quality ideals that underpin various methods of QA: academic, managerial, pedagogical, and employment. Thus, this subsection highlights the many quality values that drive various methods used in the evaluation process.

According to Brennan and Shah (2000a:14), the academic approach originates from the cultures of academic disciplines. It gives greater emphasis to the field of research, which is related to professional competence, and where academic principles and quality concepts will vary across the various basic units of the organisation's infrastructure, which has minimal prospects for defining and assessing quality. At its core, a quality management system should be decentralized and based on disciplinary characteristics and methodologies and must address quality control, quality assurance and quality improvement in the HEIs.

The second method, the managerial approach, is focused on the organisation's processes and frameworks for safeguarding the consistency of its achievements. The organisation's processes will generally be invariant throughout the organisation, setting limits to the autonomy of the basic units and the degree to which disciplinary principles and interests could thrive. It indicates that good management is a vital feature of quality production. In this approach, centralisation is seen as a core aspect of the quality control system, as well as connecting it to organisational policies and clear quality requirements (Brennan & Shah, 2000a:14).

According to Brennan and Shah (2000b:342), the third approach is known as pedagogical, and is expressed as consistency throughout the organisation. The basis of excellence in this form of model is the practical skills of lecturers and professors in teaching and not the academic discipline. The approach, according to researchers, pays attention to a more structured delivery mechanism rather than to the quality of education.

The employment-related approach is the fourth approach, whereby Brennan and Shah (2000a:15) are referred to as consumerists because they address stakeholder needs where consumers are also viewed as employers of graduates. The employment-related approach focuses on the educational outcomes, skills and competencies of students and their relevance to employment needs. It tries to consider both subject-explicit and overall features of high-quality education.

Luckett (2006:6) further elaborated and discussed the four definitions addressed by Brennan and Shah. Luckett claimed that QA schemes are replete with power conflicts of interest, and therefore attempts to examine any QA scheme should not be so much about how quality is correctly demarcated but about the identification of which issues are being handled. Key questions such, “Who chooses what constitutes as quality?” Who decides what the quality standards or metrics should be? Who oversees the quality systems (internal and external)? The question, “For whom is the assessment done?” should be addressed in the analysis of any quality assurance system. Luckett (2006:6) suggested four rationales about QA in HEIs by acknowledging four quality values: collegial rationality, managerial rationality, facilitative rationality, and bureaucratic rationality. Each of these ways of thinking about QA are discussed here.

2.7.1 Collegial Rationality

Collegial rationality focuses on the advancement of knowledge and disciplines, with its norms and principles based on the concept of a community of academics and the liberal ideal of academic freedom. It outlines quality as academic excellence and hence appears to consider students as novices or apprentices. The collegial QA technique is centered on peer review and uses an interpretive evaluation procedure based on theoretical judgement by peers with suitable disciplinary and experiential proficiency. Decisions made within the common setting of the disciplinary culture is based on understanding quality needs. The test findings are usually non-threatening and do not include any extrinsic incentives or penalties (Luckett, 2006:37).

However, because the academic organization continues to use the collegial approach, many scholars are skeptical. Prisacariu and Shah (2016:152) contends that collegial rationality appears to prioritize disciplinary excellence over good discipline. In addition, interpretive assessment is largely focused on interactive communications, indicating that power and control are frequently involved in decisions. This means that outsiders, in particular external role players in HE, remain obdurate in their decisions which are difficult to change.

2.7.2 Managerial Rationality

According to Kogan (2002:57), higher education management entails the transfer of control from senior teaching staff and their units to the institutional level, as well as the primacy of structures over intellectual principles, which stems in part from the need for an institution to meet new requirements with fewer resources. Similarly, Amariles (2017:465) observed that managerial rationality serves the HEI. It is assumed that successful centralised management control is a solution to organisational efficiency and performance. Value is commonly defined as “fitness for purpose”, with students serving as customers. Managerial rationality employs a goal-oriented, positivist and pragmatic assessment technique, yet it necessitates an external collective evaluation in which the parameters are based on the states or the investors’ objectives for the HE. The assessment technique most used is “pragmatic,” which posits that human performance of anticipated objectives can be empirically measured and that measurement, penalties and incentives may encourage improvement in outcomes.

The assessment criteria are structural; that is, they are the management aims and objectives against which institutional output is assessed (Luckett, 2006:40). According to Brennan and Shah (2000a:15), the impacts of proactive evaluation are typically associated with internal decision-making and resource allocation.

2.7.3 Facilitative Rationality

Facilitative rationality is focused on working outside of the disciplines or organisations to help HE administrators and academics in their attempts to track and develop their results. Workers and growth agents both inside and outside the institution appear to embrace facilitative rationality. Facilitative rationality, according to Van Heerden (2021), has a sympathetic but limited scope and addresses the notion of self-regulation as well as the ability of HE to professionalise and justify itself. Facilitative

rationality appears to embrace educational challenges in which students conform to the notion of quality as cognitive growth and transformation of students as co-contributors in learning. However, Windholz, (2022) criticised this approach in that it is naively believed that the potential for self-development is worldwide, while it is problematic to maintain this approach without organised support, resources, and rewards.

2.7.4 Bureaucratic Rationality

According to Langer (2022:122), bureaucratic rationality supposes a robust public or “evaluative state” to tackle social issues. It is based on rules and values that are alien to the domains of existence on which it is imposed. As a result, it is based on an instrumental perspective of HE. Administrative norms and principles, such as administrative efficiency and system-building aims, are examples of bureaucratic rationality. The approach promotes system-building objectives, and the overall goal of QA is transparency and control. It accepts the notion of quality as ‘fitness for purpose’ which is generally connected to ‘value for money’. It appears to regard students as clients or (potential) voters.

Furthermore, Lockett (2006:46) argued that bureaucratic rationality appears to adhere to a positivist epistemology because it is concerned with developing rules-based structures that can generate information (appraisal results) that can be seen as empirical, value-free, generalisable, and relative. This implies that bureaucratic rationality appears to be situational-agnostic and regards cross-situational assumptions as trouble-free. The red-tape QA paradigm is externally owned and controlled and has an accountability (and occasionally compliance) role. It reflects the external quality certification agency’s ideals and interests as well as the interests of the government to which it reports.

However, bureaucratic rationality is criticised by many academics for maintaining that one can realistically and consistently use uniform indicators to assess success across a system irrespective of contextual differences. Focusing on inputs, outputs and results ensures that the indicators are frequently overlooked. The biggest drawback of the bureaucratic approach is that it fails to address ambiguity and variety. Its external requirements and decisions seem to be subjective and irrelevant to the implementers, contributing either to resistance or skepticism about its enforcement (Amariles, 2017).

2.8. MODELS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT/ASSURANCE

There are also numerous QA models. Williams (2016:97) observed that the prevalence of QA systems in HE was a product of 1980 corporate ideology and management that followed. Tsilligirls and Hill (2021:228) defined four common quality assurance models, namely the Baldrige Framework, ISO 9000–2000, the Capability Maturity Model and Total Quality Management (TQM). Igbape and Idogho (2015:8) added the Six Sigma, Total Quality Control, Towards Total Quality Treatment, and Accreditation Board of Engineering & Technology (ABET) models. These models were created with the demands of diverse industries in mind, and they are all process-oriented with an emphasis on the use of a quality assurance system. The following subsection presents the most common quality management models (TQM, the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO), the European Foundation for Quality Management Models (EFQM), and the Baldrige Standards developed for higher education institutions.

2.8.1 The Total Quality Management Model

The TQM was presented by Feigenbaum in 1951. It is very difficult to find an exclusive and straightforward definition of what TQM is all about. Augustyn, et.al., (2022) described TQM as an all-inclusive management strategy that involves the efforts of all members in the company to achieve long-term gains for the organisation and society as a whole. Wang (2022) pointed out that TQM aims at doing things right the first time and every time, rather than periodically testing whether they have gone wrong. TQM is about building a culture of quality where every member of staff strives to delight their customers and where the framework of their company enables them to do so. It is all about supplying the consumer with what they want, when they want it and how they want it. It involves working towards improving and understanding consumer views and preferences.

According to Bayev, et.al., (2022), continuous quality enhancement, quality continuity, academic engagement, process-based communication, customer satisfaction (customer-focused), fact-based decision-making, and the presence of quality-enhancing management processes are concepts of TQM. In addition, Singh (2014) suggested that there are six critical factors required

for the proper implementation of TQM: engagement, culture, quality improvement, cooperation, customer attention and control.

Furthermore, Kanji, et.al., (1999:152) contended that the overall quality management strategy is built on four concepts: delight the customer, people-centered management, continuous improvement, and management by fact. The following sections discuss these four concepts of TQM.

- **Delight the customer:** Delight means meeting the needs of clients. According to this viewpoint, the consumer ultimately determines the level of quality. Being in sync with these advancements and pleasing clients today and in the future is a critical component of TQM.
- **People-based management:** Learning what to do, how to do it, and receiving feedback on results, according to this notion, is one approach to inspire individuals to take accountability for the quality of work done. Engagement and the obligation to please clients are two methods to do this.
- **Continuous improvement:** Continuous advancement or steady change requires a corporation to be analytical as well as inventive to become more effective and efficient in serving the requirements of role players. The notion is aimed at everyone who wants to improve their overall efficiency.
- **Management by fact:** To understand how well a business performs, data on KPIs are mandatory. TQM demands that an organisation collects and evaluates evidence on a regular basis to improve accuracy of decision-making, establish consensus, and enable historically based forecasting.

According to Kanji et al. (1999:129), the advent of TQM in HEIs is a “... product of the market philosophies of the 1980s, and managerialism that complemented it”. In addition, Mukhopadhyay (2020), suggested views on how to relate the overall concepts of quality management to the higher education framework. Education, he said, is about learning. If TQM is to have relevance to education, it needs to include an evaluation of student experience. Unless it does so, it would not have a major effect on the standard of education. Students learn to master the optimum in a way that suits their needs, emotions, and preferences. An educational institution that applies the total quality approach must take seriously the problem of learning

styles and must have strategies for individualisation and differentiation in learning. The student is the customer, and if teaching and learning approaches do not fulfil their specific desires and needs, educational institutions will not be able to say that they have achieved overall efficiency.

Educational institutions are responsible for making students conscious of the various of teaching and learning resources available to them. They need to provide students with opportunities to experience learning using a range teaching and learning methods (Siddique, 2021:592).

2.8.2 The International Standards Organisation

The International Standards Organisation in Geneva created ISO 9000 management standards in 1987, although its roots are found in early U.S. military standards (the 1960s) and British standards. According to Rogala and Wawak, (2021), ISO 9000 is a management performance measuring tool that safeguards clients that their providers have a reliable quality system with which they comply. ISO 9000 certification indicates that a company's internal procedures and processes for product design, production, supply, service, and delivery are reputable.

Similarly, Mukhopadhyay (2020) defined ISO 9000 as an international standard for harmonised quality assurance systems. It is about improving quality through preventative action. ISO 9000 principles are consumer quality and demand-driven, and efforts are made to increase customer loyalty and realise continual development. Furthermore, Demir, (2021:336) advocated that ISO 9000 be observed as a set of universally recognised accounting standards for reporting on quality procedures. It is a method for demonstrating to clients how things are verified, workers are qualified, archives are kept, and errors are rectified.

2.8.3 European Foundation for Quality Management Model

The EFQM excellence model consists of various standards that are separated into sub-categories and organised to handle all aspects of the organisation. The EFQM excellence model was developed in 1991 as a guideline for organisational self-evaluation and as a foundation for evaluating participants in the European Quality Award scheme (Fonseca,2022:101).

According to Mukhopadhyay (2020), EFQM is a non-prescriptive agenda that defines nine parameters (separated into enablers and outcomes) that can be used by any organisation to

measure progress towards excellence, while excellence can be identified as outstanding experience in managing the organisation and attaining outcomes on the basis of essential principles, such as results, actions or projects based on these principles. The EFQM model is based on nine parameters and contends that outstanding outcomes in terms of efficiency, customers, people, and community are obtained through leadership, policies and plans, people, cooperation and funds, and processes (Fonseca,2022:101).

The self-evaluation approach as described in the EFQM excellence model supports the company in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Using the EFQM paradigm, performance comparisons with internal goals, rivals, or comparable organisations, and ‘best-in-class organisations should be used to prioritise and drive change. According to Perianez et.al., (2022), the process of self-evaluation should ideally conclude in planned development stages that are then checked for success. The use of self-assessment on a daily basis guarantee that solid procedures are used and improved inside the company.

According to the research, a self-assessment technique centered on business excellence models is advantageous as continual self-evaluation using the EFQM excellence model, for example, assists firms in critically analysing, recognising, and addressing performance gaps. The use of a well-known model makes self-assessment easier and more efficient (Gabriela, 2021:301). Despite academic and practitioner adoption of the EFQM approach, experts warn that organisations face considerable obstacles and hurdles in analysing their entire output to identify strengths, identify areas for development and prioritise them (Fonseca,2022:102.).

2.8.4 Baldrige Criteria

The Baldrige Criteria were proposed by Malcolm Baldrige in 1987 in the United States of America with a view to fostering quality awareness and recognition of quality achievements. Baldrige, according to Purba, (2021:1), is an affiliate of the National Standard and Technology Institute and is devoted to a performance excellence framework that enterprises may use to improve performance. In addition, award winners must demonstrate accomplishments and progress that satisfy seven categories of performance excellence requirements, namely: leadership; strategic planning; customer and business focus; evaluation, research, and information management; human resource focus; process management; and results.

Miranda and Reyes (2021:533) proposed that the Baldrige requirements focus on industry, education, and health care organisations, which seek to improve competitiveness and service as a model for national excellence and awards programmes around the world. The Baldrige Criteria help companies define, recognise, and manage the factors that determine their performance. To encourage quality recognition and recognise quality accomplishments, the companies recognised the award in 1987. The 2007 Education Performance Excellence Standards include many sub-categories that concentrate mainly on student-centered excellence.

Since 1997, Ghafoor and Grigg (2021:128), Rahayu, et.al., (2021), Ford (2022), and Yusuf, and Fajari, (2022) have paid attention to the study of critical quality control methods in education, and different novel approaches have been expected in HEIs. To this end, the following section reviews some of the main models presented in the current literature on HE, and highlights their basic concepts, assumptions, strengths, and limitations.

2.9 THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT MODELS IN EDUCATION

2.9.1 The Generic Quality Management Model in Education

This quality improvement model was proposed by Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002). According to Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002), the generic quality management model is an educational approach, amalgamating the transformative model, the quality programme interaction model, the learning model, and the receptive university model. In addition, Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002:220) contended that the generic quality management discourse approach specifically focuses on the transformation of students, augmenting students' skills, and inspiring students to do well. The model aims to incorporate current ideas and contributions based on change, interaction, learning and reaction. The core themes emerging from this model is, therefore, student learning and successful cooperation at the level of education delivery. Quality methods and plans must also be learning-oriented and should be student-centered. It is also known as Knowledge based model (Pehlivan and Cliecek,2021), is an essential and mandatory instrument for higher education institutions mandated by the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers.

In addition, (Pehlivan and Cliecek,2021), proposed that harmonious relationships at the interface, which not only addresses conventional power imbalances (i.e., teacher-student) but also breaks

down problems between institutions and contributes to the creation of new external partnerships. Leaders of HEIs have a major role to play in motivating and safeguarding an effective collegial culture (Pehlivan and Cliceck,2021).

2.9.2 Massey's Quality Process Domains Model

Massy (1997:249) suggested a six-domain model of quality process. This approach serves as a standard tool for all HEIs with some autonomy. Massey's quality process domains model promotes greater dedication to teaching and learning, motivates institutions to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and requires HEIs to meet their obligations to quality by being accountable (Massy, 1997:255).

According to Csizmadia (2006:61), Massy's six quality process domains model is based on six domains: identifying desired learning outcomes; curriculum design; designing teaching and learning processes; system establishment for assessment and test results; implementing quality; and devoting resources to quality work in education (Massy, 1997:203). A brief summary of each domain is provided below.

- **Identifying desired learning outcomes:** The domain describes the fundamental intent of the educational initiative. It points out the aims of the programmes of study and their relation to the wishes of students, including their previous experience, abilities, additional job opportunities, the opportunity to assess social impact and quality of life (Massy, 1997:203).
- **The curriculum design:** It investigates the methodologies used to build and ensure a curriculum programme that includes “what will be imparted” and “from what viewpoint”, the inputs provided by lecturers, investors, students, and other role players. Furthermore, it emphasises what is required to produce a comprehensible curriculum by obtaining and providing structured input while offering a degree of flexibility relevant to the programme's goals; maintaining the quality of academic services provided by the organisations; and resolving arguments (Massy, 1997:203).
- **Processes for teaching and learning:** The domain emphasises processes for planning, evaluating, and developing teaching and learning practices, facilities, and infrastructure, and learning environments, such as platforms for staff to address problems, deliberation of

desired and realised learning outcomes, the role of external inputs and student perspectives, and provision for creativity to advance student learning (Massy, 1997:203).

- **System establishment for assessment and the results:** The domain gives attention to planning assessments, reviewing, and improving student results, evaluation procedures, and the relationship of examinations to educational objectives, as well as the assignment of responsibility for examinations, input mechanisms for improving examinations, and processes for improving the link between examinations and educational objectives (Massy, 1997:204).
- **The implementation of quality:** This area requires attention to learning outcomes, syllabuses, curriculum issues, teaching, and learning. Students' assessments and procedures are logically and effectively developed in conjunction with the plan, including employment and development of staff; and the advancement of teaching concepts and procedures to safeguard and enhance the consistency of teaching and learning and assessment offered to students (Massy, 1997:204).
- **Resource allocation to quality of education:** According to Csizmadia (2006:63), the domain focuses on how institutions use resources to ensure quality education effort; that quality management procedures are sufficient fund allocation; those incentives are recognised to reward good performers for providing quality education; that each component of quality education activities is adequately funded to fulfil its purpose; and that these quality education concepts are implemented.

2.9.3 The Three Quality Dimensions Model

The three-dimensional quality model addresses a set of factors to be applied in the evaluation of the quality of education and the resources used to evaluate the performance of education. Mergen Grant and Widrick (2000:347) suggested a three-dimensional quality model structure that includes quality of design (QD), quality of conformance (QC) and quality of performance (QP). A brief overview of these measurements is given below.

- **Quality of Design (QD)** addresses the major aspects of excellent education in a certain market segment at a defined fee. Three reasons can impact QD: (1) the consistency of stakeholders' aspirations and the difficulties in recognising their wants; (2) the quality of the approach employed to transform those wishes into an output that adds value to consumers; and (3) the continual expansion of the design process (Mergen et al., 2000:347).

- **Quality of Conformance (QC)** explains how the desired criteria (i.e., the educational apexes of HEIs) are met, including cost and dependability necessities. The variety of designs for products and services is minimised to ensure quality compliance. As a result, an adequate measure should be set for each design specification to verify that the design conforms with expectations (Mergen et al., 2000:347).
- **Quality of performance (QP)** is concerned with how HEIs assist students in their surroundings. It is a measure of the principle that students originate from specific and unique backgrounds. Funding, role players' satisfaction, income from education, student enrolments, compensation of new employers, and career growth are all QP metrics (Widrick, 2004:425).

2.9.4 Dill's Framework for Academic Quality Management

Dill (1992) set out a system for academic quality control in 1992. He suggested that an HE programme may be regarded as an integrated structure. Within the framework, numerous outlets provide students who are trained in the intended curriculum with unique educational methods and are eventually placed in the labour market. Similarly, Csizmadia (2006:65) argued that the educational curriculum should be constantly conceived and reorganised because of the needs of the participants and should be based on institutional knowledge and expertise. According to Csizmadia (2006:65), the framework may be applicable at any level of study, but it will be negotiated at the HEI level. Academic quality management serves as a foundation for management and student selection, curriculum design, clients' requirements for research, and the strategy and administration of a high-quality information support scheme. A summary of the element of academic quality management is provided below.

- **Source management and student selection** requires the recognition of HEIs in terms of the quality of their success over time. In this regard, according to Csizmadia (2006:65), the academic quality management method focuses on ensuring the ongoing improvement and dependability of student results based on academic quality metrics identified as relevant by those participating in the design of the academic programme. In addition, the approach focuses on the association between student selection and long-term student performance, as well as the incorporation of student selection in the academic programme design process.

- **Academic programme design:** The key concern of this aspect of the model is to improve the teaching, curricula preparation and student assessment skills of teachers. The curriculum design underlines the value of cross-functional design teams, instructional assessments, and the development of materials. Early recognition of essential components of the academic programme will help to minimise potential fluctuations in academic quality. As a result, the system underlines the importance of sequencing the different components of the instructional programme to ensure successful student learning.
- **Research on customers' needs:** Csizmadia (2006:65) emphasised the impact of academic abilities and knowledge on post-academic performance of organisational alumni and potential employers. Alumni studies have recognised the special value of broad components of undergraduate education in the workplace, as well as the impact of unique course components on performance in certain occupational categories.
- **Quality information system:** This aspect pays attention to the design of quality information systems to support HE management. The quality information system provides performance metrics for applying student performance as main programme sub-components, as well as the completion of the overall programme, student acceptance and placement, drop-out, graduate capability and satisfaction with their particular programmes. The knowledge obtained can be incorporated into the design of the programme with the active participation of students (Csizmadia, 2006:65).

2.9.5 The Holistic Educational Development Model

In 2001, Gosling and D'Andrea offered a comprehensive educational learning approach. According to Gosling and D' Andrea (2001:11), the holistic model of educational development emphasises a quality structure that not only regulates but also acts to advance the quality of educational practices, as well as one that has a developmental function. Csizmadia (2006:65) states that the approach involves the management of three key focus areas, namely academic development, learning development and quality development. The educational development model's actions will establish a quality loop in the holistic model. It emphasises the whole circle of educational creation, execution, and evaluation by integrating the curriculum design process with contemporary instructional philosophy and experience. It also increases the essential professional advancement of teachers by using teaching/learning approaches that satisfy the

curriculum's instructional aims and objectives. This integrated approach of educational development connects curriculum design and QA by fostering a collegial setting inside the organisation and improving support for students' learning requirements.

2.9.6 Verres's Quality Management Model

Csizmadia (2006:67) discusses higher education quality assurance from an engineering standpoint. The satisfaction of the stakeholders was regarded as the concept of quality. Only the "demand-satisfaction process" according to Csizmadia (2006:67), bases quality on a current view of quality control, whereas production or user processes do not. Stakeholders' satisfaction must be understood and evaluated to enhance quality. HEIs can measure educational quality, stakeholder satisfaction, and so on, but they cannot reproduce the procedures under the same conditions unless they have consistent educational, regulatory and conformity management systems.

In addition, Csizmadia (2006:67) argued that organisations can announce the satisfaction of role players, but do not know what kind of events and procedures creates this satisfaction. As a result, they do not know what to do to improve their situation. Organisations thus need to carry out a concise review of educational and secondary processes related to education, process regulation, compliance monitoring processes, and, finally, quality control procedures to satisfy stakeholders.

The model also emphasises the importance of a "goal-oriented" quality control framework in which these operations are aimed at achieving targets. The technique for determining quality targets must be drawn from the organisation's quality policy, which must be contextualised (Csizmadia, 2006:67).

2.9.7 Csizmadia Framework for Quality Management in HE

Csizmadia (2006) presented this model based on findings from a review of the QA and management approaches discussed in the literature. This model is based on a basic structure model of HE as an academic endeavour. It uses an input-output strategy, focusing on education and the systems that support it. The input, throughput and output dimensions establish the model's main parts.

External elements like government expectations, accrediting organisations, student needs and resources are all part of the input dimension. The throughput dimension focuses on relevant educational practices such as teaching and learning including research activities, leadership and support procedures. Finally, output includes things like student satisfaction with lessons, the labour market's satisfaction with graduates' performance, study results, exam performance and facilities. The model also considers education and support systems that have an impact on the quality of learning outcomes.

2.9.8. Morley Quality Assurance Model

Morley (2004) asserts that quality assurance is a "socially constructed domain of power, " and designs procedures for it in a political process-appropriate manner. It is proposed that using the "responsive model" of evaluation could increase the effectiveness of quality assurance in improving educational quality. According to the responsive model, evaluation is a collaborative process that begins with the claims, concerns, and issues raised by all stakeholders. Quality is also viewed as a powerful force of surveillance and standardization (Morley, 2004). The model investigates the political and psychic economy of QA in higher education and cross-examines the discourse and practices associated with the audit culture using a sociological framework. It focuses on key ideas such as accountability, autonomy in higher education, and continuous improvement in the face of vital inquiry.

2.10 REFLECTION ON THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT MODELS

As mentioned in the previous section, the issue of improving the standard of HE has become a contemporary agenda. Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002:216) argued that the analysis by numerous scholars shows that many HEIs have adopted quality assurance models initially designed for industry. This methodology has yielded many advantages for quality assurance, but there are still several drawbacks related to the implementation and validity of these models in HE. As a result, various models for educational standards have been offered in recent literature, and a synthesis of the characteristics of these models is needed. The objective of the next section is thus to summarise the benefits and limitations of quality management models as described in the literature, both in general and in HE.

From the late 1980s onwards, the literature indicates a continuing interest in the most used industrial model, namely the Total Quality Management model in the HEIs (Motwani & Kumar, 1997). Similarly, Pratasavitskaya and Stensaker (2010:38) argued that TQM could be seen as the first quality improvement model in HE that resulted in discussions on the possible significance of some areas of HEI practices, such as increased enrolment, educational wastage, and the internal institutional climate, as well as its social implications. According to Seeman and O'Hara (2006), TQM promotes disciplined thinking about concrete and imperceptible aspects of academic operations, incorporates TQM methods, connects goals with the process through self-assessment, and illustrates changes such as customer support, university procedures, staff and faculty morale, course quality, and recruiting staff.

However, TQM has some limitations in HE. Sahney, Banwet and Karunes (2004) revealed that it is difficult to apply the concepts established for manufacturing industries in HE settings, including the definition of outputs, academic freedom, the bureaucratic systems, the implementation of multifaceted courses and the definition of student roles within HE (client or co-producer). In addition, TQM is more applicable to academic service functions than quality of teaching. TQM does not address the quality of academic personnel, difficulties in leadership skills and poor institutional strategic planning. Abbas, et.al., (2021) also pointed out that lack of reform mentality, lack of administrative engagement, time-consuming individual training, difficulties in adapting the TQM performance measuring instrument to the HEI climate, and little knowledge of team leaders and staff working as a team are some of the reasons why TQM has failed in the HE environment.

The ISO 9001:2000 standard offers a strong quality control framework, but its development is too general. In the sense of HE, the ISO 9001:2000 guidelines have both advantages and drawbacks. In this regard, according to Crawford and Shutler (1999), the ISO 9001:2000 can improve interdepartmental working conditions, student enrolments and teachers' satisfaction, as well as continuous improvement achieved through quality certification and preventative action. However, its standardised control is less attainable in HE than in industries, which is recorded as a limitation.

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improve interdepartmental working conditions, student enrolments and teachers' satisfaction, as well as continuous improvement achieved through quality certification and preventative action. However, its standardised control is less attainable in HE than in industries, which is recorded as a limitation.

The EFQM is also a popular model established in industry that has been used in higher education. According to Becket and Brookes (2008), the EFQM excellence model is a practical technique for enabling firms to accomplish their goals by evaluating where they are on the road to excellence, assisting them in understanding gaps and generating resolutions. It refers to organisations of every size, structure, and industry. In addition, Laurett and Mendes (2019:257) proposed that the EFQM could support higher education by incorporating a management map and maintaining the trust of stakeholders. It is also helpful as a framework for self-assessment and measures the relationship between stakeholders. On the other hand, EFQM is more important to service functions than teaching and learning, lacks convergence between EFQM and national HE quality assurance systems and takes time (3 to 5 years) to produce evidence.

Malcolm Baldrige's criteria concentrate on managing all elements of the enterprise as a whole and on recognising the role of risk management within the framework perspective of organisational performance management. It is concerned with success in five areas: output and process results, consumer outcomes, employee outcomes, leadership and governance outcomes and financial outcomes. Arif and Smiley (2004) discussed the following benefits of Baldrige's parameters: organisational components, strategy and financial planning, careers, outreach, and information resources, and the impacts may be visible immediately and for a long time. Csizmadia (2006:61) contended that the Baldrige criteria lack a genuine framework and can only be applied effectively in large organisations.

Education-oriented management models for HE discussed in the preceding section appear to have two focal points: student learning and the complex communication that surrounds it. All educational management models place a premium on the students' learning practices as the foundation for excellence. For instance, Harvey and Knight's (1996:11) transformational quality management model contains quality regulations centred on the student-learning experience.

Haworth and Conrad's (1997: xiv) quality management engagement model theory also emphasises the idea of student learning as the fundamental goal of HE. The responsive university paradigm (Tierney, 1998:164) emphasises internal and external collaboration with new partnerships. Hafeez, et. al (2022:374) generic approach of QA in education also emphasises student transformation. According to Massy (1997:225), organisational problems, faculties, and departmental education QA procedures should be structured in such a way that they contribute to an increase in QA, and quality assurance policies should be geared toward learning, with an emphasis on student practices, "improving students by adding value to their capabilities and eventually empowering them". According to Hafeez, et al., (2022:374), students' learning practices should be based on a dialogue between professors and students, as well as between HEIs and the larger community. Moreover, Massy (1997:256–260), asserted that teacher-student interaction, mentorship, and peer-to-peer learning are central to teaching and learning.

The QA system is defined by Lim (2018:11) as "a system that aims to advance the quality of educational practice while simultaneously offering a developmental function". They emphasised the need for tying curriculum development and quality management together to increase students' learning growth. Advocates of educationally oriented management models agree on the need for communication and discourse at the educational delivery level. For example, tertiary education is a paradigm that emphasises academics' synergistic influence in what is core and what is complementary (Reynolds et al. 2020:7). Lim (2018:14) emphasised the need for designing teaching and learning techniques that would achieve the educational objectives of curriculum design and improve the standard of students' experiences in HE.

The requirement for numerous management activities to coordinate education processes at all levels of HEIs is a factor shared by most models. Thus, according to Hafeez, et.al., (2022:374), leadership is critical in building and sustaining a successful collegial culture to accomplish "transformation of students". Furthermore, the change of students, and indeed institutions, is the driving force behind all educational methods. The nature of excellence in education, according to Harvey and Knight (1996:8), is "transformation" and "critical ability" in students to evaluate and generate knowledge for themselves. Reynolds, et al. (2020:7) provided a nuanced educational concept of transformation as students' capacity to distinguish between options and choose the best possible resolution. This is mostly the responsibility of the programme developers.

Furthermore, student and institutional transformation is the driving force behind all instructional systems.

As a result of the foregoing debates, it is contended that the methods discussed so far in the literature to incorporate quality management models as practiced in business across all the university's functions are flawed due to their lack of fit with the core operations: teaching and learning, research, and community services.

However, a large portion of the work of HEIs entails administration and support services where industrial models may be fitting, as in any other service context (Hafeez, et.al., 2022:375). Thus, the only reasonable deduction on the quality management models in HE is that the models may be useful to some extent but should not overlook the unique core functions of HE, namely teaching and learning, research, and community service. As a result, emphasis must be given to the development of a structure that fits the major functional areas of higher education (Csizmadia, 2006:62). It would be worthwhile amalgamating aspects of diverse models to create a new model for HE (Hafeez, et.al.,2022:375).

2.11 QUALITY ASSURANCE EXPERIENCE IN SELECTED COUNTRIES

This section of the chapter includes the experience of certain developed and emerging countries' QA procedures with the purpose of determining some of the international trends in QA techniques. The USA, the UK, the Netherlands, Australia, and Norway were chosen from developed nations for their long-standing history and expertise in the implementation of QA in higher education. China and India were chosen from Asia, as well as South Africa and Kenya from Africa, depending on the availability of current studies. The HE schemes in the USA is considered as decentralised governance and market-oriented, whereas the HE system in the rest of the world is generally governed by the state. The quality assurance of these countries is rated based on the following themes: approach, level, aim/purpose, scope, and methods/procedures.

2.11.1 The Approaches and Levels of Quality Assurance

The three basic methods of quality assurance are accreditation, assessment, and institutional quality audit. Many colleges and universities have implemented one or more of these strategies. Since the late nineteenth century, the USA has had a systematic QA system that incorporates

accreditation and intra-institutional procedures (Van Vught & Westerheijen, 1994). Accreditation in the USA is a self-regulation mechanism developed by HEIs and programmes to maintain and advance academic excellence (Eaton, 2003). It comes in two forms: (1) institutional accreditation performed by regional accreditation agencies with authority derived from HEIs; and (2) specialised accreditation performed nationally by professional controlling bodies with an emphasis on national programme evaluations (Van Vught & Westerheijen, 1994). Intra-institutional analysis is a methodical examination of programmes conducted largely by tertiary education institutions to identify the quality of study programmes and improve institutional decision-making. In addition to the two approaches mentioned above, USA uses student-learning experience surveys and graduate job surveys.

In the United Kingdom, the primary method of QA is an institutional quality audit. Universities and colleges in the United Kingdom are autonomous and independent institutions. Institutional quality audits and performance reviews are procedures used to examine and verify that universities and colleges provide suitable levels of HE and certification awards. To increase the quality of its services, each firm has an institutional quality-audit system. The major factors used for standards and quality are student evaluation and processes for programme creation, acceptance, monitoring, and review (QAA, 2005). In addition to the three ways mentioned above, the UK system uses licensing or certification of graduates by professional groups.

The Netherlands embraced accreditation as a mechanism of QA for all its educational programmes (universities and universities of applied sciences) after 2003. The country's accreditation method requires degree programmes to be examined for conformity with specified quality norms. HEIs are primarily responsible for maintaining quality and realising teaching and research activities.

Australia's quality institutional quality-audit technique is the fundamental approach to QA. Its emphasis on the institution's QA prearrangement's sufficiency. It focuses on external quality control but makes no specific criteria for colleges. In addition to this, Australia uses licensing or certification of alumni by professional associations.

The quality assurance system in Norway consists of (1) local QA systems; (2) cyclical external audits of these local QA systems; (3) institutional self-accreditation of curricula and external accreditation of institutional accreditation bodies; and (4) external accreditation of curricula (in

the case of non-institutional self-accreditation authorities) (Stensaker, Langfeldt, Harvey, Huisman & Westerheijen, 2010).

According to Lim (2010), the most important aspect of QA in China is teaching quality assessment, which is a systematic analysis that includes teaching management and quality assurance procedures. Discipline-based tertiary education teaching steering committees are drive the national quality management system. In China, there are both centralised and decentralised QA authorities. Since 2008, it has been mandatory for HEIs in China to establish an institutional quality-audit scheme.

In India, the QA process includes three types of QA approaches: accreditation, assessment, and academic audit (Martin & Stella, 2004). Accreditation is primarily concerned with the effectiveness of HEIs. The evaluation evaluates HEIs on a nine-point scale. A quality audit is performed by a chosen group of external peers, tracked by a public report.

In South Africa, the QA system consists of institutional assessment accreditation programmes, as well as national reviews of certain areas of current programmes. The accreditation programme is based on compliance with basic standards. The institutional quality audit monitors the efficiency of the organisation's internal quality schemes in line with the main purposes and goals of the institutions. The same quality assurance system applies to all HEIs, both private and public.

QA, as in Kenya, is carried out through an institutional quality-audit system. It is required for all commercial, private, and governmental universities, apart from public HEIs recognised by an act of parliament. QA methods are also carried out by several professional organisations. Accreditation in Kenya involves public recognition and confirmation, as indicated by the granting of a charter, provided that the institution meets and continues to meet the Commission's academic excellence requirements (Commission for Higher Education, 2008). To sum up, these systems are essential for understanding the standard of student learning; the information, qualifications and skills gained as an output.

2.11.2. Purpose and Scope of Quality Assurance.

As stated in the preceding section, the two primary aims of QA in higher education are progress, improvement, and transparency. Improvement-led QA is formative in nature; it focuses on performance enhancement rather than monitoring. Accountability-led QA is summative and judgmental and emphasises the institution's accountability for results to all role players. Openness and enhancement are parts of the purpose of QA programmes in most of the nations studied (UK, Norway, Australia, the Netherlands, and Kenya).

Quality management is part of the aim in the USA, India, South Africa, and China, and the scope of QA includes teaching-learning and research. Furthermore, the scope of QA in the United Kingdom comprises institutional quality-audit procedures and laws, whereas QA in Australia involves management and QA processes. In both China and Kenya, the attention is on teaching and learning.

2.11.3. Criteria and Methods for Quality Assurance

The QA systems of the nations listed above are defined by two primary methods: self-assessment or self-evaluation within the institution, supported by peer review and external review, including field visits. In the United States, the accreditation process begins with self-evaluation followed by a visit by a team of external evaluators and a joint decision on the realisation of threshold academic standards, which implies that schools are qualified for federal student subsidies and loans.

On-site visits in the Netherlands follow the same concepts of self-assessment and peer review. Dutch HEIs have a long history of measuring the labour-market roles of their graduates through yearly surveys (Jeliazkova & Westerheijen, 2002:433). In Norway, institutional accreditation procedures are based on an initial audit of institutional QA programmes and self-evaluation is an essential component of the accreditation process (Haugland, 2006).

Organisational analysis, peer review, on-site inspections, and reporting are among the tactics used in China, India, South Africa, and Kenya. The same is true for the UK's institutional quality audit, where quality-audit methodologies include self-study, peer evaluation, and public reporting. Furthermore, QA procedures at Australian universities include the evaluation of new study units,

course analysis, student evaluation of teaching, the use of external surveys of alumni and owners of the business, and the use of performance measurements (Harman & Meek, 2000).

2.11.4. Lessons Learned

The subsections that follow give a brief overview of QA experience in a few selected nations in terms of approach, level, aim, scope, methods, procedures, and criteria. The examination of QA experience reveals parallels and contrasts in the selected nations' QA approaches. In terms of goal, scope, techniques, and quality assurance standards, most the countries' QA programmes are comparable. The priorities of QA include components of transparency and progress, regardless of the techniques used.

Most QA systems underestimate the difficulty of QA in teaching, learning and research. Self-assessment supplemented by peer evaluation or external review, on-field visits and reporting are typical aspects of QA systems. Internally, the goal of self-evaluation is transformation, which encourages transparency for peer or external review. In addition, there are generic characteristics in terms of quality assurance criteria and standards. In this sense, curriculum, teaching-learning, and student evaluation are common indicators of QA standards across nations.

However, the quality assurance frameworks differ in terms of approach and level of QA. Some nations approach QA through institutional and programme accreditation (e.g., USA and Norway). Others, such as the Netherlands focus on programme certification. Kenya focuses on institutional accreditation. Nations like India and South Africa use an amalgamation of programme accreditation, administrative auditing, and assessment. China, for its part, evaluates teacher quality.

An institutional quality audit is an approach to QA in the United Kingdom and Australia. Also, proof of student-learning experience is not a standard aspect of programme evaluation. Some countries use the system of external examiners or professional licensing (e.g., UK and USA) or student and alumni tracing (e.g., Netherlands and Australia) as a tool to collect and evaluate evidence on the quality of student learning. The lesson that can be learned from such disparities is that the QA framework must be consistent with the historical and educational setting of a nation.

This study focuses on national quality assurance frameworks but does not cover HEIs' actual quality assurance processes. So, the next issue is, *what do empirical research reveal regarding the implementation of the quality assurance policies?* Lim (2010) identified five circumstances under which quality assurance systems have functioned at universities in industrialised countries. These include (1) the availability of skilled staff with the necessary teaching and research skills and practice; (2) full-time jobs and participation in the institution; (3) the existence of appropriate physical facilities and administrative support services; (4) the selection and advancement of staff based on academic merit; and (5) the university's top leadership's dedication and understanding of quality assurance. The author contended that underdeveloped nations lack the sufficient resources for successful quality assurance. This demonstrates that there is a disparity in quality assurance practice among poor nations.

2.12 THEORETICAL OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This section provides useful insights into the organisational theories used in this research. As a result, the emphasis of this research is on organisational practices. The portion of this section contains a brief description of several organisational theories, including organisations as open systems and universities as open system organisations. It goes into detail about the two theories, Contingency and Neo-institutional. It also provides a synopsis of the organisational theory of higher education quality assurance research that uses organisational transformation.

2.12.1 Organisations as Open Systems

Organisational theories have been developed because of a comprehensive analysis of organisations and can thus be generalised to all forms of organisations. It provides a way of thinking about organisations and a way of handling organisations. In this regard, Miner (2005:5) suggested that organisational theory is a study of the behaviour and existence of organisations and their environment. More specifically, organisational theory studies the influence of social interactions between individuals within the organisation and their impact on the organisation. It is primarily concerned with organisational phenomena such as organisational change and growth, effective planning, design, and construction, politics, culture and structure. The significance of the organisational context is becoming more important in modern organisational theories.

Scott (2003) identified three organisational perspectives, namely logical, natural, and open system perspectives. The logical viewpoint of the organisation stresses the basic objectives and the structured framework of the organisation. Under this framework, the objectives of the company must be defined, and the duties assigned to the staff to achieve those objectives.

In contrast to the logical system, the natural system regards the organisation as a social system in which the goals and tasks are not specified, and the organisation's real objectives differ from those of the organisation. This point of view provides an informal framework in which the social norms of the organisation govern the system's activities.

According to the open system perspective, the organisation is viewed as a system that is open to the outside world and is built on resource flows. It believes the organisation is made up of numerous subsystems, each of which is interconnected and acts in concert with the other subsystems of the organisation. This point of view creates a normative foundation for the organisation (Scott, 2003).

According to classical authors, organisational theory is based on six main pillars, such as division of labour, departmentalisation, scalar chain and functional processes, organisational structure, and scope of impact, coordination, and span of control irrespective of their variations in size and function (Mintzberg, 1983). Many of these ideas have their origins in the open systems viewpoint (Miner, 2005:5).

On the other hand, in its broadest conception, "system" connotes a complex of interactive components along with the relationships between them that enable the identification of a boundary-maintaining entity or mechanism (Ackoff, 1981:16). As Macy (1991:71) put it, a structure is "less a thing than a pattern".

Broom (2006:141) pointed out that the approach to system theory is an interactive social system that must communicate with its environment to function. Structurally, the structure is a divisible whole, yet functionally, it is an indivisible entity based on the structure and patterns of the relationships that emerge from interactions between components. Theoretically, structures can be

considered either open or closed. Open organisations share knowledge, energy or resources with their societies while closed structures do not. The distinction between closed and open systems is defined by the degree of awareness of the external world (Broom, 2006:143).

Organisations are seen to be the most significant open systems in the world (Lenz & Engledow, 1986). The concept that organisations are multifaceted and adaptive systems that function and continually communicate within a specific context reinforces the core point of view of open systems, and that their interface with their surroundings is essential for their sustainability and achievement (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

According to the open systems framework, the organisation is viewed as a system that is open to the outside world and depends on resource flows. It is a way of looking at companies as processes that draw, transform and discharge inputs from the environment into the external setting in the form of goods and services (Daft, 2001). It encourages consistency, performance, reactivity, adaptability, client orientation, constant communication, and efficiency (Yasin, Czuchry, Martin, & Feagins, 2000).

Bastedo (2006) claims that an HEI, as an institution, must first be considered an open system. Furthermore, universities are seen as transparent and dynamic structures that operate in and communicate with their environment.

Van Vught (1994) described universities as a multifaceted entity with specific characteristics. The key elements that define universities as a unique organisation include mission uncertainty, role complexity, information exploitation, user service, challenging technology, professionalism, flat organisational structure, and contextual vulnerability.

Universities, being open system organisations, rely on contextual aspects in the organisational environment to carry out their essential activities and operations. Organisational theories, which are based on an open system structure, offer a theoretical lens through which to explain how organisational circumstances impact the implementation of QA in universities. Classical organisational theory, neo-classical organisational theory, and modern organisational theory are the three types of organisational theories. The subsection that follows gives a full overview of the

fundamental concepts, conclusions, and specific elements of modern organisational theory (systems theory, contingency theory, and institutional theory).

2.12.2 System Theory

A system, according to Forojalla (1993), is a coherent collection of dynamically linked elements, an interconnected system of objects and actions. It is a collection of pieces or parts that have some degree of individuality or identity while still being a vital part of a wider whole, functioning autonomously and collaboratively to produce the desired results. According to this description, a system is made up of pieces or subparts that have dynamic interactions with one another and with the whole.

According to Laszlo and Krippner (1998), the system method is also a theory that is built on construction, the creation of a theoretical framework that aids decision-making by creating a foundation for sorting variables and demonstrating linkages between and among variables and components. Furthermore, systems theory thinking entails thinking about the overall problem and its interrelating subparts or elements, as well as analysing, choosing, executing, and observing the best possible combination of the parts to obtain the desired results.

According to Kaufman and Levine (2000), the systems approach is a form of rational problem-solving procedure that is used to identify and resolve key educational challenges. According to him, the system approach consists of six steps: identifying the problem from needs; determining resolution; deciding on necessities and substitutes; choosing the best explanations or strategies from the alternatives; implementing the strategies or policies; and evaluating the effectiveness of the strategies or policies in resolving the problem. Thus, the fundamental aspects of the systems approach are the context, the inputs, the transformational process, and the outputs. In the context of this study, QA policies such as teachers' quality, service quality, student admittance and evaluation, governance and management, and internal QA increase the chances of producing highly qualified skilled manpower, which is the final output in the Input-Process-Output model.

However, others argue that systems theory is inapplicable to educational administration because the model was developed primarily for the discipline of biology and then moved to natural sciences and engineering management rather than educational administration (Forojalla, 1993). Forojalla

maintains that a systems approach focuses on outcomes rather than outputs and processes. The rigidity of systems theory (it is not reversible) has also been challenged, and because the three parts (input-process-output) are interconnected: the failure of one might influence the others.

Furthermore, the emphasis of higher education QA should not only be on the interaction between HEIs and input accessibility but also on the relationship between academic organisations and their role players (Dill & Sporn, 1995). Because the influence of education expresses itself in the quality of graduates, the output of HE serves to measure the amount to which inputs and processes are contributing to accomplishing the goals of HE. Graduate profiles, for example, include standardised test scores, cost-effectiveness, graduate employment rates and level of performance (Bolam et al., 2005). Therefore, the researcher decided that it was inappropriate to use this theory to guide this investigation.

2.12.3. Contingency Theory

The primary principle of contingency theory is that everything relies on the circumstances, suggesting that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for all organisations. It is built on the concept of open systems in companies. In this approach, open systems theory provides a background for comprehending contingency theory, in which things act and communicate with the outside environment on a continual basis (Brown, 2012:14). Contingency theory sheds light on how companies are situated within their immediate working circumstances. It postulates that the ideal manner for an entity to arrange itself is determined by the environment in which it operates. It pays attention to how companies function under changing environments and in particular situations. Contingency theory has two critical expectations, known as “there is no better way to organise” and in all situations, “the ways of organising are not equally successful” (Galbraith, 1973).

In addition, contingency theory has two fundamental assumptions, namely “fit” and “uncertainty”. According to Drazan and Van de Ven A, H. (1985:515), “fit “is a central notion of contingency philosophers. The central point of contingency theory is that the success of an entity depends on the match between its resources and its context. More specifically, Frederiks, Westerheijen and Weusthof (1994) suggest that contingency theory holds that there is a best match between an entity and its surroundings. Closer coordination between organisations and

their surroundings leads to better systemic efficiency, while failure leads to organisational problems (Frederiks et al., 1994:181).

Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) stated that the degree of uncertainty and the pace of change in the setting has an impact on the creation of internal features within organisations. In addition, Alzafari and Ursin (2019:58) argue that organisational situations are unpredictable and that organisations need to become more complex to survive. Differences in the degree of unpredictability and difficulty of contextual stresses might lead to a shift in the organisation's reaction to the context.

According to Romero, et.al. (2022:4), contingency theory studies the interrelationships between the three components: the essence of the work carried out by the organisation, the environmental context of the organisation and the institutional structure. It maintains that organisations rely on a variety of internal and external environmental aspects (Romero, S. et.al, 2022:6).

Organisational size, age, location, technology, leadership, roles, and culture, according to Thompson (1967:34), are some of the contingency variables that concern companies. Contingency theory has been used in many organisational studies to examine the degree to which organisational features clarify and foretell organisational operations (Donaldson, 2001:98). However, focusing on the position of organisational contingencies may not be enough to explain how organisations comprehend and respond to environmental expectations on its own.

Similarly, contingency theory arose from the open system view that organisations accept inputs from the environment, convert or turn these inputs into outputs, and release outputs into the external setting in the form of products and services through a sequence of operations. Teaching space, students, chairs, computers, academic knowledge, and instructional process are examples of inputs in HE. HE produces competent graduates, and the advancement of knowledge as outputs. Because of the ever-changing world and the interchange of knowledge between the setting and HEIs, HEIs constantly need to adapt their programmes and services to fit the demands of the environment. Therefore, HEIs can be categorised as open systems that receive input from the actual world and transform it into outputs (Kezar & Eckel, 2004:394).

2.12.4 Institutional Theory

Institutional theory is one of the most important theoretical frameworks for understanding organisational behaviour in the context of other organisations and larger social role players, particularly broader cultural standards, and values. Institutional theory, according to Pfeffer and Salancik (1978:56), emphasises the influence of folklores, values, and customs in organisational structure and behaviour. Madsen, D, (2022) indicated that streamlined rules for institutions emerged in some areas of work operation, in formal organisations, and were expanded by the introduction of these rules as structural elements. The institutional viewpoint means that the institutional situation shapes the organisation, defines its internal structure and the actions of the stakeholders within the institution (Madikizela Madiya (2022)). Moreover, the structural theorist is particularly concerned with the way organisational structures and procedures are institutionalised over time (Madsen, 2022).

Madikizela Madiya (2022) therefore indicated that companies show a tendency towards conformity due to pressure from the institutional setting. When an organisation does not conform with the norms of the institutional climate, this undermines the credibility of the organisation. Furthermore, conformity has a ceremonial component in which corporations creates elements of contextual change in compliance (Madikizela Madiya,2022).

The neo-institutional viewpoint stresses the importance of conformity to externally standardised institutional contexts to gain legitimacy, rather than optimising performance. Coercive, mimetic, and normative influences, according to Madikizela Madiya (2022), promote homogeneity or bring about organisational change within a specific organisational sector. External pressure put on companies by other organisations on which they rely, as well as cultural standards in the society in which they work, result in coercive isomorphism. Mimetic isomorphism operates under unclear objectives or an unpredictable environment, and organisations can mimic other organisations. Madikizela Madiya (2022:142) also perceived that mimetic activity has a major economic benefit as it minimises the expense of seeking a suitable alternative when organisations face similar difficulties.

The normative isomorphic origins are largely due to the professionalisation of organisational performers such as supervisors and managers. When role players have similar skills and share in

professional networks, they appear to hold similar roles in a wide variety of organisations and have similar orientations and temperaments in their professional activities (Madikizela Madiya, 2022:141). These sources of organisational change will contribute to the evolving standard on institutional structures and procedures and on the introduction and execution of the reform of quality control mechanisms.

However, Madikizela Madiya (2022:141) asserted that distinguishing between the three forms of isomorphic pressure may not always be achievable, and that two or more of them may be active at the same time, making it nearly difficult to determine which is the strongest in all circumstances. Madsen, D, (2022) stated that under neo-institutionalism, credibility is viewed as the most important aspect in ensuring constancy and existence. To attain acceptability, both internal and external role players must demonstrate trust and good faith. Accordingly, Madsen, D, (2022) argued that organisations are encouraged to participate in different ceremonies or practices to ameliorate strong political distrust or public attitudes.

In addition, Scott (1995) demonstrated that institutional decoupling is interpreted as a structured process implemented in response to external needs, whereas real procedures are adapted to the needs of internal workers. Decoupling methods are largely implemented for the sake of external legitimisation and are distinct from core organisational responsibilities. It has been proposed that institutional theory may easily accommodate a variety of organisational strategic responses to the institutional framework.

In this regard, Galay, J.A (2022:) recognised five organisational responses to situational challenges: acquiescence, sacrifice, avoiding, questioning, and operating. Thus, acquiescing denotes institutional pressure in the context of habit, imitation, and enforcement, while compromise entails balancing, pacifying, or negotiating with external stakeholders. Similarly, evasion is synonymous with shielding itself from institutional influences or ignoring universities guidelines and expectations, whereas defiance applies to organisations that publicly oppose institutional pressures. Finally, exploitation is the most complex response to environmental pressures. It entails the appointment, promotion, or management of the context to gain the best advantage for the organisation (Galay, J.A, 2022).

Furthermore, Madsen, D, (2022) advised that formal and representative actions reveal that “an organisation is functioning in a manner that is appropriately and justifiably valued collectively”. External evaluation, as a specific form of demonstrating legitimacy, may erode an organisation’s legitimacy by exposing inconsistency, which is why organisations attempt to limit or prohibit external reviews.

Csizmadia (2006:39) claimed that the removal of “good faith” by external constituents could obstruct the process of execution of external evaluation which is meaningless as a sign of a good organisation. Furthermore, organisations that implement a new QA model exclusively for symbolic purposes may delay using it to gain credibility or may not move beyond very shallow usage if the mechanism leads to a loss of “good faith”. Also, Scott (1987) outlined the institutional environment as being defined by a summary of the rules and standards to which individual entities must adhere if they are to obtain funding and legitimacy.

The primary contrast between institutional and contingency theories is how organisations respond to environmental desires for rationality or legitimacy. The concept of rationality is used here to denote to the degree to which a sequence of activities is organised in such a way that they lead to preset objectives with predetermined performance.

Organisational practice, according to contingency theory, is contingent on the unique settings in which the firm functions. The structural approach, on the other hand, focuses on how an entity reacts to uncertainty in the climate. Rather than assigning coherent internal reasoning to the company’s problem-solving mechanisms, the emphasis is on how management activities and actions attempt to regulate and moderate the link between critical parts of the external setting and the company’s internal operations (Scott, 1987:493).

The deployment of the QA mechanism in tertiary education can be viewed as expressing organisational principles rather than merely logical and influential purposes from an institutional standpoint. Madsen, D, (2022) maintained that genuine organisational activities can be loosely coupled with how they are externally legitimised. When institutional and contingency philosophies are integrated, they can offer an accurate image of both environmental and institutional actions.

Organisations must contend with both institutional and environmental settings (Erekson and Williams,2022). To compete in these settings, the organisation need not only proficiency and effectiveness, but also reputation. According to (Erekson and Williams,2022), management can treat these two settings individually, using symbolic methods to address their institutional contexts and logical practices to address their contextual setting. This study uses contingency theory in conjunction with institutional theory to gain a better understanding of the influential and figurative roles of QA execution activities in Ethiopian HEIs. Contingency theory is introduced to support the researcher's comprehension by emphasising that the practice of implementing QA policies is dependent on the environmental or settings of the HEIs. In turn, institutional theory is based on Madsen, D, (2022) contention that genuine organisational activities are always loosely coupled with how they are externally legitimised.

This is not the first research to use both contingency and institutional theory approaches. (Erekson and Williams,2022) for example, proposed combining both perspectives. (Erekson and Williams,2022) used contingency and institutional philosophies in their organisation theoretical approach. The study began by categorising the most important approaches as contingency and institutional theories. They also admitted that to characterise organisational occurrences, both notions contain almost opposing viewpoints. Donaldson (2008 as cited in Selos 2013:13)) explored the link between contingency and institutional theoretical issues in. Both ideas represent a key modern theory of organisational structure, which prompted the analyses. Furthermore, the analyses focused on systemic contingency philosophy and new institutionalism in sociology. Based on these perspectives, Selos (2013:13) contended that contingencies can generate internal productivity and institutional fitness to ensure external credibility.

2.13. ORGANISATIONAL THEORY IN HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH

Higher education research emerged as an issue of interest during the development of social sciences theories in the 1950s and 1960s; in particular, HE research is significantly newer than that of organisational studies. As a result, this subsection of the chapter delivers a brief overview of some of the key stages in the history of organisational studies.

According to Sirajul (2015:1), organisational theories were developed as a result of a systematic analysis of organisations that suggested a way to handle and construct organisational

frameworks, processes, and activities, as well as how they form social interactions and create institutions that affect people. Organisational theories are applicable to all sorts of organisations and focus on organisational level phenomena such as organisational change and growth, effective planning, design, development, culture, and structure.

Prior to the 1970s, university institutional structures were created and were mainly seen as closed systems with a high degree of autonomy not open to external adjustments, according to Peterson (2000). In this sociological age, universities are largely stable, and predictable, with an emphasis on prediction and preparedness, as well as a significant increase in university enrolments. HEI organisational models have emphasised formal-rational, objective, collegial and technical autonomy using political and public bureaucratic models during this era.

The 1970s and 1980s were a watershed moment in the history of organisational studies, with a focus on recognising the exterior characteristics of institutions. According to Scott (2015), during that time, organisations were generally found to be influenced by situational uncertainty and turbulence, such as cutting-edge technology (contingency theory); power processes (resource dependence); relational structures within and between organisations (network theory); resource rivalry between organisations of the same type, and the population's stage of development.

Similarly, Bastedo (2012) contended that the 1970s were a fruitful time of research that is still frequently read and quoted today, and that many of the contributions of that era serve as the basis for understanding HEIs as organisations. Furthermore, according to Koivisto and Pekkola (2018:3), the most noteworthy studies during that time include Baldrige's (1971) study which identified universities as political institutions, Clark's organisational saga in HE which named mutual awareness and organisational uniqueness of universities, and Cohen, et al. (1972) garbage can model of organisational choice.

The 1980s was another remarkable stage in the creation of organisational studies, regarded as a strong base for higher education research. Koivisto and Pekkola (2020:3) witnessed the fruitful contribution of organisational studies to the advancement of HE since the studies conducted during this period introduced inclusive and unified university models as organisations. They also maintained that the most notable organisational studies during this period were Clark's (1998)

HE System; Robert Birnbaum's (1988) *How Universities Deliver Teaching and Learning*; and Tony Becher's (1989) *Academic Tribes and Territories*

As cited in Koivisto and Pekkola (2020:4), Tight (2012) pointed out that many of the organisational studies conducted in the 1970s and 1980s relate to management and leadership models, although most of the new HE researches on organisational studies focuses on topics such as HE management practices, institutional leadership, and governance.

In addition, Peterson, and Davie (2007) pointed out that the 1990s was as a period for the creation of adaptive and constructive organisational models, and given the pressure of institutional competitiveness, expectations for a higher degree of productivity and efficiency arising from public funding limitations and a stronger drive for QA and internationalisation. Another significant point of view during this period was the major contribution made by Clark (1998) in applying the contingency principle in '*Creating Entrepreneurship Universities*' which was the most cited study in the field of HE researches.

Furthermore, Bastedo (2012) claimed that research directed in the context of universities resulted in the resource dependency principle (Pfeffer & Salanick, 1978), the 'garbage-can' model of choice (Cohen, March & Olsen, 1972), and the concept of loosely coupled organisational structures (Weick, 1976). However, as Scott (2015:48) pointed out, most institutional models used in universities research are derived from organisational studies rather than being developed within the context of HEIs.

In addition, Peterson (1995) used contingency theory to investigate the influence of national and state policies on the organisation and decision-making of universities. In the United States, Italy, Switzerland, and Austria, Sporn (1999) used contingency theory as a theoretical foundation for case study and grounded theory analysis to adjust the contextual circumstances of HEIs (Brown, 2012:18). In his analysis of policies on the level of teaching and learning in HE in Norway, Stensaker (2004:53) suggested that symbolic adoption be the first stage in the adaptation process.

Csizmadia (2006:38) investigated neo-institutional theory and resource dependence theory to analyse the adoption of quality management in HE in Hungary. It was suggested that organisational complexity, leadership, decision-making procedures, and other factors affected the pace and scope of

quality management adoption in HEIs. That is, the slower the pace of quality control that must be implemented, the more difficult the evaluation of HEI becomes.

Besides, according to Leeming, D., (2018,21), a theoretical lens can be used in designing the study and developing data collection tools (interviews, focus group discussions) in qualitative research method such an approach has the potential to enhance the robustness and rigour by ensuring that the research findings are theory driven. Also, Collin, C.S, and Stockton, C.M (2018:35) has described that the use of theories in qualitative research has included clarification of epistemological dispositions, identification of the logic behind methodological choices, building theory as a result of research findings and used as a guide or framework for the study, as well as facilitates the development of new concepts and their generalizability or transferability.

Similarly, Nguyen, et al., (2022:22), argue that theory should be interrogated throughout the research process to sensitize researchers studying a particular phenomenon advocate for the research question and objectives, guide the research design, illuminate data collection, and assist with data analysis and interpretation.

In summary, Csizmadia, Enders and Westerheijen (2008:451) confirmed the usefulness of organisational theories in examining QA operations in universities. To round up the topic on organisational studies in higher education QA, Kahsay (2012:68) used institutional and contingency perspectives to investigate the contextual concerns that influence the adoption and execution of QA in universities.

2.14. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the research is to assess the execution of QA policies in Ethiopian public HEIs to regulate how the quality of teaching and learning may be improved using the QA framework. This subsection of the chapter introduces the conceptual framework for the study which is based on QA and organisational theories. External organisational environments, QA implementation activities and its effects and internal institutional settings are the three aspects that are considered.

2.14.1 External Organisational Environment

The conceptual framework begins with external organisational settings. It can be viewed through the lens of the institutional setting. An institutional setting is a term used to designate external influences that impact an entity indirectly through social norms, resources, and restraints (Carroll & Huo, 1986:838).

Institutional theory, according to Oliver (1991:148), places a greater emphasis on the needs and limitations of the institutional context, whereas contingency theory seems to place a greater emphasis on the task environment. The atmosphere for HEIs, according to Bastedo (2006:6), is extremely problematic since HE must represent parents, alumni, trustees, state boards, lawmakers, and governors. Kahsay (2012:78) stated that internal stakeholders, such as instructors, administrative staff, and students, want the organisation to adapt to their demands.

Furthermore, HE must satisfy various, often contradictory, environmental demands to increase access, improve equity, improve quality and relevance, and improve performance. This implies that the introduction and execution of QA is not immune to environmental influences. According to Newton (2002:48), every QA approach is impacted by the conditions and environment. The external organisational climate as essentials of the setting/situations includes political-legal environment, the facilitative context and the regulatory context and structure as well as the constitutive environment. The following section discusses the impact of factors in the external organisational climate.

- **Political-legal environment:** Suchman and Edelman (1997:482) suggested that the roles of organisational stakeholders and the meanings of organisational events are governed by law, which imbues those duties and connotations with positive or negative ethical significance. The legislative and regulatory elements through which governments manage the operation of an entity are referred to as the political-legal system. It encompasses government laws, actions, guidelines and principles, and reform initiatives that oversee and impact how a business operates. Thus, the legal climate in HE may include declarations, financing and quality regulatory procedures, government regulation of HE and policies on increasing access (Kahsay, 2012:79). The legal system confronts organisations in three separate ways, as

depicted by Suchman and Edelman (1997:482) in the coordinating, regulating and constitutive legal settings.

- **The facilitative context:** The facilitative context demonstrates that the legal system is mostly a set of procedural laws, offering legal means for corporate efforts that would otherwise originate through business methods, media campaigns, industrial espionage, aggressive self-help, and so on. Organisations are role players in implementing rules and the legal system is just an avenue for doing to albeit one that can have a significant influence on the outcome of the game.
- **The regulatory context:** The regulatory context, on the other hand, is a far more complex role. In the regulatory context, legislation is a collection of substantive edicts asserting social power over various aspects of organisational life.
- **The constitutive environment** includes the legal structure, fosters a sense of ownership, and specifies the interdependence of various organizational stakeholders. The formation of organizations and the rules by which they must operate are aided by constitutional law. The political-legal system can either help or hinder the implementation of quality assurance in universities.
- **Regulatory structure:** Regulatory agencies or organisations that examine, appraise, or analyse the quality of HE is referred to as regulatory structures. In the setting of HE, this will generally be an institution that is separate from an HE provider and evaluates, audits and reports on that HE provider's teaching and learning activities. Legislation can create or empower regulatory authorities. According to Harvey (1999), regulatory bodies are often government units or agencies that report to a government ministry (education, research, housing, etc.) or a regulatory authority such ETA. Regulatory agencies can be reliant on the state or self-governing. According to Harvey (1999:4), independence denotes the degree to which regulatory agencies' daily activities are conducted, and decisions are made without political interference.

2.14.2 Internal Organisational Environment

The second dimension of the conceptual structure is internal organisational environments which may be defined in terms of tasks or technical environments within the context of contingency

theory. Internal organisational settings of HEIs impact the execution of QA policies within them (Gupta et al., 1994:267). In this research, organisational complexity (age, size, and location), institutional management and governance, quality culture, teaching staff, and student profiles and dependency are characterised as features or characteristics of internal organisational settings. These characteristics are covered in more detail below.

2.14.2.1 Organisational complexity

Complexity, according to Hall and Tolbert (2005:62), is a multifaceted phenomenon that extends both to organisational units and bureaucratic hierarchy. Complexity has been found to have a significant impact on structural context, internal processes, and interactions between the organization and its environment in organizational studies. Complexity is also likely to have an impact on the ability to apply QA policies and the way in which these mechanisms are used. Similarly, complexity influences the rate and extent of reform implementation. Hall and Tolbert (2005:62) contended that increasing complexity in organisations affects the capacity and capability for collective action within universities and colleges. In a more complex structure, implementation tends to be slower because of the many stakeholders who are involved in decision-making.

2.14.2.2 Organisational size

One of the most important elements impacting an organisation's structure and activities is its size (Kimberly, 1976:574). According to Damanpou (1996:695), large size has both advantages and problems. Large firms have greater resources for new initiatives and broadening their scope, more opportunities for employee advancement and growth, and more power in the external environment. They are, however, more hierarchical, less adaptive, unable to change and adapt fast, and tend to be impersonal. Researchers' perspectives on the link between size and creativity are inconsistent.

According to Damanpou (1996:696), scale has a favourable influence on innovation since large firms have more access to funding. Large corporations also have more experienced and skilled human resources, as well as superior technological competence and technical aptitudes. In this sense, Dewar and Dutton (1986:1442) stated that major corporations are at the forefront of technical advancement. However, large companies are considered to stifle creativity since they are more bureaucratic and standardised in terms of their operations. Furthermore, in large-scale organisations, decision-making on the implementation of audit recommendations may take

longer or may never take place at all. Small businesses, on the other hand, are more creative since they are more adaptable and have less trouble tolerating and implementing change. Frederiks et al. (1994:185) did an empirical study on the application of QA audit findings in Dutch universities and found a positive association between the size of the university and the degree to which the QA audit findings were implemented.

2.14.2.3 Organisational age

Several theorists have claimed that the age of a company influences its ability to adapt, innovate, evolve, and survive. According to Sorensen and Stuart (2000:106), age has two apparently inconsistent consequences for organisational behaviour. On the one hand, familiarity with a set of operational processes adds to increased efficiency in the execution of these operations. On the other hand, in fast changing settings, the gap between organisational competence and contextual needs narrows with age. According to Kahsay (2012:187), an older, well-established institution with more expertise, larger human capability, and deep-seated convictions and intellectual worth is more likely to use top-down policies and reject transformation suggestions than a small one with no real track record.

2.14.2.4 Institutional leadership and governance

Within a social unit, leadership influences the behaviour of others. It is a strategy of inspiring, influencing, and guiding followers in making decisions. Leadership is defined as a social control mechanism in which a leader or group of leaders influences followers to achieve the objectives of the firm (Horsburgh, 1997:16). Organisational leaders assist in the identification and formation of work environments that contribute to firm growth, and there is information that specific leadership styles are a strong predictor of change. According to Sarros, Cooper and Santora (2008:79), transformational leaders have been found to accept and support change, ensuring the organisation's long-term existence.

Transformational leadership also refers to the acts of leaders who encourage followers to achieve and realise corporate aims and interests, and who may encourage employees to go beyond the expected norms of job efficiency. People feel more driven and appreciated by their employers, and job performance such as satisfaction and motivation levels increase (Sarros et al., 2008:148).

2.14.2.5 Governance

According to Salter (2002:246), governance is a way of attaining objectives and, in a perfect world, should allow the firm to respond to the external environment by modifying its internal arrangements. Governance is both a system and a mechanism. It is a system that legitimises authority structures and relationships. It is a procedure that, either indirectly or openly, makes basic judgements concerning the goals and strategies of an organisation. Governance at an institution needs internal management systems, decision-making and leadership. Universities, being independent organisations, take responsibility for internal governance.

Internal governance relates to university administrative structures (e.g., lines of authority, decision-making procedures, funding, and staffing). As internal governance structures, universities have legislative, executive, and supervisory responsibilities. The governing board is the most senior decision-making authority of the university in Ethiopia and is responsible for overseeing the creation and application of institutional strategic plans and key policies, as well as controlling and evaluating the universities' overall performance and accountability (FDRE, 2009:5008–5009).

2.14.2.6 Institutional quality culture

A quality culture is one in which everyone in the company, not just the quality controllers, is held accountable for quality (Harvey & Green, 1993:16). Quality culture is the inner structure of an organisation that is based on the principles, thoughts and expectations held by its employees. Sarros et al. (2011:147) define culture in a corporation as the normative views (i.e., system values) and shared behavioral assumptions (i.e., system norms). A quality culture is a collection of collective, agreed-upon, and accepted behaviours that may be found in organisational processes and institutional management systems. A quality culture consists of HE quality awareness and attention, as well as evidence of effective monitoring of quality through QA methods. Quality culture is characterised as two distinct sets of elements: shared values, beliefs, goals, and dedication to quality, as well as a structural aspect with established processes that try to enhance quality and coordinate efforts (Vlăsceanu et al., 2007:2).

Kose and Korkmaz (2019) presented four classifications that are valuable for studying university cultures: receptive, reactive, regenerative, and reproductive taxonomies. The four classifications are described below.

- **Responsive quality culture** is largely guided by external needs, views possibilities positively, and seeks and shares best experiences, but views quality-related actions and initiatives as a response to externally motivated pressures over which they have no ownership or control.
- **Reactive quality culture** is guided principally by external demands, approaches opportunities constructively, seeks and communicates excellent experience, but continues to consider quality-associated events and projects as a response to external challenges or difficulties without a feeling of ownership or authority. It is primarily motivated by enforcement and accountability, looks for incentive opportunities, and prefers to delegate quality to others. (e.g., quality office). Academics, for example, who consider any form of quality culture as a “beast to be fed” may nurture countercultures in reactive mode (virgiawan et.al,2021).
- **Regenerative quality culture** is focused on organisational growth and comprises internal initiatives that are aligned with certain aims. External initiatives are recognised, but they take a back seat to a focused approach to performance development and organisational learning. It embodies the ability to subvert externally directed endeavours.
- **Reproductive quality culture:** To maintain the status quo, reproductive quality culture creates conditions to prevent interference by externally created quality initiatives. Set standards, sound internal procedures, and efficiency are an ingrained and unnoticed element of regular practice and professional behaviour

12.14.2.7 Academic staff and students’ profiles

Teaching staff play a critical role in attaining the university’s aims. Academic professionals’ performance, such as teachers, researchers, and administrators, determines the quality of the student experience in HE and has an important influence on student learning and the contribution that such institutions may make to community. Many HEIs have an implicit or stated purpose of providing high-quality learning experiences to their students. Teaching staff oversee students’ learning environments and serve as their primary point of contact with them. Students are, without a doubt, the most essential stakeholders in HEIs and QA procedures.

Students play a vital role in improving the quality of HE by participating in decision-making, developing learning, and teaching methodologies, and delivering feedback on the quality of their learning (Bowden and Naumann, 2021). As a result, the efficient execution of QA depends largely on the engagement and participation of academics and students in the quality process.

12.14.2.8 Dependence

The term “dependence” denotes the relationship between the HEI and the ETA which includes the MoE. Dependence suggests that an HEI is reliant on other players to reach goals which may be accelerated or delayed. Because money is the most valuable resource of an HEI, they rely more heavily on the government if they have fewer funds available (Csizmadia, 2006:104).

2.15 QUALITY ASSURANCE IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICES IN HE

According to Tam (2001:53), the practice of QA implementation refers to universities’ roles, functions, and obligations in assuring the quality of their educational offering (inputs, processes, and outputs) with the decisive objective of improving students’ learning experiences. This incorporates the rules, approaches, practices, systems, and services that are needed to assure quality. The development of the student learning experience is at the heart of the QA structure and activities. It should be emphasised that most modern thinking on QA incorporates the concept of quality as transformation as a key premise supporting the concept and importance of student learning.

According to Alzahrani, et.al., (2021), Quality as transformation is a fundamental notion of quality efforts, particularly the necessity to focus on student learning, which is regarded as the “heart of quality” in education and training. University quality improvement delivery initiatives are also being studied in terms of their focus on increasing the quality of student learning

2.16 THE ETA MODEL OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ETHIOPIA

Overall, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the execution of the QA policies in Ethiopian HEIs and to investigate the influence of the QA system on Ethiopian HEIs. Figure 2.1 depicts the major aspects on which this study focuses, as well as the interaction between them. Proclamation No. 1152/2019 of HE stipulates that the ETA has the authority to evaluate whether the QA system of an institution can ensure quality. The ETA’s task is facilitated by the HEIs that have implemented QA in response to the externally imposed requirements.

Furthermore, after studying numerous definitions of quality, the ETA must reach an agreement with all HEIs, professional organisations, and other interested groups on ‘fitness for purpose’ as

a functioning description of quality in Ethiopia (ETA, 2005). The current ETA quality model is made up of three parts: input, process, and output (ETA, 2005). QA must be motivated by the needs of role players including students, parents, business owners, the public, and the community at large. The following figure illustrates ETA Model of quality assurance in Ethiopia.

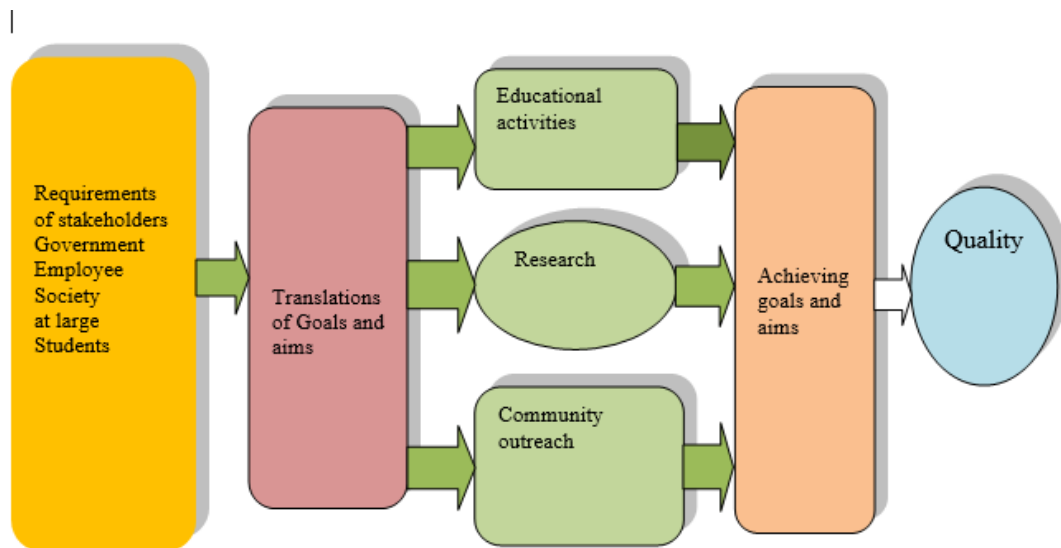


Figure 2.3 Stakeholders and quality in HEIs in Ethiopia

2.17 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter examined the literature on the nature of QA as well as difficulties with the execution of QA schemes. It examined the literature on quality and QA policies in the HE. The description of quality in education in general, and HE specifically, shows that the QA is difficult to define. Quality scholars have merged quality principles into five approaches: excellence as continuity, excellence as suitability for function, excellence as value for money, and excellence as transformation.

According to Csizmadia (2006:104), quality assurance is a broad term that denotes a continual procedure of reviewing (evaluating, controlling, ensuring, protecting, and enhancing) the quality of HE systems, institutions, or programmes. The analysis of the literature also found five connected variables that help to explain the rising prominence and strength of the QA movement. These were the possibility of a failure in academic performance because of massification; a lack of stakeholder

trust in traditional academic quality management capacities; budget constraints; increased demands for transparency; and greater competition and variety in the educational setting.

The literature review also highlighted four quality assurance objectives or functions. Each of these aims has a different emphasis, which effects the design and technique of the QA system and procedure. The first objective focuses on the internal institutional level, whereas the second, third, and fourth objectives focus on the education institutions' exterior commitments to stakeholders.

The chapter also identified several QA procedures that need further examination, particularly when developing or intending to adopt a QA system in higher education. The procedure includes accreditation, evaluation, auditing, and peer review. The benefits and drawbacks of each technique were also investigated. The review of literature also brought to light some of the complaints levelled against quality assurance. This included the control structure's design, the emphasis on transparency and compliance, the emphasis on the process rather than the outputs, the system's performance and cost-effectiveness, and the methods selected to implement it. In this context, some of the characteristics of successful external and internal QA schemes were highlighted.

The chapter also presented the conclusions of empirical research studies on the influence of QA components on HE schemes. Some studies claimed that the QA methods improved the efficiency of HEIs. Some critics, however, believe that the QA process has little or no influence on tertiary education.

The chapter also stresses both business-oriented and educational quality control approaches. The research suggests that industry-developed quality management techniques can be beneficial, but the distinctive primary roles of HE, namely education and science, should not be disregarded. The next chapter discusses quality assurance in the Ethiopian context.

CHAPTER THREE

3. THE NATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers an overview of the socio-cultural basis of the Ethiopian traditional education system and how the modern education system in Ethiopia, which began in the 1942s, abandoned classical theory, a system of knowledge and values in favour of entering a new age of modernisation. It also describes the historical development of the HE system and the introduction of quality assurance in Ethiopia, reflects on emerging developments in the Ethiopian HE environment and outlines the applicable policies and regulations on the QA framework.

3.2 THE DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

3.2.1 Demographic Context

Ethiopia, with a total size of 1 127 127 square kilometres, is physically located in the Horn of Africa, according to the Central Statistics Agency (CSA) (2006). Eritrea, Somalia, the Republic of Sudan, Djibouti, the Republic of Southern Sudan, Kenya, and Somalia are its neighbours.

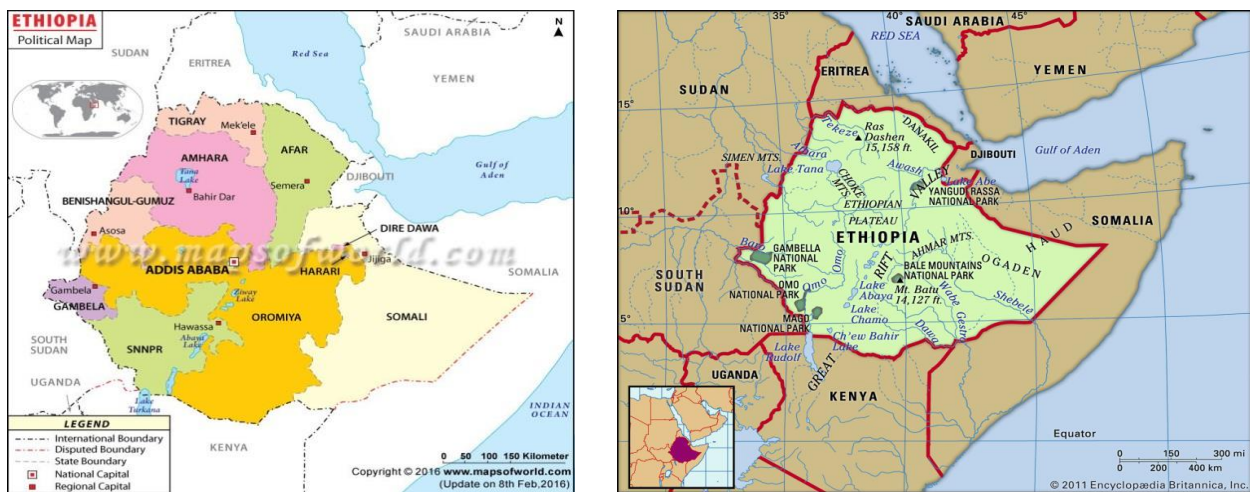


Figure 3.1 Geographical location of Ethiopia

(Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica (2011).

According to the CSA (2006), Ethiopia has a diverse geographical landscape, ranging from Ras Dashen (4 550 metres above sea level) to the Afar Depression (110 metres below sea level). Ethiopia is characterized by political instability and is an economically weak/ poor nation. It is an old nation with a more than 3000-year history with different alphabets (CSA, 2006:1). Even during Africa's colonial history, the country maintained its independence. It is a country with a diversified ethnic and linguistic community, with over 86 distinct spoken languages (MoE, 2004:2).

Ethiopia, with over 112 million inhabitants (CSA, 2019:3), is Africa's second most populous country after Nigeria and the region's fastest expanding economy. The population grows at a pace of 2.62% each year and is anticipated to double by roughly 26.3% by 2050 (Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), 2007:5). Some 14% of the population is under the age of 15 (CSA, 2012). The World Bank (2012:3) described Ethiopia as one of the world's oldest civilisations and one of the poorest nations, with a per capita income of US\$863, which is significantly lower than the developing Sub-Saharan African average of US\$1 255 and ranks sixth in the world.

3.2.2 Economic Situation

Ethiopia's economy is mostly based on agriculture, with 80% of the inhabitants residing in rural regions, and the manufacturing sector accounting for 13% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Mwanakatwe, 2010:3). Following the approval of the 2030 Agenda (SDGs), Ethiopia has proactively implemented the GTP II, which ruled from 2015/16 to 2019/20. In line with this initiative, the economy has expanded at a rate of 10.2% per year in real GTP II over the last five years. Major strides have been made in reducing poverty in the world. However, in 1995/1996 about 45.5% of the country's total inhabitants lived below the poverty line. Latest reports have shown that the national poverty line has halved from 45.5% to 23.5% between 1995/96 and 2015/16 (MoFED, 2016:4). Literacy rates expanded from roughly 50% in 2004 to 57% in 2016 (CSA, 2016:5). Diversification and commercialisation of small-scale agriculture increased non-agricultural production in services and industries, capacity building and solid governance, off-farm jobs, notably through small businesses, and infrastructure investment have all contributed to this rapid growth (FDRE, 2016:5).

3.2.3 Socio-Political Situation

For centuries, Ethiopia was ruled by emperors and kings under a feudal system. The army took over the reins of power in 1974 and ruled the country until May 1991. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's political system is a parliamentary form of government constructed in the form of a federal government, with political representatives (the House of the Peoples and the House of the Federation) chosen every five years, according to the country's constitution.

Eleven national regional states and two administrative councils exist. Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz, Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples, Sidama, Gambelia, Harari, and western Ethiopian people are part of the national regional state, whereas Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa are part of the two-city government. Legislative, executive and judicial functions are shared between the federal government and the states. Its inhabitants speak 86 ethnic languages, including 13 Semitic, 26 Cushitic, 28 Omotic, and 19 Nilo-Saharan (MoI, 2004:2).

3.3 THE STRUCTURE OF EDUCATION SYSTEM

Ethiopia's education system is currently divided into primary education (Grades 1–6), middle primary (Grades 7–8), and secondary education (Grades 9–12), technical and vocational education and training (TVET) (formerly Grade 10+1 years, Grade 10+2 years, Grade 10+3 years, Grade 10+4 years, and currently Grade 10+5), and higher education (undergraduate and postgraduate programmes).

Since 2018, the education sector has been governed by two ministries: The Ministry of Education (MoE), which oversees general education, and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MoSHE), which oversees the development of science, higher education, and TVET in Ethiopia. However, the two ministries have since been consolidated, and currently, the education sector is governed by the MoE, which includes two sub-sectors: general education and higher education. In line with Proclamation No. 1263/2021, TVET has been transferred to the Ministry of Skills and Labour.

The service industry has grown significantly in recent years as part of developments in the socioeconomic arena. Education is one of the disciplines that has shown promising improvement.

The elementary level net enrolment rate (NER) increased from 44% in 2000/2001 to 97.8 % in 2019, while the enrolment of females in primary school also increased significantly (MoE, 2019:5). At the secondary school level, the average gender parity index is GPI 0.91, indicating a nationwide gender imbalance that is narrowing (MoE, 2019:51). A comparison of rural and urban enrolment shows that rural regions accounted for 85.8% of primary education enrolment while urban areas accounted for 14.9%.

Over a five-year period, the NER increased from 14.7% in 2006/07 to 16.3% in 2010/11 at the general secondary level (Grades 9–10), although boys continue to outnumber girls in the first cycle. The gross enrolment rate of girls in preparatory school (Grades 11–12) grew to 42.2% from 35.7% in 2009/10 (MoE, 2011:44). The section that follows goes into further depth on the development of the HE subsector.

3.4 THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

This section depicts the pattern of fast transformation in Ethiopian modern higher education. Ethiopia's HEI industry is rapidly increasing. To have a better knowledge of the current situation of Ethiopia's HE system, it is necessary to go back in time and examine the Ethiopian education system's historical advancements. Ethiopian elite education has a 1 700-year history linked to the Orthodox Church. Ethiopia's educational system takes its peculiar character from the country's unique Christian background (Saint, 2004:84).

According to Tilahun, (2021:11) the church school system, one of the earliest in Christianity, arose with the arrival of Christianity in the fourth century in the Aksumite kingdom. It provided an unusual sort of education that took about 30 years to finish. The primary goal of Ethiopian Church education was to educate youth for service in the Church as deacons and priests. Furthermore, Teshome (1979) contended that in Ethiopia, church education was the principal supplier of public workers such as judges, rulers, scribes, treasurers, and general managers (Teshome, 1979:11).

Beginning in the seventh century in Ethiopia, mosques in Muslim communities, like the church, played a parallel role in the administration of Quranic schools. Unlike church schools, Quranic institutes were run by local committees and received no government funding. Due to a lack of

official funding and Church resistance, such schools could only be operated in Islamic religious centres where community support was present (Shibeshi, 1989:31).

With the creation of the Menelik II School in Addis Ababa in 1908, a key landmark in Ethiopian history, modern education, introduced by the Western HE system, started at the turn of the twentieth century. According to Shibeshi, (1991:30) it was 42 years after the founding of Addis Ababa University College, which later became Haile Selassie I University in 1961. After Addis Ababa University College, other HE, and training organisations were established, such as Jimma College of Agriculture in 1952, Addis Ababa College of Engineering in 1953, Addis Ababa Construction Institute in 1954, Alemaya College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts in 1954, Gondor College of Public Health in 1954, Kotebe College of Teacher Education in 1969, and College of Urban Arts in 1954. The University of Asmara, on the other hand, was founded in 1958 by an Italian missionary organisation and became a public university in 1979. Notably, Ethiopia had three state universities, 16 colleges, and six academic institutes by the end of the 1980s, but not a single private higher education institution until the late 1990s.

According to UNESCO (1988:1), the three universities and additional colleges had a total of 17 831 students in 1986/87. In 1978, the AAU Graduate School was established with the express purpose of training academic personnel for the country's higher education institutions (Yizengaw, 2003). Furthermore, as Saint (2004:85) argued, at the end of the twentieth century, Ethiopia was governed by an HE system that was traditional in intellectual alignment, inadequate in autonomy and lacked doctoral degrees among teachers. There was growing concern about declining educational quality, weak research performance and poorly development of cognitive skills.

Until the reform of Ethiopia's, HE system in the 1990s and early 2000s, HE in Ethiopia was elitist. The Ethiopian government, on the other hand, is reforming HE with the aim of boosting access and equity, promoting student mobility across the nation, and enhancing socio-cultural interactions among students. The HERQA (now called the ETA) was established as a regulating authority for HEIs in 2003, following the Proclamation of HE No. 351/2003.

The growth and transformation of HE in Ethiopia has been influenced by new directions set by the UNESCO and the World Bank, in addition to national strategies and growth plans. In light of the socioeconomic changes needed for national competitiveness in the globalised economy, the 1998

UNESCO world conference on higher education solicited member states' commitment to enhance HEIs (UNESCO, 1998). The Ethiopian government began revising the mission and organisation of HE during the end of the 1990s, to align with national development goals and poverty reduction methods. Ethiopia's government launched a comprehensive effort to expand access to HE, including the extension of the graduate programme, with significant funding.

Thereafter, the government announced the foundation of new HEIs and the upgrading of existing colleges as part of its higher education system growth initiative. The number of public HEIs grew from three in the 1980s to 46 in less than 20 years (MoE, 2019:20). The country today has around 383 approved private higher education institutions (MoE, 2019:20).

Under these conditions, the history of Ethiopian public universities has seen a steady increase in enrolment rates. Beginning with an admission capacity of 974 students at Haile Selassie I University in 1961, the overall enrolment in 2019/2020 was 976 678 (MoE, 2020). The gross enrolment rate, which was less than 1% two decades ago, increased to 13.8% in the 2020 academic year (MoSHE, 2020). Female students' access to education has progressively improved, rising from 20% in 2003 to 39.7% in 2019 (MoSHE, 2020).

Furthermore, HEIs in Ethiopia have the status of university, university, college, junior college, and institute (FDRE, 1152/2019:2236). The programme levels that HEIs may provide include the bachelor's degree, master's degree, medical specialisation, and doctoral (PhD). HEIs can provide their programmes on a daily, nightly, or remote basis. English is the language of teaching at both public and private HEIs, apart from specific language courses (FDRE, 1152/2019:2238).

Three major causes have been recognised for initiating a rapid expansion of education: response to expanding societal need, social inclusion and fairness, and the requirement for scientific and engineering development. The rationale behind the expansion is explained below.

Adaptability to rising societal needs: Despite being one of Africa's largest countries until recently, Ethiopia has only able to teach fewer than 1% of its appropriate age population at the collegiate level. This is an unfortunate truth for Ethiopians and their governors. The conclusion of the long civil war in 1991 provided a chance to reflect on past wrong doings and make amends for decades lost. As a result, there has been a significant public desire to take advantage of the

prospects that have arisen. The shifting circumstances at the international level have intensified the need for HE since the 1990s. As a result, the government's activities have been bolstered by shifting local and global conditions (Semela, 2011:406).

Social inclusion on a broad scale: There are 85 ethnocultural groups in Ethiopia. However, not all of them have always been treated equally as citizens of the same country. The bulk of the people have been subjected to servitude, subordination, and marginalisation by their prior rulers in recent history. As a result, social inclusion and ensuring an equitable allocation of educational resources throughout Ethiopia's regional governments, ethnic groups and other excluded groups are top policy concerns. Social inclusion is at the centre of the political debate over the implementation of countries and nationalities' constitutional rights. In other words, HE policymaking is one of the primary arenas for articulating the underlying ideological case for social inclusion. Aside from recognising their equal standing in the Ethiopian regions, the construction of HEIs in previously underserved regional states is thought to create new possibilities for solving societal problems including scientific knowledge and technical skills obtained via HE. In addition to providing access to disadvantaged groups, the Ethiopian political discourse's concept of social inclusion includes the concept of distributive justice/fairness (Semela, 2011:407).

Focusing on science and engineering: The government's poverty reduction policy is based on acquiring enough skilled human power to support long-term economic development and achieve the objective of becoming a middle-income nation within the next 20 to 30 years. In the effort to achieve these large ambitions, Ethiopia ruled in 2008 that all institutions' curricula be changed such that 70% of them were science and technology-based, and 30% are social sciences-based (Semela, 2011:409). However, as implementation proceeded, various issues arose. Second, the pool of university students entitled to gain admission to science and engineering programmes would be limited to set quotas. Second, while there is substantial practical evidence concerning science and engineering's contribution to economic development (Lin, 2004:370–371), it is unclear if Ethiopia's labour market is prepared to accommodate the massive flood of university graduates (Semela, 2011:409). According to the government's claim, 70% of science and technology enrolment is focused on predicting the need for human capital as the economy grows and the country transitions from an agricultural to a manufacturing economy. Aside from political issues, economic motivations drive the quantitative expansion of HE.

In conclusion, the present concern about economic growth is a direct effect of and a reply to the predicted need for the improved economic status and an increase access to in lower levels of education (TVET, high school, and elementary) that requires large numbers of academic staff, managers, and educational experts. This is partly owing to the increased need for teaching and research workers to support new and expanding HEIs. Foreign donor organisations such as the World Bank, consultancies, and a variety of forums outside the MoE and the government are some of the role players in increasing facilitation of increasing access (Kahsay, 2012:110).

3.5 FRAMEWORKS FOR NATIONAL POLICY

This section delves further into the Ethiopian HE system's associated policies and legislation. The ETP for 1994 was the first to be developed. It served as the foundation for subsequent announcements and was accompanied by the TVET Proclamation (No 391/2004). Following that, the HE Proclamation (No 351/2003) and the HE Proclamation (No 650/2009) were introduced. Finally, the 2019 Higher Education Declaration (No 1152/2019) was proclaimed.

3.5.1 The Education and Training Policy

The global fall of communism and the removal of the country's Marxist government in 1991 introduced a new market-oriented paradigm, which was followed by various changes in all government areas, including education. This includes the new ETP declaration in 1994. The plan was developed in response to the government's demand for a shift in socioeconomic growth across all sectors.

It comprises general and specific aims, as well as implementation techniques such as formal and non-formal education from kindergarten through HE, as well as special education. It stresses the introduction of problem-solving skills and culture in the context of education, curriculum structure and strategy with an emphasis on the acquisition of scientific knowledge and practice. Furthermore, it mandates that an effective relationship between education, training, research, and development be established via structured involvement of the appropriate organisations (FDRE, 1994:1–5).

The policy covers curriculum development, the assessment and evaluation of education, the language of instruction at various levels, recruiting, preparation, methodology, organisation,

professional ethics and teacher career development. To improve the teaching-learning process and expand education, special emphasis was placed on the provision and effective use of educational facilities, technology, resources, the environment, organisation, and management. In terms of leadership and management of the education system, the development of a decentralised, effective, and professionally organised participative structure was proposed. It also said that educational spending should be equitable, effective, and adequate to encourage greater access and quality of education (FDRE, 1994:5).

As defined in the ETP paper (FDRE, 1994:12–14), the primary focus has been on the curriculum, the educational framework, assessment and evaluation, staff preparation and development, educational support, inputs, organisational administration, and financing.

3.5.2 HE Declaration No. 351/2003

Ethiopia has a high demand for a competitive workforce, and the proclamation defines the HE objectives. HE Proclamation (No. 2003:2237) stipulated that HE must create skilled labour in sufficient quantity and quality to meet the needs of the labour market in a variety of vocations. Similarly, it intended to enlarge HE programmes that were free of discrimination based on race, religion, gender, politics, and other socioeconomic role players, as well as to establish a problem-solving educational organisational structure that would allow the country's adequate resources to be used and studies and research to be conducted.

Furthermore, Proclamation No. 351/2003 established legal requirements for the creation of HEIs at different levels, such as the institute, college, and university levels. The declaration gave these HEIs autonomy in administrative, financial, and academic affairs. According to the statement, higher education may be provided by the government, private sector, cooperatives, commercial firms, and non-profit organisations. The proclamation stated that HEIs managed by religious groups with religious purposes and courses were not governed by the regulations (FDRE, 2003:2236). The HE Declaration also included provisions about accreditation and the status of private HEIs. If the standards of the accrediting body were satisfied, the institutions could apply to the MoE for pre-accreditation, accreditation, and re-accreditation permission renewal (FDRE, 2003:2256).

Furthermore, the Higher Education Declaration called for the foundation of an accrediting agency known as the HERQA and a Higher Education Strategy Centre (HESC), both of which would report

to MoE. The HERQA (currently ETA) was established to track the quality of HE in Ethiopia through mechanisms such as accreditation, while the HESC needed to do research and development in the fields of higher education policy and education in general. The objective was for the nation's HE system to constantly satisfy the public's needs (FDRE, 2003:2256). One of the declaration's merits was that all HEIs were obliged by law to conduct research and development activities through the allocation of a portion of their institutional budget. The declaration also stated that every institution in the country must provide the appropriate proof of how they met the requirements (FDRE, 2003:2238).

However, there were some flaws in the declaration, such as the lack of specific rules for the creation of a sovereign and self-governing private accrediting body, the accreditation of public HEIs, the autonomy of ETA and the incentives and mechanisms for the distribution of public funds in relation to QA, and the lack of mechanisms to enforce execution (Kahsay, 2012:107). According to Mekasha (2005:114), private HEIs were obliged to perform a lot in the name of accreditation, but government universities were not obligated to do anything. Second, it appears that the government was most concerned about the internal issues of private HEIs under the guise of accreditation. Only one organisation (as previously indicated) oversees carrying out the complicated and arduous work of accrediting all HEIs in the country.

3.5.3 Proclamation No. 391/ 2004 for TVET

Proclamation No.391/2004, enacted in 2004, organised Ethiopia's TVET system. Before the declaration, the nation's TVET system was disorganised, with no institutional guidelines to track the overall quality and standard of TVET education in the country. Likewise, there was no formal definition of the provincial and federal governments' obligations and duties regarding how TVET systems should be overseen and enforced (Mekasha, 2005:115).

It also established legal guidelines for the administration of the three levels of TVET programmes: basic, junior, and middle level. The declaration stated that these programmes would be managed by the government, non-governmental organisations, and private investors. Correspondingly, the proclamation stated the purpose of the three levels in terms of instruction, entrance requirements, teaching methods, training length, curriculum, and so on. The proclamation specified the requirements

for pre-accreditation and accreditation certification, as well as accrediting powers, the accreditation procedure, accreditation renewal and other associated matters (FDRE, 2004:2564)

3.5.4 Proclamation No. 650/2009

The 2009 HE Proclamation incorporated virtually all the clauses listed in the 2003 Decree, with certain articles undergoing modifications or amendments. Article 5 of this proclamation asserted that federally sponsored public institutions would be created by a directive of the Council of Ministers. The MoE conferred university status on institutions based on the conditions outlined in Article 11, which include minimum programmes, intake capability, a record of at least four consecutive graduate classes in degree programmes, study capacity and other national standards (FDRE, 2009:4984). In addition, the declaration covered academic independence and autonomy, institutional quality improvement: academic guidance and advice, advising, academic staff: student admissions, academic rights and obligations, quality of teaching-learning and student evaluation, governance and management and finance.

However, according to Kabsay (2012:109), the declaration had some shortcomings in terms of the use of the internal QA framework. One of the declaration's flaws is the absence of financial options for HE. There were no prerequisites for sponsoring HEIs. Regardless of the quality of education provided, public colleges were eligible for government funds depending on student enrolment. Another shortcoming was the lack of mechanisms to encourage student competitiveness and financing competition among colleges. Accreditation of public universities was not required under the statement. Also, the declaration gave universities autonomy in carrying out their missions, and the MoE supervised student entrance and selection and provided basic finance and coordinated curriculum review and development.

3.5.5 Proclamation No. 1152/2019

The 2019 Proclamation is an updated proclamation to fill the gaps found in Proclamation No. 650/2009. It aims to ensure the quality and relevance of HE in Ethiopia and to satisfy public demands for the development of competitive graduates appropriate for the world of work. The Proclamation was promulgated to establish a legal structure to safeguard the quality and relevance of the Ethiopian HE system and to ensure that HEIs are centres of excellence in teaching-learning, study, and community services. The declaration ensures that HEIs pay close attention to and prioritise

nationally prioritized areas, as well as governance's openness, fairness, and accountability structure. It also provides for legislation that enables higher education to be competent in attaining its mission; provides for the development of graduates with the expertise, skills and ethics required; and ensures that institutional and academic freedom is exercised within the legal structures.

Similarly, the proclamation set out the goals of higher education in such a way that HE should prepare students with appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudinal maturity in related disciplines with the competence to foster peace, democracy, and national growth. It promotes and enhances knowledge-based research and technology transfer in line with the country's priority needs, and produces graduates who understand and value diversity, foster national peace and unity, treasure the nation's heritage and culture, and are globally competent. Finally, it created a framework for the development and enhancement of institutions that can be emulated as Centers of Excellence for Mission Achievement and good governance.

3.5.6 The National Education and Training Roadmap

MoE established a Roadmap for Education to serve the education sector for 2018–2030. The key objective of the development of the Education Roadmap was to transform the education system in line with the national vision and development objectives and the requirements of twenty-first century education systems that play a role in the transformation of socioeconomic systems, in particular the process of industrialisation. The roadmap involves the evaluation of instructional activities and the implementation methods of the six thematic areas (access, equity, quality, relevance, performance, solidarity in diversity in HE) of the education system, assessment of the gaps and aspirations of the various role players in the ETP, assessment of the policy's adequacy and execution strategy, considering the existing vision and growth prospects of a middle-income country.

The Education Roadmap is aimed at ensuring that HEIs giving due attention and priority to improving the standard of HE in Ethiopia. Thus, the HE system aims to build holistic people, a balance between cognitive and non-cognitive skills that include higher-level thinking skills such as analytical, imaginative, and problem-solving thinking, and a high level of computer literacy and entrepreneurship. In addition, HEIs are introducing QA initiatives in universities. Continuously

improving current practice by quality enhancement (QE) in which staff growth can play an important role and making QA policies implementable by eliminating obstacles to effective teaching, such as academic dishonesty, are important objectives.

3.5.7 Differentiation of Universities

Among the various areas listed in the Education Roadmap (2018–2030) for further action and urgent policy change was the dire need to separate public universities that have stagnated for ages from disciplinary and mission redundancy and turn them into vibrant twenty-first century competitive universities with missions commensurate with the country's critical needs.

The main objective of the differentiation is to categorise public universities along with their missions and areas of focus and to envisage a number of policy imperatives, including increasing discipline and programme limitations, minimising homogeneity (isomorphism), diversifying student choices and admissions, strengthening institutional autonomy, improving the efficiency and quality of teaching. For the categorisation, MoSHE used the university multi-rank system, where the scores of each university for indicators and sub-indicators were determined individually and the total scores of each university were compared to the scores of other universities.

Similarly, considering international practices, public universities have been categorised into four systems with a separate macro-level mission, namely research universities, applied science universities, comprehensive universities and science and technology universities. Research universities therefore undertake research and teaching with a special focus on graduate studies. The universities of applied science conduct technical, practice-oriented teaching and research, concentrating on bachelor's and master's programmes, and often on professional and work-based doctoral programmes. Comprehensive universities, on the other hand focus on teaching and research in equal proportions, while science and technology universities place more emphasis on increasing the accessibility of science and technology and are also considered to be specialised universities.

3.5.8 Higher Education Policy and Strategy

According to the National Education and Training Roadmap (MoE, 2018), HEIs are responsible for improving the education system to produce innovative and competent citizens, provide

appropriate community services and undertake applied and basic research. In order to address the problems facing the HE system, the MoSHE (now the MoE) established this policy and strategy based on the mandates, duties and responsibilities assigned to it by Proclamation No 1097/2018. The rationale of the Higher Education Policy and Strategy is to create a strong HE system that produces competent, knowledgeable, ethical, moral, and socially responsible citizens, and to enhance the competence of HEIs to improve the efficiency, convenience, and attractiveness of HE and to enable HEIs to have an institutional framework. The policy discusses the key to a more vibrant, socially active, cooperative, cohesive, cultured, efficient, creative, progressive, and prosperous country. The strategy therefore envisages a full redesign and re-energisation of the HE system to address these obstacles and thus provide high-quality HE, with equality and inclusion (MoSHE, 2020:6).

Similarly, the Education Roadmap pays due attention to having more autonomy for ETA and the separation of quality assurance from quality improvement: it is necessary to have mandatory and efficient external and internal QA frameworks in HE in Ethiopia. It is necessary to examine the conventional QA frameworks and to develop new external QA systems. In addition, the roadmap focuses on ensuring quality standards in universities. the MoE has also introduced a university ranking system based on KPIs such as publication in reputable journals, patented technologies, the number of students enrolled and graduated, the employability of graduates and the number of international students enrolled.

3.5.9 Ethiopian Science Policy and Strategy

As science is a direct source of technical ideas, science policy and strategy would improve the orientation of science and technology to promote a knowledge-intensive and technology-driven economy. However, in Ethiopia, science research and development (SRD) has a long history, but its contribution to the country's economic development has been weak. The bottlenecks that obstruct SRD include a lack of human resource resources, inadequate infrastructure, a lack of public funding, an inadequate monitoring and evaluation system for integration and collaboration between stakeholders, and weak science governance and regulatory systems.

To this end, MoSHE has highlighted the development of a knowledge-based society, a knowledge-intensive and technology-driven economy, as well as the growth of higher education and of scientific research organisations and societies that contribute to national and international contexts.

The purpose of science policy and strategy is therefore to promote the creation of science-related knowledge in HEIs, TVETs, research institutions (RIs), the private sector and other science and technology institutions, as well as professional bodies, to enhance discovery and growth.

The science policy and strategy are required to improve the standards, expertise, and competencies of Ethiopian science. It also helps to raise visibility and increase the capacity for innovation in the national economy and social development. It will boost citizens' livelihoods through science education, scientific research, innovation capability, scientific governance, leadership collaboration. The science policy and strategy are needed to enhance the standards, skills, and competencies of Ethiopian science.

3.6 THE OVERVIEW OF ETHIOPIAN EDUCATION POLICIES

This section provides a brief history of Ethiopian education policy change since 1942. Since the 1942s, Ethiopia has experienced three types of political control, each differentiated by its education policy, according to Mussie and Tekeste (2006). Ironically, the Ethiopian government's effective implementation of education programmes was similar to that of other African countries.

Mussie and Tekeste (2006:6) described the first policy on education as the establishment of the Imperial Education System through the support of UNESCO, the IMF and USAID in the development of the policy. Both the Emperor and the funding agencies strongly believed that education as a vehicle for progress and economic development and policy would enhance economic development. Thus, the policy advocated for universal primary education and the expansion of schools mainly in cities.

The initial period of this policy execution was reasonably productive as graduates were able to manage job creation. However, as the number of secondary school students grows, the public sector is unable to absorb the secondary school graduates generated by an ever-increasing number of schools. As early as 1973, up to 26% of secondary school completers were unemployed, and the economy was too small to absorb the increasing pool of high school graduates (MoE, 1986).

One of the key issues in the country was the high prevalence of unemployment among young and educated individuals. Wodajo (1963) stated that the curriculum was incapable of generating citizens capable of interpreting, enriching, and adapting the country's past to new requirements and changing situations. These challenges to education policy prompted a series of sector studies (Wodajo, 1963:9).

Similarly, Mussie and Tekeste (2006) reported widespread dissatisfaction with the education sector among secondary school students, who painted the future in bleak, unfavourable terms. Furthermore, conservative elements of the Ethiopian church and nobility claimed that there was little Ethiopian content in the curriculum and that young Ethiopians who went through the school system were ignorant about their own communities and organisations. The ideals of UNESCO, IMF, and USAID for Ethiopia to expand education to bring economic growth have resulted in such a wretched anomaly (MoE, 1986).

To remedy this shortcoming, an international panel of specialists conducted the first assessment of Ethiopia's education system in 1971/72. Its main task was to develop ways for gaining access to universal elementary education while also tackling the serious problem of unemployment among secondary school graduates. It was unfortunate scenario that the authorities relied on international expert groups to analyse the problems and establish a revised strategy given that these experts had no background knowledge of the region (Mussie & Tekeste, 2006:8).

The first aim of the revisiting of the Ethiopian education sector in 1971/72 was to access to secondary education, followed by the second task of making rural communities the key focus of its education policy. Both the Ethiopian Government and its allies deplored the sluggish speed of the spread of education in rural areas. However, the Imperial system was eliminated in 1974, and it also contributed to a new policy on education that was established after the review of the education sector (Mussie & Tekeste, 2006:9).

The military government's education policy, which was predominantly based on Marxist theory, was the second education policy to be implemented in Ethiopia's educational system. The primary goal of education, as stated by the Ethiopian government in the early 1980s, was to instil Marxist-Leninist ideology in the younger group, to develop expertise in science and technology, and to integrate and organise research and production for the revolution to advance and provide

productive people for the economy (Tekeste, 1990). Indeed, scientific socialism was the best approach for bringing the country out of its adolescent period of development.

According to Mussie and Tekeste (2006), the key pillar of socialist education is the inculcation of ideology as the primary goal of Marxism and the importance of development. The USA, one of the key proponents of the creation of the Ethiopian education sector under the Imperial regime, was replaced by education experts from Eastern Germany (Mussie & Tekeste, 2006:10). While enrolment continued to expand at a rate of 12% per year (Mussie & Tekeste, 2006), the government increased Ethiopian teacher recruitment to cover the void created by expatriates, particularly in secondary institutions. However, by the mid-1980s, the communist government could no longer ignore rising popular dissatisfaction with educational standards.

In 1983, the Socialist Regime instituted an evaluation of the educational system with the intention of developing ways for “immediately implementing educational objectives”. By the end of 1985, the review group, which had been substantially supported by UNICEF, the World Bank, and the Swedish International Development Authority, had completed its job. Most likely, the evaluation committee did not endeavour to address the government’s concerns about the sector’s shortcomings. This policy, like its predecessor, was born out of a crisis caused by a misguided policy on the importance of education in societal development (Tekeste, 1990).

The education policy, introduced by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front in 1994, was the country’s third education policy after 1942. Education in the country was entangled with complicated concerns of relevance, quality, accessibility, and fairness, according to the policy (MoE, 1994:2). In terms of education, curriculum structure and strategy, the policy promotes the development of problem-solving skill and culture, with an emphasis on the acquisition of scientific information and practice. The overall objective of the ETP was to increase people’s physical and mental potential as well as their ability to solve problems, by expanding education and ensuring that everyone had access to basic education. The intention was to provide the social benefits of education and to raise individuals who can take care of and use resources wisely and contribute their skills to developing the economy. In addition, the policy aimed at developing citizens who could distinguish between harmful and beneficial behaviour, who would seek and defend truth, value aesthetics, and have a positive attitude toward the production and diffusion of science and technology in society. Finally, the policy aimed at cultivating people’s cognitive, imaginative, constructive and

appreciative capacity through developing connections between environmental education and entrepreneurship (MoE, 1994:4).

Since the 1994 ETP, major initiatives have been undertaken in the HE sectors, such as the substantial expansion of the Ethiopian HE system, the harmonisation of undergraduate curricula, the implementation of modular teaching, ongoing evaluation and peer learning, and the development and operation of QA systems to enhance and maintain quality assurance. However, these practices have had little positive effect on the consistency of core HEI processes, such as teaching and learning. Thus, MoE developed the Education Development Roadmap (2018–2030) to bridge the gap between the current state of learning outcomes and what is required from higher education to add quality, relevance, access, and equity to the HE system.

3.7 THE PRACTICE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Higher education QA models, according to Wariyo and Asgedom (2021), differ in assessing different features of HE quality such as: (1) direct and indirect evaluation of HE quality; (2) consideration of students' college readiness; and (3) consideration of students' employability and contributions to the country's economy. Despite the fact that indirect HE quality role players such as competency of academic staff, infrastructure, commitment of the leaders, curriculum, and teaching-learning process are the reasons for the quality of HE students learning outcomes, the QA will remain partial and ambiguous unless inclusive pre-college and college indicators and measures exactly link these aspects of, HE quality to changes in the teaching-learning process.

The implementation of a systematic QA system in Ethiopia's HE industry since 2009 is a recent phenomenon. Previously, however, each lecturer was evaluated by their students, colleagues, and the department manager by means of an internal quality assurance structure (Tamrat, 2011:31). Furthermore, regardless of sex, age, religion, or ethnicity, public HEIs admitted students based on their academic achievements. Curriculum assessments were also done on a regular basis to ensure uniformity (Teshome & Kassa, 2008:4).

Given the current nationwide, international, and global changing aspects, the subject of quality HE has risen to the top of the world agenda. The HE Declaration (351/2003) created the ETA as one of the major institutions responsible for overseeing and regulating Ethiopia's HEIs. Tamrat

(2011:31) outlined new aspects of Ethiopia's quality assurance regime, such as quality assurance procedures, quality improvement procedures, and frameworks established to incorporate these processes within the higher education system. The ETA was created to assess the relevance and quality of higher education provided by all institutions in the country and reports directly to the Ministry of Education.

One of the ETA's primary responsibilities is to promote and support the development of an organisational culture in Ethiopian tertiary education that values quality and is dedicated to continual improvement. The ETA has special responsibilities and obligations to ensure that higher education and training provided by any educational organisation in the nation is up to standard, relevant and of high quality, as well as to assess the relevance and quality of institutions and their programmes (FDRE, 2003:2256). The MoE and ETA are responsible for guiding, regulating, and applying the rules and laws that govern the QA system (Tamrat, 2011:31).

Furthermore, the ETA conducts the external quality audits (EQA) on all HEIs. An EQA, according to the ETA (2006:4), is an in-depth study and evaluation of the quality and relevance of services as well as the teaching and learning context. The EQA also reports on the appropriateness and efficacy of quality assurance methodologies, accountability mechanisms, and internal assessment frameworks used by HEIs (ETA, 2006:4).

According to ETA (2006:6), the external quality assurance process includes institutional vision; mission; and educational goals; governance and leadership processes; technology and learning tools; academic and support personnel; students' admissions and support services; programme relevance and instruction; teaching; learning; and evaluation; students' development and graduation; students and outreach initiatives; and internal activities.

HE Proclamation No. 1152/2019 states that the ETA also has the authority to accredit private HEIs. The accrediting system is concerned with both the institutional and programme levels of education. The ETA is authorised to manage accreditation applications for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at the programme level. Regional Education Offices oversee accrediting diploma and credential programmes. The overall accreditation procedure is carried out in association with the Ministry of Education and the ETA.

Several concerns have been expressed, however, about the actual process of accreditation. The most prevalent criticism is that ETA accreditation is purely focused on educational feedback (such as infrastructure and facilities, the number of full-time professors, and so on), to the neglect of educational procedures and outcomes (Semela, 2011:418). The accreditation debate asks the question, “What does certification mean for private HEIs?” The reality that the public sphere is not compelled by legislation (FDRE, 2009:5031) to go through the same governing procedure as private HEIs has been regarded as discriminatory. It contains a grain of truth. Trends in other African nations, such as Kenya and South Africa, narrate similar stories. After evaluating the Kenyan situation, Otieno (2017:192) came to the same conclusion, highlighting that the quality assurance bodies’ mandate implies discrimination against private HEIs.

At least three linked features influence private-sector regulation in Ethiopia: (a) the fast expansion of the private sector in response to significant public demand; (b) the diversity and complexity of private players; and (c) the lack of a comprehensive quality control system. The government appears to have been forced to use “special treatment” because of these private-sector conditions. Experience over the last two decades has shown that the fear of private higher education is not unwarranted. Not to downplay the government’s failures in avoiding the problem, but there is ample evidence of actual dangers to higher education quality because of widespread fraudulent behaviour especially in the private sector (Semela, 2011:419). However, the government must continue with caution to avoid stifling Ethiopia’s private higher education sector.

3.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter examined the broad context of Ethiopian higher education in light of policy developments from its inception. To this end, the chapter attempted to assess the demographic, economic and social context of the Ethiopian HE. The chapter addressed the structure of education system and the historical development of Ethiopian higher education.

Furthermore, the reasons for the expansion of HE was discussed, such as the need to cater for increasing social needs, social inclusion on a broad scale and a focus on science and engineering. The framework for national policy was elaborated and different policies and guidelines were presented in detail. Finally, the chapter provided a brief history of Ethiopian education policy change since 1942. Since the 1942s, Ethiopia has experienced three types of political control, each differentiated by its

education policy, according to Mussie and Tekeste (2006). Ironically, the Ethiopian government's effective implementation of education programmes was quite like those of other African countries. The next chapter provides details of the research methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The research methodology is a procedure that directs the study design and execution of the research plan. Thus, the researcher outlines the research paradigm, approach, and research design in this chapter. Also, the chapter provides an overview of the research sites, population and sampling, sampling requirements, data-collection techniques, tools and procedures, data analysis and interpretation used in the study. The ontology and epistemology of qualitative research is defined. Finally, the research ethics and trustworthiness of qualitative research will be explained in terms of the theory of (Hamilton,2020) and the concepts of qualitative research (Ward and Delamont).

4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Pham (2018) introduced the word paradigm to refer to a philosophical method of thinking in the field of research. It refers to a manner of seeing the world (an “analytic lens”) as well as a framework for understanding human experience/reality (Morgan;2019 Patton 2002:37). A research paradigm, whether theoretical or philosophical, is referred to as a research philosophy. In educational research, the term “paradigm” denotes a researcher’s “worldview” (Nathan,2021). This worldview is the point of view, method of thinking, school of thought, or set of common beliefs that impacts the interpretation or meaning of study results. A research paradigm is defined by Jeung, R., (2022) as “a comprehensive belief system, point of view, or outline that directs the study and practice in that area study”.

As a result, Creswell (2010:37) argued that there are four types of paradigms (worldviews) adopted in understanding reality, namely, the positivist, interpretivist/constructivist, transformative and pragmatic paradigms. McNally and Gray-Brunton (2021) maintained that the idea of interpretivism is that we are each influenced by the worlds in which we live and the experiences we encounter. This study takes an interpretive approach, in which data collection and analysis are viewed as a process that is actively ‘built’ and ‘selected out’ rather than inactively ‘collected’. The following sections describe why interpretivism was chosen as the

paradigm to guide this inquiry. Depending on the philosophical assumptions of a researcher, qualitative research, which incorporates several approaches extending from explanation and decoding to translation, is usually constructive. Unlike positivism, interpretivism tries to grasp and explain the interaction between human and social truth.

In the interpretivist approach, Ikram and Kenayathulla (2022:17) distinguishes three historical views: hermeneutics, phenomenology, and representative interactionism. These three ‘views’ take the position that culture is a learnt knowledge (Spradley, 2016:27) in human relations. Nonetheless, each ‘stream’ has a distinct perspective on ‘what culture is.’ First, phenomenology is concerned with comprehending a broad range of cultural meanings. Second, figurative interaction is employed to explain the origins of the human mind, the self, and self-realisation. Phenomenology views culture with skepticism (Ikram and Kenayathulla, 2022, 18), but symbolic interactionism aims to comprehend culture as an expressive environment that drives human lives. Hermeneutics is a method of analysing texts, human activities, and events. Hermeneutics is the ‘stream’ most often employed by scholars within the interpretivist approach and depends on “the empirical (collection of experiences) and reflective (analysis of their meanings) activities” (Fuster Guillen, 2019:225). Ikram and Kenayathulla (2022) asserted that the interpretivist view is the best way forward for academics interested in dealing with people’s perceptions, attitudes, and feelings, as well as analysing a society inherited from a culture.

This study is founded on a social constructivist viewpoint, which claims that all knowledge and meaningful reality are dependent on human actions, which are generated and transmitted via interaction between humans and their environment (Justus & Nangombe, 2016:91). The interpretive view also provides researchers more possibility to address concerns of influence and impact of QA policies. Furthermore, the interpretive method was chosen as the theoretical basis for this study because of its ability to offer new understandings of complex human events, such as individual experiences and opinions on the problem under inquiry. Furthermore, it was chosen to provide the researcher with the ability to understand things from the informants’ perspectives, and it is primarily focused on the construction of reality, in which individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences and the researcher relies on the contributors’ opinions of the situation being studied.

4.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

Modica, M. (2022:48) described a research design as the overall plan that the researcher selects to conduct the research logically and rationally. It establishes the outline for the gathering, measuring, and analysis and interprets data. Similarly, Ikram and Kenayathulla (2022) defines research design as a strategy or plan of action that influences the researchers' technique selection and is connected to the desired study findings.

Also, the research design is framed by the research questions, thus it will take look at the research questions, and then explain the methodology, methods, and empirical work. Qualitative research uses a variety of research designs, including phenomenology (the study of individuals' experiences), ethnography (understanding the broad culture sharing behaviour of specific groups), grounded theory (the construction of new theory from phenomena), and case studies (the in-depth all-inclusive study of individual cases) (Bakker,2018:3).

To that end, the researcher employed a variety of methods to answer the four specific research questions, primarily document analysis, interviews, and a textual survey questionnaire, because these were appropriate for accounting for the intricacy of individual behaviours and making comparisons between the HEIs. The researcher of study employed case study design in which it tries to demonstrate a decision or set of decisions, why they were taken, how they were implemented and with what result and emphasis added (Daou, D., 2022). As a result, the following section discusses case study design in detail.

4.4 CASE STUDY DESIGN

A case study design is a research design that is preferred for “how” or “why” questions are being posed, and the focus of the study is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context as well as over which the investigator has little or no control (Yin, 2009:13). There were two reasons for using the case study design. According to Yin (2009:12), case study design is used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge, of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena. assumptions about reality, the inquirer-subject interaction, and the nature of truth assertions. Case studies design examine people's behaviour and attitudes by reporting, analysing, and understanding evidence, and they concentrate on a single or limited number of events, actions, or occurrences (Modica, 2022:19; Yin, 2009). Doing case study

research provides a diverse set of evidence, such as papers, artefacts, and interviews. Second, RQ2 was designed to assess “how” higher education institutions react to the QA system. RQ2 is a ‘how’ inquiry leading to an explanatory case study since the answer to this sort of question must be monitored over time rather than quantified in terms of frequency or incidence.

According to Yin (2009), there are two essential elements of a multiple sources: First, the researcher should gather a variety of data that includes an analysis of the causal relationships between context (political and social factors) and phenomenon (the QA system) in the four universities. The social (national and institutional) context is perceived to encompass multiple issues that influence how higher education institutions and departments have been influenced by and respond to the QA system and presents a documentary investigation into the process of preparing for evaluations/QA in the four universities, as well as interviews with academic staff in the four universities, which provide the sources needed to complete the picture. Second, the researcher should place the cases into a social framework.

Based on the advice of Harrison et al. (2017:20), the researcher used a case study as the methodological technique, in addition to document examination and interviews, because both document examination and interviews can give wider and analogous information and facts across case studies. These strategies are considered as primary data-collecting instruments for ensuring the breadth and depth of evidence acquired. When posing ‘how’ and ‘why’ inquiries, i.e., when the researcher intends to comprehend actions in specific contexts, case studies are an ideal strategy. The strength of case study design lies in allowing investigators to understand complex social phenomena and retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events, such as group behaviour, organisational and managerial processes, and international relations (Modica,2022:19; Meyer, 2022:231). Furthermore, case studies allow the researcher to explore a single or numerous instances over time using sophisticated, in-depth data-collection methods.

Yin (2009) asserted that qualitative case studies have four characteristics: they are comprehensive, empirical, interpretative, and empathetic. The holistic characteristics suggests that researchers should evaluate the interplay between the phenomenon and its surroundings. Empirical research is conducted by researchers based on their observations of situations. The interpretive component is dependent on the researchers’ intuition, and research is largely based

on researcher-subject interaction. The empathetic attribute indicates that researchers use their imaginations to represent their own understandings of the emotions or behaviours of participants.

A case is a bounded integrated system that might be an individual, a group, a programme, a particular policy, an organisation, and so on. The value of a case study design rests in its ability to help researchers comprehend complicated social phenomena while retaining the holistic and relevant aspects of real life such as group behaviour, organisational and management procedures, and global interactions (Schoch, 2020:245; Creswell, 2013). However, case studies have several drawbacks. The choice to do a case study implies that data will be gathered and analysed qualitatively. As a result, findings will be based on ‘soft’ data from document analysis and interviews. Furthermore, one of the concerns presented by this study is that case study research does not provide a solid foundation for scientific generalisation.

‘How can you generalise from a single case?’ is a commonly asked question. According to Yazan (2015), case studies not only assist researchers in extending their reach beyond the unique informants and environments involved, but also permit them to widen and simplify concepts. Yin (2009), on the other hand, feels that qualitative case studies necessitate the provision of several perspectives and opinions, and that there is no way to develop a single best or ‘objective’ position. As stated in the prior section, the strategy of this study is interpretivist. Rather than taking Yazan’s (2015) perspective of simplifying theories from case studies and attempting to offer the responses of every HEI to the QA system in Ethiopia, this study takes Yin’s approach, depicting the phenomenon of the influence of the QA system on HEIs and drawing on local knowledge to augment studies on the effect of QA systems.

4.5. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method is a research strategy that creates a funnel where “the inquiry begins with a relatively broad topical scope and narrows as data collection continues” (Thompson, et al. 2021:336). A research method is a study plan and technique that includes everything from comprehensive expectations to procedures of data collecting, analysis, and interpretation. In addition to the philosophical assumptions that govern study design and data collection, appropriate research procedures must be selected. According to Creswell (2010:31), the three most likely research approach/method categories are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method

methods. The discrepancy between qualitative and quantitative approaches is that the quantitative research approach deals with arithmetic and statistics and employs closed-ended questions, whereas the qualitative research approach employs open-ended questions and deals with words, expressions, and meanings.

This study used the qualitative method to have a deeper understanding through first-hand evidence, truthful reporting, and quotations from authentic discussions. The qualitative approach entails creating questions, using various procedures, and collecting data in the setting of the potential informants; data analysis inductively builds from specifics to broad themes, and the researcher makes interpretations of the meaning of the data, with a flexible structure in the final written report. According to Hays and McKibben (2021), qualitative research could increase scientific knowledge by extracting, evaluating, and integrating findings from several investigations on a specific phenomenon in comparable contexts.

The qualitative approach also seeks to comprehend how people get meaning from their environment, as well as how meaning drives their behaviour. Furthermore, the researcher used a qualitative research approach because reviewing the implementation of QA policies in the context of public HE in Ethiopia entailed exploring the participants' opinions, investigating general and broad questions, collecting data containing primarily participants' oral clarification, discussing, and evaluating those words for topics, and conducting the analysis.

Furthermore, the qualitative method employs inductive data examination to create a deeper understanding of the interplay between the researcher's and participants' reality and experiences. According to Ruslin et.al., (2022), qualitative research assists scholars in comprehending the intricacies of many social and cultural situations. It makes use of both 'soft' and 'rich' data sources, such as informant observation, interviews, and document analysis.

Furthermore, the qualitative technique is founded on the many connotations that the study respondents attach to their practices, personal perspectives, and experiences. Similarly, the qualitative analysis technique was used since it was vital to assess procedures and processes, as well as flaws in organisational QA (Creswell, 2010:33).

4.6 RESEARCH SITES, POPULATION, AND SAMPLING

4.6.1 Research Sites

A research site is a place where researchers conduct research. Public universities in Ethiopia were chosen as research sites for this study. At the time of the study, there were 46 public universities in Ethiopia, which are categorised based on their level, type, profile, namely Research universities, applied universities, comprehensive universities, Education University and special or science and technology universities (MoSHE, 2019:10).

According to the MoSHE (2019:10), research universities are those whose academic staff is expected to be composed of 50% PhDs, who publish annually in reputable journals, who allocate 5% of their annual budget to research, who establish strong academic and research collaborations with regional and international partners, and who build high-level research centres and facilities. Applied universities are those that provide professional, and practice-oriented instruction in a variety of programmes, those whose academic staff is expected to be composed of 20% PhDs, with at least 5% having industry and/or business experience, those that have strong links and engage in collaborative applied research with industries and businesses, and those that devote 30% of their resources to research. Comprehensive universities, however, offer multidisciplinary programmes and conduct teaching and research in equal proportions with a greater emphasis on teaching, whereas science and technology universities primarily focus on long-term social and economic development to meet the nation's current and future demands through a coordinated approach, as well as research on the nature and practices of science and technology.

Consequently, four sample institutions were chosen from among the 46 public universities. Therefore, the source of data comprises four sample public universities one from each category. The selection of universities was grounded on educational specialisation, site, organisational characteristics, and their practices in managing and implementing quality assurance policies.

According to Epler, (2019:20), there are three sorts of case studies: intrinsic (where the institution seeks to learn something from a single incident); instrumental (when the goal is to provide insight into an issue or establish a theory); and collective (which is an instrumental case study design extended to several cases jointly).

As stated in the preceding section, this is an exploratory study (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009). This is because it investigates “how” and “why” HEIs in Ethiopia differs in quality assurance policy implementation in terms of institutional qualities, generation, geographic locations, size, academic specialisation, history, and future potential. As a result, the institutions for this study were chosen with the aim of embracing variety and allowing for comparisons. Four HEIs (research, applied, comprehensive and education) were chosen for their differences in this study. Two general concerns also influenced the selection of the four universities. First, the four universities needed to be reflective of the overall university population. The key rationale for choosing one from each group is because the quality assurance system may affect them differently due to institutional differences. Second, when it comes to establishing the quality assurance system, the institutions will have varying degrees of autonomy and will confront a variety of problems. Furthermore, three fundamental considerations for selecting cases were considered: the kinds of HEIs, their status and the outcomes of their quality assurance applications.

During the selection, the researcher anticipated that different types of institutions would place varying demands on their staff and professors. As a result, one of the selection criteria was the 2017 ETA institutional audit report. To make systematic comparisons, all the aspects were taken into account while selecting cases. Using the different criteria to choose the instances resulted in a suitably diversified sample of colleges. All these characteristics were addressed during data collection and analysis, providing the researcher with the opportunity to conduct an analysis in terms of acquiring full information regarding the implementation of QA policies at Ethiopian HEIs.

4.6.2 Research Population and Sampling Techniques

A population can be articulated as all participants, objects, research components or any entity with the characteristics that the researcher desires to draw a scientific inquiry about the study. In comparison, sample refers to the participants selected from the population (Lakens, D., 2022:2).

Mansourifar and Shi, (2020) claimed that sampling is the method of selecting appropriate participants to represent the entire population and provide rich information on the phenomenon of interest. As a result, multiple sampling methods may be used to draw a representative sample from the population. Therefore, the total number of 46 participants were involved in this study

including vice president of the targeted universities, college deans, department heads, instructors, institutional quality assurance senior experts, ETA and MoE officials, and student representatives from students' unions. As a result, to select the key informant purposive sampling, convenience sampling and multistage sampling were applied in this research.

Kalu, (2019) suggested that purposive sampling is also characterised as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling. It is a non-probability sampling strategy that depends on the researcher's discretion in picking the institutions to be studied (e.g., individuals, cases/institutions, procedures, or pieces of evidence). It is usually used in qualitative research to recognise and select evidence-rich contexts to make the best use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). This involves positioning and selecting individuals or groups of persons who are predominantly well-informed about or qualified with an issue of interest (Tenny, et.al., 2017). Similarly, when performing an evaluation, purposeful sampling can lessen the bias of a homogenous sample and allow for more valuable or insightful evidence to be acquired.

The goal of purposive sampling is to select informants with experience of the phenomenon under study. The purposive sample approach was used to include senior authorities, while the multistage sampling technique was used to choose representatives from university college deans, faculties, departments, instructors, and students' unions. Furthermore, internal quality assurance audit specialists ETA senior experts and MoE officials and senior expert were included using the convenience sampling approach.

These selected sample, however, is not based on advanced knowledge. RQ1 and RQ3 rely on a review of the literature and document analysis. To establish fertile ground for the study, however, this is advantageous for selecting cases to meet essential criteria, particularly selecting persons who oversaw the establishment of the QA system because this was the emphasis of RQ1 and RQ3. Thus, the researcher used 'purposive sampling' to answer RQ1 and RQ3. Purposive sampling (also known as judgment, selective or subjective sampling) is a sampling technique in which researcher relies on his or her own judgment when choosing members of population to participate in the study" (Thomas, F.B 2022:23). In terms of interviews, the researcher chose one senior official and one QA specialist from the ETA. The criteria were as follows: one senior official and one QA specialist who oversaw the development of the QA system while working

for the government or the ETA since 2006. The researcher used purposive sampling, convenience, and multistage sampling to pick participants from the four case universities to answer RQ2, RQ4, and RQ5.

The researcher began by purposefully selecting two colleges from each institution from distinct fields. Again, at purposefully, the researcher chose two departments from each college, as well as two professors from each department. In an ideal world, each institution's interviewees would have included one academic vice president, two college deans, two department heads, and two lecturers who had prior experience with ETA grading systems. However, with limited resources and time, the researcher scoured the university websites and emailed seven professors picked at random from each college and department, inviting them to be interviewees.

Similarly, the researcher invited two internal quality assurance senior experts by using purposive sampling procedures to invite them. However, the ultimate number of participants selected by the researcher was determined by those who replied to via email and agreed to be interviewed. A few people declined to participate for personal or other reasons, such as a lack of time or interest in the research issue.

4.7 DATA-COLLECTION TOOLS, INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURES

4.7.1 Data-collection tools/ instruments

According to Moser and Korstjens (2018:11), the most often used data-collection methods in qualitative research include participant observation, document analysis, questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. The researcher used interviews, document analysis, and brief textual open-ended questions in this study.

4.7.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

Structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, open-ended interviews and focus groups are the four primary forms of interviews identified by Ruslin et.al., (2022). The researcher used semi-structured interviews to gather relevant information about the contributors' perspectives, connotations, views, values, and beliefs about the implementation of quality assurance in their respective HEIs and to allow the researcher to obtain further clarification about the issue under consideration where needed. A semi-structured interview with a person helps the researcher to

gain a thorough insight of the interviewees (Cohen et al., 2011). People may talk about their own thoughts and experiences in one-on-one interviews without being influenced by others. It also allows the researcher to learn about how various people understand the same issue. In addition, such interviews provide the interviewer with a wealth of information. Although the interview is conversational, interviewers have some say over how to follow up on comments made and when to open and close issues.

In-depth interviews were conducted at five levels at the four institutions, including (university vice-presidents, college deans, department heads, lecturers, internal quality assurance senior experts), who did not have ETA or MoE QA duties.

There were two interview schedules in each university (see Appendix ten). MoE and ETA staff, university academic vice presidents, and internal quality audit senior specialists were selected for the RQ1 and RQ3 interviews. Four vice-presidents, four college deans, eight department heads, and eight lecturers were chosen for RQ2, RQ4, and RQ5. Following the completion of the literature review and pilot study, the interview schedules were created.

4.7.1.2 Document analysis

The researcher used document analysis concentrating on ETA and MoE publications and the subsequent policies, strategies, and procedures developed by the ETA connected with organisational QA. Document analysis was used to determine the background for how the QA system is expected to be implemented in the HE system.

4.7.1.3 Textual questionnaires

Also, the researcher used a textual questionnaire (see Appendix Nine) to collect data from chairpersons of students' unions of the sampled universities. The questionnaire's goal was to collect as much comprehensive, accurate and exploratory information in the respondents' own words as possible, to gain a better knowledge of the subject under investigation. The questionnaire explored students' views, experiences, beliefs, and attitudes concerning the quality of teaching and learning. The questionnaire consisted of short open-ended text questions and included items on QA processes and procedures.

4.7.1.4 Focus-group discussion for the pilot study

The researcher used a focus group interview for the pilot study. The pilot study was intended to examine interview methodologies and conceptual frameworks that would later be used for extensive interviews and data processing. The focus group was used to determine reactions to the interview questions and processes and to adjust them where necessary for the main study.

4.7.2 Data-Collection Procedures

Data collection is the systematic acquisition and measurement of information on variables of interest that allows the researcher to answer specific research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes. To effectively finish the task, careful preparation, patience, perseverance, and other qualities are required. The goal of data collection is to gather high-quality information that will allow for comprehensive data analysis and the development of a convincing and plausible response to the problems posed. Regardless of the research topic or approach used, accurate data collection is crucial to the integrity of the research.

As stated in the preceding section, the study used a qualitative approach. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were the most used for data gathering. Each semi-structured interview lasted 40 to 60 minutes and was conducted face-to-face. Individual interviews were employed by the researcher to acquire the information from the participants. Three factors influenced the decision. First, because of their diverse schedules and locations, it was hard to gather all academics into focus groups, so meeting with people one-on-one was better. Second, such interviews provided the researcher with direct access to the interviewees, allowing him to examine what they truly believed in real life. During the interview, both the interviewer and the interviewee actively created meaning. A third argument is that interviews are excellent for learning about people's perspectives and ideals.

4.8 ADHERENCE OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC PROTOCOLS

COVID-19 is a communicable respiratory disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus that causes illness in humans. As a result, Alsabbagh, et.al., (2022:215) suggest that it has become mandatory for all academic institutions and researchers to conduct virtual interviews (VI) rather than face-to-face interviews (FTFI). Face-to-face structured interviews have traditionally been

the most efficient and dependable method of administering educational researchers. However, the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the implementation of public health measures, movement restrictions, and 'social distancing' protocols, making face-to-face interview data collection extremely difficult.

Virtual approaches can also present difficulties, particularly in Ethiopian contexts where internet network connectivity is limited. These concerns prompted the researcher to postpone data collection from the target institutions. Recognizing that the COVID-19 crisis was not going away anytime soon, the researcher immediately began using innovative COVID-19 safety protocols established by the Ethiopian Ministry of Health, the Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI), and Labour, and Social Affairs to conduct the study by using face-to-face interviews that would allow the researcher to conduct research across four research areas.

As a result, the researchers strictly adhered to COVID-19 data collection protocols to reduce the risk of exposing both researchers and respondents by employing Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and arranging other logistics required to protect both enumerators and respondents from COVID-19 infections. Face masks and hand sanitizers were purchased for respondents and researchers. The data collection procedure was carried out in accordance with the Covid-19 workplace response procedure established by the Ministry of Health, the Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI), and Labour, and Social Affairs.

4.9 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis is the systematic use of logical processes to characterise and portray, compress, recapitulate and evaluate data. Analysis is the act of breaking down the data into comprehensive categories based on the questions posed in the problem statement (Dai, et.al., 2022). According to Thomas, et.al., (2022), data analysis is the act of gathering, demonstrating, and analysing data to get insights that improve decision-making. Also, Kahsay (2012:157) noted that the purpose of data analysis is to answer the research questions. Therefore, the qualitative data were transcribed and thematically analysed, and a meta-narrative method was used to examine and synthesise the

literature. The premises for data analysis were derived from the research's conceptual outline, which is based on the main research question.

Data interpretation, on the other hand, deals with answering the question “so what” in relation to the findings of the study, and is the most critical aspect of the research report. As a result, depending on the organisation and the purpose of the analysis, there are many analytic techniques to perform data analysis. Data analysis in qualitative research uses inductive processes, which are governed by the qualitative design used (field study, ethnographic content analysis, oral history, biography, understated research) and the data type (field notes, documents, audiotapes, videotapes). The researcher used Miles and Huberman's (2014) technique to analyse the data for this study, which entailed the following steps: gather evidence and search for themes, patterns, similarities, relationships; and outline initial generalisations. The next section outlines the coding process and shows how the analytical framework was used to analyse the data.

4.9.1 The coding processes

The process of extracting meaning from data is known as data analysis. It is the primary phase in developing theory from case studies. One-on-one interviews were the primary data-gathering instrument in this study and transcribing and coding were the initial steps in organising the information. According to Saldana (2021), a code is a word or brief expression in qualitative analysis that captures the essence of ideas, based on verbal or visual data. To this end, further categories and new codes were generated or existing codes were refined to reflect emerging themes. To ensure the validity of the analysis, coding in all steps was undertaken independently and data were analysed in two stages: descriptive and meta coding. Transcripts of interviews, field notes, journals, papers, and open-ended survey replies can all be included in the data. The researcher transcribed all interview recordings, including time and non-verbal data such as laughing or sighing, and created codes based on the transcriptions. The Atlas.ti8 windows qualitative data management software was used for this procedure. ATLAS.ti8 is a qualitative research tool for coding and analysing transcripts, field notes and literature, providing network diagrams and data visualisation.

To comprehend the QA system's implementation, the researcher first developed six categories (emergence of the quality assurance system, development, expectation, leadership and governance of

quality assurance, external pressure, and internal response to quality assurance) based on the research inquiries, review of literature and conceptual framework (as indicated in Chapter 2), before moving on to analyse documents and interview data. RQ1 and RQ3 were used to derive the categories of QA system emergence, development, and expectation, while RQ2, RQ4 and RQ5 were used to derive the categories of HEIs leadership, external situation, and internal reactions to QA. Each of the six categories was tailored to answer the research questions. As the researcher analysed each instance, gradually building codes that were based on the interview transcripts. Each code derived from the data was assigned to a category. The case study design allowed for systematic comparisons across all four examples thanks to these codes.

As Miles and Huberman (2014) found, codes may be classified into two types. A descriptive code, such as ‘definitions of QA’, is used in the margin of field notes to define a ‘chunk’ of interview material. The second form of code is a meta code. Meta codes were derived from empirical data gathered across the four institutions and were used to develop repeated themes. Similar topics in the transcriptions are linked by coding in accordance with a discernible pattern and grouped under the same interview technique categories. As a result, a meta code is referred to as a category in this study. The six categories and codes are integrated and evaluated in each situation inside the analytical framework. This procedure also straddles two categories: ‘external ETA pressure’ and ‘internal responses to QA exercise.’

4.9.2. The Four Institutions’ Cross-Site Analysis

According to Huberman and Miles (2014), qualitative data analysis procedures are commonly left ambiguous or implied in study reports. This research focuses on giving descriptions and explanations that are sufficiently comparable throughout the four different themes to provide appropriate clarity on approach. The data analysis process is completed with the preparation of four structured case reports, containing tables, and narrative text addressing one of the four research questions. To do this, interview procedures were developed in line with the four study questions. To categorise the interview data depending on the research themes, a whole list of codes was created. During the cross-case analysis process, the codes develop relevance for the readers, and their meaning becomes clearer as the investigation advances. The six organisations’ data displays on subjects allowed for a full evaluation of the data. Then, for each subject, a cross-

causal network was created, with detailed explanations that appeared to be relevant to all universities.

As mentioned in the previous section, this study is an explanatory case study, (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2009). The reason is that higher education in Ethiopia comprises 46 public higher institutions with different characteristics, traditions, geographic locations, size, academic specialisation, and history. Thus, the selection of institutions within this study has been made with a view to embracing the variations which allows for further comparisons.

In this study, four HEIs: University A, University B, University X and University Y and two organizations have been selected for their differences. University A is a Research university, University B is Applied University, University X Comprehensive University, and University Y is Education University. All the above four universities are public universities which are categorized in different generations. To this end, University A categorized in first-generation universities, University B also categorized in the second-generation universities, while University X is categorized in the fourth-generation universities. University Y is a prestigious educational institution which was set up in 1959. The two organizations are organizations that have different duties and responsibilities. Org.1 is an authority which is established under proclamation 351/2003 in 2003, while Org.2. an organization which was established in 1930, is responsible for overseeing the teaching and learning process throughout the nation.

4.9.3 Writing-Up

Following data analysis with a cross-causal network and an analytical framework, draft reports on individual cases were prepared and presented in thematic cross-case reports in the following chapters based on the findings of the document analysis and interview data. Each cross-case report included empirical data indicating a link between the QA policy and the replies to the QA system.

4.9.4 Data Presentation

There are several styles available for data display. Younas and Inayat (2021) defined data presentation as the act of arranging data into logical, linear, and meaningful categories and classifications so that they may be studied and interpreted. As a result, the data presentation was designed in such a way that the methodology chapter introduces the basic features of each case,

such as the emergence of the QA system, features, elements, specific approaches, mechanisms, institutional activities to implement the quality assurance process, and the challenges impeding quality assurance implementation. The institutions were then compared synchronously using a firm structure based on the interview inquiries and this study's approach. Each analytical chapter focused on a distinct topic resulting from cross-site analysis results.

4.10. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Assessing the reliability of study findings necessitates judgments by researchers and professionals about the 'soundness' of the research in terms of the application and appropriateness of the methods used, as well as the integrity of the final conclusions. Qualitative research is frequently chastised for lacking scientific rigour, with inadequate justification of methods used, a lack of transparency in the analytical procedures, and findings that are merely a collection of personal opinions subject to researcher bias.

Although the tests and measures used to determine the validity and reliability of quantitative research cannot be applied to qualitative research, there is ongoing debate about whether terms like validity, reliability, and generalizability are appropriate to evaluate qualitative research. In the broadest sense, these terms are interchangeable, with validity referring to the integrity and application of the methods used, as well as the precision with which the results accurately reflect the data, and reliability describing consistency within the analytical procedures used (Nobile, H and Smith, J., 2015). However, if qualitative methods differ from quantitative methods in terms of philosophical positions and purpose, alternative frameworks for establishing rigour are appropriate.

Lincoln and Guba offer alternative criteria for demonstrating rigour within qualitative research namely truth value, consistency and neutrality, and applicability. This corresponds to the question, "How can a qualitative researcher persuade his or her audience that the research findings of an investigation are important?" (Lincoln and Guba,1985:290).

To respond to the question, Nobile, H and Smith, J., (2015) argue that the quality of a study in each paradigm should be judged on the terms of its own paradigm. For example, reliability and validity are important quality criteria in quantitative paradigms, credibility, neutrality or

confirmability, consistency or dependability, and applicability or transferability are important in qualitative paradigms.

Similarly, Lincoln and Guba (1985:300) use the term "dependability" in qualitative research, which closely corresponds to the concept of "reliability" in quantitative research. They also highlight "inquiry auditing" (Lincoln and Guba (1985:317) as one measure that may improve the dependability of qualitative research. This can be used to check for consistency in both the research process and the research product (Long and Wang,2022:4). In the same vein, Ozcakir and Ozdemir (2022) and Van de., et al. (2022:13) associate dependability with consistency or reliability in qualitative research. Data consistency will be achieved when the research steps are verified by examining raw data, data reduction products, and process notes (Campbell, 2007).

According to Van de., et al. (2022:13), examining trustworthiness is critical to ensuring reliability in qualitative research. Likewise, Van de., et al., (2022:14) states that the "trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability" to establish good quality studies through reliability and validity in qualitative research. As a result, trustworthiness and triangulation are important research concepts, particularly from a qualitative standpoint, and must be addressed below further to reflect the various methods of establishing truth.

4.11. TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is the way to address how the qualitative researcher establishes that the research results are trustworthy, consistent, verifiable, and reliable. Within the traditional paradigm, the classical criteria for measuring the quality and logic of research designs for all social scientific areas are internal validity, external validity, dependability, and objectivity (Frey, 2018:43). Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed that, rather than the traditional paradigm, a naturalistic paradigm representing a logical collection of claims may be better suited to qualitative research. The trustworthiness criteria, which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability would be used in this case. The difficulty in gaining credibility is that the researcher must represent both the respondents' reality and their own reflections and make their biases known.

The four role players are used to assess the trustworthiness of a piece of research. This study used a pilot study as well as several sources of information, such as government papers, ETA policies and MoE reports, to better understand the phenomenon of QA. This helped the researcher's capacity to transfer and rely on his findings. Purposive sampling was used to identify representative participants, and in-depth face-to-face interviews were done. For the interviews, the researcher devised questions to uncover any exceptions to the rule and used these interview questions to do negative case analysis. These research processes assisted the researcher in ensuring the study's credibility. The following table illustrates the strategies for achieving trustworthiness in this study.

Table 4.1 Strategies for achieving trustworthiness

Criteria	Techniques	Strategies
Credibility	<p>1.Actions that increase the likelihood of resulting trustworthy results</p> <p>2. peer-to-peer debriefing</p> <p>3.Analysis the worst-case scenario</p> <p>4.Adequate referential adequacy</p> <p>5.Checks from members</p>	<p>Applying systematic procedures such as matching, documentary analysis and self-evaluation</p>
Transferability	<p>The purpose of transferability is not to provide a guide of transferability, but rather to offer a data base that allows future applicants to make transferability decisions</p>	<p>Clarification of acceptable literature, including an audit trail for other to follow.</p>
Dependability	<p>1 Asses the inquiry’s procedure, and in deciding its appropriateness, the researcher should ensure the inquiry’s trustworthiness</p> <p>2.Assess the facts, results, interpretations, and suggest and certify that they are backed by evidence and internally consistent so that the bottom line may be accepted.</p>	<p>Providing reasons for using the qualitative research technique and setting out the case study analysis protocol, interview protocol and empirical process</p>
Confirmability	<p>1.Establishing the veracity of the investigation</p> <p>2.Interviewing with the audit process, and hence the two are no longer discussed separately</p>	<p>Data Analysis should be well structured. Process notes including methodological notes confirmability, instrument, development data such as pilot forms and preliminary schedules were used</p>

Source: Adapted from Lincoln and Guba, 1985

As shown in Table 4.1, the main strategies for achieving confirmability are careful data analysis structuring, which comprises the structure of categories (themes and meanings), results and conclusions (interpretations and inferences), and maintaining flexibility throughout the analysis process.

4.12. TRIANGULATION

Triangulation was originally introduced into qualitative research in the 1950s as a means to avoid potential biases arising from the use of a single methodology (Roberta Heale,2013:1). It is used to confirm suggested findings, but it is also be used to determine the completeness of data (Stamenkov, G.,2022). Likewise, it is the method of correlating information from several sources, including various people, various types of data, and different data-gathering methods. The use of a variety of data sources is especially beneficial to obtain various viewpoints, which is defined as “... many sources of evidence successfully giving numerous measures of the same phenomena” by Yin (2009:116–117). Similarly, Nancy, et al. (2014) asserts that triangulation in the qualitative research is the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena. Triangulation also has been viewed as a qualitative research strategy to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources. Most often, triangulation in qualitative research helps authenticate research findings by checking that different methods or different observers of the same phenomenon produce the same results. It can also be used to interrogate inconsistencies and data that are not expected to align.

As a result, Nancy, et.al (2014) classified triangulation into four types: data, researcher, theoretical and methodological triangulation. Among these four types of triangulations, the researcher used methodological triangulation that involves the use of multiple methods of data collection about the same phenomenon from different types of people, including vice presidents, college deans, department heads, lecturers, institutional quality audit senior experts, ETA and MoE officials by employing purposive sampling approach to choose individuals, then conducted in-depth interviews to learn more about their perspectives. To this end, Nancy, et al. (2014) explained that multiple sources of data enhance the researcher to obtain dynamic and interactive ideas from key informants and leads to produce multiple views and diverse experiences. Thus, the use of interviews, documentation, and textual questionnaires in this study allowed for

methodological triangulation from several important research themes discussed. The researcher triangulated data from sources in addition to gain multiple perspectives and compare the study results from each data collection method and describe how the data were integrated to arrive at study results.

Thus, the study compared the data from the interviews during the analysis step to find areas of agreement and divergence that ensured data was triangulated. Second, the researcher conducted a pilot study to accomplish researcher triangulation. In the analytical process, researcher triangulation entails employing a variety of qualitative approaches (interview, observation, case study, or focus groups).

The researcher used different viewpoints to understand a single piece of data to accomplish theoretical triangulation. Brennan and Shah's conceptual foundation model was initially used. Following the pilot study, the researcher recognised that it was inadequate, and that there were categories of replies that the Brennan and Shah model did not capture. Thus, Morley's model was included into the researcher's analytical framework. Because of analysing the data from the key interviews, the researcher determined that the Brennan and Shah and Morley frameworks needed to be expanded.

As previously stated, numerous qualitative tools were used in this study to establish methodological triangulation. The researcher used document analysis and interview data and document analysis for RQ1. The researcher used case studies design as the primary method to analyse RQ2 through RQ4. The employment of a range of tools increased trust in the study's conclusions. Finally, while analysing the interview data, the researcher kept a notebook of everything he did during the study. By doing so, the researcher was able to gain confirmability.

Individual perspectives and experiences can be triangulated against those of others, resulting in a rich picture of the attitudes, needs or behaviour of individuals being studied based on contributions from a diverse group of people. Triangulation across diverse data sources within the same method (triangulation of sources) is also employed in the study to trace and regulate the interpretations provided. Furthermore, just as triangulation through data sources may entail the use of several informants, so may the use of a range of documents as source material. These triangulations have the potential to improve the results' trustworthiness.

4.13. PILOT STUDY

Pilot studies can be used in both quantitative and qualitative social science research. Lewis, et al, (2022:118) summarises the importance of pilot studies in four areas: 1) to find problems and barriers related to participants' recruitment; 2) being engaged in research as a qualitative researcher; 3) assessing the acceptability of observation or interview protocol; and 4) to determine epistemology and methodology of research. Also, Lewis. P. et al, (2022:119) asserts the specific functions of pilot studies in qualitative research are assigned to four main qualitative designs including phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. It allows exercising epoch within the phenomenological research, increasing theoretical sensitivity in grounded theory, familiarity with fieldwork in ethnography, and refining the sampling strategy, provide unique opportunities to improve skills of a qualitative researcher in conducting semi-structured interviews including dealing with participants, selecting an appropriate venue for interview, conducting an in-depth interview, and seizing opportunities for probing emerging topics in interview process and finding the most effective way to recruit participants in case study design . It could also help the researcher to practice qualitative inquiry and therefore enhance the credibility of a qualitative research (Lewis, p., et al, 2022:119).

Because the interview questionnaire was specifically prepared for this study, it is vital that it be pilot tested for clarity of interview questions and statements, choice of words, missing items, efficacy of rules, extensiveness of answer items, and length and time required to complete. The goal of the pilot study was to assess the face validity of the data-collection instrument, or to determine whether the questions produced proper replies (In, J.,2017:34).

The pilot study involved the use of the interview schedule with several interviewees who did not form part of the final sample. Following that, the researcher asked the respondents what they thought of the interview procedure and remarked on their ideas, which included rearranging the question order and using more neutral phrasing in the questions. Because of these ideas, the researcher obtained a greater understanding of how future respondents might perceive the interview questions.

Furthermore, the questions and statements were analysed and validated for application, content, language, and sequencing in the pilot study. The pilot study revealed that certain adjustments

were required. The three main issues were trouble comprehending various questions and claims; inappropriate phrasing; and the lack of a “Do not know” option when informants did not understand the remarks. To improve the simplicity of the questions, those that appeared to be unclear to respondents were altered and rewritten. The data from the pilot study were not used in the final results.

4.14. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section examines numerous ethical considerations surrounding this study, which is a critical component of the research. According to Andronic, A.M.T., (2022:1), to address ethical concerns, the researcher will need to explore the following problems in an effective manner.

4.14.1 Access to the research sites

The procedure of obtaining site access took one month, including confirmation of interviews and scheduling appointments. Because it was difficult to reach university academic vice-presidents, directly, the researcher confirmed the interviews with their assistants. Most of the respondents in the case study were university lecturers who actively contributed personally and usefully.

4.14.2 Voluntary Informed Consent

The willingness of respondents to participate in the survey is crucial because participants might opt out of the study at any moment. Once the cases had been selected, the researcher called the respondents by phone to set up interviews, with the understanding that the interviews would be anonymised, documented, and employed solely for this study. Before taking part in the research, all interviewees completed and submitted signed permission forms (see Appendix three).

According to the principle of informed consent, researchers must offer individuals adequate evidence and assurances about contributing for them to comprehend the implications of involvement and make an entirely informed, considered, and deliberate choice about whether or not to take part, without the use of any coercion. All respondents were given a document with their consent forms that described the goal of the study, how the data would be gathered, recognised the researcher’s position and background, and indicated their right not to take part or have their names used in the study. The consent forms were either mailed to all interviewees ahead of time or handed to them at the start of the interview.

4.14.3 Language Use

The use of language that is derogatory, discriminatory, or otherwise undesirable. In the creation of the questionnaire and interview, sensitive terms should be evaded. Only personal data may be considered sensitive in this study; hence, all informants were advised that all such evidence would not be unidentified.

4.14.4 Respondents' Privacy and Confidentiality

All details of the interviewees and universities were kept confidential. To protect the participants, names, positions, and locations were altered where required. The report of the study was supplied to all interviewees who demanded a copy of the final thesis.

4.15. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 4 presented the research paradigm and methodological methods that were used to answer the study topics. This inquiry employed the qualitative method. Because of its potential to develop new considerations of difficult human events such as respondents' experiences and attitudes, an interpretative viewpoint will serve as the philosophical framework for this study. Furthermore, it was chosen to provide the researcher with the ability to understand things from the perspective of the informants, and it was primarily focused on the construction of reality, in which individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences and rely on the contributors' opinions of the situation being analysed.

The chapter also delved further into the rationale for using the qualitative research technique. The chapter then delved into and explained the several components of the qualitative research design that will be employed to optimise the examination of Ethiopia's QA policy and practices in HEIs. The data-collection strategies used, as well as the rationale for using them, were also detailed. Data was acquired through a number of methods, including interviews, document analysis and open-ended survey questions. The interview design and implementation as well as the self-administered survey questionnaire were also covered. Also, the chapter indicates how the steps taken to observe COVID-19 protocols during the interview sessions. Concerns about the credibility of the research were addressed; and, last, a review of the underlying ethical

thoughts within this study was stressed, as were the subsequent measures used to resolve these concerns. The next chapters present the data.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings of the assessment of the implementation of HE Quality Assurance Policies in Ethiopian Public Universities are discussed in this chapter, which includes data analysis, presentation, interpretation, and discussion. The current level of quality assurance policy implementation in Ethiopian HEIs is examined using empirical interview data and textual survey questionnaire data in this chapter. The first section of the chapter examines and evaluates interview responses in terms of the emergence of the QA system, its appropriateness, the growth of quality assurance, its goal, and the organisational structure of QA procedures in Ethiopian higher education institutions. The second section of the chapter explores the QA systems, policies, processes, and procedures used by universities. The third section evaluates the efficacy and implementation of the chosen public HEIs' quality assurance policies. The chapter's fourth section looks into the institutional and external factors that influence the execution of QA policies in specific HEIs, and the chapter's final section investigates what should be done to address the issues associated with implementing the ETA QA policies and mechanisms in Ethiopian HEI quality assurance operations.

5.2 THE DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Vice-presidents of public universities, college deans, department heads, lecturers, institutional quality-audit officers, students' union chairs, ETA quality-audit officers, and officials from the Ministry of Education were the study's target participants. In addition, four public university academic vice-presidents, college deans, department heads, and institutional quality-audit directorate directors, institutional quality-audit officers were interviewed in-depth. In addition, the director and senior expert of the ETA quality audit and capacity building directorate, as well as the director and three senior experts of the MoE's academic affairs general directorate, participated in the interview to obtain relevant information on the implementation of QA policies in Ethiopian public universities. Students' union chairpersons were given text survey questionnaires.

Institutions	Participants	Vice-Presidents	College Deans	Department Heads	Lecturers	Institutional Quality-Audit Director	Institutional Quality-Audit Expert	Student Union	General Director/ Director	Senior Expert	Total
University A	No. of participants	1	2	2	2	1	1	2			11
	Sex	M	M	M	M/F	M	M	M/F			
	Qualification	PhD	PhD	PhD	PhD	PhD	MA	BA			
	Total experience	22	17	20	16/14	20	16	3 rd year			
	Experience in The current position	2	2	4	2	4	3				
University B	No. of participants	1	2	2	2	1	1	2			11
	Sex										
	Qualification				MA						
	Total experience										
	Experience in The current position										
University Y	No. of participants	1	2	2	2	1	1	2			11
	Sex	M	M	M	M/F	F	M	M/F			
	Qualification	PhD	PhD	PhD	PhD	PhD	MA	BA			
	Total experience	15	15	2	15	16	16	3 rd year			
	Experience in The current position	3	3	2	2	2	4				
University X	No. of participants	1	2	2	2	1	1	2			11
	Sex	M	M	M/F	M/F	M	M	M			
	Qualification	PhD	MA	MA	MA	MA	BA	BA			
	Total experience	13	3	16	16	3	2	3 rd year			
	Experience in The current position	2	2	2	2	2	1				
Org.1	No. of participants	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2
	Sex	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	M	M	
	Qualification	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	MA	MA	
	Total experience	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	15	
	Experience in The current position	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	8	
Org.2.	No. of participants	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	4
	Sex	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	M	M	
	Qualification	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	PhD	MA	
	Total experience	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	22/13	
	Experience in The current position	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3	
			1 Prof						1 MBA		50

Table 5.1 Demographic information of the participants

For the purposes of profiling participants and giving context for explaining disparities in responses among various participants, contextual evidence of participants is critical. Academic vice-presidents and college deans are the top-level administrators in charge of coordinating, developing strategies, allocating finances, monitoring, and evaluating the execution of QA policies at their institutions. The research intended to determine the demographics of academic vice-presidents and college deans at universities. Academic presidents and college deans played an important role in the study because they were the guardians of their institutions. The information acquired about them pertains to their gender, education, and overall experience in their current employment. The survey included four vice-presidents of public universities and eight college deans from their prospective campuses. The vice-presidents and college deans who took part in the research were all men. This reveals that women in Ethiopian public colleges were denied leadership positions. It is also likely that the problem of gender imbalance in university management persisted simply because few female executives were ready to take on the responsibility. This could indicate a dearth of role models for girls, which could explain their lack of motivation.

In addition, the researcher inquired about the academic vice-presidents' and college deans' educational backgrounds at the selected universities. According to the findings in Table 5.1, all academic vice-presidents have a PhD, while 7 (91.6 percent) of college deans have a PhD and 1 (8.4 percent) of college deans have a master's degree. This indicates that the government has made a concerted effort to enhance university leadership in order to better administer public universities. The designated institutions' academic vice-presidents and college deans were also asked about their total years of experience and experiences in their current roles. Table 5.1 shows that all the academic vice-presidents and college deans at the selected public universities had only 2–3 years of experience in their current positions. None of them had more than five years' experience. This shows that, in light of the rapid expansion of public institutions, academics may have recently been promoted to positions of leadership without sufficient subject knowledge. This could be a serious problem in implementing ETA's quality assurance guidelines and policies at Ethiopian public universities, which could be due to a lack of competence and capacity in higher education administration.

Similarly, department directors are the frontline leaders in implementing quality assurance policies and coordinating the day-to-day teaching and learning process at the university level. As a result, all the department heads from each institution were involved in the study. Seventy-seven percent of the participants were men, whereas just 12.5% were women. In addition, the researcher inquired about their qualifications. PhD degrees made up 62.5% of the participants, while MA/MSC holders made up 37.5%. In comparison to academic vice-presidents and college deans, department heads had longer job experience of 2–5 years.

The presence of skilled, experienced, and dedicated professors is required for quality education. Lecturers play a significant role in the teaching and learning processes in public institutions. To put it another way, the quality of a university's academic staff is inextricably linked to the quality of its teaching and learning, the relevance of its research output and the delivery of services to the general public. The university's academic staff are skilled professionals who are aware and attentive to social needs. To provide excellent and relevant education, they must be appropriately qualified, informed, and skilled. The participants believed it was crucial to offer information not just concerning the teaching and learning process, but also about how QA measures were implemented at their respective institutions. Gender, degree of education, and teaching experience are among the demographic features of lecturers who participated in this study, as shown in Table 5.1.

The gender of the lecturers was examined since there is a need for equalisation of opportunities (gender equity) in all parts of life, including higher education lecturing. This is in line with international conventions such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to which Ethiopia is a signatory. It was found that 7 (87.5%) of the lecturers in this study were men, whereas 1 (12.5%) was a woman.

The educational qualifications of public university lecturers at the designated universities were also questioned. The rationale for this is that professional qualifications can aid in the improvement of educational quality. Table 5.1 shows that 4 (50%) of the professors in this study were PhD holders, while the remaining 4 (50%) were MA/MSC holders. In terms of experience, they were also asked for their overall years of experience as well as their experiences in present university jobs. According to the findings, the lecturers who took part in this study had between 2 and 16 years of experience. Lecturers needed strong experience teaching in higher education institutions, which could be another

factor contributing to Ethiopian public universities' fall in educational quality. In order to evaluate the implementation of QA procedures at their respective colleges, students must be involved. As a result, the student union chairs were asked to discuss their experiences with QA guidelines implementation in Ethiopian public universities. The participants in the survey gave demographic information such as gender and academic year. Men made up 62.5 percent of the participants, while women made up 37.5 percent. They were all third-year students from distinct fields of study in terms of their academic year.

In Ethiopian higher education institutions, institutional quality assurance officers play a vital role in developing quality assurance strategies, managing, reporting, and acting on the execution of QA policies. The gender, education, and experience of institutional quality-audit directors and officials are all covered in this study's demographic data. The study included four institutional quality-audit directorate directors and four institutional quality-audit officers, seven of whom (87.5 percent) were men and one (12.5%) was a woman. It is possible that this has something to do with preconceived preconceptions about women. Many people believe that women cannot do good audits because they are too soft and scared to make harsh decisions. Shirley (2008:87) disagreed, arguing that female auditors are more likely than male auditors to take their jobs seriously and carefully. Male auditors are commonly connected with bribery and corruption. In terms of educational qualifications, two-fifths of the participants (25%) were PhD holders, four-fifths (50%) were MA/MSC holders, and the remaining two-fifths (25%) were BA/BSC holders. In terms of total experience, they had between 3- and 20-years' work experience in the education sector, However, they only have 2–4 years' experience in their current position.

The ETA, also known as the HERQA, was founded in 2003 by Proclamation (351/2003) as one of the key institutions in charge of overseeing and regulating the higher education sector, as well as ensuring the quality of HEIs. The director and senior expert of the ETA's Quality Assurance and Capacity Building division were asked about their gender, qualifications, and experience. The men who took part in this study from ETA were all MA holders with more than five years' experience. This shows that the officers were well-qualified to carry out their responsibilities as auditors.

The researcher also collaborated with the Ministry of Education to analyse whether the ETA's quality assurance policies were adequately implemented. The general directorate for academic affairs and a senior specialist from the Ministry of Education took part in this study, and they were both men. The general directorate for academic affairs was headed by a PhD holder with 18 years' experience in the education sector, four of which were spent in his present position. This study included three top ministry experts who work in the curriculum development and teacher development bureaus. They were all MA graduates with between three- and twenty-two-years' experience in their respective positions.

5.3 THE INTRODUCTION OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HE SYSTEM

The purpose of this section is to respond to RQ1: *What is the national and worldwide outlook for the implementation of QA policies?* The section explores "Why" the government of Ethiopia decided to build a QA system on nationwide scale. The part also discusses the ETA's governance, structure, and connection with HEIs. In addition, it examines how the ETA disseminates information about the quality assurance process. Finally, it looks at the global implications of its emergence, the factors that drive the introduction of new processes and structures, and how these changes have impacted HEIs. In order to obtain relevant information to answer RQ1, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews and analysed documents.

The Ethiopian government announced a new educational training policy in 1994, with the goal of addressing the multifaceted issues of accessibility, equity, relevance, and quality (TGP, 1994:2). After nine years, the MoE responded by establishing HERQA/ETA in 2003 with Proclamation no. 351/2003. The declaration gave the higher education sector direction by stating policy and highlighting organisational changes. The Ethiopian Higher Education Agency was formally established in 2003 under Article 78 of the Ethiopian Higher Education Proclamation No. 351/2003. The purpose of the organisation is to monitor the relevance and quality of tertiary education offered by colleges across the country. It reports directly to the MoE (FDRE, 2003:2256).

In addition, the MoE revised Proclamation No. 351/2003 in order to create an adequate legislative framework to guide institutions in concentrating on critical issues of relevance and quality in education and research in order to effectively contribute to national development.

Article 89/4 of Proclamation No. 650/2009 requires ETA to design and implement clearly defined evaluation and accrediting criteria and processes, and to review whether HEIs' QE systems are capable of ensuring higher education quality.

The present objective and vision of the ETA are based on Proclamation No.1152/2019, which is less vague and more precise than Proclamations No. 351/2003 and 650/2009. The ETA set three main objectives: ensuring the relevance and quality of HE, accreditation, and pre-accreditation of degree programmer at all HEIs, and supplying evidence to stakeholders.

5.3.1 ETA Governance and Structure

A board of directors oversees policies and functions, while a management division oversees day-to-day processes or functions. According to the Higher education proclamation 1152/2019, the ETA Board of Directors comprises seven members. During the ETA's history, the number of delegates on the board has never exceeded six (FDRE, 1152/2019:11485).

The researcher spoke with Org.1.the director of the quality-audit directorate regarding the board members' active engagement, and the interviewee stated that the board currently has only four members who are actively involved, and that the board members who had resigned had not been replaced. This could have impacted the Board's ability to lead and advise the Agency as a whole, while also improving government involvement (as the chairperson is the MoE and the other three members are representatives from other public sectors). The Agency accepts that the Board and ETA officials did not communicate effectively. According to the Proclamation, the Board should meet every three months. However, the Board has not been meeting as regularly as expected, according to our inquiry.

Similarly, the researcher looked through documents to learn more about the ETA's organisational structure. The Quality Audit and Augmentation Team, the Accreditation Team, and the Managerial and Supportive units make up the two technical and one directorial department. All the specialists report to the Director General of the Agency while being horizontally connected. The ETA's organisational aims, management, and enhancement make up the two technical departments. To carry out the Agency's technical QA operations, the Agency presently has a director, five specialists in the audit directorate, nine in the accreditation

department, and a total of 12 staff. Aside from the director, who holds a PhD, the rest of the crew is made up of MA graduates and below. In general, the current number and qualification profiles of ETA personnel are judged insufficient. According to interviews with the director of the ETA's quality-audit division and a senior expert, there is a major shortage of human, financial, physical, and technical competence to undertake institutional quality audits.

The ETA expert's job was heavy, according to the researcher. Because of remuneration scales that were not analogous to other similar firms in the market, the Agency noticed that there was a high rate of worker turnover. The Agency lost three experienced senior personnel in just one year (2021), all of whom went for higher pay and reimbursements. There was no way to tell if the ETA had a good employee evaluation system because there were no data. The researcher feels that the expertise of the ETA expert team in quality assurance procedures should be preserved and improved. Increased competency should be the goal of human resource development, which may include formal training programmes.

Before issuing licences, the accrediting division verifies the minimum standards and performs emergency monitoring to keep private HEIs under control. This component aids the control goal and works with private higher education institutions, whereas the quality-audit portion works with both public and private institutions. An Org.1. quality-audit directorate director and senior expert maintained that:

We (Org.1) devote equal attention for both accountability and improvement reasons. However, the process of accreditation in public universities is not yet implemented by ETA. The only exception is that public institutions are established by regulations of the ministers and assumed to have a self-accrediting power. The accreditation exclusively applies to private HEIs, and the quality assurance system's goal in this respect is accountability. (Interview#Org.1, 2021)

In terms of financial resources, the current Higher Education Proclamation No.1152/2019 authorised the agency to generate revenues from three sources: agency revenue, government revenue and donations (FDRE, 2019:2258). The ETA has been shown to be significantly reliant

on government (MoE) support. Government financing has ranged from 71–92% of the Agency’s overall budget during the last four years (i.e., 2019–2021).

The ETA revealed in its self-assessment statement that, despite being obligated to generate its own funding, the accreditation expenses levied on private HEIs were not kept by the Agency but instead handed on to the MoFED (ETA, 2011b:34). This illustrates that when it came to dealing with financial difficulties related to its many activities, the ETA was firmly bound by civil service rules and laws. The ETA should be given more leeway in dealing with its financial challenges.

5.3.2 The Regulator ETA and the Four Case Universities

The following subsections discuss the autonomy of ETA, institutional quality audit, institutional self-assessment and reporting to the ETA and the public, and the relationship between the ETA and the HEIs.

5.3.2.1 The autonomy of the ETA

According to HE Proclamation No 1152/2019, article 87, the ETA is an autonomous and neutral entity with its own legal personality that evaluates the quality of education and the appropriateness of programmes (FDRE, 1152/ 2019:11516). However, the Agency’s size and structure are not specified explicitly, and the proclamation demands that it reports to the Ministry of the Environment. Being self-sufficient does not always entail “non-responsibility”.

However, there are some apparent concerns because the ETA and the HEIs report to the same body, the Ministry of Education. “Independence” is defined by the ENQA (2008:33) as “...self-governing accountability for operations in which report conclusions cannot be influenced by HEIs, ministries, or other role players”. The outcomes of the ETA procedures, on the other hand, were not determined freely and autonomously from the government, predominantly the Ministry of Education.

The authority oversaw accreditation and institutional audits, as well as reporting to the Ministry of Education on its findings and recommendations. Its conclusions are used for making judgements. Furthermore, the government appoints the authority’s director (FDRE, 1152/ 2019: 11516), and the

ETA Board's chair has always been the Minister of Education since the Agency's inception. However, after 2018, the MoSHE assigned its representative, i.e., MoST, to this position for some time, but now the Ministry of health (MoH) is the chairperson.

Some participants interpreted this as a sign that the ETA is a subordinate organ of the Ministry (lacking the functioning autonomy it requires) rather than an autonomous organisation as indicated in the HEP. Second, the ETA receives considerable funding from the MoFED (government). This undue reliance may force the ETA to act in conformity with the government's goals and objectives, jeopardising the Agency's ability to make independent choices. Third, as things stand today, when it comes to hiring staff, the ETA, like any other government organisation, must follow the Civil Service Commission's basic criteria, norms, and laws. It has no say over how its employees are compensated or paid.

The authority will have a difficult time demonstrating its legitimacy under these circumstances. Nonetheless, the ETA is functionally autonomous, according to an ETA quality-audit directorate director, and its reliance on the MoE for finance and other provisions has not precluded it from exercising decision-making independence. He claimed that:

...in practice, we had no problems coping with the MoE." I have yet to come across a MoE decision that has shown the ETA's autonomy or choices. On the contrary, the MoE always respects our decisions and has had no impact on our job. Personally, I believe that the ETA's current structure should be altered to improve the service delivered by the Agency. Many people do not believe the ETA to be independent because it is accountable to the MoE, which breaches international norms. (Interview#Org.1, 2021).

It is critical that the ETA becomes more self-governing and autonomous, and that the ETA Board not be controlled by the Ministry of Education, since this could threaten the ETA's autonomous status as a professional authority alerting the HE sectors to its performance quality.

5.3.2.2 Relationship between the ETA and HEIs

There was a considerable difference in how the ETA rated public and private HEIs, according to the responses of the survey participants. Before starting a new programme, private HEIs must

apply for (pre)accreditation. The ETA then uses input criteria to evaluate the programme's expected quality. In accordance with Proclamation no. 1152/2019, the ETA requires these (pre)accreditation checks for private HEIs.

Public HEIs are excluded from such a (pre)accreditation evaluation because they are legally entitled to initiate new programmes. Despite the fact that there was no proof that public universities were any better than private colleges, the ETA was primarily concerned with reviewing and correcting private institutions.

However, according to Article 87/3 of Proclamation No. 1152/2019, the ETA evaluates each institution's activity, relevance, and quality of education and training before granting or renewing accreditation. Internal and external observers are concerned about the ETA's inability to exert its authority on public HEIs in this environment. According to a renowned expert in institutional quality auditing:

ETA as regulatory body still now doesn't started accreditation of public universities. From its establishment, ETA doesn't visit university X i.e., no control mechanisms created, and no communication with the university for the last five years over the implementation of quality assurance policies. The ETA must do his effort to assess well the approaches that has been developed to assure quality of education. (Interviewee # UX5, 2021).

The Agency's capability is severely constrained. Among its primary issues were a shortage of competent and experienced labour force, a lack of institutional expertise, and operational inefficiencies. According to an org.1 & org.2 senior expert:

“At the moment, the Authority believes it is difficult to adopt and apply all of the methods used in private HEIs to the public due to a lack of professionals for accreditation and audit operations. In theory, we (ETA) think that public and private higher education institutions should be treated equally; yet, given the ETA's existing restricted resources, accrediting public institutions appears to be unfeasible. (Interview#Org.1, &2 2021)”.

When compared to the capacity of the ETA staff, the demand for private HEIs for programme certification was considerable. Accreditation necessitates knowledge of several programmes or fields of study. According to Org.1. & Org.2.senior experts:

“Because the ETA lacks specialists in many disciplines, it finds it difficult to take part in this kind of huge assignment and responsibility to accredit public higher education institutions. (Interviewee # Org.1. & 2. 2021)”.

Despite the fact that the ETA was actively working with private HEIs on accreditation, quality auditing efforts in both public and private HEIs were not prioritised. When it comes to private HEIs, the ETA plays an important role; it controls them to the point of sometimes closing them down and rejecting permission for certain projects, among other things. The Agency’s involvement was limited in the case of public HEIs, however, to publishing the results of a quality audit. It is the responsibility of the institution to develop and implement an improvement plan in accordance with the recommendations in the quality-audit report. Public HEIs are not officially accredited, even though this could help to counteract a low level of quality and drive QE in all HEIs. To sum up, the investigation found that the ETA’s relationship with government institutions was very shaky. As of 2020/21, just 20% of public universities had been examined for quality (ETA audit report, 2020/21).

5.4. HOW HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS GO ABOUT IMPLEMENTING THE QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICES

The purpose of this part is to respond to RQ2: *How do the four universities, each with its own set of characteristics, carry out and implement the ETA quality assurance system?* As a result, it investigates how academic employees view quality and QA, as well as the goal of QA as regarded by academic staff. The section also evaluates the efficacy of QA policies, how the four institutions apply the policies, the QA system’s influence at the institutional level, and the ETA QA system’s key strengths. Furthermore, the section examines the necessary conditions and resources for effective implementation, as well as the identification of stakeholders and their participation in the QA process.

Determining impact as described in the literature review, is difficult. Scholars have recommended that, rather than analysing impact, a more accurate assessment of quality

assurance systems' influence and results would be to look at how QA is incorporated into and interacts with the HE system to which it is tied. This would entail a review of developments in areas such as organisational learning, institutional behaviour, and individual-institutional interactions (Henkel, 2000; Kogan & Hanney, 2000; Newton, 2002; Stensaker, 2008).

So, in this study, the researcher used the technique of examining what 'changes' had occurred to establish the QA system's 'impact'. In this chapter, I examine how the QA mechanism affects HEIs at the system level. Through the responses of top academics in managerial positions to the QA system, I believe that the QA system has had an impact on the dimensions of HE as well as the administration of HEIs.

To investigate this assertion, I analysed interview data from key QA system policymakers from the Org.1 and Org.2, as well as vice presidents, college deans, department heads, and lecturers from the four institutions included in the study, to look into the evolving links between HE, the MoE and the ETA. Second, I considered how the QA system influences educational quality.

The Org.2 believed that the ETA and the QA system could improve higher education quality and guide its growth, as stated in the previous section. Many respondents from University A, B, X, and Org.2.regarded that:

“The ETA as a new tool for guiding HEIs, one that would ensure that the QA system was taken seriously. The MoE’s aim to create a QA system in Ethiopia was said to be motivated for various reasons. These debates largely revolved around internal and external issues. Internal factors mentioned by respondents include secondary school and misalignment of university expansion, the need for development of human capacity at all levels, public sector reforms, increased private-sector involvement in higher education, issues of employability and low competency of graduates in the labour market, and demands from industry and stakeholders to fit qualifications for the world of work. Similarly, the influence of globalisation, international consultant recommendations, Ethiopian universities’ low participation in global conventions, the issue of internationalisation (increased mobility of professionals and students), and donors’ interests prompted the government to introduce a QA system, implying that the higher education subsector requires reform, accountability, managerialism, and improved monitoring and evaluation.

In this section, I also review how the ETA has used the quality assurance system and rules to oversee and govern institutions.

5.4.1 Academic Staff Perceptions on the Concept of Quality at HEIs

The answers to the interview questionnaire were used to look into the viewpoints of academic staff on the concept of quality at HEIs. The interview replies and outcomes were classified into five separate yet interrelated quality-thinking paradigms by Harvey and Green (1993:11–27), Harvey (1998:244), and Harvey (1999:245). (Harvey and Newton 2007:6). Quality can be defined in a variety of ways, including “perfection,” “transformative,” “excellence,” “value for money” and “fitness for purpose”.

It was a remarkable revelation that the academic staff’s options were not limited to a single definition. This was shown when three of the definitions were chosen, namely “excellence”, “transformative” and “fit for purpose”, implying that no one term was more prominent than the other two. The research also found that different people had varying definitions of quality. This exemplifies how difficult and complex it is to define the concept of quality. This finding supports Hager’s (1997:6) and Harvey and Green’s (1993:28) findings that educational excellence is difficult to define. The finding supports the idea that quality is a multifaceted concept. In external quality monitoring, the ETA uses fitness for purpose as a guiding concept. Accountability, compliance, control, and improvement are the four main goals of quality assurance procedures. (Harvey, 1998; Harvey, 1999; Harvey, 2007; Harvey & Newton, 2004; Van Damme, 2000).

The four universities agreed that the most important goal for adopting a QA system should be improved HE, based on the interview data on respondents’ ideas on the most significant goals for building a QA system. According to the respondents, the goal of building a QA system is “---to ensure responsibility, control, and compliance in their colleges.” However, when Compared to the other QA objectives indicated in the selected institutions, this study found that improving educational quality was the top choice for all academic professionals. “Control and compliance” as QA goals, according to the academic staff, were less important.

However, because Ethiopia's QA system was put in place in response to external constraints, it tends to satisfy external accountability, making quality improvement a side issue rather than a core component of quality. Many functions are obviously served by the quality assurance policies at the sampled institutions, including accountability to an external state agency (e.g., meeting the ETA's EQA) and self-improvement through self-evaluation processes.

5.4.2 The Efficacy of the Quality Assurance System

Using information from interviews and textual survey questionnaires, this part aims to analyse the QA system's efficacy or impact. The purpose of internal quality audit in Ethiopian institutions, according to the HE declaration, is to improve quality. The goal of this part is to see if the Ethiopian higher education system's existing quality assurance system has resulted in changes for staff, students, and higher education institutions in general.

5.4.2.1 Effectiveness of quality assurance policies in HEIs

The section's goal was to analyse the QA system's efficacy and investigate how Ethiopian institutions responded to national policy objectives related to higher education teaching and learning quality assurance. To this purpose, academic professionals were asked about the extent to which elements of universities' quality assurance efforts were effective.

According to Academic staff from targeted universities (Vice president, College deans, Department heads, lecturers), did not feel that the QA system was clear and rigorous, nor did they believe adequate physical and financial resources were available to ensure teaching and learning quality. Staff, students, and other essential stakeholders were not informed about the current QA system (policy, approaches, guidelines, processes, and instruments). To make matters worse, the motivation and working situation of the academic staff, according to the interviewees, did not typically generate an atmosphere favourable to improving the quality of teaching and learning. One would expect that all the participants believed that the quality of their institutions' teaching and learning programmes was very important to them.

Neither the lecturers nor the student interviewees from targeted universities agreed or disagreed with the assumption. Similarly, the academic staff were unable to affirm positively that the quality assurance decision-making style was participatory, that the execution of staff professional

growth activities was successful, and that the current QA systems were related to the quality of student learning, aimed at improving the quality of teaching and evaluation practices, and related to the achievement of the overall mission and goals.

5.4.2.2 Staff attitudes toward the effective implementation of QA policies at universities

The researcher conducted interviews with academic staff to learn about their perspectives on the effective implementation of QA policies in the target universities. It appears that Jimma conducted quality assurance activities more efficiently than others. However, this statement should be approached with caution because certain results contradicted the conclusions. In general, the findings suggest that the selected institutions' efforts to implement an internal quality assurance system were insufficient.

All staff members from University A, B, X, and Y stated that many QA activities were not carried out in the selected universities. Performance requirements for learning objectives, well-established information systems and feedback mechanisms, rules, and processes for guaranteeing quality, meetings on quality-related issues, and motivation structures for successful teaching were all said to be lacking.

University A, University B, and University Y all had quality assurance policies, processes, and committees, but University X did not. In contrast to the other three institutions, most of University X academic staffs said their university had a structure in place to assure good governance, transparency, and accountability to stakeholders but do not have quality assurance policy document.

The lack of a shared culture of excellence in the institutions was one of the study's most notable findings. The word "quality culture" refers to a culture in which everyone in the organisation is responsible for quality, not only the quality controllers (Tumlovskaja, 2022). In this context, quality culture refers to shared beliefs, attitudes, expectations, and commitments to quality, as well as a managerial aspect involving established systems to improve quality and coordinate efforts (Kimaro, 2015:4).

Lecturers and professors were requested to rate their level of satisfaction with the leaders' commitment to QA and engagement in it. Most of the lecturers at the four institutions were dissatisfied with the leadership's commitment to and involvement in quality assurance. Academics were also unhappy with how schools handled staff recruitment and development, student admissions, teaching, learning and assessment. Satisfaction with shared responsibilities and processes for QA execution, collaboration and partnership among the numerous stakeholders involved in QA execution was also found to be low in the four universities.

Between the four universities, there were significant disparities in respondents' perceptions. Academic employees at University A and University B were "somewhat" satisfied with the leadership's dedication to QA, staff recruiting and development initiatives, and teaching, learning, and assessment processes compared to the other two universities (University X and Y). While leadership commitment, lecturers, and student participation were two of the most important concepts in developing a quality culture and QA procedures, the results of the interviews specified that these situations did not exist in the selected public institutions. This research obviously indicates that more work must be done in this area. To expand the study on institutions' involvement and commitment, students were asked for suggestions concerning their professor or department's involvement in QA functions.

5.4.2.3 Students' attitudes toward the effective implementation of QA Policies

Students' perceptions of their department or faculty in terms of setting clear goals for quality preservation, interacting QE policies, encouraging shared values and quality culture, commitment to providing high quality teaching, and creating methods to enable quality learning were all low, indicating that their department or faculty's QA efficiency was very low. Current QA procedures are weak and ineffectual in enhancing educational quality, according to the overall interview results in this area. As a result, the recently implemented (external and internal) QA system may not have had a major impact on actual quality improvement throughout the selected universities.

The quality of student learning is maintained, according to various academics, by the professional dedication and participation of all stakeholders (Barnett, 1992; Harvey & Knight, 1996; Harvey & Newton, 2007; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2002; Wilger, 1997). Students'

learning experiences improve when top management, lecturers, professors, and students participate and are engaged in the creation and execution of QA.

5.4.3 The Impact of Quality Assurance Policies

I believed that the QA system has had an impact on the parameters of tertiary education as well as the management of HEIs, based on the responses of top academics in administrative positions to the QA system. To look into the evolving relationships between HE, the government, and ETA, I analysed interview data from key vice-presidents, college deans, and institutional quality-audit officers of the targeted institutions, and academic staff from the four universities, as well as senior experts from the two organizations in the study. Second, I explored how the quality assurance system affects university governance.

Academic personnel were asked structured interview questions to assess the degree of perceived effect of the current QA system on institutional procedures. The goal was to look at how QA policies from the outside (namely external audits) and the inside (namely self-evaluations) influenced institutional practices, student-learning experiences, and the institution as a whole. Most academic staff at the four universities judged that the internal quality assurance system had minimal impact on increasing educational or instructional quality at their institutions. Lecturers did not believe that the QA system was improving teacher and student engagement. Furthermore, staff respondents claimed that the quality assurance methods had no beneficial influence on internal decision-making processes, fund allocation, institutional standing, or stakeholder satisfaction.

University academic vice-presidents and college deans reported that new courses, programmes, approaches, and processes were introduced in institutions. In their view, the quality assurance system had changed and improved university governance structures. The universities had improved their leadership and QA processes by establishing quality assurance structures and creating new departments and teams/units to supervise planning, quality, and reviews.

The majority of academic staff interviewed across the four universities agreed that current quality assurance mechanisms had a minor positive impact on improving daily teaching and learning activities. However, determining how to define the term “positive impact” was a significant

difficulty. The positive impact might be measured purely in terms of better governance and organisation, rather than in terms of teaching and learning. The lecturers and professors staff felt the “positive effects” of QA on the formulation of new practices and procedures, governance structures, university survival, the development of new courses and programmes, and the improvement of student engagement in learning and teaching when the undergraduate discipline-based curriculum was changed to a modularisation curriculum.

Interviews with Org.1. and Org.2. specialists were also conducted to establish the degree to which external quality assurance processes had enhanced QA in Ethiopian institutions. One of the questions used to generate debate during the interviews was: “*Can external (e.g., quality assurance) and internal quality audit (e.g., self- evaluations) QA procedures be acknowledged for change and advancement in your institutions?*” According to an Org.1& 2 senior expert who participated in this study:

“Most institutions now have quality assurance offices or directorates, institutional quality-audit guidelines have been created, and, most crucially, quality and QA have become a major priority in HEIs, although not in a systematic and coordinated manner. (Interview#Org.1&2, 2021).”

The authority’s establishment of quality-audit document requirements and processes, according to an Org.1, expert, was a favourable element. The ETA claims to have settled quality-audit mechanisms and other standards that are compliant with global standards. In terms of quality audits, the ETA’s creation of these norms and processes was regarded as a major success. The quality-audit processes comprised ten focus areas that were similar to those used in other countries across the world.

This question was also asked of institutional quality-audit officers during the interview. The director of the University A Quality Assurance office reported:

“We were able to discover areas of strength and places for progress thanks to the self-assessment process. Having the ability to do self-reviews has allowed us to make systematic changes. The ETA’s external auditing process has also aided us in

enhancing QA methods in fields like leadership, learning and teaching, and research (Interview# UA5, 2021)."

Similarly, the University Y internal quality-audit office director reported that:

"By establishing governance structures at various levels (university & colleges) and appointing senior personnel to manage QA activities, universities have enhanced the leadership and monitoring of quality assurance. This approach bolstered the planning and coordination of QA efforts in our institution (Interview#UY5, 2021)."

5.4.4 Stakeholders' Involvement in the Implementation of Quality Assurance Policies

According to stakeholder theory, firms generate value through their interactions with several role players, comprising customers, suppliers, rivals, workers, regulators, society members, and anyone else "who may impact or is influenced by the firm's aims" (Zhang, 2016:477). To that purpose, this section focuses on the various role players' involvement in the implementation of QA policies in the sample HEIs.

5.4.4.1 Involvement of academic staff in the implementation of quality assurance policies

Organisations engage with a variety of groups, according to Khanyile and Green (2016: 329), and these groups influence and are influenced by the organisation. The theory emphasises the nature of these relationships in terms of processes and results for the organisation and its role players. *In terms of academic staff participation in QA activities, the most of lecturers interviewed at the four universities said they had not participated in QA operations in the preceding five years.* This could indicate that QA implementers, such as academic staff, were not involved in the institution's core QA operations. Academic professionals, according to Newton (2000:162), should be active in and dedicated to the creation and execution of quality assurance methods. In higher education institutions, academic employees play a critical role. They create, deliver, and oversee the assessment of educational programmes, and what people believe and do has a huge impact on the quality of HE.

Similarly, the researcher enquired about academic staff involvement in the establishment of nationwide and institutional QA policies. Academic personnel, although being the forefront

executors of policy, were not involved in creating and implementing QA policies in the public institutions under examination. The QA structure was developed at the institutional level in the institutions under study, such as the Quality Assurance Directorate at University A, the Education Quality and Enhancement Directorate at University X, the Quality Assurance Directorate at University B, and the Relevance and Institutional QE Directorate at University Y. The institutional quality audit directorate was under the under direction of academic vice-president of the respective universities.

QA offices must be formed at all three levels of the university hierarchy: at university level, college, and departmental, according to the HE policy (MoE, 2021). Document analysis and data received from the academic vice-presidents of the targeted universities, on the other hand, revealed that:

“There were no quality coordinators at the departmental level and that the college-level quality coordinators had ceased to exist. Internal quality has an impact on every aspect of a university, particularly the teaching-learning process, according to the study, hence QA units should be established at the college and departmental levels in all HEIs.”

At the college level, there was a so-called QA coordinator, but their tasks were confined to academic rehabilitation, student supplemental assessments, and affirmative action for female students. At the college level, the academic committee regularly debates and distributes evidence on the issue of quality education; nevertheless, the committee did not carry out any scheduled or planned activities to evaluate quality problems.

Aside from that, college-level quality assurance coordinators at University A and university X reported the presence of an examination committee as a quality assurance technique at departmental levels. University professors delivered the test papers to the committee for approval after preparing tests. The practice, however, was not universal throughout colleges and departments, and it was eventually phased out in some departments due to a lack of motivation among the committee members. This committee has proven to be an extremely effective quality assurance instrument in the departments’ overall quality management.

However, based on the interview data acquired, it was established that none of the four universities had effective organisational structures for QA operations. At University A, the institutional QE directorate was not a separate entity, but rather an extension of the academic programme office. Quality assurance at University A was managed by a single professional (a quality assurance directorate director) at the institutional level, with no other specialists participating. It was astonishing to analyse the level of all academic programmes provided at the college with only one specialist. Guidelines, manuals, and procedures are all required for QA. Such policy texts necessitate a high degree of expertise as well as a significant financial investment. For these operations, there was no money set aside. Bringing the current QA system up to speed necessitates reorganising the organisation and allocating adequate funds.

Another issue that was brought up was the assignment of QA staff to the system. The administrators of the system lacked the essential knowledge, skills, and experience. This was a big problem in the targeted institutions studied. The ETA did not make any attempts to improve the system. The new hires had little to no expertise with the ETA's quality assurance procedures and processes. According to the quality audit officer at University X:

“We do not have formal connection with ETA,” stated an academic officer at Bonga University. Our resource director contacted the ETA and gathered certain documentation around a year ago. Other than that, our university and the ETA did not have any official communication. (Interview#UX5, 2021).”

The deployment of the QA system at institutions was hampered by this situation. Academic Development and Resource Centres (ADRCs) may be the only support structure capable of improving quality in Ethiopian higher education institutions. If correctly constructed, ADRCs can help improve academic quality by providing short-term training in teaching methods, curriculum design, student assessment, and other educational skills to academic employees.

However, there were indications that the ADRC's potential benefits were not completely acknowledged or recognised by university officials. The ADRC was side-lined since it was considered as little more than an extension of University A, Institute of Education and Professional Development.

In addition, the selected HEIs lacked professional expertise and abilities in terms of what it takes to integrate QA systems into institutional culture. One example of inadequate management is the University X and University Y inability to establish Academic Development and Resource Centres as a significant component of their QE plans.

The lack of vision and enthusiasm shown by the leadership in laying the basis appears to have impeded efforts to build functional institutional quality assurance systems. It was encouraging to observe that in the institutions reviewed, quality assurance systems had been established at the university level. In terms of the QA system, some of the institutional quality guidelines' strengths were the development of a draft institutional quality-audit policy and the adoption of quality culture components.

Participants in the survey agreed that the allocation of resources for the provision of institutional quality-audit initiatives, the construction of full-fledged QA structures, the effort to establish the structure, and the commitment of institutional top management were all key concerns for HEIs in general. Thus, quality assurance divisions or directorates are required at all levels of higher education, from the university to the departmental. These units must also be operational. The posts must be filled by university professors with the relevant skills and knowledge. A requirement for institutional-wide policy that directs all areas of the HEI's QA system should also be in place. Supporting guidelines and other documents must be created for the QA policy to be functional.

5.4.4.2 Student union involvement in quality assurance activities

Management decision-making is the focus of the stakeholder theory. It emphasises how educational role players try to effect organisational decision-making procedures so that they are more associated with their desires and aspirations; and how organisations must comprehend and keep balance their own benefits as well as the interests of diverse students. In any organisation, role players' trust judgements are based on biased impressions. All students' interests are intrinsically valuable, and no particular set of interests is thought to predominate (Mahlangu, 2016:5).

Based on the suggestion of Mahlangu (2016:5), the researcher inquired about the involvement of student union chairpersons in QA issues at institutions. At college and departmental meetings on educational quality provision, as well as university-wide meetings to address academic difficulties, all respondents stated that they did not participate in educational or quality-related policy development. There was no institutional culture of students speaking up at meetings to debate the quality of teaching and learning.

According to the responses above, students participated in teaching-learning and programme or course evaluation by filling out survey questionnaires and evaluating teachers. According to the chairperson of the University Y student union,

“No, I didn’t never involve in the creation of our university QA policy. Most of the time We(students) participate on the limited issues of student’s affairs. I believe that students are the frontline stakeholders and beneficiaries of the education system, we (students) must participate and contribute on the development of quality assurance issues. (Interview#UY6, 2021).

Student participation in quality assurance procedures has been found to improve higher education quality by boosting the validity and reliability of both internal and external evaluation systems. Students, like academic staff, have an equal role in achieving excellence in higher education.

5.5 THE FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS, APPROACHES AND MECHANISMS IMPLEMENTED BY HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS.

5.5.1 Overview of the Section

This section aims at answering RQ3. It reflects on the outcomes of the ETA’s policies and procedures in relation to QA operations in public universities in Ethiopia. It examines the essential components of the ETA’s real achievement in the context of the ETA’s existing legal mission and the Agency’s operations in Ethiopia.

Quality assurance components, systems, and procedures are effective methods for an institution to meet its QA purpose and objectives. The latest HEP No. 1152/2019 states the requirement for Ethiopia’s HEIs to build a comprehensive internal QA system (FDRE, 1152/2019:5039). As a result,

to have adequate policies, processes and procedures, institutions are required to demonstrate how they are involved in continual improvement of their operations. Bearing this in mind, this section assesses the QA systems, policies, methods, and mechanisms implemented at the sampled institutions. As sources of information, relevant documents, survey questionnaires and interviews were used.

5.5.2 Availability of Responsible Organs for Quality Assurance

It was reported by all participants of this study that the sample universities had QA offices that were accountable for leading the institutional QA and programme relevance, developing quality assurance packages, preparing accreditation manuals, and overseeing matters pertaining to quality of programmes and research services. However, this does not imply that the presence of offices or bodies at universities guarantees excellence.

5.5.3 The Presence of the Quality Assurance Policies, Mechanisms and Procedures

HEIs should have a QA policy and related processes, according to the ETA guidelines for institutional quality audit. This researcher asked academic participants at the four universities if they had an institutional QA policy or an analogous document.

An overwhelming majority of the academic participants of University A, University B and university Y replied that they do have draft institutional quality-audit guideline, while all respondents from university X revealed that they did not have such document. To substantiate the above data from academic staff, the researcher conducted interviews with the institutional quality-audit directorate director and senior experts of that department. They stated that they only had draft documents. According to one interviewee from University X:

The university's lack of institutional quality-audit policy is a big concern. We lack comprehensive aims and direction; hence quality is a shambles in our situation.
(Interview#UX4, 2021)

The academic personnel were also asked to indicate whether they had been engaged in the QA practices during the past five years. Almost all participants from target universities revealed that

they had not participated in any quality-audit activities in their perspective universities, colleges, and departments. One of the interviewees from University Y revealed that:

“No, I have never been involved. But I can assure that every quality-audit practice is just connected with students’ learning. The institutional quality audit from the university and coordinator of the college collect data on students learning obstacles on a weekly and semester basis and proposes solution for the problems (UY5, 2021)”.

5.5.4 The Adequacy of QA Procedures

Adequacy in this research setting refers to the extent to which the QA system covers input, process, and output. The study is based on the premise that quality is not a one-dimensional notion and discussing quality in terms of a continuum is thus more appropriate. Using relevant document analysis and participant interview data, the current condition of quality and QA of input, process, and output at Ethiopian HEIs was assessed.

5.5.5 Quality assurance mechanisms and procedures

The purpose of this sub-section is to comprehend the execution of QA mechanisms (methods) and processes in the sample universities. Study participants explained that different mechanisms and procedures were implemented for the QA at the sample universities. The researcher found that universities used various systems and procedures to ensure the quality of the education. The targeted universities used a variety of practices, the most common of which were institutional self-evaluation, peer review, external evaluation of the institution, student-satisfaction survey, programme or curriculum review, tracer study, exit examination, need assessment for new programme, and students’ evaluation of courses and teaching effectiveness. University’s A institutional QE directorate director indicated that:

“The procedures of assuring quality in university A are based on the standards set to assure quality, thus checking the extent to which the standards set are met, working towards the attainment of QE standards, and frequently checking the existence of standards for all university activities. Also, we (university A) conduct self-assessment every year, and programme evaluation based on the programme length conduct external programme reviews once in five years. (Interview#UA5, 2021).”

Staff informants in University X and University B, on the other hand, cited departmental self-evaluation and examination panels as ways for measuring quality. A few interviewees from target universities indicated that the external assessment of the departments, review meetings with main role players and internal programme reviews were accepted as methods of QA. To check the consistency of the implementation of the procedures and mechanisms, the researcher asked the ETA quality-audit directorate director, who said that the ETA used the quality audit as an approach to assure quality. The HE General Directorate Director for Academic Affairs of the Org.2. revealed that the ministry monitored QP on a regular basis against KPIs, through assessment and evaluation of the university's activities. In this regard, Plebani, M, et al. (2022) assert that rethinking the management of internal quality audit is fundamental issue to assure quality

Likewise, to determine if universities had a fully operating QA framework that supports proactive engagement of its students, a textual survey questionnaire was distributed to the chairs of the student unions. Participants from the selected institutions stated that a key QA method and procedure used by the departments in the universities was student evaluation of teachers and assessment of learning.

Until recently, institutional quality audits in Ethiopian HE was conducted at the institutional level. However, there is now an initiative to begin programme-level quality evaluations. According to ETA, the guidelines that enable programme-level evaluation were developed and pilot-tested at two private and two public HEIs before being approved as an official document for the purpose. Quality evaluation was formally adopted at the programme level in 2021 and 2022. For the institutional and programme-level quality audits, external quality examiners were chosen and skilled.

According to the Ethiopian Education and Training Authority (ETA), there are around 400 undergraduate programmes at HEIs (both public and private) and that performing assessments of the whole programmes currently was improbable due to a paucity of quality auditors. Consequently, a few programmes from engineering (civil, computer science, and electrical) and health (nursing, medical science, and health officer) were chosen for the preliminary audit. When requested to engage in programme-level audits, such as the institutional quality audit, private HEIs were more accessible

than public HEIs in terms of implementation. The ETA had received many self-assessment forms from private HEIs regarding their programmes.

5.5.5.1 Accreditation

Fraser, Bhaumik, and Wright (2015) described accreditation as the process through which a non-governmental or private agency analyses the quality of a HEIs as a whole or of a specific educational programme in order to publicly acknowledge it as meeting certain preset basic criteria or requirements. This method usually culminates in the issuance of recognised status and, in certain situations, a time-limited operating licence. The director and specialist of the ETA QA directorate, as well as academic staff from targeted universities, were questioned regarding the implementation of accreditation programmes in Ethiopian HEIs. All the participants revealed that accreditation has not yet been implemented in Ethiopian public HEIs. However, ETA accredited the private HEIs. In this regard, the Org.1. quality assurance director revealed that:

“At the moment, public universities are not accredited. This is due to the fact that public institutions are founded by rules of the Council of Ministers and are presumed to have self-accrediting capacity. The lone exception is that any public institution seeking to operate a distance programme must get ETA accreditation. Other issues include a lack of trained human resources and a sufficient framework to carry out the accreditation mandated by Proclamation No. 1152/2019. (Interview#Org.1, 2021).”

To this end, Romanowski, (2022:1) argue that accreditation systems for higher education are used by institutions and programmes to demonstrate their legitimacy to deliver quality education. It is one of the preferred mechanisms to provide quality assurance and improvement (Ulker & Bakioglu, 2019). The process is used worldwide to evaluate universities and programmes and provide quality assurance, improvement, and accountability for stakeholders (Gillen, 2020).

5.5.5.2 Institutional quality audit

The HEP No. 1152/2019 places a greater emphasis on the quality-audit processes at HEIs. The components of pre-accreditation and accreditation systems that were primarily oriented at quality control and were meant to apply solely to the business sector. Although there were no formal

processes for external quality audits before Proclamation No. 1152/2019, the ETA began using the technique in 2007. Prior to implementing the external quality-audit system, HEIs performed institutional self-evaluations and developed a self-evaluation document (SED) in accordance with the ETA standards. The completed SE was then forwarded to the ETA. The SE was used as the foundation for an external institutional quality audit. The external evaluation is based on 10 focus areas as well as the reference points for each focus area.

According to the ETA, the EQA was a collaborative effort and HEIs are welcome to send representatives to the Agency's regular training seminars on the EQA procedure. If a university wanted it, the ETA would organise discussion sessions at the universities to support and familiarise them with the 10 areas of emphasis and the audit team's objectives although these workshops were expected to run automatically. HEIs also received all the ETA's instructions to help them with the external QA procedure.

Initially, the external QA was a voluntary activity in public HEIs. However, the ETA is now striving to make it a required practice for universities. The external QA is carried out using the self-evaluation document (SED) produced by the institutions. Prior to the audit initiation, two ETA specialists conduct a briefing visit. The briefing visit has several functions. Its major goal is to foster mutual relationships and confidence between the institution and the ETA regarding the audit process's aim, methodology and outcomes.

The ETA explicitly says in its institutional audit procedure paper that audit reports must be publicised (ETA, 2006a:4). The crucial consideration following the publishing of a quality-audit report is arguably what should be done about the peer-reviewers' approvals. Based on the suggestions in the quality-audit report, HEIs are supposed to produce a strategic plan outlining the remedial steps that they must implement. The strategic plan would specify the steps to be followed (in relation to the recommendations provided) as well as the time range for completing them. It was alleged that several audited institutions were unable to accept the ETA audit team's suggestions and implement improvement plans. In the Ethiopian system, there are no reward or punishment mechanisms associated with the quality audit. As a result, HEIs often ignored the ETA audit team's recommendations. Based on the quality-audit monitoring actions of the Org.1., an expert stated that:

“... the audit team’s suggestions were not followed” at the audited HEIs. If this problem is not handled seriously, the quality-audit process may come to an end (Interview#Org.1,2021).

Furthermore, respondents were asked to discuss the ramifications of the evaluation results, if any, particularly in terms of institutional support. They all agreed that no established or clearly stated link existed between budgets and the outcomes of an institutional quality audit. They claimed that the lack of support connected with quality audits was a major reason for considering this activity as a waste of time. To make matters worse, neither the HEP nor the other papers produced by the ETA or the MoE addressed the possible consequences of the report’s conclusions on sanctions. Until recently, the MoE has taken no formal action on the issue. In contrast to what has been done in numerous other countries, external audit results in Ethiopia are not utilised to reallocate funding or rate audited organisations. This had an impact on the execution of the audit teams’ recommendations. To this end, Org.1. specialist explained that:

“We (Org.1.) intended to link QA processes to monetary value. If the quality audit is not related to any action, HEIs will disregard the report and may not carry out the suggestion. We encouraged the MoE to link QA, particularly audit findings, to concrete indicators such as funding, but quality audits have yet to produce fruit. (Interview#Org.1, 2021).”

The new Ethiopian HE funds allocation formula, on the other hand, states that the variables used in the budget distribution process include the quality of education, research and community services offered by the institution. This obviously shows that, in the future, the outcome of a QA audit may be used as a consideration in HEI financing (MoSHE, 2019:34). Institutional quality-audit reports are only available in hard copy and are not published on the Agency’s website.

The reports provide descriptions of the review’s goals, format, and criteria for making choices or rendering judgements. They include a description, an analysis, the principal findings, and a conclusion. The last section of the audit report provides the recommendations for improvement. The standards for the achievement of the universities during the institutional quality audits were

explicitly specified, according to the ETA's institutional audit documents. The focal categories did encompass an institution's essential functions.

However, there were several difficulties in the execution of the institutional quality audit. Some of the difficulties observed were due to the methodologies and processes used, while others were related to conceptual concerns. For starters, there were flaws in the inclusion of additional role players in institutional quality assessments, such as professional groups, recruitment agencies and industrial sectors. Quality audits were undertaken with external auditors who were professionals from the ETA and lecturers from HEIs. This might have prejudiced the variety of knowledges and comments obtained about the quality-audit system.

Regarding the audit reports, it was found that the reports were not comprehensive or well-organised. For example, the long list of conclusions and the comprehensive summary were often similar. Regarding the suggestions offered in the study, it was unclear whose criteria were used to differentiate between necessary, suggested and required endorsements. It is critical that the ETA give autonomy to the universities to choose the most important areas for development based on the authority's suggestions. It was also found that the ETA's audit reports produced thus far were more descriptive than logical in nature.

Furthermore, it was unclear if the audits were true QA audits, because it was impossible to tell whether a fully working QA system was in existence, or whether they were managerial audits, which looked at management procedures at the institutional level while the institutional audit should be aimed at analysing the quality of core activities such as teaching and learning, research, and community outreach initiatives in more detail (ETA, 2011a:27).

According to the respondents, the ETA made every effort to avoid any conflicts of interest with external specialists. However, the policy does not specify how institutions must bring the latter to the notice of the ETA if there is any concern regarding the independence of any of the external experts on the audit team (ETA, 2011a:26). According to the ETA, the universities have right to raise objections to the report, but based on conversations with Jumma officials, this did not appear to be the case. An appeal method was provided in the ETA's institutional audit procedure paper although it was not explicit. However, since the ETA's inception in 2007, no institution has

objected to the audit procedures or opposed the ETA's conclusions to date (2022). One factor for this lack of appeals might be because HEIs typically believe that the ETA's previous external quality assessments had no major implications for them.

5.5.5.3. Institutional self-evaluation

The purpose of institutional self-evaluation is to identify the HEI's strengths and limitations, as well as the efficacy of its methods for monitoring the quality and relevance of its programmes. It should attempt to showcase good practices and explore methods to improve the quality and relevance of the HEI's functions (ETA 2006a:3).

The self-assessment essay is a brief paper which gives the ETA institutional audit team a clear description of the HEI and indicates the strengths and weakness of ETA assessment tool; it should also permit the audit team to have a good understanding of the significant features of the HEI's approach to assure quality and relevance. Since the ETA's inception, certain HEIs have conducted self-evaluations in a systematic and organised manner.

According to the ETA's chief expert, implementing the outcomes of the institutional quality audit proved difficult. Since institutional quality audits were a recent educational initiative for Ethiopia, as well as for HEIs, some resistance had been noted. This was especially noticeable in communication. It was usual for SEDs and action plans to be submitted late. It was revealed that:

“---notwithstanding the ETA's unequivocal directives. Some of the SEDs given did not meet the ETA's requirements; some focus regions were ignored, and some verge points were missing. This might be because the HEIs underestimated the required time and resources to complete a SED to the appropriate standard. Regardless of the ETA norms, numerous HEIs delegate SED development to inferior or already overworked employees, or to the ADRC. Some SEDs were not distributed on time.” (ETA, 2011b:26)

The dedication of HEIs to perform impartial and rigorous self-assessments is important to the success of any institutional quality audit. Some SEDs were written in such a favourable way that they were impractical, possibly with the aim of influencing or impressing the auditors; others feel that a self-evaluation process only be serious about teaching and learning in the HEIs. These concerns can be

summarised as following: First, institutions may have a deficiency of important knowledge of the necessity for such an evaluation; second, even if they are aware of its worth, they are not convinced of the significance of the assessment's recommendations for effecting transformation and growth in the quality of their teaching. Thus, when the leadership lacks commitment to the audit, self-evaluations are less likely to be rigorous and unbiased.

The ETA urges universities to incorporate external role players in the self-assessment process, such as an employer or a recent graduate (ETA, 2006b:5). However, it was found in this study that self-assessments in Ethiopia were undertaken by staff professionals chosen from inside the universities. This might have had a detrimental impact on the spectrum of opinions about the self- assessment process.

The ETA rules do not specify whether institutional self-assessment reports should be secret or public. However, it was established that HEIs, such as University B and University Y did not communicate the self-assessment account to several role players, such as the academic staff members and supportive staff while Bonga university had not conducted a self-evaluation since its establishment.

5.5.6 Curriculum development and review procedures

In terms of public university curricula, HEP 1152/2019 specifies that “any institution shall oversee curricular development by its academic departments through approved learning outcomes” (FDRE, 2019:11458).

Although this proclamation acknowledges the authority and duty of public institutions, as well as the mandate and independence to establish and implement academic programmes, reality contradicts the rhetoric. Curriculum development was revealed to be centralised at the national level and typically undertaken by the MoE. An interviewee from University A said that:

“We only participated in such activities when we were requested by the MoE to participate in curriculum creation or evaluations, generally to align the curriculum at the state level. At our institution or department level, we have not yet

conducted curriculum development or review, programme, or course review.
(Interview#UA4, 2021).”

The interviewee also discussed their involvement in curriculum development, revealing that the university takes a top-down approach to curriculum development, with outside experts developing a curriculum to serve as a state guide, which each unit is required to employ as an orientation while institutionalising the nationwide curriculum. Despite their restricted reach, University A and University B’ experience indicated that few courses or programme appraisals were carried out in some departments. At this point, it seems logical to investigate who oversaw developing university curricula, how much academic independence a HE had in curricular affairs, and what role the professors/lecturers had in the process of curriculum renewal and development.

According to Araya (2012:100–101), academic and research personnel should have the right to design, be involved in, and select programmes for their universities that are consistent with tertiary educational ideals and basic philosophies, either directly or through democratically chosen representatives. The so-called revised or newly generated programmes, on the other hand, ignored institutional differences and were all mandated by the MoE in the same way. This appears to have impacted the sense of ownership among the teaching personnel. “Some members of staff were of the belief that most curriculum is defined through workshops held by the MoE and that individual instructors have no capacity to change what had already been determined”, according to one of the ETA’s institutional audit reports.

On every occasion the MoE decided to create a new educational programme, regardless of its importance or need, and did so without following the proper curriculum development procedures. Undergraduate courses at public universities, for example, were reengineered from the ground up into introductory courses and modular curricula. Many of the academic programme deliverers were not involved in this substantial transition. The academic communities at universities were regarded as technicians who were expected to do whatever the MoE told them to do. As a result, the effectiveness of curriculum implementation has been questioned. The rapid pace at which the modifications were enacted also contributed to the short lifespan of most curricular reforms, highlighting the volatility of the HEI curriculum reforms.

5.5.7. The implementation of the modularisation

Modularisation has been adopted in Ethiopia's higher education system since 2013. Although it is too early to say for sure, academic authorities at University A believe that switching from a discipline-based to a modularized system has yielded some benefits. With the institution of modularisation, some new and important subjects, such as physics, were introduced into high-tech courses. Simultaneously, previously irrelevant courses were removed (due to their inconsistency with the required new competences) and new content was included in courses and programmes. This was also believed to increase the quality of the curriculum. The modularised system contained ECTS was designed to help students move from one region to another. According to a University B academic officer:

“When quality is defined in terms of student participation, the implementation of modularisation provided several benefits. modularisation enhanced student participation. On campus, you never see students wandering about aimlessly. Every student was preoccupied... involved in his or her own study, individual reading, preparing for continual tests, conducting group work, and working on other projects. (Interview#UB5, 2021).”

Despite the fact that modularisation is in place, the current investigation found that the system has significant difficulties in execution. Using competencies demands the creation of three separate but interconnected elements: a skill description, a mechanism for evaluating capability, and a standard by which someone is declared capable (Hanu, et al., 2020:34). At the target universities under investigation, all these facets of modularisation were missing: the capability levels were not obviously specified in the course guides; there was insufficient time given for the courses; and the module capability measurements were not robust. Additionally, students' preparedness and competence to complete various academic tasks and comprehend course material within the time frame assigned for the course were described as rather poor. The execution of modularisation was determined to be managed in a disorganised manner. The evaluation, for example, remained traditional even if the grading method was altered to a criterion-referenced method. Both the lecturers and the students were in a rush to finish the module's content. An interviewee from University X stated:

... the modularisation approach transformed the subject-based curriculum into block instruction. Its influence was limited to that. The more a new curriculum diverges from the old, the more teacher preparation with new approach is necessary. (Interview#UX4, 2021)

As a result, instructors must be trained to teach the competency-based curriculum. Throughout the implementation of modularisation in the universities studied, this was neglected. As a result of the lack of effort to educate and train personnel in the application of the new curriculum, “old wine was poured into new wineskins...” and the modularisation was not properly executed. Furthermore, according to a University X interviewee said that:

“There was no compelling rationale given for the switch from a discipline-based to a modularized system. Again, the necessary rules, procedures, and manuals to support this new curriculum were missing. Implementing the modularisation was exceedingly complicated and challenging due to a lack of documentation and instruction (InterviewUX4,2021)

Other modularisation issues relating to evaluation and classroom management methods were also found in the responses of the participants. As schools grew, the number of students in each class grew to 120 or more, making it difficult for professors to keep track of them. With such large class numbers, it was difficult to successfully implement the continuous evaluation system, active learning practices, and provide support for students as required by the modularisation.

Another issue with the modularisation was readiness and willingness. Preparedness and willingness apply to both teachers and students, according to the study’s participants. In this regard, the ideal situation for modularisation is for both lecturers and students to be eager to participate in the teaching and learning method in the classroom, but lecturers from university B responded that:

“This was not the case. Most instructors were unprepared to teach block time courses. They complained about not having enough time to cover the course, prepare activities, evaluate students on a regular basis, and ensure that students grasped the concepts, among other things. Students were passive, and most of them

still perceived themselves to be inactive students. As a result, many refused to take accountability for their own learning and were reluctant to carry out additional projects, project work, or other educational practices for the sake of continuous evaluation (Interview# UB4, 2021)."

Instructors are also needed to create varied activities, conduct ongoing evaluations, and supply resources that are suited for the active learning style because of modularisation. The application of modularisation methods indicated the need for better evaluation procedures and techniques. The emphasis of evaluation is on the executed competences rather than the acquisition of facts, information, and knowledge because the modularisation system's ultimate goal is competence. As a result, academics at the universities studied raised another issue: assessment. Participants from University B said that judging students' performance in a modularisation class was more difficult than in a traditional lesson.

"In typical classes, students are only tested two or three times through regularly arranged mid or final assessments. However, because we must do continuous assessments in the modularisation class, we must evaluate the students' work based on their day- to day practices... which takes a long time. We're doing it with a growing workload and a lengthier schedule, which, as you know, causes a lot of dissatisfaction among lecturers. (Interview#UB5, 2021)."

In today's environment of growing living costs, declining wages, and greater teaching commitments, the implementation of modularisation was hampered by a lack of teacher motivation. It might be argued that the appropriate execution of the modularised system will face considerable obstacles in impacting conventional teaching unless a deliberate approach to teacher motivation is used. Students in competency-based courses are held to high standards, and their success is not only the result of what they taught in classrooms. The consequences for Ethiopian HEIs include the need for changes in classroom practice and instructor support in order for the improvements to be effective. Despite the challenges, academic leaders were optimistic about the programme's execution and benefits. According to a University A academic official:

"We cannot anticipate full execution of educational reform in such a short amount of time since the process is quite sluggish. That is why we are presently encountering

some resistance; we anticipate such resistance until it is assimilated. However, the preliminary actions completed thus far have been pleasing. So far, we have modified the curriculum to include modularisation. The first-year students were the first to benefit from the application. (Interview#UA4, 2021).”

The modularisation scheme was implemented in the institutions under review in 2013 for first-year courses, and it is too early to draw conclusions regarding its efficacy. Institutions that accepted the adjustments were asked to perform continuing monitoring to ensure that the essential pillars outlined in the modularisation policy were implemented as needed. The new curricula provided additional opportunities for learning and critical thinking; nonetheless, it remains to be seen whether these goals can be met. In this area, both HEI management and the government have high expectations. However, if the modularisation transformation is to be successful, the gap between goals and classroom implementation must be bridged.

5.5.8. Staff development practices

One of the strategies for ensuring the quality and relevance of HE in a changing context is establishing strong and innovative staff development. The potential for ADRCs to play a substantial part in staff enhancement is enormous. Establishing ADRCs was acknowledged by University A and other short-term training programmes conducted by the ADRC for senior and new academic staff members, which largely emphasised development of instructional skills, student assessment, module writing, and ICT. However, the ADRC positions and functions have yet to be acknowledged inside the University’s structure. Additionally, financing for the ADRC, which is intended to coordinate pedagogical training among other things, was insufficient at University X University Y, and University B, while University A had established the ADRC.

A shortage of ADRCs and instructional guidance programmes were cited as major roadblocks to staff growth at the universities studied. Academics were awarded a one-year Higher diploma Programme (HDP) as part of the continuous professional development system, notwithstanding differences in staff development implementation at the four schools. Annual induction training sessions were held at the sampled institutions for newly recruited employees to familiarise them with the university’s vision, mission, values, legislation, guidelines, schedules of the universities, organisational culture, and philosophy. The sampled institutions’ Staff Development Plan (SDP)

incorporated a five-year strategic plan of the institutions, but no specific staff development strategies were found at the institutions. The four institutions investigated had senate-mandated standards in place for staff recruitment. According to informants' interview evidence, there was a paucity of senior instructors at the selected institutions due to frequent turnover of academic staff. The situation is critical, particularly in the engineering and health sectors.

According to a University A Vice president, some staff development measures were ongoing to address the issue:

“We provide opportunities for additional study to teachers in less than two years of employment at the institution. We provide them with an education opportunity in the technology faculty within a year of their start. We also hire expatriates from India, the Philippines, and other nations where skilled workers are in short supply. (Interview# UA1, 2021).”

Based on the findings of the interviews, the institutions under consideration should create an inclusive SDP, preferably aimed at having the most impact at the departmental level. This strategy should include the evaluation of skills gaps in annual employee assessments. An adequate budget for implementation is required for the project's success.

5.5.9. Staff appraisal practices

Staff assessments with the intention of recognising the strong points and limitations of the staff development and making suggestions for improvement were not carried out, according to the findings. Students, peers, and their immediate department heads evaluated academic staff at the four schools; however, this was not done in all departments.

This was only done in the case of people who wanted to develop in their careers. Every semester, each lecturer is appraised by students, peers, and department leaders, according to a University A academic officer. However, it is not generally applied across all departments or faculties for various reasons. Because students are represented at various phases of the programme planning and approval process, their interests and concerns are acknowledged. (Interview#UA4, 2021).

Nonetheless, it was not established during the interviews whether students who made important contributions to the system received feedback. Similarly, it was observed that, even when assessments were completed, some departments only supplied a summary of the assessment results to individual staff members, but in other departments, the outcomes were not shared with the lecturers at all. This suggests that lecturers were not provided with valuable information that would empower them to take tangible steps to improve their professional development. Thus, there was no link between employee evaluations and staff development.

The academic programme and quality assurance office at University A and University B said they had done everything they could to advance performance evaluations by changing the content and structure of the current staff assessment system:

“Every semester, students, peers, and department heads review all academic staff members. This is tracked by workers being labelled as A, B, or C depending on their assessment results and receiving comments from their respective department bosses. The institution is also going to provide further assistance to employees who had grades of C or worse. (Interview# UA& UB5, 2021).”

Many academics, on the other hand, were wary of the existing procedures of “labelling” people based on the outcomes of their appraisals. They thought that the designation was prompted by political factors rather than academic performance.

5.5.10 Ranking as a QA approach in universities

Rankings provide an incentive for better data collection within institutions, can expose institutional weakness and confirm areas of strength, and are useful for benchmarking against like institutions. Rankings encourage institutions to re-examine mission statements (Derakhshan, Hassanzadeh & Nekoofar, 2020). Thus, the Ethiopian HE carried out a quality audit of HEIs in accordance with the ETA’s ten focus areas. An Ethiopian public university consortium (CEPU) has created a set of performance components or criteria that are now being used to rank Ethiopian public universities. The CEPU was founded in 2010 with the assistance of 21 government agencies. The HEI Building Council, led by the MoE, guides, and advises the

consortium. As a systematic assessment technique, the peer-review system was used. The peer-review process began with a self-evaluation report (SER), followed by a peer review by a team lead by academic vice-presidents, and was eventually authorised by presidents' forums. The exercise served two key objectives: it encourages institutional peer learning and competition.

Some, on the other hand, argue that institutional rivalry is not necessarily beneficial. According to Harvey (2008:193), competitiveness based on rankings is bad. Universities contending for top rankings may try to persuade the ranking agency to revisit its criteria (the ranking levels). An institutional quality-audit officer from University B claimed that:

“Certain institutions engaged with high officials about changing their ranking position. The rankings were not objective and were regularly modified. (Interview#UB5, 2021).”

The rivalry is not only harmful when the main purpose of the ranking system is not to respond to signals to improve teaching and learning initiatives, but rather to alter data in order to acquire a better rating.

Another source of concern is that the ranking methodology runs counter to the Ethiopian Tourism Authority's operational definition of excellence. The term “fitness-for-purpose” implies that institutions have specific goals on which they are evaluated, but the ranking system defines and evaluate universities based on a set of general standards. The universal criterion method, according to Harvey (2008:195), is “...especially destructive to institutional multiplicity...”. An Org.1&2. expert explained this as follows:

“The CEPU ranked all public HEIs as though they all served the same goal... this contrasts with the distinctive features and contextual distinctions that exist across the HEIs. (Interview#Org.1.2., 2021).”

As a result, the CEPU's rating system may have been rendered ineffective due to its inability to account for institutional variations. The quest of rankings homogenises a wide range of institutions. Rankings (Gogillo, 2016:98) it is argued, have become a goal in and of themselves, with little regard for what they measure or if they help to alter institutions and systems.

Institutions are ranked in ranking systems even when data differences are not statistically significant, which is a recurring issue.

The current ranking system, according to the findings of this study, has some influence on trends in university student preferences. According to publicly available information from University A:

“Student selection system was recently altered based on its ranking position. The purpose of university rankings, it is sometimes stated, is to convey information to student “consumers”. Furthermore, there is a link between students’ selection and a university’s renown, which is derived only from ranking data.”

The data, on the other hand, disclose little about actual instruction and are only somewhat concerned with educational quality. Higher education authorities’ attention is also diverted away from students and the main purpose and goal of HE by the demands of probable ranking system outcomes. In this context, there is a genuine danger that HEIs may emphasis strategies to climb the academic ladder while ignoring their obligation to generate and share knowledge and skills for social growth. In addition, ranking places an excessive amount of emphasis on institutions as a whole while ignoring educational programmes. According to a University X respondent, the ranking process clearly differed from the CEPU document’s rating criteria:

“Two essential but hidden elements impact the ranking method: political considerations and the personalities of university executives.” The degree of political allegiance and the extent to which institutional independence is jeopardised are crucial elements in determining rating rank. If the university has a high amount of institutional autonomy, such as AAU, you will receive a lower grade regardless of your performance. (Interview#UX5, 2021).”

Many academicians at University B agreed with this view:

“They claimed that the quality of the report and the top management’s proximity to the MoE were more important than the institution’s performance (Interview#UB4, 2021)”.

The CEPU uses peer reviews as one of its major ranking mechanisms. Peer evaluations, it is said, boost quality assurance systems. Kis, et.al., (2015:17) revealed that academics are more inclined to heed their colleagues’ opinions than those of outsiders such as the External Quality Agency. One of the most significant problems in the current ranking system headed by the CEPU was the mechanism for selecting peers to ensure the legitimacy of the review. The following flaws in the CEPU’s peer review process were noted by an interviewee from University B:

“Interestingly, newly established universities like the Bonga and worabe Universities, which is young (formed in 2017) and does not have a graduate programme, was reviewed by the AAU, Ethiopia’s oldest and largest HEI, which now operates 232 graduate programmes (of which 81 are PhDs). For me, Bonga and worabe Universities was not a genuine peer reviewer for AAU. (Interview#UB5, 2021).”

Furthermore, the investigation found that some of individuals who execute ranking were not even trained and performed the ranking without sufficient training.

5.5.11 Institutional autonomy and academic freedom

Every public entity is given the necessary authority to carry out its mission, according to HEP No. 1152/2019. This gives HEIs the power to “... create and execute appropriate curriculum and research programmes, choose teaching and other staff to be used by the university, recommend the top management, and Board members, and choice and assign top managers of college and departments.” (FDRE, 2019:11458). As a result, the HEP agreement expressly grants limited administrative and academic autonomy to public higher education institutions. However, there is a substantial gap between rhetoric and reality, it could be said. In terms of individual liberties and rights, the poll found that academics were hesitant to complain about organisational and other public activities, and self-censored their comments. According to a University B lecturer:

“I don’t claim that the existence of academic freedom in the HE. Academics to be productive, it requires freedom. without freedom it may be difficult to ensure innovation, new ideas, and creativity in HEIs. (Interview#UB5, 2013).”

His opinions were also shared by the academic staff of University X.

“Explaining it is quite difficult. Because of the severe bureaucratic supervision, it is impossible to express in words (Interview#UX5, 2021).”

In addition, University Y academic staff stated that:

“Institutional autonomy was the most important component. Academic freedom also played an important role in creativity. Academic freedom fosters continuous progress, implying that quality can be ensured through academic freedom (Interview#UY4,2021).”

In this context, Proclamation 1152/2019 states that HE presidents are chosen on merit. However, there are some inconsistencies in the current implementation of the Proclamation. According to a University B institutional quality-audit interviewee:

“In the universities, academic efficiency is regarded secondary, and what matters is your political viewpoint... to be appointed to diverse positions, to have work stability, and to receive other perks. Moreover, there were no trust between these political- delegates and the other lecturers/professors. Lack of academic freedom hinders faculty right and do research on the topics relevant and to draw what conclusions they find consistent with their research. (Interview#UB5, 2021).”

In terms of institutional autonomy, Mansfield, (2021) noted that most public universities, particularly those that have been recently formed, are regulated, and administered by the federal MoE on a continuous basis, as if they were all part of a single university whose president is the MoE. Wanna and Vincent (2018:153) agreed with Araya’s generalisation and revealed the lack

of institutional independence and individual academic liberty in his case study statement, arguing as follows:

“Academic staff often have little voice in policy or decision-making, despite being one of the most essential role players in HE and one of the most crucial participants in quality assurance. The erosion of academic freedom and institutional independence, as indicated by a top-down approach to policy and even curricular issues, has contributed to the marginalisation of teaching professionals.”

The academic personnel that took part in the research said organisational independence and individual academic freedom were severely curtailed. They considered that they had little or no meaningful involvement in educational policymaking or the appointment of university leadership. The teaching staff felt that they lacked a strong organisation to defend or safeguard their interests.

5.5.12. The perceptions of academic staff on the implementation of the QA mechanisms and processes

The researcher found that universities used various schemes and procedures to ensure the quality of the education they delivered. The most adopted QA mechanisms and procedures by the four sample institutions were institutional self-evaluation, peer review, external evaluation of the institution, student-satisfaction survey and students’ assessment of courses and teaching efficiency. The most often used techniques for assuring quality, according to most academic responders from University A, B and Y were programme or curriculum evaluation, tracer studies, exit examinations, and needs assessment for programme or course development. Staff respondents, meanwhile, identified departmental self-evaluation and examination forums as ways of measuring quality at University X.

Only a tiny percentage of respondents at the four institutions thought that external departmental evaluations, review meetings with key role players, and internal course assessments were used as QA procedures. Similarly, questions were posed to these role players to evaluate if the institutions had a fully working QA framework that fosters proactive engagement of its key role players.

5.6. THE CHALLENGES FACING THE HEIS IN IMPLEMENTING THE QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICIES

This section provides a response to RQ4. It draws findings based on information obtained from interviews and the survey questionnaire completed by chairpersons of student unions at the target institutions in an attempt to analyse the successful execution of quality assurance measures at several public universities. Internal quality assurance at Ethiopian institutions serves to improve quality, as stated in the HE proclamation. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to determine if Ethiopia's present quality assurance system has resulted in improvements for professionals, students, and HEIs in general. Based on this reasoning, a comprehensive explanation of each item is provided below.

The fourth study question was to identify the major obstacles faced by Ethiopian public universities in implementing ETA QA measures. The interview and survey textual questionnaire data were analysed to address this question. The data included the difficulties that students, academic staff, internal quality officers, and university management face when implementing quality assurance policies in their individual institutions.

5.6.1 Factors that Affect the Execution of QA Policies as Perceived by University Top Management

The public university vice-presidents and college deans of the target universities cited some of the challenges they faced in executing the ETA quality assurance policies. These problems were identified as:

“Lack of sufficient budget; lack of resources such as laboratories; lack of modern technology-oriented capability of the staff; political instability; inadequate academic staff; poor experience of lecturers; brain drain; limited involvement of staff and stakeholders in the implementation of ETA policies; poor policies for deployment; lack of commitment from top management to implement ETA policies; teachers' willingness to implement quality assurance policies; and knowledge gaps of supportive staff (Interview# UA,B,X,Y,2021).

These 12 challenges were mentioned by the participants during their interview. This demonstrates the gravity of the situation. In this regard, Zou (2022:2) suggested factors that affect the quality assurance including institutional legitimacy, sources of pressure, institutional content, monitoring systems, and organizational context. Each of these issues is critical because they may have an impact on ETA's QA recommendations being implemented in public colleges. Thus, a strategy for overcoming these obstacles and improving the situation should be devised.

5.6.2 Factors that Affected the Execution of QA Policies as Perceived by Academic Staff

The researcher was also interested in hearing from the lecturers. Internal and external university-specific variables were examined to evaluate how much they aided or hampered the adoption of quality assurance at the schools under inquiry. Academic staff members were canvassed for their opinions on how QA rules should be implemented for this aim. It was found that there was;

“Lack of appropriately developed institutional quality-audit tools; instruments; standards and manuals; a lack of awareness and knowledge gaps regarding quality and quality assurance policies among academic and supportive staff; a lack of appropriate technologies; a lack of professionals with experience in the area of quality assurance; poor academic staff attitudes toward quality assurance; poor teachers' competency; infrastructure shortages in universities; and lack of regular institutional quality audit.”

To this end, Aburizaizah, S.J., (2022) asserts the factors that affecting quality assurance policies in HEIs includes shortage of funds, insecurity, policy inconsistency, and lack of regular training of staff.

In addition to internal variables, an evaluation of the extent to which external environmental factors aided or impeded QA efforts in the target institutions was carried out. Academic staff at the four universities regarded government interference in institutions' internal affairs, as well as present institutional and student enrolment expansion policies, as substantial external impediments to the implementation of quality and QA in the universities. The ETA requirements and objectives were viewed as a burden by academic staff at all four universities. The effect of globalisation; limited ETA follow-up; the readiness of potential role players, incompatibility of MoE programmes and regulations; ETA failed to exercise its mandate well and implement the provisions of the

proclamation in full power and effect; lack of clarity of ETA policies; and political leaders interfering in internal affairs of institutions were some of the key external problems that impeded the implementation of QA at Ethiopian public universities.

Arising from the above observations, the existing quality assurance process can be determined to be externally driven. Many people believe that internal engagement in higher education is essential for long-term change and quality assurance. According to Chiarini et al. (2021:28), internal QA approaches are crucial for improvement. They maintained that, while internally originated quality evaluation might be problem-driven and beneficial for improvement, externally launched systems are more objective and less sensitive to internal requirements and missions. In this regard, universities have encountered both internal and external challenges in implementing QA policies.

5.6.3 Factors that Affected the Execution of QA Policies as Perceived by Institutional Quality-Audit Officers

The researcher was also curious as to what the internal quality-audit directors' and officers' thought were the most significant problems faced by public university administrators in complying with ETA's quality assurance standards in Ethiopia. Most of them identified the following issues as challenges for public universities that result in insufficient implementation of the guidelines: poor resource management; a lack of student facilities; a knowledge gap; a shortage of qualified personnel in the labour market; political instability; a lack of top management commitment; insufficient finance; and insufficient skills, among others. The senior internal quality-audit director of University B said that:

“Quality assurance objectives receive almost no money at public colleges,” says the expert. For instance, to prepare a workshop for academics and supporting staff to increase awareness, to pay for personnel who will provide the course, to create and implement internal quality-audit tools, to cover travel and housing fees, and to cover other costs. So, where will the money come from to pay for all these expenses at the public colleges, which are already underfunded? Believe me when I say that a well-planned budget is essential to success! You can organise millions upon millions of seminars if

you have enough money! That concludes our discussion. (Interview#UB5, 2021)."

The other internal quality auditor director from University A emphasised that:

"The lack of adequate PhD holders in the market," he says. "The greatest issue for me is the labour market's paucity of skilled employees, namely PhD holder instructors." First and foremost, there are just a few universities in the nation that can provide doctoral study. Second, going overseas for higher education is prohibitively expensive. Most Ethiopians, in my opinion, cannot afford to go overseas to pursue PhD studies unless they are provided scholarships in some way." (Interview#UA5, 2021)."

5.6.4 Factors that Hampered the Execution of the QA System as Perceived by the Student Union

The researcher was interested in hearing from the students. According to all student union participants, the most significant obstacles to the execution of QA policies in selected universities were a lack of facilities; teachers' attitudes toward teaching and learning; teachers' absenteeism; and teachers' competency; insufficient learning resources; and lecturers' absence from classes. A few comments included course materials, computers for research and term paper preparation and laboratories.

The findings of the survey also revealed that most libraries at the universities were stocked with outdated resources, and that there was a general lack of academic journals. Three of the institutions studied (University B, University Y and University X) lacked a well-developed, integrated, and networked ICT infrastructure, limiting staff and student access to computers and the internet. This runs counter to ETA's QA guidelines which state that every HEI must have adequate physical facilities and learning resources to ensure that its programmes are delivered properly. This is supported by World Bank research from 2004, which identified a lack of appropriate teaching and learning resources as one of the key factors affecting school quality. Furthermore, students cited professors' absence from class as a source of frustration. This is consistent with the previous findings of the investigation. When it came to staff absences, students said that lectures were regularly missed, and that lecturers eventually tried to cover the course in a hurry, causing students to be stressed.

The researcher also looked at the Staff Discipline Policy and Code of Conduct. The obligations of employees, as well as the expectations around their attendance on campus and the completion of their jobs, were made very plain. These expectations may need to be managed more rigorously. Otherwise, instructors' absence may have a negative impact on the effectiveness of student learning. These absences may have an impact on the quality of education provided by Ethiopian public institutions and should be addressed accordingly to increase quality.

Other difficulties included insufficient administration by university management groups, poor teaching methods, and a lack of commitment to great education from both administrators and lecturers to name a few. Each of these concerns could have an impact on the teaching and learning process, ultimately leading to low academic performance that is directly linked to QA rules. As a result, finding potential solutions to these problems is crucial to improve the quality of education in Ethiopian public institutions.

5.7. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICIES

This subsection of the chapter focuses on answering RQ5. The research sought to find out what might be done to address the issues raised by the university students' union, academic staff, and vice-presidents. The solutions proposed by each group of responders to their difficulties were examined and presented.

5.7.1 University Top Management Suggestions

During the interviews, public university presidents were also asked what might be done to improve the situation. Several recommendations were made, including adequate budget allocation from the government; high commitment; good relationships with staff and students; continuous and regular monitoring and regulating practices; ETA strong follow-up and support; decentralised management system; transparent; competitive; and merit-based recruitment; full engagement in the implementation of QA guidelines; and encouraging and supporting staff members.

Most participants underlined the importance of granting enough funding for the public institutions that they ran. It is common knowledge that university administrators cannot supply enough teaching and learning resources, let alone host a single workshop or seminar, without adequate

funding. This might be why the majority of presidents emphasised the need of having adequate funding to govern public institutions, because money is the key to fixing many managerial challenges. In this regard, Zou, (2022) identified, some solutions that enhance the implementation of quality assurance policies in HEIs such as providing a good opportunity to show teaching achievements, cultivating a quality culture, and optimizing quality assurance strategies that contributed positive impression and practical actions such as top-down organizational strategic tasks, resource allocation and management mechanisms.

5.7.2 Academic Staff's Suggestions

The lecturers' ideas on how to overcome the obstacles experienced by Ethiopian public universities while implementing the QA policies were examined. Academic staff offered some solutions to the problems they were confronting. The most often proposed solution was for academic personnel to have suitable office and teaching facilities, as well as free scholarships for further study and small class sizes. It is a well-known truth that excellent teaching requires appropriate resources to promote students' learning. As a result, as stated in ETA QA rules, both students and instructors require suitable learning facilities. It is the obligation of university administration to provide the required teaching and learning facilities in their particular institutions. The second proposal made by instructors was to be awarded free scholarships for further study. The researcher agrees that providing free scholarships can boost the number of PhD holders in the country.

As a result, it is important to investigate various methods of obtaining free scholarships from abroad to address the issue of a lack of highly trained academic staff in Ethiopian public institutions. Other proposals include lower class sizes, collaboration with management, academic independence, and revamping the present wage and incentive structure. All these proposals are really essential and beneficial, and the MoE should take them into account to alleviate the concerns of lecturers. These will almost certainly result in the efficient application of quality assurance criteria in their respective universities.

5.7.3 Institutional Quality-Audit Officers' Suggestions

Institutional quality-audit directors and officers were asked to make suggestions on how to mitigate the deficiencies. The most often offered answers for how to overcome the challenges were to build implementable institutional quality policies; strengthen current educational reforms; introduce high-tech technologies and equipping HEIs with appropriate and adequate infrastructure; capacitate academic staff on the issue of quality assurance; ensure good governance; restructure institutional quality offices and fill the gaps with experienced experts; enhance stakeholders' involvement on the issue under study; strengthen timely follow-up and feedback mechanisms; and harmonise HEIs quality assurance policies with a clear structure across all units.

5.7.4. ETA and MoE Directors' and Experts' Suggestions

ETA QE directors and experts as well as the general director for MoE academic affairs for higher education were interviewed to suggest how to overcome the challenges impeding the execution of QA policies in public HEIs. Both ETA and MoE participants suggested that to solve the current problems hindering the execution of QA policies in HEIs were to give the ETA greater autonomy; revisit ETA focus areas within the current situation of Ethiopian public HEIs and establishing well-defined quality assurance policies; restructure the ETA and establish a well-defined structure; build capacity of professionals on quality and quality assurance issues; empower institutional quality-audit offices with well experienced experts; improve infrastructures of the HEIs; create conducive working environment and strengthen the self-assessment and programme evaluation at institutional level; establish a system that engaged students in giving feedback; and introduce compulsory accreditation into public HEIs.

5.7.5 Students' Union Suggestions

Students were asked to give suggestions about ways to alleviate the problems. The most frequently suggested solution to the problems was to increase learning facilities. Other suggestions included being devoted workers despite obstacles, employing a participative learning method, and discussing their problems in a responsible manner. It was also stressed that better food and transportation services, as well as full orientation, be provided.

5.7.6 Summary of the Suggestions

To summarise the ideas, most informants stated that university administration should be committed to quality assurance regulations above all else. This implies that decision-making should include both academic personnel and students. Academic freedom to engage in such activity should be encouraged by the government, and university presidents should be appointed based on merit rather than other reasons. At least once a year, the ETA should perform follow-up inspections, and the MoE, the ETA and the presidents of public universities should work together to improve the quality of education at the nation's HEIs. Furthermore, free scholarships should be given to as many university presidents as possible for important administrative training, as well as professors for additional studies in their fields. Salaries and incentives for public university administrators and professors, as well as other federal servants, should be increased. In addition, the students' advice that higher education institutions employ interactive learning methods was quite noteworthy. According to the study, this type of learning can increase educational quality, which in turn would improve the execution of QA policies in HEIs.

5.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In Chapter 5, empirical data on QA policy implementation in Ethiopian public HE was discussed. The first section analysed the national and international contexts in which Ethiopian quality assurance strategies were implemented. The empirical findings of the study showed that internal and external factors influenced the Ethiopian government's decision to implement QA policies, while the second section of the chapter looked into how Ethiopia's public colleges went about implementing quality assurance procedures. The empirical evidence demonstrated that the HEP's quality assurance standards and guidelines were not being followed adequately at the sample universities.

The third section of the chapter, based on the preceding assumption, examined the quality assurance elements, components, and methodologies that were adopted or implemented at the selected institutions. There was minimal empirical evidence that the institutions reviewed used institutional quality audits and self-evaluation. Internal QA systems in HEIs appear to be in their infancy. The researcher also wanted to see if Ethiopian tertiary education's current QA system had resulted in enhancements for professionals, students and HEIs in general. It is unclear whether internal quality assurance programmes helped or hindered the teaching and learning process, or whether they

changed the students' learning practice. Similarly, when it comes to quality improvement, the deduction that can be made that external QA is equivocal and not very positive.

It was stated that the ETA's ability to collaborate closely with HEIs was severely hampered. Its key issues included a deficiency of resources, institutional independence and practice, and functional inefficiencies. The educational inputs, process and outputs were addressed in the implementation QA policies. In this regard, the study's findings demonstrated that a triple dilemma of inputs, processes and outcomes had an impact on HEI quality assurance. The next chapter summarises and synthesises the results, discusses the study's conclusions, and concludes with some recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The major findings are summarised and reflected in this chapter. I begin by summarising the thesis statement and research questions, followed by a brief discussion of the empirical outcomes. The chapter also provides research proposals, since the empirical findings indicate to elaborations and subjects that offer intriguing and potential prospects for further study of quality assurance execution in HEIs.

6.2 SYNTHESISING PROBLEM STATEMENT, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AND LITERATURE REVIEW

6.2.1 Revisiting the Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to look at the implementation of QA policies at Ethiopian public HEIs to determine how the QA system may have improved the quality of teaching and learning. The study also emphasises quality assurance procedures created and implemented by the ETA after 2003. Thus, the study has two distinct aspects in terms of topic focus: an assessment of national QA policy and an examination of QA policies at HEIs. As a result, three related claims were presented in this study. First, the establishment of QA rules and methods in HEIs in Ethiopia has not resulted in significant improvements in institutional performance. Second, in terms of QA mechanisms, there was a glaring lack of ownership and accountability among academic professionals. Finally, the QA policies were more focused on policy standardisation than with improvement of academic practice. The QA mechanisms have not resulted in HEIs' self-development.

QA policies and the accompanying structures and processes were required, but not adequate, prerequisites for improving teaching and learning in institutions. The efficient deployment of a QA scheme necessitated a commitment on the part of all system participants, as well as the empowerment of those participants to exhibit that dedication. To this end, Lucander and Christerson (2020:141) asserted that involving teachers in QA discussions to ask questions, share their experience and identify challenges related to quality is a prerequisite for developing a

quality culture. If professionals did not assist in the execution of QA procedures, it would be ineffective at best and result in short-term compliance at worst.

Third, there was a paucity of research addressing how lecturers and professors viewed the influence of QA; therefore, realistic research on the real role that QA performed inside HEIs was necessary. The pragmatic analysis was based on the underlying idea that certain QA schemes were more concerned with regulation although some were more concerned with improvement. There was a significant risk that attempts by universities and university authorities to improve quality would result in the introduction of repetitious rituals and a loss of sight of the essence of academic activity. The majority of impact evaluations strengthened the assumption that quality was about compliance and accountability while contributing little to any significant transformation to make the programmes more suitable (Harvey & Newton, 2004).

6.2.2 Revisiting the Research Questions

Ethiopian higher education has recently undergone a transformation that aims to build internal QA methods in addition to relying solely on external quality assurance. The study looked into how QA policies have been institutionalised and implemented in public universities based on this national trend. The study addressed all five of its primary research questions within the context of this larger investigation. The following is a concise synopsis of the discussion.

The key research question posed for this study was, “How were the ETA’s QA policies effectively realised at selected HEIs in Ethiopia to assure excellent education?” The study sought and found answers to five sub-questions based on the primary question. First, the findings revealed that the internal and external factors influence the introduction of quality assurance at institutional and national levels. Also, quality assurance policies were executed in the sampled universities in reaction to external requirements and tended to address external accountability, making quality augmentation a by-product rather than a basic component of quality growth. The study results shows that many QA practices were not executed in the sampled universities. The findings also revealed that the key elements and approaches used by the sampled universities were primarily aimed at ensuring academic excellence. The primary approach to QA is to concentrate on the input, process, and outcome. This is due to the fact that supplying input and closely monitoring the process delivers superior outcomes. It also includes self-assessment, peer

review and programme evaluation as well as implementing an internal quality audit, and an ETA audit that occurs within a five-year cycle (by applying the ETA's ten focus areas), External review mechanisms, monitoring and supervision of QA, curriculum review, developing quality assurance instruments, training academic staff, continuous assessment, and teacher evaluation formed key elements of the audits. Also, the targeted universities were preparing to follow up on graduate employability. In this context, University A and University B' internal quality audits had also begun working on tracer studies and documenting graduates' contact information, which will be used subsequently to assess their employability. In general, the targeted institutions' internal quality-audit directorates strived to lead and help in the continuous assurance and enhancement of academic quality and relevance. Accreditation, on the other hand, is ineffective in public colleges for a variety of reasons.

The fourth study question sought to identify the key issues experienced in adopting ETA QA systems at Ethiopian public universities, as well as viable remedies. To this end, the study indicated that internal and external aspects affected the implementation of QA system.

6.2.3 Revisiting the Literature Review

The study found disparities between the four HEIs in terms of QA system execution and how existing QA methods might be modified to promote long-term quality. The existing national and institutional QA system's perceived impact/outcome on HEI teaching and learning, leadership, and quality culture.

Contingency theory and neo-institutional theory provided a theoretical lens for analysing how internal and external organisational settings impact QA execution in higher education. Contingency theory was used to guide the researcher's views in that QA policies execution mechanisms were contingent on the individual conditions or contexts of the HEIs. Institutional theory, in turn, was derived from Peters, (2022:223) findings, which asserted that real structural activities are often loosely tied with the methods in which they are superficially legitimised. Scott (1987:507–509) found that, when practical and separately used, contingency and institutional theory explanations provided only an inadequate understanding of the various activities of current organisations, but that when used together, both theories provided a better understanding of the instrumental and representative roles played by organisations.

6.2.4 Revisiting the Research Design and Methodology

This study also highlighted the complementary nature of using the exploratory qualitative technique. This was shaped by the constructivism/interpretivism view, which is often viewed as the theoretical companion for a qualitative study.

The qualitative technique was used in the study to collect data on the many variations of the informants' practices/understandings, individual views and connotations, and values, customs and beliefs about QA processes. It also aided in gaining a better understanding of the challenges at hand. The study's sample consisted of four public universities. For the arrangement and choice of universities, Alkurdi, et.al., (2020:217) framework idea was used as a starting point, which largely emphasised the different character of the universities in terms of their settings and anticipated levels of growth and advancement.

Using Hopkin's guidelines, Ethiopia's 46 public universities were divided into five broad groups: research, comprehensive, applied, technology, and education. The purposive sampling technique was used to choose University A, B, X, and Y in the research. For this study, multiple cases (four cases) were chosen rather than one. Multiple cases strengthened the results by duplicating the pattern-matching and provided more confidence in the findings. Within each scenario, the institutional quality-audit structures and procedures, and relevant circumstantial issues were explored. Even though there was interest in studying individual individuals' attitudes, actions, and backgrounds, the major attention was on the patterns and trends within the entire organisation. The HERQA, now known as the ETA, and MoE were also involved at the macro-level to investigate the impact of the organisational setting on internal QA policies.

The information was collected from academic vice-presidents, institutional quality-audit officers, college deans and department heads, lecturers and professors, student representatives; ETA specialists, academic affairs general directorate director, and top MoE experts. Data sources included policy and transformation documents, strategic plans, recommendations, HE statutes, reports, annual statistical summaries, quality monitoring manuals, and rules/strategies.

The study used a multistage sampling procedure to choose colleges and departments, and purposive sampling procedures to pick informants. To answer the research questions, qualitative

data-gathering methods were employed in the study. Semi-structured interviews and textual open-ended questionnaire, and document analysis were used to gather data for the study. Based on the findings of the literature research, two data-collection tools were created. The semi-structured interview tool was created to collect data from four sample institutions' vice-presidents, college deans, department heads, lecturers, and professors. A textual open-ended questionnaire was designed to collect data from the chairman of the student unions at four institutions. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain important evidence on the participants' attitudes and perceptions of the current QA policies and procedures. Senior professors from all four institutions, as well as ETA specialists, the Academic General Directorate Director, and senior experts from the MoE, were interviewed. In addition, eight student union chairpersons assisted in the completion of the survey questionnaire, and 42 informants were chosen and participated in semi-structured face-to-face interviews.

Regarding document analysis as a data-gathering tool, all related and appropriate documents were obtained and analysed, including quality assurance policy statements, HE Proclamations (No.1052/2019) and other pertinent laws, yearly statistical abstracts, pertinent plans, institutional quality audit and self-assessment credentials, circulars, annual reports, conference papers and other available documents related to HE and QA. The qualitative data in this study were transcribed, categorised, and thematically evaluated. The information gathered through interviews and survey questionnaires was coded, entered, cleaned, and analysed employing the Atlas ti.8 computer software tool. To present the analysis and outcomes from qualitative data, a thematic approach was used. Triangulation, a pilot study, member checks, and review of the literature of the research scheme were used to improve the study's trustworthiness. In this study, the use of interviews, documentation and survey questionnaires provided for procedural triangulation on the key study topics. Triangulation across multiple information sources within the same approach (data source triangulation) was used to validate the data through cross verification from more than two sources (Bans and Tilmub,2021).

The questionnaire was tested in a pilot study at a university like those participating in the research project. The pilot research results demonstrated that the subscales of the questionnaire exhibit high internal consistency and homogeneity within each subscale. Moreover, the interview questions were analysed and checked for suitability, topic, language, and sequence through the pilot research. On basis of the findings of the research project, the interview questions that appeared ambiguous to the first responders were revised and rewritten. The pilot research data were not included in the results.

To improve the study's dependability, the interview plan was pre-tested with two subjects who had similar characteristics as the sampled interviewees. Some interviewees were asked to review the final written report for any inaccuracies or distortions. The final review improved the study's internal validity, Confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, sensitivity, and voluntariness were the key ethical problems addressed in this work.

The respondents' personal information was not used in the report. The right to privacy of respondents was also protected by the pledge of confidentiality. Several measures were used to protect the participants' anonymity and confidentiality. The use of codes rather than their actual names meant that the information supplied in the report could not be used to identify the respondents by anyone other than the researcher.

It was unethical to investigate if the subjects were uninformed of the true goal, thus all role players, including instructors, top management, and students were told of the study's aim, procedures and scope. Participants in this study were advised that they would be able to withdraw from the study at any moment if they felt the need to do so. The most essential ethical factor in conducting this research was the concept of informed consent, which included the right to participate or to decline to partake. To avoid the possibility of losing confidentiality, the evidence in this research was gathered by the researcher alone.

To gain entrance to the universities, the researcher began with a formal written request made through official channels. The researcher explained in full the goal of the research and the data-gathering techniques. The research offices of the targeted HEIs as well as the University of South Africa were asked to provide ethical clearance for this study, which were then included in the final report (see Appendices A and B).

6.3 SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

This section summarises the significant findings of the study by Synthesising the main ideas offered in Chapter 5 of the thesis.

6.3.1 Definitions of Quality

According to the result of study finding, various scholars define the concept of quality in different ways. To that purpose, Mahlangu et al. (2016:109) stated that quality is an ongoing method of evaluating, judging, monitoring, assuring, preserving, and enlightening the quality of education schemes, institutions, or programmes. Quality assurance techniques must be linked to the “who” and “how” of quality assurance. This illustrates the difficulty and complexities involved in defining the term quality. In the Ethiopian HE environment, the working definition that has an instrumental approach to quality is “... fitness for purpose”. However, stakeholders in education may have differing viewpoints on the goals, how they are measured/quantified and their applicability in the education sector. Conceptually, this has resulted in techniques for measuring and checking quality, with an emphasis on educational leadership systems. The agreement of the HE role players on the drive of QA was critical since each of the objectives for building a QA system required a distinct emphasis, which informed the strategy and mechanisms of the QA systems and processes. According to Ahmad (2017:264), the use of overlapping, contradictory ideas, and conceptions of quality, as well as diverse perspectives on the aim of building a quality assurance system, results in a complex concept of quality assurance. In terms of the aim of QA, this study highlighted “improvement” as the most significant motivation for implementing a QA scheme.

6.3.2 The Need for Quality Assurance

The study undertaken to explore the implementation of quality assurance policies in public HEIs system in Ethiopia. The study’s findings revealed that the Ethiopian government implements QA for a variety of reasons, including the expansion of the postsecondary education sector, public sector restructurings, answerability managerialism, augmented private-sector participation in higher education, the impact of globalisation, and so on. However, because the QA system in Ethiopia was developed in response to external constraints, it attempted to fulfil external accountability, making quality augmentation a by-product rather than a primary component of quality development. The quality assurance system at the target institutions was obviously multi-purpose, performing an accountability role to an external government agency (e.g., meeting the ETA’s EQA) as well as boosting self-development through self-assessment processes.

6.3.3 The Establishment of the ETA

It was also argued that the MoE established HERQA to carry out the initiative pursuant to Proclamation No.351/2003, and that HERQA (now ETA) had brought the QA issues to the forefront in the HEIs, and it had played an important role in the establishment of numerous QA manuals, processes, norms, and regulations in collaboration with role players. Nonetheless, several difficulties were found with the current ETA's policy and procedures. The provisions of Proclamation No. 1152/2019 relating to the ETA mandates were not very precise, and most of the mandate was stated in extremely vague terms.

6.3.4 Problems with the ETA System

6.3.4.1 Incapacitation

The investigation also found that ETA lacks the authority to adopt its own guidelines and cannot make ultimate judgements based on its study results; hence, it may not be called an independent organisation. This means that the agency was less likely to be independent of government politics and policy. The ETA's Board of Directors was found to be barely functional. The actual makeup of the Board changed significantly from that specified in the Proclamation 1152/2019. Various sections of society's stakeholders were not included. Half of the positions were vacant. The ETA recognised that the Board would function more effectively if it had a "... less tight relationship..." with the MoE (ETA, 2011b:50). It is feasible to conclude that the governance of the ETA did not adhere to the global code of good governance for QA agencies. Furthermore, it must be argued that the law was insufficient because the ETA's mandates were not clearly defined and uniformly articulated.

6.3.4.2 Staff qualifications

The existing qualification status of ETA workers did not seem to be sufficient. A major professional and skill human power shortage existed, particularly in the accreditation and quality-audit divisions. The ETA agreed that there was a high rate of employee turnover because salary scales were not competitive with other enterprises in the market. In this regard, Ishola, et.al., (2022), argue that the wealth of nation is determined to a large extent by the quality as well as the quantity of its human resources that ultimately set the pace for the social, economic, or political development of a nation. There was also no evidence that the ETA had a functioning

personnel assessment system. The ETA was largely reliant on the MoE for its funding and was rigidly restricted by civil service norms and regulations when it came to handling its financial matters relating to its numerous operations. In terms of infrastructure and facilities, it was determined that the ETA's website, www.eta.edu.et, was frequently in poor condition, with little current evidence available for the public to read and/or download.

6.3.4.3 Institutional autonomy

According to Mathew (2017), institutional autonomy improves institutions' ability to determine their own courses of study and syllabi, as well as restructure and redesign courses to meet local needs, prescribe admission rules, and evolve methods of assessing student performance, and it contributes to the development of an intellectual climate in HEIs. However, in Ethiopia, it contradicts the rhetoric. Curriculum design and development were revealed to be centralised at the national level and typically undertaken by the MoE. Outside experts created a national curriculum to serve as a guide, and each department was expected to use it as an orientation and pattern in institutionalising the national curriculum.

6.3.4.4 The ETA's mandate

The study's findings demonstrated a significant difference in how the ETA perceived public and private institutions in terms of the interaction between the ETA and HEIs. When it came to private HEIs, the ETA had a strong mandate, and it controlled them to the point of closing the institution and withdrawing the licence for specific programmes. In regard to the public universities, the ETA's involvement was restricted to the publication of findings following quality checks. It was up to the institutions to create an improvement plan and put it into action in accordance with the suggestions in the quality-audit report. The capacities of the ETA were severely limited. A lack of qualified labour, financial allocation, information transmission, an uncomfortable relationship between key stakeholders, a surge in the number of colleges and programmes, a lack of institutional practice, and functional inefficiencies were amongst its primary challenges. In the 2020/21 academic year, just 6% of public institutions were evaluated for quality.

6.3.4.5 Lack of uniformity at universities

The universities were found to have no specific rules on teaching and learning. The lecture technique dominated the teaching and learning methodologies at universities. According to Kaburise (2015:2), students should be aware of and capable of achieving programme outcomes such as the ability to apply knowledge; the ability to decipher, analyse and interpret data; the ability to work on multidisciplinary teams; the ability to recognise, express, and solve problems; a commitment to professional and ethical responsibility; and the ability to communicate efficiently. However, due to a number of problems such as high student-to-staff ratios, a lack of instructional skills on the part of certain inexperienced professors, and a lack of suitable facilities, public institutions are unable to meet their objectives. In the universities under investigation, there were no common norms on assessment, just as there were no uniform standards on teaching and learning. Only a few programmes offered project and term paper tasks. Most assessment procedures, according to the participants, concentrated on the replication of recalled information, typically using just the cognitive domain and its taxonomy. The evaluation process was insufficient in terms of providing feedback and providing inspiration and drive for further study.

6.3.4.6. Autonomy of public higher education institutions

The HEP has explicitly permitted public higher education institutions to exercise administrative and academic autonomy to a certain extent. However, it was found that there was a significant disconnect between rhetoric and practice. Academic freedom is defined by Harvey (2022) as the scholar's right to follow truth wherever it appears to lead in his or her teaching and research without fear of punishment for violating any political, social, or religious principle. Karran, Beiter and Mallinson (2021) also claimed that academic freedom in higher education includes both substantive (freedom to teach) and supporting factors (freedom to study) (autonomy, governance, and occupancy). Academic freedom is not effectively preserved, according to the research. Academics exercised self-censorship because they were afraid to challenge institutional and other government actions. Teachers had little or non-existent influence in the appointment of university leaders. Teachers had minimal input into the quality assurance policy, despite being one of the most significant role players in HE and one of the key participants in QA. The marginalisation of teaching professionals was facilitated by a decrease in academic independence

and institutional autonomy, as indicated by the top-down approach to policy and curricular issues.

6.3.4.7 Key external role players

The study found that government intervention in internal concerns of universities, external dependency of universities, existing institutional and student intake policies, as well as the preparation of prospective student policy, were all key external affecting factors to the execution of QA policies in universities. The ETA criteria and expectations were recognised as a key facilitator for quality assurance implementation. Quality should be clearly defined in terms of quantity, according to Brady and Bates (2016:169), through establishing quantitative outcomes, benchmarks, performance indicators and other data that resemble KPIs. No well-defined and quantified outcomes, criteria, or performance indicators were shown in the results. As a result, the study indicated that internal university aspects such as established and quantified objectives, standards, and learning and teaching resources were a barrier to quality assurance implementation. Similarly, students' lack of engagement in their learning was highlighted as a hindrance, as was a lack of institutional leadership commitment and support for the execution of quality assurance procedures. According to the study, lecturers and professors in the target universities had positive perceptions of their drive, devotion to and support for excellence.

6.3.4.8 Student satisfaction

Students were asked to assess their satisfaction with the level of their learning abilities acquired during their studies. Organisations engage with a variety of groups, according to Khanyile and Green (2016:329), and these groups influence and are influenced by the institutional environment. The idea stresses the nature of these relationships in terms of the outcomes for the organisations and its role players. All students' interests as stakeholders are fundamentally valuable, and no single group of interests is deemed to be dominant. However, the findings revealed that students were dissatisfied with the quality of their education and learning experience.

6.3.4.9 Staff satisfaction

The academic staff expressed dissatisfaction with the students' abilities. Academic preparation, self-confidence, curiosity, and drive to learn were all reported to be poor among the students. Problem-solving, logical thinking and communication abilities were also found to be lacking. The researcher found that there appeared to be widespread dissatisfaction between academics over student performance and competency due to the low impact of quality assurance system.

6.3.4.10 Complacency

According to the findings, the basic problem of the HEIs under study was the lack of student and academic staff participation in quality assurance concerns. As stakeholders, all students' interests are intrinsically important, and it is recognised that there is no one predominant set of interests, requirements, or priorities; hence, organisations must comprehend and balance their own interests as well as those of diverse students (Khanyile & Green, 2016:329). Teachers were crucial stakeholders in the development and implementation of QA. Teachers oversaw creating, delivering, and assessing educational programmes. Bendermacher, Egbrink, Wolfhagen, Leppink and Dolmans (2019:645) maintained that employee commitment to quality improvement is critical to the establishment of a quality culture. Similarly, like instructors, students had an equal role to play in achieving excellence in higher education. Student participation in quality assurance systems has been demonstrated to promote the validity and reliability of both internal and external evaluation procedures and to be a value-adding component in enhancing higher education quality. Academic staff and students, on the other hand, did not have enough say in the execution of QA policies at the public institutions under study.

6.3.4.11 Different visions

The study found that administration at all levels of the four selected institutions did not share the same vision for improving teaching and learning quality. According to Sayidah and Adey (2019), quality is an important feature of HEIs since gaining recognition and public confidence is a crucial priority for HEI administration. In this regard, the teaching staff did not think that the present QA mechanism was clear and demanding. It was claimed that the current QA scheme (policies, models, strategies, procedures and tools) had not been conveyed to lecturers and professors, students and other important role players. To make matters worse, as seen by teacher

respondents, academic staff motivation and working circumstances did not typically foster an atmosphere conducive to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. In general, these data indicate that the institutions' efforts in developing an internal quality assurance system have been modest thus far.

6.3.4.12 Lack of impact of quality audits

According to the findings, institutional quality audit has not had a substantial influence on the enhancement of the quality of education at target HEIs. The teaching staff did not feel that the QA scheme improved staff participation in internal decision-making and fund allocation or improved organisational reputation and stakeholders' satisfaction. They did, however, see some "good benefits" of QA on increasing student engagement in attaining knowledge and skills and instruction as undergraduate programmes were converted to modularisation.

6.3.4.13 Problems with self-evaluation

Concerning the influences of external QA on institutional development, the study found that the self-evaluation process allowed universities to determine their focus areas of strength and for development/weakness. The ETA's external audit mechanism also helped universities increase leadership and monitoring of the QA process by developing leadership structures at the university level and conveying employees to conduct QA efforts. This method emphasised the need for planning and coordinating QA efforts at the institutions. Even if not in a systematic or coordinated fashion, institutions had established QA offices, established QA policies, and, most prominently, quality and QA had become a priority at HEIs.

6.3.4.14 Lack of uniform standards

Ethiopian HEIs must create a solid internal quality assurance system, according to Higher Education Proclamation No. 1052/2019. According to Dada, et.al., (2017), accreditation of degree and other academic programmes by responsible parties, is a method of reviewing academic programmes to see if they meet the criteria set in the Minimum Academic Standard guidelines. However, according to the findings presented in this study, public HEIs lack a thorough accrediting mechanism. A few quality assurance methods were in existence at universities, but they were not implemented uniformly by all HEIs or departments. The lack of a

shared quality culture in the organisations is one of the limitations. A quality culture is one in which everyone in the organisation is held accountable for quality, not only the quality controllers (Dada et al., 2017:506).

6.3.4.15 Poor reporting

Regarding the practice of institutional quality audits, the audit papers for the 2021 ETA revealed that the expectations for institutions' performance during institutional quality audits had been clearly stated. However, when it came to implementation, there were several limitations. Some of the difficulties arose from the specified processes and procedures while others sprang from philosophical considerations. In terms of the audit statement, it was found that the reports were neither concise nor well-organised. They tended to be more subjective than analytical. There was no provision in either the HEP 1052/2019 or the HEP 1052/2019 for including other organisations in the quality audit. As a result, no other private groups or organisations in the country had the authority to perform institutional quality audits. There were many delays in presenting the SEDs and action plans. Some of the examined institutions were reported to be resistant to accepting the ETA audit team's findings and produce the required upgrade plans.

6.3.4.16 Funding for quality assurance

There has not been any recognised or explicitly specified relationship between the funds of the institutions and the outcomes of the institutional quality audits so far. To make matters worse, neither the HEP nor the other credentials prepared by the ETA under the auspices of the MoE have addressed the potential ramifications of the audit reports' findings. The MoE has taken no concrete action in response to the audit results to date. In contrast with what has been done in several other countries, the results of external audits in Ethiopia were not used to make fund reallocations or to rank the examined institutions. This had an impact on the audit team's recommendations being realised at the institutional level. The dedication of HEIs to perform authentic and serious self-assessments is important to the success of institutional quality audits. Some SEs were written in such a way that they were impractical, yet they were created in the hopes of influencing or impressing the auditors. Other role players appeared to believe that an SE's function was limited to being critical of the HEI. The ETA standards did not specify whether the institutional SER

was secret or public, but they did indicate that HEIs did not share the self-assessment reports with stakeholders, including the academic staff.

6.3.4.17. Overemphasis on university rankings

According to Lim and Williams Ørberg (2017), university rankings are increasingly being used to guide national higher education policymaking and to define nations' ambitions for global knowledge economy placement. Furthermore, Liu (2021) claims that rankings differ in terms of goals, target groups, and who administers them, as well as what and how they measure. In Ethiopia, ranking is not an ETA emphasis area for auditing HEI quality. Although the ETA does not focus on ranking, there has been a steady drive to rank public institutions alongside a set of performance indicators that focus on conceptual, methodological, and procedural difficulties created by an Ethiopian CEPU. However, there is a dilemma in which the ranking has evolved from its original objective of improving the quality of teaching to data manipulation to obtain a higher rating. As a result, the system was found to be unsound. Another source of concern was that the ranking violated the ETA's working description of quality in the Ethiopian setting, which was a fitness-for-purpose approach. The phrase "fitness-for-purpose" suggests that universities have various goals and are graded based on those goals, whereas the ranking system created judgement based on a set of broad criteria. It was stated that the present ranking system redirected university officials' focus away from the true aim and goal of the universities and toward representative compliance and paperwork to "climb" the rating ladder. Many teaching staff considered that the quality of the reports provided and the top managements' proximity to the MoE were more important than the institution's performance under the present CEPU assessment system. Furthermore, the CEPU ranking overemphasised institutions while ignoring study programmes.

6.3.4.18. Problems with modularisation

Modularisation was implemented in the HE system beginning in 2013. Many obstacles arose during its implementation, including the fact that capability levels were not clearly specified in the syllabi (course manuals); there was an absence of sufficient assigned time for the courses; and there was a lack of module competency tools. According to Sridharan, Leitch and Watty (2015), modularisation mapping visualises how the learning outcomes of the courses required for graduation build up, integrate, and advance for students to achieve the programme objectives.

The modularisation implementation, on the other hand, was not managed consistently. Therefore, the grading system was altered to a criterion-referenced system and the assessment was done as normal. Employees received minimal training and mentoring, and modularisation was not reinforced by any appropriate legislation, rules or handbooks. As a result, the findings indicate that the modularisation was not applied properly. Furthermore, there was no compelling need to convert from a discipline-based to a modularised curriculum. The modularisation was complicated and challenging because of the lack of regulations and standards, as well as the high number of students that attended pre-classes. Continuous evaluation methods, active learning methodologies, and tailored attention as a need for an effective application were incredibly challenging to combine as a need for the effective and fruitful application of the modularisation in these massive courses.

6.3.4.19. Lack of uniformity in self-evaluation

According to the findings, self-evaluation methods were only in place at University A and University B, and the two institutions developed a SEDs for the drive of EQA. The external institutional quality-audit scheme did not include University X and University Y. To this end, Kelleher (2016:3) stated that it is best practice for QA measures to involve self-assessment, followed by appraisal by QA professionals who can make national and worldwide comparisons. However, the findings of the study show that no one department or unit oversaw organising and undertaking the self-assessment. Even though the SER was fairly informative, it was noted that the SE was not logical or critical. This might be because the self-assessment criteria did not result in the institutions generating a self-critical, systematic, and logical document. Because both the commencement and methods originated from the ETA and was then conveyed to the institutions, the current QA system seemed to be a top-down process. External QA, which focuses on accountability as opposed to institutional quality audits which emphasise QE, was also favoured by the quality audit system.

6.3.4.20. Lack of skilled manpower

As the findings of this research show that there is lack of skilled human power in Ethiopian public universities to execute quality assurance policies according to the provisions of the proclamation. Bendermacher et al. (2019:644) argued that leadership and staff commitment is a

crucial causal factor for implementing quality assurance policies as well as for developing a quality culture and improving quality of education in HEIs. However, in the Ethiopian context, low wages and an absence of motivation were mentioned as important contributors to the problem, which has a direct impact on the application of QA policies. A brain drains to other countries in search of better paying jobs and inadequate training programmes in Ethiopian HEIs have aggravated the situation. Bendermacher et al. (2019:643) noted that there was a high “... internal brain drains...” in the universities. Lecturers and professors were no longer just leaving for foreign universities but also for the private or non-governmental sector where they might make more than an lecturers and professors with the same educational background and years of experience. The government and the MoE are required to work together to resolve quality assurance problems. Limited incentives, poor student backgrounds in primary and secondary schools, a deficiency of commitment and cooperation on the part of academic staff and university managers or leaders and an absence of professional knowledge and skills about how to integrate quality assurance systems into organisational culture. The leadership’s lack of vision and zeal for laying the foundations of QA was evident. This seems to have hampered efforts to put in place functioning institutional QA policies, among other obstacles noted in answers to interview questions.

6.3.4.21. Budgetary deficiencies

As the outcomes of this study show, the difficulty of budget scarcity verifies the study’s previous conclusions. This demonstrates that each public university’s funding was insufficient to carry out quality assurance programmes such as conducting seminars and workshops. Vnouková, et.al., (2018) claimed that in the globalisation age, all nations’ economic futures are dependent on their ability to develop a stock of human competency through the quality of their education. Furthermore, because the primary goal of HEIs is to deliver high-quality education, performance-based budgeting (PBB) should be used to fulfil these goals (Dicker et al., 2019; Mourad, 2017; Pham & Starkey, 2016). However, the findings of the study show that it is a well-known reality that the government’s insufficient resources for running public institutions might be another obstacle to adopting QA rules. As a result, public university management bodies were not expected to wait for the government to allocate an appropriate funding. In terms of financial resources, it was found that, while overall public education spending had climbed somewhat

(22.8 percent in 2007 to 23 percent in 2021), the unit costs of HE had decreased significantly. The explanation for the discrepancy between rising public spending and falling costs of HE may be found in the fast growth of the number of universities, which suggests that the increase in intake capacity is driving up unit prices.

6.3.4.22. Lack of resources

Lower student textbook ratios, few available learning resources and limited access to ICT and laboratory facilities all had an impact on the quality assurance process. Hwang and Choi, (2019:1) revealed that service quality and student satisfaction are inextricably linked. The physical situation of infrastructures, academic staff, libraries, laboratories, and ICT facilities, among other things, may all help to boost an HEI's image. The outcomes of the survey revealed that physical and financial resources were sufficient to ensure the quality of teaching and learning at universities. Service quality may have an impact on students' impressions of HEIs. In reality, there is a connection between the quality of services and students' satisfaction. Student satisfaction may be impacted by perceptions of service quality, which can lead to word-of-mouth marketing attracting more students. For HEIs, quality is a vital performance measure, and it is the most effective approach to develop a favourable image in the minds of students (Idris, 2019:166).

6.4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings in Section 6.3 of this Chapter, the following conclusions were reached on the execution of the QA policies at Ethiopian HEIs.

6.4.1. The State of the Internal Quality Systems

The state of the internal QA system appeared to be in its early stages of development among the targeted HEIs. Although certain initiatives could be noticed, there was little additional information on institutional quality-audit systems at the target universities. The quality assurance initiatives were carried out without a clear direction or goal, and hence required effective coordination. For example, the four institutions were unable to design, promote, or execute teaching, learning and evaluation policies in their respective settings. There was no operational quality-audit structure at the college level while at departmental levels, the quality audit structure had yet to be developed, and there was no formal QA policy. Similarly, here was no data that

suggested that continuous evaluation was commonly used and conducted. There was no involvement of institutions in performing tracer research. A key concern at colleges was the lack of a structured mechanism for curriculum development and review. The performance appraisal scheme for teachers was used more for upgrading salaries than for improving teaching quality. According to the findings of the survey, HEIs were suffering from an absence of adequate infrastructure. Most of the teaching staff lacked appropriate experience to use QA mechanisms, teaching, and research abilities, and consequently fell well short of the MoE's criteria. The major difficulties for sample institutions were identified in terms of dedicating facilities to assist institutional QE activities, the realisation of full-fledged QA mechanisms, facilities to staff, and institutional management commitment in this respect. It is, therefore, possible to infer that there was little or poor information about self-initiated quality improvement efforts in the four institutions studied. The study found that QA systems led by higher-level institutional management were often considered as administrative and were deficient in academic staff ownership. The absence of QA ownership by teaching personnel has major consequences for execution. Institutional quality-audit schemes or structures were not accessible to teaching personnel unless they were engaged in the formulation and execution of QA policies. The extent of staff involvement in the execution of QA policies, their level of ownership of the policies, and the capability to incorporate contextual difficulties were all important issues in the efficiency of the institutional QA policies and practices.

6.4.2. Quality Assurance Role players

Finding evidence on the influence of QA policies was challenged by multiple variables, comprising the problems of HEIs and the various procedures affecting them, as mentioned in the literature study. However, the findings of this research enabled some inferences to be made. In terms of the impact of QA procedures on universities, the first conclusion is that with the ratification of HEP 1052/2019 and the founding of the ETA, teaching quality assurance was a topic that received considerable attention. HEIs were developing institutional quality-audit actions and structures, but they were still in the initial phases of growth, and they may not yet have attained the level of quality culture that they aspire to. The findings indicated that self-assessments undertaken primarily at higher levels of institutions, and that the conclusions of the evaluations were seldom used in an orderly manner to improve teaching-learning, faculty

decision-making and planning processes. It was not clear whether internal quality assurance approaches enhanced teaching and learning or affected students' learning experiences. Similarly, the findings on the impact of the external QA scheme, i.e., whether the ETA QA instruments, focus areas and necessities had altered the HE system thus far, was equivocal and not very encouraging in terms of quality improvement. The ETA's QA policies and focus areas appeared to be decoupled from internal attempts to improve quality in HEISs, according to neo-institutional philosophy.

6.4.3. Resources

The problem of resource adequacy, use and quality was found to be widespread across all four universities in this study. According to Latchem (2016:10), HEIs must strive to ensure accountability for government funds, improve the quality of education provided, inform funding choices, inspire competition within and between HEIs, quality check HEIs, transform the power and authority between the MoE and HEIs, and empower student mobility through quality assurance and accreditation. All the foregoing would be a significant setback in fully grasping the goals of high-quality teaching and learning in HEIs. It must be claimed that as the development of higher education outpaced the availability of resources and facilities, the quality of instruction in the four public universities has deteriorated.

6.4.4. Staff Involvement in Curriculum Development

As Mansfield (2021) precisely mentioned, lecturers, professors and researchers should have the right to create, contribute in, and define their institutions' academic programmes in conformity with the uppermost educational level, values, and basic philosophies. However, in Ethiopia, curriculum design and programme reviews failed to recognise organisational differences and were all consistently established by the MoE. This appears to have harmed the teaching staff's sense of ownership. Whenever the MoE chooses to create a new academic programme, regardless of its relevance or demand, it does so without going through the appropriate curriculum creation procedure. For example, undergraduate courses at public institutions are recently being designed on a top-down basis into modularisation and offered through block teaching. This significant overhaul occurred without the agreement of many of the academic programme executors (the academic staff). As a result, the quality of curriculum execution at

universities has been called into doubt. Also, the pace at which the changes were implemented contributed to the short lifespan of most of the curricular transformations and changes, accentuating the unpredictability of the curriculum restructuring in Ethiopian public institutions.

6.4.5. Modularisation

The modularisation approach was initially introduced into Ethiopian HEIs in 2013 for first-year courses; therefore, determining its success was premature. However, the institutions that adopted these modifications were expected to conduct ongoing monitoring to see whether the major pillars outlined in the modularisation guidelines were realised as necessary. The redesigned curricula provided new chances for reflective learning as well as logical thoughtfulness skills development. It is too early to tell if they will be met satisfactorily. Both the administration of HEIs and the Ethiopian MoE have high expectations for this development. However, if the modularisation reform is to be perceived as more than simply a paper-based exercise, the gap between these goals and their execution in the classroom must be overcome. The consequences for Ethiopian higher education institutions are that adjustments in classroom techniques are required, as is support for teachers.

6.4.6. Autonomy and Academic Freedom

In terms of institutional autonomy and academic freedom at HEIs, the study concludes that, despite authorised discourse, some form of regulation is still exercised by the MoE, and that academic freedom at the HEIs under study was implicitly controlled and constrained by the MoE and its bureaucratic systems. The institutional autonomy of public universities is quite restricted; for example, they have very little control over student admissions and appointments as well as deciding the intake capacity. Curriculum design and changes were also influenced by outside sources. In terms of administrative and academic concerns, the HEIs were rigorously supervised by the MoE, and, in terms of financial matters, they were strictly controlled by the Ministry of Finance.

6.4.7. The Neo-Institutional Approach

Based on the neo-institutional approach, Fernandez, (2022) noted that the acceptance of policies and programmes by an institution is restricted by the norms, regulations and principles

apprehended by its members on what establishes suitable institutional forms and behaviour. As a result, academic principles and standards are seen to be more recognised at older universities than in newer universities. Therefore, the former is predicted to be less amenable to the introduction of quality evaluation methods than the latter. When evaluating the efforts of University Y and the University A in creating and realising specific QA tasks, this was also evident. The former has been more rigorous in creating new QA structures, in deploying somewhat diversified quality management methodologies and in offering good practices.

6.5. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The major findings of the study were summarized in this chapter. It begins by synthesizing the problem statement, research questions, literature review, and research design and methodology. The study also sought to determine whether the current quality assurance system in Ethiopian higher education has resulted in improvements for staff, students, and higher education institutions in general. This study's chapter investigated university top management's, lecturers', and students' attitudes toward the implementation of quality assurance policies in their respective universities, as well as the involvement of key actors in the implementation of quality assurance policies. Similarly, the study's Chapter attempted to investigate the HERQA's policies and practices in relation to quality assurance activities in Ethiopian HEIs. It was discovered that the HERQA's capacity to collaborate closely with HEIs was severely limited. Among its major issues were a lack of resources, institutional autonomy and experience, and operational inefficiency. The following Chapter summarizes and synthesizes the findings, presents the study's conclusions, and finally makes some recommendations.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the study's findings for improving the implementation of QA policy in Ethiopian HEIs.

7.1. GENERIC RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1.1. Definition of an Acceptable Quality Assurance System

In order to improve the timely development and delivery of the self-evaluation report and establish a clear image of what an acceptable QA system entails, the ETA should create more clearly demarcated plans and strategies for the institutional quality audit, programme evaluation and self-assessment system. Increased understanding of self-evaluation results is recommended to spark internal discussion about evaluation reports and align QA practices to leadership processes. It is suggested that all academic staff participate in the self-evaluation process to ensure that the process is well-defined, understood and owned by all members of the faculty, making the execution of the QA policies and outcomes easier. It should be emphasised that QA is most effective when it is as closely related to the teaching and learning processes as possible. Self-evaluation and peer assessment training for staff would be required. It is critical to have leaders that encourage employees to participate.

7.1.2. Professional Development

Teachers in higher education must be educated with the required pedagogical abilities in order to implement quality assurance procedures. Taking relevant steps such as continual professional development, short-term pedagogical training, action research, and assessment of teaching and learning should be viewed as key measures. It is critical that the ADRC be prearranged and empowered to achieve this goal and enhance quality and efficiency at HEIs. HEIs should offer induction and mentorship programmes for newly appointed instructors to familiarise them with the institution's QA policies and processes.

7.1.3. Institutional Autonomy

According to Seyfried and Pohlenz (2018), quality assurance can be viewed as autonomy in the sense of independence from external expectations and the ability to behave according to internal motivations, based on the motivation theory of Tien and Jose, (2021). However, the sampled universities confirmed that the QA system in Ethiopian HEIs was formed in response to external constraints, and that it was aimed at meeting external accountability requirements. As a result, the Ministry of Education should make institutional autonomy one of the strategic concerns to develop a sense of effectiveness.

7.1.4. The Establishment of Frameworks

According to the study's findings, the sampled institutions lack the necessary frameworks for carrying out quality assurance procedures. Institutional quality-audit systems should reflect the institutions' goals and principles, but these should be aligned with the national QA policy. Universities should create institution-wide QA strategies and clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of everyone engaged in the QA process to safeguard consistency. The establishment of rules is important for QA roles such as curriculum design and evaluation, staff appraisal and advancement, and evaluation of student learning appear to be the most pressing difficulties. Universities must analysis these policies on a regular basis. It is also crucial to staff the quality assurance offices with the right people. Structure-independent incentives should be used. The institutions, in partnership with the ETA, should ultimately bear the responsibility for ensuring educational quality.

7.1.5. The Establishment of a Quality Culture

Leadership commitment, as well as staff and student engagement, are critical components in establishing a quality culture and QA processes; nevertheless, this study found that these situations were not present in the public institutions studied. Professional dedication from all system participants, as well as empowerment of these members to develop commitment, are compulsory for the real/actual execution of a QA scheme. Mahlangu (2016:1082) noted that need evaluations among stakeholders in any organisation are based on biased impressions. Unfulfilled contractual prospects of uprightness, friendliness and reliability of behaviour can result in a loss of trust. Stakeholders need to keep their promises and be consistent in their actions to re-establish

trust. In order to mobilise the efforts of all role players, predominantly teaching staff, in the execution process, it is vital that nationwide and institutional QA programmes, strategies, processes and methodologies be debated, disseminated and continuously promoted. QA should also be built on competence-based trust, which is widely acknowledged as the foundation of inter-organisational collaboration.

7.1.6. Roles and Responsibilities

Designing quality assurance structures alone was found to be insufficient for carrying out quality assurance duties. QA practices should not be seen solely as the concern of QA officers employed by the sampling universities. The roles and accountabilities of QA experts in tertiary education must also be clearly defined. One important finding of the study is the need for QA coordinators to be trained at universities. Academics tasked with leading and administering the quality assurance system in targeted universities have little or no experience with quality assurance issues. As a result, many skill sets are required at the HEI level, such as system design, methodology formulation and QA process implementation abilities. Universities must also have the capacity and expertise to effectively manage quality assurance operations.

7.1.7. Common Values

One of the major needs for ensuring educational quality, according to Tumlovskaja (2022), is the knowledge and assimilation of common values. However, the survey found that teaching staff at the targeted institutions were uninformed of QA rules, procedures, and methods. There was a lack of clarity in the requirements for quality assurance procedures. This demonstrates that there was a substantial absence of quality assurance communication at the implementation level. This means that, despite the presence of quality assurance structures and coordinators at the institutions, there was a lack of a collective understanding of quality culture inside the universities. All staff members must also be familiarised with the different QA processes and procedures used by HEIs, both conceptually and practically. As a result, induction training on QA rules, ETA areas of emphasis and quality assurance handbooks are crucial.

7.1.8. Capacitation of All Stakeholders

Successful QA requires effective employee development and participation in planning. This study found that an absence of adequate experience and knowledge in the QA field, as well as an absence of lecturers and professors' enthusiasm and commitment, and a disorganised approach to professional development, all substantially impeded the fruitful execution of QA in universities. As a result, inclusive staff development strategies in HEIs are vital. It is suggested that HEIs design a comprehensive continuous professional development programme, preferably one that would have a significant influence at the department level, and that this plan should focus on addressing the skills gaps in methods of staff evaluation.

7.1.9. Integration of Quality Assurance throughout the Institution

Quality assurance measures were not carried out or supported in many academic activities, according to the findings. Despite their best attempts to provide outstanding education, the sampled institutions' focus is on report writing and form filling rather than implementing the ETA's QA regulations. To that end, Tumlovskaja (2022:3) urged that rather than being segregated and bureaucratised, educational quality assurance initiatives should be integrated into all academics' normal work. The focus of QA should be solely on improving teaching and learning.

7.1.10. Assessment Practices

Assessment practices were recognised as a challenge, necessitating the development and dissemination of a well-defined and operational assessment policy. Therefore, it is recommended that transparent and rigorous approaches be established to assure that students are graded fairly, and that practices are consistent and aligned with performance indicators in relation to course objectives.

7.1.11. Remuneration

The study confirms that adopting attractive pay and extra inducements for public HEIs is one of the minimum requirements for improving the quality of HE, which in turn improves the execution of the QA policy. Such a strategy would not only help to maintain the present available workforce but would also aid in attracting competent, knowledgeable, and skilled

personnel from other sectors and professions. Instead of the existing recruiting method and practice, which employs political allegiance as a criterion, institutions should choose lecturers and professors based on their professional ability (knowledgeable instructors) and professional ideals.

7.1.12. Robust Accreditation Procedures

The study also confirms that, according to the Declaration No.1152/2019, public institutions were not required to seek accreditation and, as a result, were not evaluated by the ETA when they began new programmes. The absence of an accrediting procedure at public HEIs has an impact on the quality of education provided. Because accreditation involves the accomplishment of quality threshold norms, it would have given public tertiary educational institutions the option to make their own effort and reach the minimum accreditation standards. Stura, et.al., (2019) quality assurance in higher education must be strictly connected to the disciplinary nature of the accreditation of academics and institutions. As a result, it is proposed that the ETA adopts equivalent accreditation methods and quality checks for both public and private HEIs. The ETA could play a role in informing all HEIs about quality assurance on a regular basis.

7.1.13. Self-Evaluation

According to Korres (2021:8), self-evaluation is a technique for monitoring, assessing, and valuing professional behaviour and its outcomes to contribute to the development of superior educational experiences. For this reason, self-assessment should be incorporated into an institution's planning, implementation, analysis, and reporting processes. HEIs should conduct effective self-assessments of their operations at the departmental, college, and institutional levels, as well as initiate the QA process and strive to reach their own specified goals. As a result, universities should make self-evaluation a regular activity. The more self-evaluation is highlighted in the monitoring procedure, the more it will serve as a help HEIs to be prepared to take accountability for their own quality development, rather than simply being a source of evidence for the external quality assurance agency. It is vital that the self-evaluation process be coordinated by practitioners with relevant skills and/or knowledge.

7.1.14. Training

Short- and long-term QE training programmes for individuals working in QA sectors are also required. Also, QA components should be included in new academic leadership development and induction programmes.

7.1.15. Budgetary Considerations

Budgetary allocations, competent human labour and an enlarged number of institutions and programmes are the main impediments to implementing quality assurance methods in the topic under research, according to Dada et al. (2017). Sufficient funds must also be budgeted for quality assurance methods to be carried out successfully. The research contributes to the field of knowledge in both a practical and theoretical sense. In practice, it is crucial to implement PBB in HEIs because it is one of the variables that can help improve HEI quality and hence help Ethiopia's low HEI quality problem.

7.2. EXPLICIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Quality assurance in HE has been a crucial problem in all developing countries since World War II, in both private and public HE. There are many outstanding education models available, but strategic education models are scarce. As a result, this section of the chapter looks at a one-Of-a-kind quality assurance technique for Ethiopian universities. The proposed QA model was created using system theory, which recognises the impact of internal and external environmental factors on HEIs' operations. It follows the 5Q quality assurance paradigm, which emphasises the key roles of teaching and learning and comprises quality faculty, quality students, quality service, quality programme, and quality education (quality output). The graphical representation of the 5Q model of quality assurance for education is shown below to show how the model can be practically implemented.

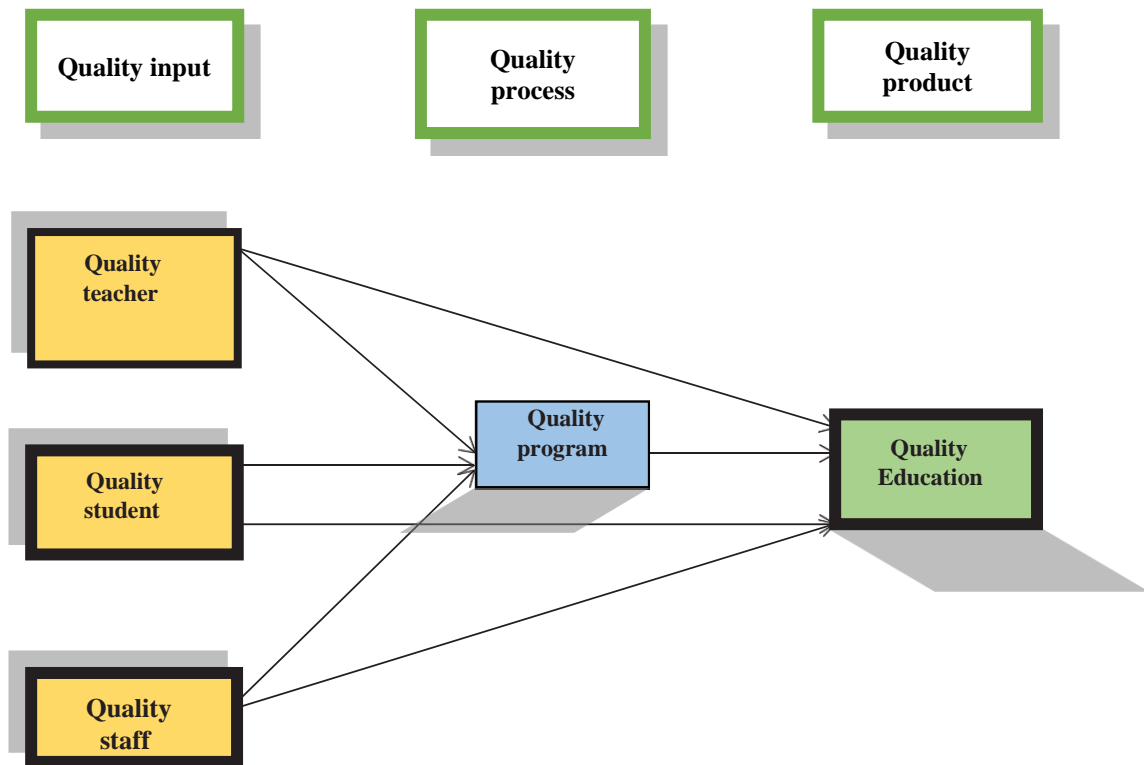


Figure 7.1 The 5Q model of quality assurance for Education

The fundamental components of the concept are stated in the narrative below in terms of educational independent components, mediating components and target components for quality education.

7.2.1. Independent components

Quality professors, quality students, and quality service are separate components of the 5Q paradigm and are considered as inputs that impact the quality programme and education of quality alumni (Aliyari et.al 2022). The inputs thus include skilled manpower/professionals, fund allocation, and infrastructure and facilities that have a direct or indirect influence on the quality of teaching and learning in HEIs, with the purpose of strengthening QA.

More precisely, the availability of competent, experienced, and motivated professionals with the necessary teaching and research skills is a critical factor in the quality assurance process (applied

competences). The first step in developing high-quality instructors should be to hire skilled and experienced staff. Practice and evidence of talent and potential in excellent learning and teaching approaches are significant elements throughout the employment process. It also concentrates on the institution's leadership and management aspects, such as the vision, mission, objectives, goals, anticipated outcomes, shared values, accountability, and team alignment roles.

Second, the quality of the enrolled students has an impact on the students' quality. The number and quality of incoming students is one of the criteria. The students' readiness for continued study can be assessed based on their prior experience and aptitude. The rules, tactics and procedures used to evaluate student readiness as well as the utility of admission criteria and standards, are all significant considerations.

The third independent component in the quality assurance process is quality service, which is measured in terms of evidence, fund allocation, infrastructure, and facilities. It is about allocating money to tuition and producing high-quality work. Adequate financial resources, physical facilities and support services are recognised as prerequisites for good student learning. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of information and its analysis in quality improvement. It could contain indicators such as the quality education in the institution as well as the competency and satisfaction of its graduates. Structures, rules, and processes that improve QA drive, optimise the efficacy of procedures and outputs, and align and assure that policy and procedural coherence are also recognised as key inputs for HEIs.

7.2.2. Rigorous Quality Assurance Principles

The availability of the required institutional processes, which should ideally be supported by rigorous quality assurance principles, is critical to quality assurance initiatives (Mahlangu, 2016). As a result, the ETA should pay more attention to strong quality assurance requirements, particularly external monitoring, and emphasise accountability while focusing on institutional quality-audit follow-up. Conducting quality audits may be a waste of time and money if they are not followed by activities aimed at solving any problems. However, no documentation that any renovation plan has been filed with the ETA yet. As a result, the ETA should place a greater emphasis on audit follow-up, and institutions should offer an action plan based on the ETA's recommendations. It is also critical that the ETA become more independent and autonomous,

with the ETA Board not being controlled by the Ministry of Education, since this might jeopardise the ETA's independence as a professional agency advising the HE sector on its performance quality.

7.2.3. Mediating Component

Because of the mediating component of the 5Q model for quality, the quality programme gets sufficient attention. The quality programme is the heart of the model, and it is considered as a process and facilitating variable for improving graduate quality, with quality education as the outcome variable. A quality programme is a vital component of all-inclusive high-quality education that can be applied to quality-assurance-related educational activities. "Quality programme", according to Aliyari et al. (2022), denotes all the planned activities and approaches used by HEIs to offer educational programmes that support in the alteration of students. The quality programme component includes basic aspects such as curriculum creation and evaluation, successful teaching-learning, student assessments, and staff development.

Instructor instructional affects, such as teaching styles, curriculum, and materials, are also highlighted by Aliyari et al. (2022), which may have an impact on academic programmes. As a result, both a good instructor and a good student are linked to good programme execution.

Furthermore, the curriculum should be designed and updated in a reactive manner, with feedback from a wide range of role players influencing it on a regular basis. Curricula for programmes should be developed using methodical feedback from industries, government sectors, alumni surveys, current students, and staff-student meetings, as well as consultations with appropriate academic departments within HEIs using mechanisms such as peer talks, meetings, and debates, and putting in place systems to keep curriculum up to date. Thus, assuring the quality of teaching and learning processes necessitates a focus on how and what students learn, as well as techniques for enhancing the processes.

7.2.4. Target Component

The 5Q model's target component is the quality product, which is quality education. In this model, a quality graduate is someone who has the skills and experience necessary to undertake professional duties in order to meet set company goals and objectives. The collection of information on the performance of role players, which can encourage and assist higher education institutions in improving the quality of their operations, is required for a quality product. As a result, higher education institutions should develop systematic information-gathering strategies for their outputs or outcomes, which will be critical in the future for improving academic quality in their institutions.

Student satisfaction with courses, company/owner satisfaction with graduates' performance, student test outcomes, research outputs, and facilities are all examples of goal component variables that may be categorised. Quality information role players include attrition rates, students' learning experiences and accomplishments, alumni employment and incomes, alumni competency, and gratification with specific programmes, in addition to student admissions and placements.

To summarise, higher education institutions should evaluate learning outcomes and use the evidence to assure all educational quality. When students finish their programmes, they should know exactly what is anticipated of them. The criteria for the specific programmes describe the desired outcomes (knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes).

7.3. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Previously, the topic of quality assurance at Ethiopian HEIs received little attention. As a result, the outcomes of this study were designed to offer HE administrators and academics useful baseline data on QA policy and implementation in Ethiopia's higher education system.

Following are some recommendations for future research topics based on the results of this study. To begin, ETA has employed quality assurance methods at private HEIs rather than public HEIs, so the impact of quality assurance regulations on private HEIs needs to be examined. It would be fascinating to see how much the use of quality audits and certification procedures has improved academic quality at private higher education institutions. This type of study might also

look into the challenges that private HEIs confront in providing quality-assured programmes. This type of research could contribute to the development of much-needed policies to assist HEIs in improving the quality of their teaching and learning.

Second, a unique study subject is presented on the necessity for really institutionalised QA in HEIs, particularly at the departmental level. The question of how to ensure quality in accordance with academic standards at the departmental, system, and programme levels remains unsolved. To conduct adequate and honest self-evaluations under the ETA accountability frameworks, research should be conducted. In terms of assuring and guaranteeing quality, the researcher also advises doing a complete study on the on the relationship between the MoE and HEIs.

Third, specific aspects of QA, such as evaluation, research and outreach projects, and community services, need to be examined more thoroughly. The goal/aim of this study should be to determine how these factors might lead to higher quality by incorporating a broader variety of HE participants to obtain a fuller view of the issue or topics under discussion. To enhance awareness of the issue of QA in Ethiopian HEIs, new role players such as alumni and employers should be included in addition to academic staff, the MoE, the ETA, and students. Finally, research of the impact of globalisation and internationalisation on Ethiopian higher education is necessary. The most recent modifications to the Ethiopian HE system, such as modularisation, the introduction of freshmen courses, and differentiation, have happened as a result of the globalisation and internationalisation trend. It is vital to figure out how Ethiopian higher education institutions may profit from this trend.

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APPENDEXES

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2021/08/11

Ref: **2021/08/11/66588707/41/AM**

Name: Mr MA Shamele

Student No.:66588707

Dear Mr MA Shamele

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2021/08/11 to 2026/08/11

Researcher(s): Name: Mr MA Shamele
E-mail address: Manayebera2@gmail.com
Telephone: +251-912150254

Supervisor(s): Name: Prof Vimbi Mahlangu
E-mail address: mahlavp@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: +27 124298550

Title of research:

Assessing the implementation of the quality assurance policy in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions

Qualification: PhD Education management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2021/08/11 to 2026/08/11.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2021/08/11 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



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3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2026/08/11**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **2021/08/11/66588707/41/AM** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,



Prof AT Mothabane
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
motthat@unisa.ac.za



Prof PM Sebate
EXECUTIVE DEAN
Sebatpm@unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION FROM MINISTRY OF EDUCATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



የኢትዮጵያ ፌዴራላዊ ዲሞክራሲያዊ ሪፐብሊክ
ትምህርት ሚኒስቴር

FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

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DATE: 08 NOV 2021
 REF NO: 212-559/11/259/135

To: - Jimma University
 To: - Bonga University
 To: - Wolayta University
 To: - Kotebe Education University
 To: HERQA (Higher Education relevance and quality Agency)
 To: -Ministry of Education

Subject: - Request for letter of Permission to Conduct Research

Manaye Abera is a PHD candidate at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and a Senior Expert on Higher Education Competence Assessment Directorate at the Ministry of Education. He is now engaged in a research project entitled "Assessing the Implementation of Quality Assurance Policies in Ethiopian Public Higher Education Institutions." The purpose of this study is to examine how Ethiopian public HEIs execute quality assurance policies and use the findings to create a strategic framework for effective quality assurance policy implementation. As a result, he is seeking your assistance in gathering essential data for the study.

Semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and survey textual questionnaires will be employed to collect data for the project. Individual interviews of no more than 40 minutes will be conducted with the Academic Vice-President, the Quality Assurance Director and Senior Experts, the College Deans and Department Heads at the university, and Academic Staff outside of their usual working hours. The survey textual questionnaire will be administered in collaboration with the student union, and completion of the questions will take around 20 to 30 minutes. This study's participation is entirely voluntary, and there are no known risks connected with it. The information obtained will be kept anonymous and confidential and will only be used for academic purposes. Although participation is entirely optional, the study's purpose is to include specific universities due to their distinctiveness and the necessity to build a full grasp of the concerns.

Therefore, I'm writing to ask that your excellent office assist him in drafting letters of consent for all participants that will allow him to gather data for the study. As part of the feedback process, copies of the research will be made available at each of the universities. Finally, we respectfully request that you writing letters stating your consent to participate.

Thank you for Consideration

Sincerely

CC: To Manaye Abera


Dr. Eba Mijena Negero
 Higher Education
 Academic Affairs
 General



APPENDIX C: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE STUDENT'S UNION

Dear respondent, I am a post graduate student in Educational Management at the University of South Africa /UNISA/. Dear, this is fulfilment of the requirements for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education. I am engaged on a research project entitled "*Assessing the Implementation of Quality Assurance Policies in Ethiopian Public Higher Education*

Institutions." The purpose of this study is to examine how Ethiopian public HEIs execute quality assurance policies and use the findings to create a strategic framework for effective quality assurance policy implementation.

I request you to answer the following questions honestly to the best of your knowledge. Be assured that all the information you will give will be appreciated and treated with confidentiality and used only for the intended academic purpose. Your honest responses will contribute greatly to the success of the study. Your objectivity and cooperation will be highly appreciated. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Manaye Abera Shamelu

Faculty of Education Postgraduate studies in Education

Demographic Information

- i. Gender: Male ----- Female -----
- ii. Age: -----
- iii. Field of study -----
- iv. Year-----

1. Have you been involved in the creation of your university's quality assurance policies and systems? Is it possible for students to contribute? To what degree is your university's existing QA practice connected to the quality of student learning?

2. Did you participate in any quality assurance related activities in your faculty/university since the last 5 years?
3. In your opinion, how do you evaluate the impact of quality assurance practices on the improvement of everyday teaching and learning in your university?
4. What are the specific approaches/procedures employed in your university to assure quality?
5. What are the most significant obstacles/challenges to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning at your college/department, in your opinion?
6. What are the possible solutions to the challenges of the implementation of the quality assurance policies?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS
FOR THE MOE GENERAL DIRECTOR& DIRECTOR

Dear respondent, I am a post graduate student in Education Management at the University of South Africa /UNISA/. Dear, this is fulfilment of the requirements for degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education. I am engaged on a research project entitled "*Assessing the Implementation of Quality Assurance Policies in Ethiopian Public Higher Education*

Institutions." The purpose of this study is to examine how Ethiopian public HEIs execute quality assurance policies and use the findings to create a strategic framework for effective quality assurance policy implementation.

I request you to answer the following questions honestly to the best of your knowledge. Be assured that all the information you will give will be appreciated and treated with confidentiality and used only for the intended academic purpose. Your honest responses will contribute greatly to the success of this work. Your objectivity and cooperation will be highly appreciated. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Manaye Abera Shamelo

College of Education Postgraduate studies

Part I. Demographic Information

- i. Gender: Male ----- Female ----- II. Age: -----
- ii. Professional qualification Bed/BA/BSC ----- MED /MA/MSC----- PhD -----
- iii. Current position -----
- iv. Experience at current position----- v. Total experience -----

Part Two

1. What is your main area of responsibility within this organization?
2. In your opinion, how is quality and quality assurance in higher education perceived/ understood at your university?
3. Have you been involved in the creation of national quality assurance policies and systems?
4. What national internal factors that influenced the government/MoE for the introduction of the quality assurance policy in the Ethiopia? Why did the government/Moe introduce the quality assurance policy? (e.g., growth of the post-secondary education sector, public sector reforms, accountability, managerialism, increased private sector involvement, etc.)?
5. What external (global/international) factors may have been influenced the government/MoE for the introduction of the quality assurance policy in Ethiopia (e.g., recommendations of international consultants and banks, participation in international conventions, developments in other countries, etc.)?
6. What are the fundamental elements, specific approaches, and mechanisms developed by HERQA to assure the quality of higher education?
7. How do the Ethiopian public HEIs go about implementing HERQA's quality assurance policies? To what extent are these approaches being applicable/implementable in Ethiopian HEIs context?
8. Are you satisfied that the HERQA has enough resources and capacity to conduct institutional audits and accredit programs at public HEIs as required within the provision of proclamation? If "No" Why?
9. How is the process of accreditation done in public universities?
10. What focus areas do you check when you go to visit the public universities? What follow up is done to see whether the recommendations are put into practice or not?
11. Are there any control mechanisms at ministry of education level that must put in place to improve the implementation of quality assurance policies in the HEIs institution?
12. In your opinion, what are the primary strengths/weakness of the HERQA quality assurance systems? What is your overall opinion on the QA policy's implementation?
13. Could you kindly share your thoughts/views on the influence/impact of quality assurance policy on the higher education sector in general, and its quality in particular?

14. Is there a set of quality indicators that HEIS may use to improve their education system's quality?
What types of quality indicators does the institution use? (Academic performance, student performance, research performance, teaching resources, research resources)
15. In your opinion, what are the main obstacles/barriers to enacting measures to improve *higher education quality*? How could the government/HERQA overcome these obstacles?
16. From your point of view, what are the internal and external factors that influences/hinders the *implementation of the quality assurance policies* in your universities?
17. What are the possible solutions to the challenges of the implementation of the quality assurance policies?

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS
FOR THE HERQA QUALITY AUDIT DIRECTOR& SENIOR EXPERTS

Dear respondent, I am a post graduate student in Education Management at the University of South Africa /UNISA/. Dear, this is fulfilment of the requirements for degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education. I am engaged on a research project entitled "*Assessing the Implementation of Quality Assurance Policies in Ethiopian Public Higher Education*

Institutions." The purpose of this study is to examine how Ethiopian public HEIs execute quality assurance policies and use the findings to create a strategic framework for effective quality assurance policy implementation.

I request you to answer the following questions honestly to the best of your knowledge. Be assured that all the information you will give will be appreciated and treated with confidentiality and used only for the intended academic purpose. Your honest responses will contribute greatly to the success of this work. Your objectivity and cooperation will be highly appreciated. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Manaye Abera Shamelo

College of Education Postgraduate studies

Part One. Demographic Information

- i. Gender: Male ----- Female ----- II. Age: -----
- ii. Professional qualification Bed/BA/BSC ----- MED /MA/MSC----- PhD -----
- iii. Current position -----
- iv. Experience at current position----- VI. Total experience -----

Part Two

1. What is your responsibility within this organization?
2. In your opinion, how is quality and quality assurance in higher education perceived/understood at your university?
3. Have you been involved in the creation of national quality assurance policies and systems?
4. What national internal factors that influenced the government/MoE for the introduction of the quality assurance policy in the Ethiopia? Why did the government/Moe introduce the quality assurance policy? (e.g., growth of the post-secondary education sector, public sector reforms, accountability, managerialism, increased private sector involvement, etc.)?
5. What external (global/international) factors may have been influenced the government/MoE for the introduction of the quality assurance policy in Ethiopia (e.g., recommendations of international consultants and banks, participation in international conventions, developments in other countries, etc.)?
6. What are the fundamental elements, specific approaches, and mechanisms developed by HERQA/ Education and training Authority to assure the quality of higher education?
7. How do the Ethiopian public HEIs go about implementing HERQA's/ Education and training Authority quality assurance policies?
8. From your point of view to what extent these approaches are applicable/implementable in Ethiopian HEIs context?
9. Is the accrediting procedure conducted at Ethiopian public universities as required by the requirement of proclamation? How is the process of accreditation done in public universities? If 'No' Why?
10. How often do you visit public universities? What focus areas do you check when you go to visit the public universities? What follow up is done to see whether the recommendations are put into practice or not?
11. How frequently do you conduct institutional audits at public universities?
12. Are there any control mechanisms at **HERQA**/ Education and training Authority level that must put in place to improve the implementation of quality assurance policies in the HEIs institution?

13. Are you satisfied that the **HERQA/** Education and training Authority has enough resources and capacity to conduct institutional audits and accredit programs at public HEIs as required within the provision of proclamation? If “No” Why?
14. In your opinion, what are the primary strengths/weakness of the **HERQA/** Education and training Authority quality assurance systems? What is your overall opinion on the QA policy's implementation?
15. Could you kindly share your thoughts/views on the influence/impact of quality assurance policy on the higher education sector in general, and its quality in particular?
16. Is there a set of quality indicators that HEIS may use to improve their education system's quality? What types of quality indicators does the institution use? (Academic performance, student performance, research performance, teaching resources, research resources)
17. In your opinion, what are the main obstacles/barriers to enacting measures to improve higher education quality? How could the government/**HERQA/** Education and training Authority overcome these obstacles?
18. From your point of view, what are the internal and external factors that influences/hinders the implementation of the quality assurance policies in your institution?
19. What are the possible solutions to the challenges of the implementation of the quality assurance policies?

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS
FOR THE UNIVERSITY QUALITY AUDIT OFFICERS

Dear respondent, I am a post graduate student in Education Management at the University of South Africa /UNISA/. Dear, this is the requirements for the fulfilment for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education. I am engaged on a research project entitled "*Assessing the Implementation of Quality Assurance Policies in Ethiopian Public Higher Education*

Institutions." The purpose of this study is to examine how Ethiopian public HEIs execute quality assurance policies and use the findings to create a strategic framework for effective quality assurance policy implementation.

I request you to answer the following questions honestly to the best of your knowledge. Be assured that all the information you will give will be appreciated and treated with confidentiality and used only for the intended academic purpose. Your honest responses will contribute greatly to the success of this work. Your objectivity and cooperation will be highly appreciated. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Manaye Abera Shamelo

Faculty of Education Postgraduate studies in Education

Demographic Information

- i. Gender: Male ----- Female -----
- ii. Age: Below 30 ----- 31-40 ----- 41- 50 ----- 51-60 ----- 61
- iii. Professional qualification Bed/BA/BSC ----- MED /MA/MSC----- PhD -----
- iv. Current position -----
- v. Total Years of experience
Below 2 years ----3-5 ---- 6-10 ---- 11-15 ----- 16-20----21 years and above ----

vi. Years of experience at current position

Below 2 years ----- 3-5 ---- 6-10 -----

1. What is your main area of responsibility within this organization?
2. Do you have any institutional quality assurance rules, standards, or manuals at your university? If so, could you kindly mention the policies that have been developed?
3. In your opinion, how is quality and quality assurance in higher education understood at your university?
4. Is there a responsible body for the implementation of quality assurance policy in your university? Yes. Please (state the responsible body/unit and its responsibilities) No, why?
5. In your opinion, how do you evaluate the impact of quality assurance practices on the improvement of everyday teaching and learning in your university?
6. How do you assess the efficacy of the quality assurance procedure in your university? Has the quality of teaching and learning improved as a result of the QA process? To what degree do you feel that contemporary higher education reforms (such as the BSC, modularization, differentiation, and so on) are legitimate and implementable in terms of enhancing quality of the educational processes?
7. In your opinion, what are the essential circumstances and resources for the efficient implementation of a quality assurance policies at your university/college/department that really affects change in the quality of teaching and student learning?
8. Did your institution identify its stakeholders for quality assurance? If yes, who are the stakeholders that the institution identified? Please mention them. which area of quality assurance did the stakeholders involve?
9. What are the specific approaches/procedures employed in your university to assure quality?
9. What elements of quality are you most concerned with? What are the guiding ideas behind this emphasis on quality? How does your college/department deliver high-quality education?
10. In your opinion, what strategies, will truly impact on the quality of education in everyday teaching and learning practice in higher education institutions?

11. In your view, how much influence/control did the HERQA have over the execution of the quality assurance approaches and mechanisms?
12. Do you believe that the institution's quality assurance policy, tools, techniques, and processes properly consider the academics' interests and concerns?
14. Has your university recently participated in quality assurance activities (institutional self-evaluation, quality audit)? How frequently? Who starts it, and who oversees carrying it out? How do you assess the quality of education in general, and the efficacy of your faculty/quality department's assurance process in particular? Is there an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning because of the QA process? If so, how much so? How can this progress be seen? Is there evidence of progress in areas other than institutional practices? If so, which areas?
15. From your point of view, what are the internal and external factors that influences/hinders the implementation of the quality assurance policies in your universities?
16. What control techniques/mechanisms have a good and negative impact on your quality assurance processes?
17. How do you plan to mediate the HERQA's expectations in the internal quality management system you're putting in place for your institution?
18. What would you recommend for improving your university's present quality assurance rules and/or practices?
19. What recommendations would you offer to the government, educators, university presidents, and lecturers on how to implement quality assurance guidelines/policies at Ethiopian public universities?

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTION
FOR DEPARTMENT HEADS & ACADEMIC STAFF

Dear respondent, I am a post graduate student in Education Management at the University of South Africa /UNISA/. Dear Sir or Madam, this is the requirement fulfilment for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education. I am engaged on a research project entitled "*Assessing the Implementation of Quality Assurance Policies in Ethiopian Public Higher Education*

Institutions." The purpose of this study is to examine how Ethiopian public HEIs execute quality assurance policies and use the findings to create a strategic framework for effective quality assurance policy implementation.

I request you to answer the following questions honestly to the best of your knowledge. Be assured that all the information you will give will be appreciated and treated with confidentiality and used only for the intended academic purpose. Your honest responses will contribute greatly to the success of this work. Your objectivity and cooperation will be highly appreciated. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Manaye Abera Shamelo

Faculty of Education Postgraduate studies in Education

Demographic Information

- i. Gender: Male ----- Female -----
- ii. Age: Below 30 ----- 31-40 ----- 41- 50 ----- 51---60
- iii. Professional qualification Bed /BA/BSC ----- MED /MA/MSC-----PhD -----

ii. Current position -----

iii.Total Years of experience

Below 2 years ----- 3-5 -----6-10 ----- 11-15 ----- 16-20 -----21 years and above ----

iv. Years of experience at current position

Below 2 years ----- 3-5 ----- 6-10 ----- 11-15 -----

1. In your opinion, how is quality and quality assurance in higher education understood at your university?
2. Have you been involved in the creation of your university's quality assurance policies and systems?
3. Did you participate in any quality assurance related activities in your college/department since the last 5 years?
4. To what degree is your university's existing QA practice connected to the quality of student learning?
5. In your opinion, how do you evaluate the impact of quality assurance practices on the improvement of everyday teaching and learning in your university?
6. To what degree is your university's existing QA practice connected to the quality of student learning?
7. To what degree do you feel that contemporary higher education reforms (such as, modularization, differentiation, and so on) are legitimate and implementable in terms of enhancing quality of the educational processes?
8. How do you think quality assurance should be carried out to effect improvements in teaching and learning?
9. What are the specific approaches/procedures employed in your university to assure quality?
10. In your opinion, which approaches, will truly impact on the quality of education in everyday teaching and learning practice in your institutions?
11. Has your department recently participated in quality assurance activities (institutional self-evaluation, quality audit)? How frequently? Who starts it, and who oversees carrying it out? Is there an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning because of the QA process? If so, how can this progress be seen? Is there evidence of progress in areas other than institutional practices? If so, In which areas?
12. From your point of view, what are the internal and external factors that influences/hinders the implementation of the quality assurance policies in your universities?

13. What are the main problems that the college/department has when it comes to implement quality assurance policies?
14. How does academic freedom hinder or limit your efforts in implementing quality assurance policies? (In terms of the policy environment administration and leadership, and QA resources, how much bureaucratic control do you encounter)
15. What control techniques/mechanisms have a good and negative impact on your quality assurance processes?
16. What would you recommend for improving your university's present quality assurance rules and/or practices?
17. What recommendations would you offer to the government, educators, university presidents, and lecturers on how to implement quality assurance guidelines/policies at Ethiopian public universities?

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR UNIVERSITY VICE- PRESIDENTS, AND COLLEGE DEANS

Dear respondent, I am a post graduate student in Educational Management at the University of South Africa /UNISA/. Dear, this is fulfilment of the requirements for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education. I am engaged on a research project entitled "*Assessing the Implementation of Quality Assurance Policies in Ethiopian Public Higher Education Institutions.*" The purpose of this study is to examine how Ethiopian public HEIs execute quality assurance policies and use the findings to create a strategic framework for effective quality assurance policy implementation.

I request you to answer the following questions honestly to the best of your knowledge. Be assured that all the information you will give will be appreciated and treated with confidentiality and used only for the intended academic purpose. Your honest responses will contribute greatly to the success of this work. Your objectivity and cooperation will be highly appreciated. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Manaye Abera Shamelu

College of Education Postgraduate studies

Part One: -Demographic Information

- i. Gender: Male ----- Female ----- II. Age -----
- ii. Professional qualification MED /MA/MSC----- PhD -----
- iii. Current position -----
- iv. Total Years of experience ----- Experience at current position -----

Part Two.

1.1. In your opinion, how is quality and quality assurance in higher education understood at your university?

- 1.2. Do you have any institutional quality assurance rules, standards, or manuals at your university?
If so, could you kindly mention the policies that have been developed?
- 1.3. What national/ internal factors influenced the introduction of the QA policy in the Ethiopia? (e.g., growth of the post-secondary education sector, public sector reforms, accountability, managerialism, increased private sector involvement, etc.)
- 1.4. What external (global/international) elements/factors may have impacted/influenced the implementation of Ethiopia's quality assurance policy? (e.g., recommendations of international consultants and banks, participation in international conventions, developments in other countries, etc.)?
- 2.1. Is there a responsible body for the implementation of quality assurance policy at your university?
Yes. Please (state the responsible body/unit and its responsibilities) No, why?
- 2.2. In your opinion, how do you evaluate the impact of quality assurance practices on the improvement of everyday teaching and learning in your university?
- 2.3. In your opinion, what are the primary strengths of the HERQA quality assurance systems? What is your overall opinion on the QA policy's implementation?
- 2.4. How do you assess the efficacy of the quality assurance procedure in university? Has the quality of teaching and learning improved as a result of the QA process? To what degree do you feel that contemporary higher education reforms (such as the BSC, modularization, differentiation, and so on) are legitimate and implementable in terms of enhancing quality of the educational processes?
- 2.5. In your opinion, what are the essential circumstances and resources for the efficient implementation of a quality assurance policies at your university/college/department that really affects change in the quality of teaching and student learning?
- 2.6. Did your institution identify its stakeholders for quality assurance? If yes, who are the stakeholders that the institution identified? Please mention them. which area of quality assurance did the stakeholders involve?

- 3.1. What are the specific approaches/procedures employed in your university to assure quality?
- 3.2. What elements of quality are you most concerned with? What are the guiding ideas behind this emphasis on quality? How does your college/department deliver high-quality education?
- 3.3. In your opinion, what strategies, will truly impact on the quality of education in everyday teaching and learning practice in higher education institutions?
- 3.4. In your view, how much influence/control did the HERQA have over the execution of the quality assurance approaches and mechanisms?
- 3.5. Do you believe that the institution's quality assurance policy, tools, techniques, and processes properly consider the academics' interests and concerns? If “yes” How?
- 3.6. Has your university/college recently participated in quality assurance activities (institutional self-evaluation, quality audit)? How frequently? Who starts it, and who oversees carrying it out? Is there an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning because of the QA process? If so, how much so? How can this progress be seen? Is there evidence of progress in areas other than institutional practices? If so, which areas?
- 4.1. From your point of view, what are the internal and external factors that influences/hinders the implementation of the quality assurance policies in your universities? How does academic freedom hinder or limit your efforts in implementing quality assurance policies? (In terms of the policy environment administration and leadership, and QA resources) What control techniques/mechanisms have a good and negative impact on your quality assurance processes?
- 4.2. How do you plan to mediate the HERQA's expectations in the internal quality Assurance system you're putting in place for your institution?
- 4.3. Could you kindly share your thoughts/views on the influence/impact of QA on the higher education sector in general, and its quality in particular?
- 5.1. What would you recommend for improving your university's present quality assurance rules and/or practices?

5.2. What recommendations would you offer to the government, educators, university presidents, and lecturers on how to implement quality assurance guidelines/policies at Ethiopian public universities?

INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Research project: Assessing the implementation of quality assurance policies in Public Higher Education Institutions in Ethiopia

Greetings, participant Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this study. You should have enough information to make an educated decision before consenting to participate. Please ask any questions you may have and confirm that you are pleased with the answers before proceeding.

The goal of this study is to evaluate how quality assurance policies are implemented in Ethiopian public higher education institutions. An interview lasting around 40 minutes will be part of your participation in this study. A series of questions will be addressed on the implementation of existing quality assurance rules and practices. You have the option to withdraw from the study at any moment before or during it. Before deciding to participate in the study, you also have the right to ask any questions and have those questions answered, as well as the freedom to decline to answer any of the questions asked during the interview. This study's participation is entirely optional. All interviews will be tape-recorded with your full permission.

Your anonymity is assured and the information you supply during interviews will be treated with the highest discretion. This implies that your identity, including any identifiable characteristics, will not be used in any reports or scholarly publications based on this research, and that data gathered for this project will not be made accessible to outsiders without your prior agreement. Although exact statements may be included in the final report, all information gathered throughout the study that might be used to identify participants will be kept absolutely secret. The remarks of participants will be reported anonymously. The findings of this study will only be utilized for scholarly reasons. To the best of my knowledge, there are no real or possible hazards associated with your involvement in this research endeavour, whether physical, psychological, legal, social, or otherwise. There will be no monetary remuneration for taking part.

This research may be beneficial for presenting your institution's quality assurance processes. You will also get the opportunity to share your thoughts and views on quality assurance in Ethiopian HEIs. The study's findings will be made available to policymakers and institutional leaders for use in planning and decision-making. The study findings will be published in the form of a thesis and may

be presented in public forums. Please do not hesitate to contact me at +251-912150254 or by email at 66588707@mylife.unisa.ac.za. If you have any objections or issues about this study, please contact my mentor, Prof V P Mahlangu, at (+27 12) 0124298550 in South Africa or by email at mahlavp@unisa.ac.za.

Yours sincerely

Manaye Abera Shamelu, PHD. Candidate

Informed Consent

Name of participant: _____ I am voluntarily deciding to participate in this study. My signature certifies that I have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. I understand that the interview will be audio-taped for the purpose of transcription. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature of participant

Date

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

University	Research Questions	key informants	Date	Responsibility
University X	RQ1	Vice presidents, MoE senior experts, and ETA senior experts	Nov.10-17/2021	Responsible for implementing quality assurance policy, decision making, and evaluating self-assessment
	RQ2	Vice presidents, College deans, department heads, lecturers		
	RQ3	Vice presidents, MoE senior experts, and ETA senior experts		
	RQ4	Vice presidents, College deans, department heads, lecturers		
	RQ5	Vice presidents, College deans, department heads, lecturers MoE senior experts, and ETA senior experts		
University A	RQ1	Vice presidents, MoE senior experts, and ETA senior experts	Nov.18-25/2021	Responsible for implementing quality assurance policy, decision-making, and evaluating self-assessment
	RQ2	Vice presidents, College deans, department heads, lecturers		
	RQ3	Vice presidents, MoE senior experts, and ETA senior experts		
	RQ4	Vice presidents, College deans, department heads, lecturers		
	RQ5	Vice presidents, College deans, department heads, lecturers MoE senior experts, and ETA senior experts		
University B	RQ1	Vice presidents, MoE senior experts, and ETA senior experts	Nov.26- Dec.2/2021	Responsible for implementing quality assurance policy, decision-making, and evaluating self-assessment
	RQ2	Vice presidents, College deans, department heads, lecturers		
	RQ3	Vice presidents, MoE senior experts, and ETA senior experts		
	RQ4	Vice presidents, College deans, department heads, lecturers		
	RQ5	Vice presidents, College deans, department heads, lecturers MoE senior experts, and ETA senior experts		
University Y	RQ1	Vice presidents, MoE senior experts, and ETA senior experts	Dec.3-10/2021	Responsible for implementing quality assurance policy, decision-making, and evaluating self-assessment
	RQ2	Vice presidents, College deans, department heads, lecturers		
	RQ3	Vice presidents, MoE senior experts, and ETA senior experts		
	RQ4	Vice presidents, College deans, department heads,		

		lecturers		
	RQ5	Vice presidents, College deans, department heads, lecturers MoE senior experts, and ETA senior experts		
Org.1.	RQ1 RQ2	2 ETA senior experts	December 11, 2021	Responsible for the implementation of QA policy.
Org.2.	RQ1 RQ2	4 MoE Senior Experts	December 12-13, 2021	Responsible for Monitoring and evaluating the implementation

N.B. Students representatives are chosen as key informants, and they were involved by filling textual open-ended questionnaire. Therefore, the representative fills the questionnaire when the researcher is free from the interview schedule in flexible manner.

APPENDIX J: TURNITIN REPORT

Turnitin

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Turnitin Originality Report

Processed on: 28-Jun-2022 00:31 SAST
 ID: 1863871737
 Word Count: 76270
 Submitted: 1

ASSESSING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY IN ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS By Manaye Abera Shamelo

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APPENDIX K: CONFIRMATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDITING



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27 June 2022

Declaration of professional editing

ASSESSING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY IN ETHIOPIAN HIGHER
EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS
by
MANAYE ABERA SHAMELO

I declare that I have edited and proofread this thesis. My involvement was restricted to language usage and spelling, completeness and consistency and referencing style. I did no structural re-writing of the content.

I am qualified to have done such editing, being in possession of a Bachelor's degree with a major in English, having taught English to matriculation, and having a Certificate in Copy Editing from the University of Cape Town. I have edited more than 300 Masters and Doctoral theses, as well as articles, books and reports.

As the copy editor, I am not responsible for detecting, or removing, passages in the document that closely resemble other texts and could thus be viewed as plagiarism. I am not accountable for any changes made to this document by the author or any other party subsequent to the date of this declaration.

Sincerely,

Dr J Baumgardt
UNISA: D. Ed. Education Management
University of Cape Town: Certificate in Copy Editing
University of Cape Town: Certificate in Corporate Coaching
Full member: Professional Editors Guild (BAU001)

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