

Session 1-2

The Case for Botswana Cross Border Tertiary Education

Gagoangwe Bogopa

Master of Education, University of Wales, Cardiff, UK,
Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Management, University College, London.;
Assistant Director, CAD. University of Botswana.

Patricia Ncube

Master of Science in Nursing, Wayne State University Detroit, Michigan, USA.
Post Graduate Certificate in Nursing Education, Wayne State University Detroit,
Michigan, USA.; Deputy Director, CAD. University of Botswana.

Abstract

The Botswana Government recognises the role of human resource in the development of the country's economy. The Botswana National Development Plan 9 (2003-2009) & 10 (2009-2016) emphasise the importance of quality education as an important ingredient in achieving economic growth.

Some Botswana in cross border Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are concerned that some programmes are not up to standard & may not have much impact on the country's development. Graduates are often told that their training is not recognised as programmes and methodologies are neither adequate nor relevant. Cross-border HEIs are steadily increasing while their outputs are being questioned. Challenges faced from these programmes have made some people and employers question their relevance. This is a worrying situation because the key mandate of the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MOESD) is; *“providing efficient, quality and relevant education and training that is accessible to all”* (Botswana Government Vision 2016)

For the MOESD not to have much control on the programmes offered is a setback for the country's human resource development. Currently, there is a widespread understanding throughout the country of the need to get the training accurate & more meaningful. The country is calling for more quality assured provision and to ensure that the private HEIs are value for money in line with Government thinking that; *“The quality of our insight in making the correct policy decisions is not only important in terms of the effectiveness of the tertiary education system that will evolve over time but is also critical to the future of Botswana.”* (Botswana Government Human Resource National Strategy, 2008).

Background

The Botswana Government sees the role of human resource in the development of the country's economy. The government has a vision of an educated and globally competitive human resource by 2016. The Botswana National Development Plan 9 (2003-2009) and 10 (2009-2016) emphasise the importance of quality education as an important ingredient in achieving economic development and recognised the need for the country to urgently establish a national human resource development strategy that will help direct human development, locally, regionally, and internationally. In 2009, the then Minister of Education and Skills Development Mr Nkate Jacob (2009) noted that; *"by 2022 it will be universally accepted that the quality, productivity and motivation of its people will be Botswana's single greatest and valuable resource"*.
pg 4.

The Botswana Gazette on 23 May 2012, too noted that, in promoting human resource development, the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD), Grace Muzila explained that the Ministry will with immediate effect start sponsoring learners who did not perform well but managed to sponsor themselves for certificate courses.

The Ministry of Education and Skills Development has, embarked on developing its national human resource to help diversify the country's economy and minimise dependency on diamonds and farming alone. Botswana's economic diversification is critically tied to having the right skills in place for it to take place. To help the Ministry achieve its vision of human development, the Department of Student Placement of the Ministry of Education and Skills Development, charged with the role of training Botswana at tertiary level intensified its training plan.

Botswana trains its human resource at tertiary level in various countries including within SADC region, e.g. South Africa, Swaziland and Namibia. It also trains in East and West Africa as well as the United Kingdom, Ireland, United States of America, Australia, Czech Republic, etc. In addition, while implementing efforts to train outside the country, there was a gradual increase of non-government tertiary institutions within the country to help address the critical need for human resource development. Most of the non-government institutions set up in the country offer programmes from parent cross border tertiary institutions or as a franchise.

The importance of cross border education is also supported by Bernhard Andrea (2010) who sees higher education from across borders as a promising path to enhance the quality of higher education. Cross-border higher education is a practice implemented in Botswana to meet the growing need and increased demand for higher education as identified in the country's National Development Plan 9 (2004-2009) which focused on increasing access and equity, improving quality and relevance of

education. Having more cross border tertiary education institutions led to a massive increase in students' enrolments in tertiary education institutions, including those privately owned. To parents and other stakeholders, this was a welcome development. The country's enrolment in tertiary education, increased massively from 20,011 in 2003/4 to 47,889 in 2008/9 (National Development Plan 10: April 2009- March 2016). The increase was due to Government's decision to sponsor students into privately owned tertiary institutions registered with Tertiary Education Council. (NDP 10, April 2009 - March 2016). Freedman (2005) in Ncube (2012 unpublished) describes massification as "*an indicator for improving both national economies and the well being of individuals*" pg1.

Freedman further reminds that, massification however needs more funding and high level of quality to satisfactorily serve the large numbers of students and the nation positively.

Botswana like many other African countries has indeed responded to the need for higher education by opening its borders to cross border education. Delivery of HE by cross border providers is under a variety of contractual agreements for institutions such as Limkokwing University for Creative Technology from Malaysia, Boston City Campus, Business Colleges and the University of South Africa (UNISA). Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL) offers programmes from Zimbabwe and London, while UNISA and Boston City Campus work with BA ISAGO- a 100% citizen owned private institution offering higher education. To date, such institutions are few in the country but have through Tertiary Education Council (TEC) QA mechanisms been highly recognised to be offering quality tertiary education such that students are sponsored by the Botswana government to enrol in them and to follow Botswana Training Authority (BOTA) and TEC registration. All are registered by both quality assurance bodies namely BOTA (2004) and TEC (2006).

QA visits aimed at monitoring the quality of programmes in these institutions are cyclical. Those institutions seen to be meeting the criteria and standards are awarded a Certificate of Compliance. The certificate should be shown to any stakeholder upon request. QA authorities also encourage these institutions to continuously conduct self evaluation sessions and produce a self evaluation report. The self evaluation should aim at continuous development of the institution.

An observation made is that although the government of Botswana spends considerable amount of money on cross border training, it has limited control on the types of programmes offered to students in these institutions. However, Botswana government through the Tertiary Education Council (TEC) has introduced quality assurance measures to help guide the transformation of Tertiary Education. The tools

for the transformation include Tertiary Education Policy, the National Human Resource Development Report, the Funding Strategy and Formula for Tertiary Education Institutions (NDP 10). These tools are however not specific and detailed on the programmes and courses offered by these cross-border HE institutions. Further consultations, development and refining are ongoing.

Quality in Higher Education

Tertiary education worldwide as stated earlier is expected to provide the required human resource skills and expertise to service and promote the economy of the country in this competitive world. In developing and providing the workforce with the required skills, quality issues have been a great concern. The concept of quality in higher education has been discussed a lot different fora and with various meanings and interpretations attached to it. Quality though widely discussed has been found to be very difficult to define in a concise manner. Quality means different things to different people e.g. positive student outcomes, teaching and learning processes and overall institutional achievements. Green (1994) views quality in terms of highest standards, conformity to those standards, fitness for purpose, effectiveness in achieving institutional goals and meeting customer needs.

The idea of quality provision has existed for many years in higher education institutions. Newton (2002) alludes to the fact that formal meaning of “quality” in the early 90’s was;

- Perfection
- Value for money (Harvey and Green notion)
- Excellence, management commitment
- Peer review, fitness for purpose and
- Customer satisfaction

Quality viewed as excellence is based a lot on standards, benchmarks and academic achievements while quality assurance is achieved mainly through assessment, accreditation/affiliation, audits and external examination (European University Association 2007)

The European University Association (EUA) also points out that quality depends on how it is used and experienced in practice by those impacted by QA arrangements especially academics. Other views regarding quality are that; *“no one can presume to know what is best for another individual. No one knows the needs or desires of an individual better than that individual, him or herself. Therefore the user must always be at the forefront of all quality assurance activities for the very idea that, quality assurance begins and ends with the user”* Rosmaita G.J. (2001) pg3.

The concept of quality though fundamental to quality assurance systems has been found by many involved in its practice to be complex and subject to different interpretations that reflect the interest of different stakeholders. It is a multi-dimensional and often subjective (Cambell and Rozsnyai 2002) phenomenon. Authors like Harvey and Green (1993) Woodhouse (2006) and the PHARE Manual of QA: Procedures and Practices (1998) conceptualized quality as excellence, zero errors, fitness for purpose, value for money, and continuous improvement. However some of these conceptualisations are now seen as traditional academic views. Though all the definitions may be valid, they do not necessarily suit all circumstances and situations.

The discussions above demonstrate to us that Quality is the eyes and ears of the beholder (www.w3.org/2001/01/qa-ws/pp/greg-roseita-vicag.htm) (Rosmaita, 2001). How then can those in higher education attempt to clarify quality matters to themselves, students and other stakeholders? Quality assurance measures are the best tools to describe quality. Some of these measures to mention a few are;

- clear academic standards
- documented feedback from users
- technologically published information for public consumption
- being ethical and self trusting

For higher education then we need to involve academics, students and other stakeholders such as relevant industries and encourage them to contribute to the quality of teaching and learning.

Quality Assurance in Higher Education

In recent years it has come to light through research that, expanding tertiary education and improving its quality can improve the country's ability to boost its economic output (Bloom, Canny and Chan (2006) as cited by Materu, 2007). Tertiary institutions have since been challenged to ensure quality in higher education (HE) and to continuously improve their programmes, curricula, teaching/learning and assessment methods. This has called for more robust quality assurance processes and mechanisms (World Bank 2002, Tertiary Education Council 2008; Ramatsui, Kupe & Molutsi 2006).

FETAC in its policy on Provider Quality Assurance (2008) notes that; *“to quality assure a service is to do all you can to ensure that customer needs are metthe customers being learners and other stakeholders.”*^{p1}. It is further noted that for one to satisfy customer needs, the provider should clearly know what is to be done, how it is to be done, and whether what has been done has made a difference (FETAC 2008). Botswana in its attempt to improve higher education, moved swiftly to install QA mechanisms by first of all establishing the Tertiary

Education Council through an Act of Parliament in 1999. The Council in its Quality Assurance Manual of 2009 has clearly defined quality assurance and its implementation approach. In the Tertiary Education Act of 1999, the Council outlines among its responsibility the following:

- Registration of institutions,
- Institutional accreditation and
- Quality assurance.

TEC's emphasis is more on quality assurance. In its Quality Assurance Manual (2009), just like some authors, the Council indicates that quality has neither a common definition nor a common measure. A move was then taken to define quality assurance as "a process of establishing stakeholder confidence that provision (inputs, process and outcomes) fulfils expectations or measures up to threshold minimum requirements".pg1. Thus the Council saw it fit to focus more on quality assurance as the subtheme of the conference suggests concentrating more on sustainability of quality assurance processes. In addition, QA Standards and Criteria to be followed by both public and private providers are clearly laid out. Great strides have been made in accrediting institutions and even controlling proliferation of Degree/Diploma Mills.

While TEC supports access to education as a Council, it is very much concerned about the quality of education provision. It has, as EQA taken as one of its major roles of quality assurance, the responsibility to assist higher education institutions rethink their teaching/learning strategies to achieve quality outputs. Little room now exists in HEIs for traditional type teaching and learning. All public HE institutions too, such as Colleges of Education, Health Training Institutions and the University of Botswana are registered with TEC following quality assessments based on set standards and criteria. In assuring and improving quality, many aspects are covered within the criteria and standards utilized for HE in Botswana. One helpful dimension which has gained momentum is that of student and industry complaints and other stakeholders' alertness and interest in quality of HE for their children. These help HE institutions to constantly relook at their programmes and methodologies with the aim of continuous improvement. This aspect with its inputs is gradually being accepted by academics as being of great importance though the big questions border a lot on the level of involvement taking into account implications on the QA systems (Thune 1998). As authors, we have noted that some countries like New Zealand involve students in their Academic Boards, while in Iceland students' involvement is compulsory. Australia and China engage students through course evaluation questionnaires. For Botswana, this still requires strengthening.

Methods and instruments utilised for QA:

The authors have observed that one common method used is the four stage model which is implemented by the majority of QA agencies (Santiago, Trenblay, Basri & Arnal (2008). The four stages are;

Internal Quality Assurance which institutions do quite often but with comprehensive reports for stakeholder consumption published on a 2year basis.

- Self evaluation
- Institutional quality assessments through 4 year visits
- Publication of assessment reports for students and stakeholders' consumption.

In addition, the country through the Ministry of Education and Skills Development has just completed the task of developing and has begun publicising a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which is another quality assurance tool. The NQF will ensure greater opportunities to learners nationally and internationally to participate in higher education.

Characteristic befitting an effective QA system

TEC in its quality assurance measures for cross-border higher education offering institutions aims to ensure the following:

- a) All staff members in the institution should be involved in QA practice and implementation at various levels.
- b) Quality assurance visits should be as objective as possible.
- c) Promotion of achievements of institutional goals and objectives.
- d) Clearly stated and achievable standards. .
- e) Promotion of continuous quality improvement (HEQC 1994).
- f) Clear Guidelines and Procedures in place.
- g) Clear and specific roles and responsibilities.
- h) Outcomes of QA should inform decision making (EUA 2007).
- i) The necessary achievement updates should be made on an annual basis.

Authors conducted interviews on selected cross border Higher Education Institutions to ascertain the case for the move from quality providers to quality provision. Interviews revealed that quality assurance provision by TEC as an external QA body and cross border education institutions themselves have some major advantages such as those outlined by Thune (1996) which are:

- ❖ Impartiality
- ❖ Credibility
- ❖ Authority
- ❖ Comprehensiveness
- ❖ Consistency

❖ Transparency

TEC as an External QA system serves as a catalyst for internal improvements in HE institutions both public and private including cross-border providers and helps in self improvement as it advises, supports and encourages research and even provides training and development upon request.

Challenges to Quality Assurance Provision in Botswana Higher Education Institutions

One weakness of massification is introducing more and more courses to meet the need for diversification. This may compromise on quality (Mohamedbhai 2008). HE institutions in Botswana are continuously being monitored to ensure that while they do their utmost to focus HE on market needs, quality is not compromised. Those interviewed e.g. Limkokwing University in Botswana embraces industries a lot in the supervision of students' practical activities, in meetings and in external moderation as a quality assurance practice (Academic Office Interview held 20/2/12). Botswana government too, in mediating the effects of massification, offers through BOCODOL, more Open and Distance Learning (ODL) programmes, a number of which are cross-border and is encouraging HE institutions to use ICTs to vary teaching strategies and manage teaching and learning. Various faculties and departments are also encouraged to come up with problem solving approaches in education, such as outcome based and self –directed learning.

In ascertaining how the concept of quality assurance is implemented in cross-border HE institutions in Botswana, one of the cross-border institutions was visited and below are outcomes of the visit.

Visit to Cross Border Institutions

The authors visited the institution to learn from a cross-border institution their aspect of quality assured provision. In this institution, quality assurance is mainly industry focussed. The industry has a strong influence on the quality of the students at the end of their programme. Quality assurance is what is accepted and relevant to industry.

The University has a quality assurance office specifically responsible for maintaining quality of academic programmes through but not limited to the following;

- Teaching and learning
- Internal quality monitoring
- Relevant programme content
- Effective and efficient teaching methodologies
- Programme evaluation and assessment

➤ Special education needs

The Academic Quality Assurance office (AQA) works closely with Human Resource office to ensure that academic staff is of quality. The office sits in most of the academic staff selection panels. The office therefore ensures that: The University

- I. Conforms and complies with TEC requirements.
- II. Programme objectives are aligned to institutional objectives.
- III. Assessment processes are appropriate and effective.
- IV. Quality assures assessments.
- V. Trains staff on test development.
- VI. Develops and monitors Examination Setting Policy and Procedures.
- VII. Facilitates external moderation.

The University processes operate through a variety of boards, committees, and teams aimed at maintaining quality of programmes. These include but are not limited to the following;

a) Board of Studies

This is an interim board set up to check progress in teaching and learning. All members of academic staff are members of this Board. The Board produces a report concerning the teaching and learning which is considered by Senate.

b) Joint Faculty Board

The Board cuts across faculties and programmes. It helps to standardise programme development and delivery. It is composed of Heads of faculties. Among other things, the Board facilitates cross teaching, for example a member from one faculty will teach a relevant component in another faculty, such as an Information Technology lecturer teaching that aspect in another faculty. A report is produced.

c) Board of Examinations

The Board comprises Heads of Department, programme leaders and Principal lecturers. It is responsible for all issues concerning examinations. It gives feedback on how the examinations progressed. A report is produced

d) Board of Appeal

The Board of Appeal is responsible for appeals concerning examinations. Appeals are taken within two weeks after the results are published. The students are required to pay an appeals fee.

e) Quality Team

The University has a Quality Team which works closely with key faculty quality representatives. The team monitors quality of programmes. In between, students assess their lecturers on their teaching. They do not indicate their names on the assessment sheet. There is also a system of principal lecturer assessment of staff.

Principal lecturers observe and assess staff. Staff training needs are based on the results of this assessment

Apart from coordinating quality Boards and Teams, AQA is tasked with various other quality assurance activities including the ones listed below:

Policy and Procedure Development

The office is also responsible for programme development. It works closely with key stakeholders such as faculties and the Tertiary Education Council (TEC). In addition, AQA quality assures policy development. There is a strong liason with departments and faculties on matters of programme development. The office sets up a board to determine whether developed programmes reflect what the university wants to achieve. It conducts Policy Needs Assessment for effectiveness and efficiency.

Research and Publication

TEC requires Higher Education Institutions to base teaching and learning on research. All tertiary institutions including cross-border education institutions should take research as a priority. The authors were informed that the university is not doing well in this area. A lot of staff is not engaged in research except in a few cases. However they are being encouraged all the time to do some research as that is one important way to enrich teaching and learning. Students, working closely with industry are carrying out some industry related research. Like all other universities, the institution visited is facing challenges regarding funds for research and publication.

Final Examinations

Faculties submit a pool of questions. The office of AQA sets examinations following a template. The principal lecturer responsible for a number of subjects moderates the set paper. The examination and all the processes for examinations are conducted in the examination office where the examinations are kept under lock and key in the strong room. The strong room is under the AQA office. The examination processes including typing and printing are done under the supervision of AQA personnel. For security reasons, the computers used for the examinations are not networked and the room is network proof.

Challenges Facing Quality Assurance Provision in the institution visited

The university experiences the following quality assurance challenges;

- a) Inadequate trained personnel with Masters and PhDs. Programmes are mainly industry focussed resulting in limited staff with the right qualifications for some

specialised programmes such as in Film Industry, Computer Engineering and Hospitality Industry.

- b) The university's main pool of relevant staff is from outside the country. This in some cases clashes with the country's localisation policy and therefore creating friction with the university, the regulatory body, and the immigration office. This makes proper and continuous implementation of QA activities difficult as the 2-year contracts awarded to non-locals are often too short for educational activities.
- c) A high number of staff has first Degrees unlike the minimum of a Masters Degree required by the regulatory body.
- d) In some cases, the regulatory body is unable to get some of the specialised assessors with appropriate qualifications locally. They are forced to solicit them from outside the country at the expense of the university.
- e) Erratic student population sponsorship mainly by government e.g. a drop of sponsored student population from 11,000 down to 2000 in 2011/12.
- f) Overreliance on government sponsorship.
- g) Inadequate staffing.
- h) Negative staff perception of quality assurance.

Recommendations

The authors recommend the following measures with the aim of improving quality assured provision in cross-border higher education:

- a) Well documented Policy, guidelines, rules and regulations governing specifically cross-border HEIs.
- b) More transparency students, parents, employers, government and other stakeholders on all matters related to cross-border higher education in the country.
- c) The role and functions of quality assurance agencies should be in place and shared with all including students, parents and stakeholders.
- d) Staff development activities, workshops and seminars should include the importance of quality assured provision.
- e) The need for more benchmarking locally, regionally and internationally on best practices in QA provision.
- f) There is need for a local quality assurance network for all QA bodies of higher education locally.

Conclusion

The need for quality assured provision in Higher Education cannot be overemphasised. Cross cross-border higher education institutions working with regulatory institutions should make continuous quality improvement their daily bread. This would ensure their credibility to the students, government, parents, industry and communities. There should be continuous review and refining of aspects of quality assurance measures. The TEC, BOTA and Academic Quality Units in cross-border higher education institutions, other universities and colleges in Botswana are willing and committed to supporting and implementing HE quality assurance endeavours with the aim of maintaining continuous quality improvement. Institutions in the country are generally moving from placing emphasis on being quality providers to quality assured provision.

References

- Botswana Government () Vision 2016: Towards Prosperity for All. Retrieved on 07/10/12 from website [http://www.vision2016-faq.php#toggleVie\(q1\)](http://www.vision2016-faq.php#toggleVie(q1))
- Campbell, C. & Rozsnyai, C. (2002), Quality Assurance and the Development of Course Programmes. Papers on Higher Education Regional University Network on Governance and Managemnt of Higher Education in South East Europe Bucharest, UNESCO (pp.19-23).
- FETAC (2010) Provider Quality Assurance and Registration.
- Government of Botswana (1999). Tertiary Education Council Act, 1999; Gaborone: Government Printers
- European University Association (2007) Embedding Quality Culture in Higher Education. A Selection of Papers from the 1st European Forum for Quality Assurance, Brussels, Belgium.
- Green, D. (1994) What is Quality in Higher Education? Buckingham: SRHE: Open University Press.
- Rosmaita, G. J. (2001) Position paper for the W3C/NIST Quality Assurance Workshop, Washington, DC: April 3&4 2001 www.w3.org/2001/01/qa
- Harvey,L& Green,D. (1993) “ Defining Quality” Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, Vol. 18.No1, 9-34.
- Materu, P. (2007) Higher Education Quality Assurance in Sub-Saharan Africa. Status, Challenges, Opportunities and Promising Practices. The World Bank, Paper No. 124. Washington, DC.
- Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. (2009) National Development Plan 10: April 2009 – March 2016: Vol.1, Government Printers, Gaborone. Botswana.

- Mohamedbhai, G. (2008). The Effects of Massification on Higher Education in Africa: Association of African Universities. Working Group on Higher Education.
- Newton, J. (2002). What is Quality? European University Association.
- Republic of Botswana Ministry of Education and Skills Development (2009)
- National Human Resource Development Strategy: Realizing Our Potentials. Gaborone: Government Printers.
- Santiago, P. Trenblay, P. Basri, K. & Arnal, E. (2008). Assuring Quality Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society. Vol. Paris, OECD 259-317.
- Tertiary Education Council Quality Assurance Manual (2009). Gaborone: Government Printers.
- Thune, C. (1996). “The Alliance of Accountability and Improvement: the Danish Experience”. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 2. No1.
- Thune, C. (1998) The European Systems of Quality Assurance; Dimensions of Harmonisation and Differentiation” Higher Education, Management Vol. 10, No.3
- Woodhouse, D. (2006). Quality =Fitness for Purpose, presentation at APQN Conference, Shanghai, 2 March 2006.