

# **PERCEPTIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN BOTSWANA**

By

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## DEDICATION

To my dear husband, Basner Pule for his unwavering love and support;

My children, Neo, Tshepo and Kitso jr. sedisa, my pillars of strength;

My mother, Sophie Keneilwe Tshane, my mentor; and

My late father, Patrick Moutlwatsi Tshane.

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Gomotsegang Joyce Pule

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## ABSTRACT

Quality and its assurance are now important aspects of higher education in both developed and developing nations. Accordingly, this study seeks to explore the perceptions of stakeholders with regards to quality assurance in higher education institutions in Botswana. The study employed mixed methods research, which is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis, Ivankoka, Creswell and Sticks (2006). Interviews were conducted with heads of quality units at Limkokwing and BIUST, Deans, Deputy Deans, Heads of Departments, DVC AA at UB and other academic staff members as well as questionnaires to also include officials in the ministry of education who are in charge of tertiary education. Quantitative data was analysed statistically using SAS V9.3 running under windows XP on a desktop computer.

Interviews were conducted with 34 staff members from the participating institutions, while 61 lecturers from UB, Limkokwing and BIUST and 3 officers from the ministry of education responded to the questionnaires.

The respondents in this study emphasised the need for proper implementation of the institutions quality assurance policy. The academic staff members also raised concern over high teaching loads and understaffing that impact negatively on the achievement of quality academic programmes. Chief among the recommendations in this study is the call for team work between the institutions and other important stakeholders like TEC and the ministry and to put in place a research plan for the institution in order to improve research output by the academic staff members. In terms of future research, the respondents suggested that there should be more research conducted to establish a quality assurance model that can be relevant to the institution.

**Key words:** Quality      Quality assurance      Higher education      empowerment      Quality assurance models

## List of figures

1.1 Conceptual framework of the study .....	9
5.1 Data collection and analysis .....	100
6.18 Gender of the respondents in institution D .....	167
6.19 Area of specialisation .....	168
6.20 Number of years in current post .....	170
8.1 Reflective timeline .....	238
8.2 Research experience .....	238

## List of tables

5.2 Research strategies with respect to research questions .....	114
6.1 Questionnaire response rate.....	124
6.2 Respondents per institution.....	126
6.3 Employment status of respondents .....	127
6.4 Gender of respondents .....	129
6.5 Age ranges of academic staff .....	130
6.6 Qualifications of the respondents.....	132
6.7 Area of specialization of academic staff .....	134
6.8 Previous work experience .....	135
6.9 Current positions of academic staff .....	138
6.10 Number of years in current institution .....	140
6.11 Core duties of academic staff.....	141
6.12 Involvement with quality assurance .....	142
6.13 Experiences and opinions of quality assurance in Institution A .....	146
6.14 Experiences and opinions of quality assurance in Institution B .....	150
6.15 Experiences and opinions of quality assurance in Institution C.....	154



6.16 Levels of knowledge of quality assurance policy for institution A.....	157
6.17 Levels of knowledge of quality assurance policy for institution B.....	160
6.18 Levels of knowledge of quality assurance policy for institution C.....	163
6.19 Questionnaire response rate for institution D.....	165
6.20 Age of respondents .....	167
6.21 Previous work experience .....	169
6.22 Current positions.....	170
6.23 Experience and involvement in policy .....	173
6.24 Knowledge of the institutions quality assurance mechanisms.....	175
6.25 Top three areas that benefited from quality assurance experience .....	177
6.26 Interview response rate .....	178

### **List of acronyms and abbreviations**

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
APRU	Academic programme Review Unit
BIUST	Botswana International University of Science and Technology
BQA	Botswana Qualifications Authority
CAD	Centre for Academic Development
CHE	Council on Higher education
CMM	Capacity Maturity Model
DQATS	Departmental Quality Assurance Teams
DVC-AA	Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs
HE	Higher Education
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee

HOD	Head of Department
INQAAHE	International Network of Quality Assurance Associations in Higher Education
ISO	International Organisation for Standardization
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NCHE	Namibian Commission on Higher Education
NDP	National Development Plan
PMS	Performance Management System
QA	Quality Assurance
QASC	Quality Assurance Support Committee
QUAL	Qualitative
QUAN	Quantitative
SARUA	Southern African Regional Universities Association
TEAS	Teaching Excellence Awards
TEC	Tertiary Education Council
TIGS	Teaching Improvement Grants
TLU	Teaching and Learning Unit
TQM	Total Quality Management
UB	University of Botswana
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UP	University of Pretoria
ZCHE	Zimbabwean Commission on Higher Education

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>DEDICATION.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES.....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES.....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>LIST OF ACRONYMS .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background to the study .....	1
1.2 Key terminology .....	3
1.3 Statement of the problem.....	3
1.4 Focus of the study .....	5
1.5 Aim of the study .....	6
1.6 Research questions .....	6
1.7 Outline and organization of the study .....	7
1.8 Conceptual framework of the study .....	8
1.9 Conclusion .....	9
<b>CHAPTER 2 QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	11
2.2 Quality .....	11
2.2.1 Quality as exceptional .....	13
2.2.2 Quality as perfection .....	14

2.2.3	Quality as fitness for purpose .....	14
2.2.4	Quality as value for money.....	15
2.2.5	Quality as transformation .....	15
2.3	Quality assurance .....	17
2.4	The university as an institution .....	18
2.4.1	Factors that led to quality assurance in higher education.....	21
2.4.2	Perspectives on quality assurance in higher education.....	24
2.5	Aspects of quality assurance in higher education.....	25
2.5.1	External examiner/moderator system .....	26
2.5.2	Academic Programme development and review.....	27
2.5.3	Facilitating learning .....	29
2.5.4	Assessment.....	30
2.5.4.1	Assessment of learning .....	30
2.5.4.2	Assessment of teaching practice.....	31
2.5.4.3	Self-assessment .....	31
2.5.5	The teaching portfolio .....	32
2.5.6	Staff appraisal and development .....	33
2.5.7	National and international benchmarking .....	37
2.5.8	Learning and teaching policy.....	38
2.5.9	Quality assurance officers and committees.....	39
2.6	Quality assurance models in higher education .....	39
2.6.1	Malcolm Baldrige Model .....	40
2.6.2	ISO 9000:2000 Model.....	41
2.6.3	Capacity Maturity Model (CMM) .....	43
2.6.4	Six Sigma Model .....	44

2.6.5 Total Quality Management(TQM) .....	46
2.7 Conclusion .....	49
<b>CHAPTER 3 QUALITY ASSURANCE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES .....</b>	<b>51</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	51
3.2 Educational changes.....	51
3.2.1 Education reform in Botswana .....	54
3.2.2 Education reform in Zimbabwe .....	58
3.2.3 Education reform in Lesotho .....	60
3.3 The nature of higher education institutions in developing countries .....	62
3.4 Problems with higher education institutions in developing countries .....	63
3.5 Quality assurance in higher education in Botswana, South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe .....	64
3.6 Conclusion .....	67
<b>CHAPTER 4 QUALITY ASSURANCE AT UB.....</b>	<b>69</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	69
4.2 Background to quality assurance at UB .....	69
4.3 UB quality assurance .....	73
4.4 The UB Academic quality management policy.....	74
4.5 Quality assurance mechanisms at UB .....	78
4.5.1 Quality assurance of programmes .....	80
4.5.2 Quality assurance of teaching and learning .....	81
4.5.3 Quality assurance of assessment and student learning.....	90
4.5.4 Quality assurance of research and publications .....	91
4.6 Conclusion .....	92
<b>CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>95</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	95

5.2 Research paradigm.....	95
5.3 Research design.....	97
5.4 Validity.....	101
5.5 Reliability.....	103
5.6 Research methods.....	105
5.6.1 Sample and participants.....	105
5.6.2 Instruments.....	106
5.6.3 Procedures.....	110
5.7 Data collection.....	111
5.7.1 Literature review.....	115
5.7.2 Document analysis.....	115
5.8 Data analysis.....	116
5.9 Researcher's role in the research process.....	118
5.10 Ethical considerations.....	119
5.11 Limitations of the study.....	119
5.12 Conclusion.....	120
<b>CHAPTER 6 EMPIRICAL STUDY.....</b>	<b>122</b>
6.1 Introduction.....	122
6.2 Data gathered by means of questionnaires.....	122
6.2.1 Participation in and response to the questionnaire by academic staff.....	124
6.2.2 Findings from background information.....	126
6.2.3 Findings in section B.....	144
6.3 Findings from the questionnaire for institution D.....	165
6.3.1 Findings from section A.....	166
6.3.2 Findings from section B.....	172
6.4 Findings from the interviews and open ended questions.....	177

6.4.1 Participation in and response to interviews.....	177
6.4.2 Interview data .....	178
6.4.2.1 Knowledge of policy .....	179
6.4.2.2 Policy development .....	187
6.4.2.3 Government position on quality assurance by the university .....	188
6.4.2.4 Reporting on quality assurance.....	190
6.4.2.5 Performance management mechanisms .....	192
6.4.2.6 Support and training for academic staff on quality assurance .....	194
6.4.2.7 Preferred quality assurance model for UB.....	194
6.4.2.8 Opinions regarding the institution’s quality assurance policy.....	196
6.4.2.9 Changes/improvements to the institution’s quality assurance policy .....	200
6.5 Conclusion .....	204
<b>CHAPTER 7 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>206</b>
7.1 Introduction.....	206
7.2 Summary of the research process.....	206
7.3 Research findings and their analysis .....	207
7.3.1 Research questions and their findings .....	208
7.4 Summary of issues from the findings.....	219
7.4.1 Academic quality assurance and staff empowerment.....	219
7.4.2 Working environment and quality assurance .....	220
7.4.3 The role of other stakeholders in quality assurance.....	220
7.4.4 Institutional culture and focus .....	220
7.5 Implications of the study.....	221
7.6 Conclusions and recommendations from the study .....	221

7.6.1 Conclusion 1 .....	222
7.6.2 Conclusion 2 .....	222
7.6.3 Conclusion 3 .....	223
7.6.4 Conclusion 4 .....	223
7.7 Conclusion .....	224
<b>CHAPTER 8 SCHOLARLY REFLECTION ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS .....</b>	<b>225</b>
8.1 Introduction.....	225
8.2 The proposal.....	225
8.2.1 Plan .....	225
8.2.2 Implementation/defense .....	226
8.2.3 Feedback.....	227
8.3 Ethical clearance.....	228
8.3.1 Completion of forms.....	228
8.3.2 Submission.....	229
8.3.3 Feedback.....	229
8.4 Drafting of the chapters .....	230
8.4.1 Plan .....	230
8.4.2 Implementing .....	234
8.4.3 Submission.....	235
8.4.4 Feedback.....	235
8.4.5 Evaluation .....	237
8.5 The final product .....	238
8.6 Opportunities for further research .....	238
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>APPENDIX I-Consent letters .....</b>	<b>252</b>



<b>APPENDIX II- Academic staff cover letter and questionnaire .....</b>	<b>254</b>
<b>APPENDIX III Ministry cover letter and questionnaire .....</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>APPENDIX IV-Interview schedule for Academic staff, Heads of quality units and DVC-AA .....</b>	<b>274</b>
<b>APPENDIX V- Permission letters for UB, LIMKOKWING , BIUST and Ministry of Education .....</b>	<b>281</b>
<b>APPENDIX VI- Codes for qualitative data.....</b>	<b>285</b>

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the study

Higher education institutions in developing countries are now convinced that they need quality and some form of quality assurance in order to remain competitive. As a result policies, structures and systems at national, regional and international levels have been developed to address quality issues in higher education institutions.

Higher education institutions all over the world have established their own quality assurance criteria to suit their different contexts. Quality assurance takes place at different levels, namely individual, institutional and national level (Brown 2004:x). The individual or micro-level of quality assurance involves the academic staff members engaging in self-reflection to identify their strengths, weakness and in focusing on areas for growth and plans for improvement. According to the Council on Higher Education Report of 1999, “the institutional or internal level is where the institution decides to use strategies such as external examining, academic audits and programme reviews to ensure that teaching and learning meet the required standards”. In some higher education institutions quality assurance offices are set up to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and these are supported by committees at departmental, faculty and institutional level. At national (macro) level countries also have overarching quality assurance systems. The Botswana Tertiary Education Sector Strategy 2009 - 2016 outlines that in order to do this, a number of bodies have been set up in different countries to carry out the quality assurance role that involves institutional audits and registration of institutions. For example, the Government of Botswana decided to set up the Tertiary Education Council (TEC) “to take responsibility for quality assurance in higher education institutions in the country”. It is worth noting that, TEC has now been abolished and its quality assurance role has now be taken over by a new body called Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA)

Other countries such as South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe also have bodies set up to take up the responsibility of constructing and implementing national quality assurance systems in the respective counties. “The standards set at national level are meant to enhance the internal ones” (Brown 2004:x).

The need for quality in the education sector in general and in higher education specifically is very important for the various stakeholders involved. Factors such as;” the great expansion of higher education, the need for accountability, limited public expenditure on education and student demands in certain fields of education are some of the issues that seem to have led to the need for quality in education”(Materu 2007:2). Even with these factors in mind there seems to be no particular aspect that can be referred to as the standard for the empowerment of academic staff members in higher education. This is because the aspects that an institution selects are influenced by many contextual factors such as the background, culture and purpose of that particular institution. These factors have brought about different quality assurance criteria to serve the varied purposes of each institution. Mishra (2007), “however noted that quality and its assurance are important for the enhancement of higher education and therefore it is imperative to use aspects of quality assurance to empower the academic staff members of an institution to take responsibility and contribute in this regard”.

Different quality assurance criteria such as; “external programme reviews, accreditation, rankings and ratings, Total Quality Management, accountability and performance indicators, and others are discussed; the current thinking is to look for quality assurance models for the future as well” (Cheung 2003:202). The University of Botswana is currently using external programme reviews but these approaches have been found to have shortcomings, particularly in terms of addressing other areas of the institution, such as academic staff members taking full responsibility for the quality assurance activities in the institution.

The current thinking is, “to identify an institution-wide quality assurance model that will address quality in all areas of the institution as well as respond to future needs of the society” (Cheng 2003:2002; Materu 2007:xv). Notwithstanding this line of thought, the study focuses only on quality assurance strategies to empower academic staff members of the institution to take responsibility and contribute to quality academic programmes of the institution, which includes quality checks on teaching and learning. According to Materu (2007) and Mishra (2007), “ultimately the responsibility for quality assurance rests with institutions and it is very important for academic staff members to be developed in order to drive the institution’s quality initiatives”.

It is also important at this point to mention my motivation for engaging in a study of this nature. First and foremost, has been a desire for my professional growth. My engagements in higher education over the years have awoken my desire to attain some professional development with the aim of improving my outlook towards my work. The desire to learn has resulted in my discovery of my strong and weak points through my engagements with various colleagues both in my institution and the other institutions that I worked with during my studies. Of importance at this point, is my discovery and acceptance of the different views and thinking processes of the various individuals that I worked with and the relationships that we developed over the five years of my study, which in my view will go a long way in developing me as a young researcher.

The other benefit has been the opportunity to learn and further explore other people's 'thoughts and views in relation to the topic of my study. This provided me with valuable information that benefited my role as a quality assurance officer in UB.

Secondly, my desire to make a valuable contribution in my institution's quest for quality also motivated me to engage in this study. The University of Botswana is one of the institutions of higher learning in Botswana that aims to continuously improve the quality of its processes and procedures. As such, it needs staff members who are interested and willing to contribute to this improvement drive. In addition, the higher education reforms that are now prevalent in the country also call for higher education institutions to improve the quality of their programmes and services in order for them to remain competitive in the country and outside.

## **1.2 Key terminology**

Quality; Quality Assurance; Accountability; Internal evaluation; External evaluation; Quality management policy; Higher education; Empowerment standards.

## **1.3 Statement of the problem**

The University of Botswana (UB) that serves as exemplar in this study was established in 1982 (UB Calendar 2004 -5:10). From then up to now many changes have taken place in the institution. One such change is the introduction of semesterised courses/modules instead of year-long ones. With the introduction of semesterisation came calls for quality assurance of

the institution's academic programmes. Even the current strategic plan of 2009 - 2016 emphasises commitment to quality and provision of high standards of service to all the stakeholders. Sustainability, quality and relevance, and serving the development of the nation are key driving forces that inform the strategic plan. According to the UB Teaching and Learning Policy of 2008 the institution also aims to have high quality academic programmes that prepare students to function effectively in every sphere of life and to contribute to the economic needs of the country.

The strategic direction of the institution is also influenced by other important national initiatives such as Vision 2016 and the Tertiary Education Policy of 2008 (UB Strategic Plan 2008). The UB Quality Management Policy of 2007 calls for "stronger relevance and improved quality of academic programmes" that meet national development priorities; the University of Botswana has to respond to this by ensuring quality academic programmes. The Tertiary Education Policy also calls on the university to "support the development of the country's human resources with the knowledge and skills to deliver competitively in the knowledge economy" (Tertiary Education Policy 2008:10).

As a result of the above, the institution has set up a committee to develop a framework and process for internal and external monitoring of quality of academic programmes. The specific aims of the framework are" to:

- have in place procedures and processes for quality assurance in the institution
- establish a system that will ensure the quality of academic programmes to meet stakeholder needs
- ensure that quality as well as academic excellence is maintained
- have in place international benchmarks to measure the quality of programmes in the academic departments" (UB Academic Quality Management Policy 2003:35)

The framework recommends the establishment of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms in faculties. The internal quality assurance mechanisms address "quality assurance of programmes, academic staff, and teaching and assessment". The external

quality assurance aspect involves “the external review of academic programmes and external examining of master’s and PhD research”.

However, even with the framework in place, there is still a problem when it comes to the implementation of the framework in the faculties and departments at UB. Academic staff members in the departments seem not at all knowledgeable regarding the framework and its expectations from them. For instance, all departments are expected to establish departmental Quality Assurance Teams, but these are not functional in all the departments. The main function of the teams is to ensure quality assurance of courses in the departments. The application of quality assurance in the institution is not consistent across all the departments and this is due mainly to the fact that academic staff members lack awareness of the policy and therefore fail to implement it.

The commitment by all staff members to issues of quality should result in continuous quality improvement in UB academic programmes that would lead to the achievement of the UB vision and mission “to be a leading academic centre of excellence in Africa and the World” (UB Strategic Plan 2008). It is against this background that the researcher has established the need for a model that would ensure empowerment of academic staff at UB to take responsibility for the quality assurance of academic programmes at micro-level in the institution.

#### **1.4 Focus of the study**

The main focus of this study is quality assurance policies, practices and models that are being used in higher education institutions; more precisely, those that can be used to empower academic staff at UB to drive the quality initiatives of the institution. It is important to note that the focus of the study is on intrapersonal quality assurance or quality assurance at individual level and not organisational quality assurance. Intrapersonal quality assurance emphasises commitment towards quality by academic staff members. In trying to establish a quality assurance model that is relevant to the empowerment of academic staff at UB, the researcher also engaged with other institutions in the country such as Limkokwing and BIUST as well as the ministry of education to try and get their views regarding quality assurance in higher education in Botswana.

This engagement was very helpful in establishing the gaps in the practices and suggestions on how to improve those, with the ultimate goal of academic quality.

### 1.5 Aim of the study

The main aim of the study is to explore aspects of quality assurance in higher education in developing countries in Africa, especially those that could be used to empower academic staff members at the University of Botswana to take responsibility for ensuring quality of teaching and learning in the institution. The University of Botswana is used as a case study and exemplar in this context.

The study aims to benefit higher education institutions in developing countries and in particular the University of Botswana as well as other stakeholders in an effort to ensure that academic staff members take full responsibility for quality academic programmes in the institution. They should make a contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the area of quality assurance in higher education in general. The vision of the University of Botswana is “to be a leading centre of academic excellence in Africa and the world; the need for a well-developed quality assurance culture that can drive this quest for excellence is very important for the institution” (UB Strategic Plan 2008:3).

### 1.6 Research questions

The overarching research question of this study is: **What strategies can be used to empower academic staff members at UB in terms of quality assurance?** In order to address this question the following sub-questions are addressed:

- What are the perceptions of stakeholders in terms of quality assurance in higher education in Botswana?
- Which strategies are applicable to quality assurance for the University of Botswana?
- What are the needs of academic staff members of UB in terms of empowerment with regard to quality assurance?
- Which quality assurance model would be relevant to the empowerment of academic staff at UB?

## **1.7 Outline and organisation of the study**

In order to achieve its aim the study proceeds from a theoretical standpoint in the form of a literature review. The literature review covers three broad areas, namely quality and quality assurance in higher education, quality assurance in developing countries and quality assurance in UB. It is followed by the conceptual framework of the study.

Chapter 2 addresses quality and quality assurance in the context of higher education. It starts by defining the key concepts of the study being; quality and quality assurance. Thereafter, aspects of quality assurance that are used in higher education are discussed. Finally, a discussion of the quality assurance models available for higher education.

Chapter 3 explores quality assurance in higher education in developing countries, followed by the nature of higher education institutions in developing countries and the problems they experience. Then examples of quality assurance practices in countries like Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

Chapter 4 is an exploration of quality assurance in the context of UB. It starts by providing a background to quality assurance in the institution. The quality assurance policy and practices of the institution and their effectiveness are then explored.

Chapter 5 presents the research design and methodology of the study, in particular, the research paradigm that guides the study, the research design used to address the research questions, the research methods including the sample and participants, data collection methods used. In addition, the researcher's role is also discussed as well as the ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

In chapter 6, I present the findings of the study in terms of the quantitative data and the qualitative data that was obtained in relation to the research questions of the study.

Chapter 7 provides the summary, conclusions and recommendations from the findings of the study. The chapter provides a summary of the process, a summary of the findings as per each research question, a summary of issues raised in the study and the conclusions and recommendations reached through the study.



Finally, chapter 8 presents my scholarly reflection on the research processes, starting from the proposal, ethical clearance, drafting of the chapters and data collection and the final product of my research journey.

### **1.8 Conceptual framework of the study**

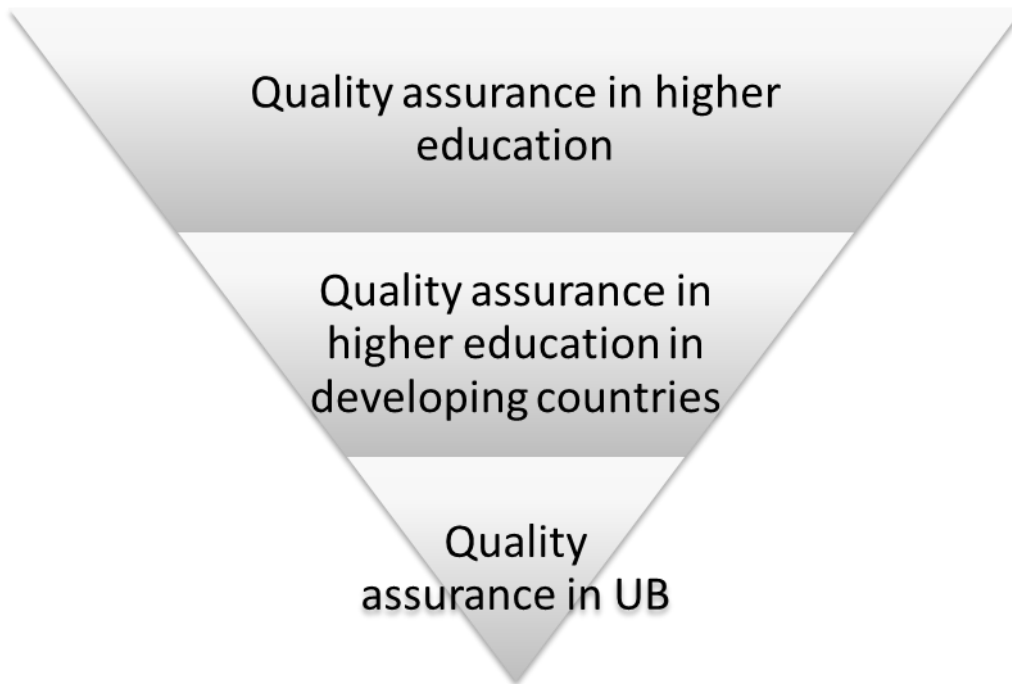
The demand for quality in higher education by the various stakeholders cannot be ignored by the institutions and governments in both developed and developing countries. As such, the institutions need to put in place quality assurance measures that could build confidence in the stakeholders that they are providing quality programmes that are of value to the nation.

The changing landscape in higher education across the globe also puts a lot of pressure in higher education institutions to allocate more resources to the improvement in the quality of their offerings.

It is in this context that the conceptual framework of the study is developed in order to guide the institutions in the approaches that are used worldwide for quality assurance in higher education. These approaches should then guide higher education institutions in developing countries to design their own policies and practices that guide their day to day engagements. The policies and practices must take note of the notions of self-improvement and accountability to the stakeholders. Finally, the University of Botswana is guided from these approaches to also try and improve its quality assurance practices for it to be relevant and competitive for its own survival.

The conceptual framework (figure 1.1) presented here is meant to guide understanding of the various aspects of this study as discussed in the chapters that follow. It is through my experiences, the literature and interactions with participants in this study that resulted in a broader understanding of quality and its assurance in higher education and the appropriate model that can be used by UB to empower its academic staff to take more responsibility for the quality of academic programmes of the institution.

**Figure 1.1 Conceptual framework of the study**



## **1.9 Conclusion**

In my professional engagements with various stakeholders who have a lot of interest in higher education, I have had a number of questions raised in my mind with regards to quality in UB and how far the institution has achieved its objectives. This study has therefore, presented a lot of ideas with regards to my questions and how the institution can improve, especially with regards to empowering its academic staff members to drive quality in the institution.

The underlying issue in this study is to try and establish, through the views of the participants, a model that could work for the improvement of quality assurance practices of the institution.

The approach used in this study has highlighted the views and opinions of the various stakeholders with regards to quality assurance in higher education in Botswana and in particular in UB.

The engagement with the research questions of this study through the various participants has provided a platform from which further reflection can be explored to enrich the existing knowledge of the key concepts of this study.

It must be pointed out that much as this study aimed to provide more reflection and meaning to the quality assurance practices at UB, it is not without its own limitations and constraints. It is hoped that such limitations and constraints can assist other colleagues who have an interest in future research to take note of and where possible limit the negative impacts of such limitations.

The next chapter explores the literature in so far as the topic of this study is concerned and other related issues. The literature aims to shed more light to the existing knowledge with regards to the key concepts of this study.

## CHAPTER 2 QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

### 2.1 Introduction

The quality of teaching is now becoming a critical issue for the 21<sup>st</sup> century higher education sector. There is general agreement that quality and its assurance is important for the sustainability and enhancement of higher education. This chapter reviews the literature with an exploration of the concept of quality (section 2.2) and quality assurance with reference to education in general (section 2.3). Since this study focuses on quality assurance in higher education, an exploration of the university and what it stands for is discussed (section 2.4) Also important are the factors that led to quality assurance in higher education (section 2.4.1) and some of the perspectives on quality assurance in higher education (section 2.4.2), the quality assurance aspects that are currently used in higher education institutions (section 2.5) and the quality assurance models for higher education (section 2.6).

### 2.2 Quality

It is always important to start any discourse on quality assurance by defining the concepts “quality” and “quality assurance”. Such clarification is necessary in view of the fact that different interpretations of the concepts are held by different people. For instance, a quality item could be defined by one customer as one that is expensive and carries a certain label, whereas a quality item to another customer could be one that lasts longer and serves their purpose at the time. Even in higher education, various stakeholders hold various interests, values and expectations regarding quality of education and that influence their definition of quality. According to Barnett (1994) university institutions carry particular social and cultural identities and these determine how each university defines quality. As a result, the way an institution defines quality has a strong influence on its quality assurance policies and strategies. What comes out of this discussion of quality is that it is not easy to define quality. This view is also held by Pirsig (1976:209) who says; “I think there is such a thing as quality, but as soon as you try to define it, something goes haywire. You cannot do it”. In the end Pirsig concludes that quality is all encompassing; it is in everything and in anything that we do or it is not there at all.

The many definitions are due to the differences in culture, purpose, history of the institutions and the changing landscape in higher education. Even though many interpretations of quality have been offered, it is always important to define the concept in terms of a particular context. In some cases, instead of a definition of quality, there is reference to notions of quality. In the case of this study, quality is defined in the context of higher education at micro-level or the level of the teaching-learning processes.

It is also important to note that, within higher education, there are many stakeholders such as parents, students, government, the private sector, lecturers, employers, professional bodies and the general public. These different groups have their own perceptions of quality; for instance, students may view quality as the provision of facilities and how this would be useful for future employment. However, employers may be interested in the competence of the institution's graduates, while the management of the institution may view quality in terms of its achievements such as research outputs. Each stakeholder tends to have a different perspective in defining quality but what is important is a definition that facilitates the perspectives of the different stakeholders. Furthermore, an institution may be regarded as of high quality in relation to a particular factor or the perspective of a particular group of stakeholders. There are also increased calls on institutions for quality and accountability to their stakeholders and to compete with other institutions.

Harvey and Green (1993) provide five notions of the meaning of quality which are presented below. Quality as:

- being exceptional(excellence);
- Perfection;
- fitness for purpose;
- Value for money;
- Transformational.

These notions are discussed in more detail below.

### 2.2.1 Quality as exceptional (excellence)

The notion of excellence or exceptional views quality as special, that which cannot be attained by many. The notion of excellence as presented by Harvey and Green (1993) presents three variations of exceptional being; distinctive, exceeding very high standards and passing a set of required standards. The distinctive nature of quality implies high class that cannot be easily attained by many. In my view, this assumes that quality is a reserve of a certain class of people and can be used as an indication of status. The question that comes to mind at this point is; who determines this status and against what background? This view of quality seems not able to explain in detail how quality is determined and by who.

The variation of exceeding very high standards views quality in terms of set standards and as having what Harvey and Green (1993) call zero defects. This view assumes that excellent resources are provided and as such there should be excellent results. It also assumes that the processes themselves have no defects in order to achieve the excellent results. This view of quality is used by most higher education institutions in their Vision and mission statements which tend to emphasise excellence. For example, the University of Botswana vision is 'To be a leading centre of excellence in Africa and the world'. The Quality assurance Policy of the institution is therefore underpinned by the vision which emphasises excellence. Van Kemenade (2008) says, 'quality as exceptionality demands of institutions to demonstrate exceptionally high standards of academic achievement'.

The last notion of exceptional determines quality in terms of a set of required standards. A quality product or service is one that meets the required standards. There is emphasis on conformance to standards and the defective items are rejected. Improvement in the standards results in improved quality. The problem with this notion is likely to be in terms of the criterion that is used to determine the standards. The criteria may not necessarily be one that is accepted by all. The other problem is likely to be due to the different cultures of each institution and how they determine their standards. This could pose a problem when trying to compare institutions.

However, it should be noted that the notion of quality as excellence is also questionable. The main issue with the concept is on how excellence is determined and by who, as well as who gives the authority to determine excellence. According to Readings (1996) excellence

does not say anything at all as it shift focus from understanding quality and pertinence and again it does not explain as to who become the judges of good universities and by whose authority. Furthermore, Barnett (2004) also views excellence as having no purpose, no ideal and no concept.

### **2.2.2 Quality as perfection**

As perfection, quality is explained in terms of what Harvey and Green (1993) refer to as zero defects and getting things right first time. This notion emphasises consistency and ensuring that there are no defects in the process. The responsibility lies on every participant in the process to ensure quality at each stage. Quality as perfection poses problems for education due to the multi – faceted products of the education process. Secondly, it is impossible to refer to graduates as perfect or having no defects.

### **2.2.3 Quality as fitness for purpose**

In general, fitness for purpose notion refers to quality in relation to the purpose of the product or service. According to Harvey and Green (1993) the quality of a product or service is judged in terms of the extent to which it fits its purpose. The notion tends to focus a lot on the functionality of the institution in serving the needs of the various stakeholders.

Fitness for purpose puts emphasis on the function of the institution in terms of producing graduates who can immediately function in the world of work. Fitness for purpose is linked to, ‘aligning the output of the institution with broad national goals and for using the institutions as an apparatus to address broader social problems’ (Mhlanga 2008:35). Quality of higher education tends to change with the needs of the stakeholders and this leads to change in the aims to be achieved by the institution.

The problem with this notion in higher education is on who determines the purpose, is it the students, the governments, or the institution itself. The various stakeholders have various needs and expectations that may not necessarily match the resources and culture of an institution. However, the fitness for purpose notion of quality tends to appreciate and recognise the dynamic nature of higher education institutions.

The fitness for purpose concept of quality is linked to value for money since it is associated with accountability to the stakeholders and the funders of higher education institutions.

#### **2.2.4 Quality as value for money**

Quality as value for money tends to focus on accountability to the funders and customers. Governments as funders of most higher education institutions tend to put more emphasis on getting more students into the institutions and the institutions themselves ensuring that there is efficiency and effectiveness in their processes. The institutions ensure efficiency and effectiveness through performance indicators, and student charters. However, it is still debatable as to the extent to which these can improve quality in higher education.

#### **2.2.5 Quality as transformation**

Quality as transformation denotes qualitative change and it encompasses both physical and cognitive transformation. Martin and Stella (2007:35) define quality as transformative. It refers to the extent of transformation or value added that occurs as a result of the learning process. According to Nicholson (2011) quality as a transformative phenomenon is a process of qualitative change with emphasis on adding value to students and empowering them. This involves enhancing their knowledge, abilities and skills. In empowering the learners, the process should result in the learners taking ownership of their learning, providing opportunities for self-empowerment through increased confidence and self-awareness, guaranteeing learners minimum standards of provision and giving them responsibility for monitoring them. All these are part of transforming higher education and adding value to the students. This in turn would result in the learners having control over their learning and their critical ability developed. The transformation is not tangible and the institutions tend to use assessment to try and establish the transformation in their students.

Other definitions of quality in higher education include issues of inputs such as students, resources and lectures, and outputs such as the number of graduates and scholarly awards. There are other definitions that focus on the achievement of mission-related outcomes through the provision of adequate and appropriate resources in both academic and non-academic areas of the institution. It should be noted, however, that the search for a definition of quality is still on-going and many suggestions are still being presented in the



definition of quality. There are also notions of value for money, zero defects, added value, transformative and input-process-output that are being discussed in terms of defining quality but these are not explored in this study.

In my view, even with the many concepts of quality in higher education, it is important for an institution to do what it claims to do and what its customers expect it to do. The institution needs to be clear on what it wants to do and at what quality standards and to communicate these to its customers so that they know what to expect from the institution. Quality in this case should be for the benefit of all the stakeholders. The students should benefit by getting quality education and skills that would enable them to function effectively anywhere in the world and society, including the employers, should get the benefit of a highly skilled workforce that can drive the development of the country. According to Griesel and Parker (2009) “these skills include basic skills and understanding, knowledge and intellectual ability, workplace skills and applied knowledge, interactive and personal skills”. Quality assurance policies and practices in higher education institutions are greatly influenced by the notions of quality that are available. In most cases the institutions focus their quality assurance policies and practices on value for money and excellence. This is evident in their vision and mission statements. Much as the institutions opt for excellence and value for money as their main focus of quality, there should also be a commitment to self-improvement in order to achieve excellence and accountability to the stakeholders.

For example, the vision of the University of Botswana is “to be a leading academic centre of excellence in Africa and the world” (2006 UB strategic plan 2016 and beyond). This mission is guided by six strategic priority areas namely “expanding access and participation, providing relevant and high quality programmes, strengthening engagement, intensifying research performance, improving the student experience and enhancing human resources for excellence in delivery”. The strategic plan of the institution is based on “sustainability, quality and relevance, and serving the development of the nation”. As a result the university is committed to “quality and accountability in all its operations and would ensure that there are appropriate processes in place to maintain and enhance the quality of its research, learning and teaching, community engagement, infrastructure, administrative and management functions” (2006 UB Strategic plan 2016 and beyond). The institution aims to

improve in order to enhance institutional excellence but at the same time to be accountable to the government, funders, stakeholders and the professional bodies.

### **2.3 Quality assurance**

The definitions of quality assurance refer to “an on-going, continuous process of evaluating and improving the quality of a higher education system, institution or programmes” (Martin and Stella 2007:34). Other aspects pertaining to quality assurance refer to “processes that ensure the sustainability and enhancement of the quality of education and scholarship” (Bornmann 2004:374). Some definitions suggest four components of quality assurance, “namely sustainability of the product or service, enhancement of the product or service, ownership of the systems in place for maintaining and enhancing quality, and regular checks of the validity and reliability of the systems” (Bornmann 2004:374).

A quality assurance system therefore acts as the means by “which an institution confirms that the conditions are in place for students to achieve the standards it sets”. Harvey and Green (1993) say “quality assurance is all those planned and systematic actions necessary to provide adequate confidence to the stakeholders”. Woodhouse (2004) defines it as “all the policies, attitudes, actions and procedures necessary to ensure that quality is being maintained and enhanced”. The purpose of quality assurance is to ensure accountability and to bring about improvement. From the aspects of quality assurance indicated above, it is clear that the concept stresses the need for systematic planning, predetermined standards and ways of maintaining and enhancing quality and all these are meant to give stakeholders confidence that they are getting value for money. Through quality assurance, higher education institutions have to prove to the funders that their activities provide value for money and meet national objectives.

Fourie (2000:3) identifies four components of quality assurance that I consider to be vital for any quality assurance system to be successful, “it is:

- the responsibility of everyone in the institution to ensure maintenance of the quality of the product or service

- the responsibility of everyone in the institution to ensure the enhancement of the quality of the product or service
- the responsibility of everyone in the institution to understand, take and use ownership of the systems that are in place for maintaining and enhancing quality
- the institution's responsibility to satisfy itself that it has effective structures and mechanisms in place so that continuous quality improvement can be guaranteed.

Having considered the interpretations of quality assurance, the next section discusses the university as an institution and the nature of academic staff in a university and how that impacts on quality assurance.

#### **2.4 The university as an institution**

In exploring the notions of quality and quality assurance, it becomes apparent that there is need to explore the concept of the university and the academics in a university. The key functions of a university are teaching and learning, research and service. Kaye (1994:5) also points to the fact that, 'universities pursue the goal of inquisitiveness and understanding and the benefits that the university gives to society and learns from society is not just the external products in the form of research results and other service to society but also in the maintenance and promotion of a life of individual and social inquiry within the university itself'. The university therefore exists not just to provide knowledge to society but also to get knowledge from its interaction with the society. According to Barnett (2000:410) the university is no longer 'the sole or even the main source of production of knowledge in society'.

However, universities are now facing a lot of changes that also impact on the knowledge functions of the institutions. Barnett (2004) highlights the fact that higher education institutions today are faced with many changes due to:

- Globalisation
- Revolution due to the arrival of digital technologies
- Interpretation of higher education in society
- Agendas of participation, access and equal opportunities
- Marketization of higher education
- Competition

- Development of systematic and nationwide state sponsored evaluation mechanisms.

Due to the many challenges that universities are now facing, there is now need to relook the kind of knowledge that the university produces, or the 'knowledges' according to Barnett(2000). In reflecting on the kind of knowledge that the university now produces, Barnett (2000) used ideas from other scholars such as Clark (1998) and Reading (1996) to reflect on knowledge and the university. Such reflections led to the following conclusions about knowledge and the university in the current era:

- The university now needs to market and sell its knowledge to the community.
- The university is no longer regarded as the main source of knowledge in society.
- There are now new forms of knowledge that are posing a big challenge to the forms of knowledge that the university used to hold dear.
- The knowledge that the university produces is now under closer scrutiny from the consumers of such knowledge and they have an option to reject it or to accept it.
- The criteria that is used to validate knowledge is widening
- The university is now expected to be accountable to the state. Reading (1996) says that the university has moved from the university of reason, then the university of culture and now the university of excellence.
- The university knowledge is now replaced by knowledges
- New challenges are now coming to the fore with regard to new frameworks, values, images and identities that are now expanding in the current society.
- Since the university is now part and parcel of the society, the knowledge that it produces should not just be to enlighten but also to be performative.

The discussion above brings out the idea of autonomy that the institutions themselves want to protect and to be assured that it would not be eroded by the role they now need to play in society. This again depends on the nature of the institution for instance, national universities tend to be strongly influenced and guided by demands from the state and that is not the case with all universities. In effect, the acceptance and effective application of a quality assurance system in a university depends to a large extent on the nature and culture of the institution.

In terms of the academic staff members of a university, the challenges that are now prevalent in higher education today also have an effect in the way they view these challenges in relation to their operations. As I have already mentioned, the university now has a set of institutional roles, for example, quality assurance, which is based on self-improvement, excellence and accountability to the stakeholders. There is now need for the university to try and respond to its own internal dynamics as well as to external demands on higher education. According to Kogan (2000:208), 'higher education now has social obligations which start with the proper performance of the academic tasks of teaching, promoting learning and the creation and testing of knowledge' In my view these social obligations impact on the way academic staff perform their duties including implementing quality assurance policies.

In order to understand how academics respond to the changing roles of their institutions, it is important to consider the nature of academics inside and outside these institutions. My discussion draws heavily from Mary Henkel (2005) who discussed three concepts of academic identity namely:

- Distinctive individual- This individual identifies with a certain community or institution due to his achievements. The individual chooses the community on the basis of its history, moral and conceptual framework. The elements of individual identity discussed above make an academic effective as a professional.
- Embedded individual- the academic staff member belongs to an institution and communities with their own languages, conceptual structures, histories, traditions, myths and values. The roles of each individual are determined by the institutions and communities to which they belong.
- Professional identity- makes the academic staff members stronger due to their expertise and their own moral and conceptual frameworks.

Secondly, academic staff members belong to other academic communities outside the institution. The communities have shared values, expertise and standards. The external communities that academic staff members belong to provide reference points from which academic staff members receive recognition and honour.

In my view, these now present more and interesting challenges to the university that the university need not shy away from but see them as opportunities for growth that would see the institutions performing effectively in today's rapidly changing world.

It is also worth noting that the institutions depend on the academics and the academics depend on the institutions, so there is need for a balance between the two in order to successfully implement quality assurance systems in the institutions. In addition, it is also important for the institutions themselves to recognise and appreciate the nature of academics in developing and implementing their quality assurance policy. According to Hoecht (2006:556), 'it is high time for proper debate between higher education policy-makers and academics on how to achieve quality in higher education teaching and learning while maintaining trust and professional autonomy'. What in my view seems important is to strike a balance between the nature of academic staff and the external demands for quality in higher education. There is need for what Kogan (2000) refers to as; 'negotiation and exchange'.

#### **2.4.1 Factors that led to quality assurance in higher education**

Over the past decade, higher education institutions have experienced a lot of changes (see section 2.4) and these have resulted in increased calls for the institutions to be accountable to their stakeholders. As a result, there is now need to have in place mechanisms or systems that could be used to measure the performance of these institutions. The need for quality assurance in higher education has been brought about because of various factors. Some of the known factors include the great expansion in higher education due to more students gaining access to higher education than before (Koslowski 2006:277). In addition, public expenditure on higher education is now limited due to other demands on governments; yet the stakeholders continue to demand better higher education. Therefore, higher education has to compete for limited resources with other needs in the society. Related to expenditure is the need for accountability of higher education institutions in terms of the resources that have been allocated to them and the services they deliver. Another factor is the student demand for certain fields of specialisation that are deemed relevant to the economic needs of the country. The primary goal of quality assurance is to give institutions, funders and the public some method for obtaining assurance that the institution is keeping its promises to its stakeholders (Materu 2007:1). Strydom (2001) refers to "seven reasons for quality assurance:

- The need for socio-economic development (transformation) - higher education institutions are now expected to contribute a lot to the socio-economic development of their societies. Institutions now focus on producing and interacting with knowledge in their societies in order to improve the lives of their communities.
- Massification of education- Higher education is no longer preserved for a small number of privileged individuals as it was before. Student numbers have increased tremendously due to increased interest and demand for higher education. Countries now have policies that aim to improve and increase access to higher education and the new interest in lifelong learning has attracted a lot of interest in higher education.
- Rise of private education- increased need for access to higher education has resulted in more institutions, including privately owned institutions coming on board to provide the much needed service. More and more countries are witnessing the mushrooming of private institutions and this has led to calls for regulation of the institutions and the quality of their teaching.
- Professionalising academia-The changing context of higher education globally has resulted in increased calls for academic staff members to undergo some form of training in order to improve their professional competence. According to Quinn (2012:70), 'there has been increased pressure to provide structures to develop academics' professional competence'. It should however, be noted that not all forms of academic development are welcomed by academic staff members.
- Matching programmes to labour needs- There are now more and varied expectations on higher education institutions by the various stakeholders such as students, parents, employers, funders and governments. The institutions are now under pressure to align their programmes to the needs and expectations of the labour market.
- Doing more with fewer resources (value for money)- the explosion on student enrolments in higher education institutions has not been met with an equal explosion in the provision of resources. Instead what prevails is an environment characterised by limited resources. Fresen (2005:19), 'Not only are financial resources insufficient, but

academics are suffering under the burden of additional loads, and often resent the 'quality burden' thrust on them'.

- Trade agreements and increased mobility- Governments across the globe have trade agreements with each other and there is now an increase in the movement of people across the globe. As a result, students are now able to access study programmes across the globe and this calls on higher education institutions to be competitive in order to attract students from all over the world. The competitiveness of higher education across the globe now puts pressure on the institutions to ensure quality of their teaching and learning and their research engagements.
- Community engagement/Upliftment- Universities can no longer function in isolation but need to be part and parcel of the communities in which they operate. Communities now want to see institutions that engage them in their operations in order to ensure that their needs are met.

The need for quality assurance in higher education is greatly influenced by the issue of accountability and self-improvement. Governments spend a lot of resources in ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education programmes. There is now pressure on the institutions for continuous self-evaluation in order to improve and accountability to its stakeholders. According to Fresen (2005:19), 'there is now need for higher education institutions to pursue active involvement in quality assurance practices in order to belie their image of 'ivory tower 'exclusivity'. Higher education institutions can no longer rely on traditional methods of evaluating their performance.

In the context of the University of Botswana quality assurance as intended by the institution's Quality Management Policy is based on the strategic plan whose mission and vision are framed around the notion of excellence. In addition, the university aims to develop a quality and effectiveness strategy that would cover all aspects of institutional quality. The strategy provides an outline of how the following processes should be implemented: "internal reviews of faculty programmes examining relevance and quality that allow for intra-reviews by individual lecturers as a first cycle in the process; these bring 'people' into the process and promote a bottom-up approach, external review of academic programmes, external review of student support services, internal audits of selected areas



of management, administrative and financial functions, external institutional quality audit and external assessment of research". It is also expected that the strategy would be in line with the statutory requirements of quality assurance as stated by the tertiary education policy of the country.

I identify strongly with the notion that quality assurance can be successful in any institution if all members involved understand it, own it and practise it in their everyday practices, including community engagement. The institutions need to establish a quality culture and quality assurance systems that promote ownership for the staff members but at the same time continuously look for ways to transform. This could be done by involving academic staff in the development of quality assurance policies so that they own them and do not perceive them as being managerialistic. The institution needs to demonstrate to its stakeholders that quality is really manifested by having in place processes and procedures that ensure efficiency in all functions of the institution.

#### **2.4.2 Perspectives on quality assurance in higher education**

Much of the literature that has been written about quality assurance in higher education tends to focus more on the development of quality assurance policy and its implementation in higher education institutions. However, in my discussion of the concept I would like to focus mainly on two perspectives of quality assurance being:

- The internal improvement
- External accountability

In section 2.4.1 I made mention of the fact that higher education quality assurance is concerned with self-improvement and accountability to its stakeholders and this is the understanding that addresses the two concepts of quality assurance.

Internal quality assurance systems tend to be aimed at self-improvement and are mostly controlled by the academic staff members. According to Mhanga(2008:18), 'internal quality assurance systems are being portrayed as being controlled by the academics, as having reporting systems that are fully internal and as being less accountability driven; hence the approach is regarded as self-improvement. This self-improvement tends to require

academic staff members to continuously ask themselves questions regarding their own performance and how to improve it. The success of the system is based on the academic staff members and it is believed to appreciate and recognise academic autonomy. However, there are opposing views expressed with regard to internal quality assurance systems. A system that mainly focuses on internal improvement tends to lose sight of the external demands of accountability that are now prevalent in higher education today.

External accountability on the other hand is mandatory. It calls on institutions to be accountable to their external stakeholders and does not seem to emphasise self-improvement. However, Fresen (2005) cautions against over reliance on external control, as that have the potential to hinder internal improvement and commitment.

In my view, it is better to have a system that acknowledges and appreciates the need for self-improvement and external accountability. Boyd and Fresen (2004) argue that internal improvement and external accountability are not mutually exclusive but both are imperative, in relative proportions, for a successful quality assurance system. If both are incorporated, it is my believe that they would take care of the needs of our stakeholders and in turn encourage continuous self-improvement.

## **2.5 Aspects of quality assurance in higher education**

This section of the study explores the three levels of quality assurance in higher education: the international, national and institutional level. For purposes of this study the rest of the section focuses only on the various aspects of quality assurance at institutional level, such as self-assessment by lecturers, external moderator/examiner system, programme development and review, assessment, staff appraisal and development, student feedback, national and international benchmarking, learning and teaching policy, quality assurance officers and committees.

In higher education quality assurance can be said to manifest at three main levels, namely international, national and institutional level. The international level of quality assurance in higher education is evident in the worldwide phenomenon to address issues of quality assurance such as the use of International Organisation for Standardization (ISO) standards. Governments have also contributed by calling for improved management practices in higher

education. There are networks such as the “International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education” (INQAAHE), other international forum and the inclusion of international experts in audit teams that are addressing issues of quality assurance of higher education at international level.

The national level involves institutional audits and accreditation, both institutional and programme accreditation. An institutional audit is a system of checking that procedures are in place across an institution to assure quality. UNESCO defines it as “an evidence-based process carried out through peer review that investigates the procedures and mechanisms by which an institution ensures its quality assurance and quality enhancement”. Institutional audits ask underlying questions such as *“How does the institution ensure that the standards and objectives it sets for itself are being met? On what evidence is the assessment of the quality of its work based? Are there procedures in place to ensure that significant processes are followed up and continuously improved?”*

Accreditation is an evaluation of whether an institution meets the minimum standards in areas such as staff qualifications, research activities and student services as well as learning resources. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)(2006) defines it as “an external review of an institution’s ability to provide quality programmes”. Programme accreditation is specialised in the sense that it is done by professional bodies for certain programmes.

### **2.5.1 External examiner/moderator system**

The external examiner or moderator system involves the use of experts from other institutions or organisations to assess the assessment process of an institution for fairness and academic standards. In the case of UB the external examiner system was terminated and it was replaced by the external review of academic programmes at undergraduate level. Graduate level programmes still continue with the external examination of research projects. The two main reasons why the university terminated the external examination system are “the fact that the system tended to focus mostly on assessment and paid little attention to the whole learning process; the other reason is the great financial and organisational burden of the system on the institution”. External review of academic programmes is regarded as more appropriate for the institution in terms of addressing all

the areas of learning and teaching such as the quality of academic programmes, teaching and learning, research, assessment, staff, facilities and support services, and community engagement/service learning.

### **2.5.2 Academic programme development and review**

Programme development and review is another process that institutions engage in to ensure the quality of their programmes. In line with the changing demands and expectations in the teaching and learning environment is the need for change in the curriculum to reflect the new demands of the society on the education system. Learning institutions are now expected to embrace the changing needs of the society and reflect them in the curriculum. Academic staff members therefore have to ensure that they incorporate such change when developing and implementing the curriculum. Academic staff members get to know what to improve in the curriculum through their own self-reflection, students' feedback and feedback from other stakeholders. In order to do this, academic staff members require a certain aptitude and skill (Carl 2009:16). Such skill and aptitude would enable them to develop relevant curricula for their students, develop the most appropriate teaching and assessment strategies and to look continuously for opportunities to transform the curriculum. Academic staff members are important players in curriculum development and implementation as they are directly involved in classroom practice. Through curriculum development academic staff members are able to grow continually and develop professionally.

Curriculum development is a process that takes place through phases such as planning, development, assessment, implementation and evaluation. Various curriculum development approaches are available that may serve as theoretical foundations; they include academic, experience-based, technological and pragmatic approaches (Carl 2009:49). Curriculum design focuses on developing curricula for students through setting standards for education to ensure that all learners achieve a similar level of education, reviewing the standards and determining how they can be met, the type of curriculum that would be more appropriate for the different kinds of student and considering limitations such as funding and obtaining the relevant textbooks.

Programme development should also consider issues of adult learning because in higher education institutions all the students are adult learners. Adult learning is different from learning by young children because adults tend to bring into their learning environment their life experiences; they tend to want to learn in a way that is different from the young learners and want to establish reasons for learning and are self-motivated (Russel 2006:349). Part of the array of learning theories is theories on learning styles. Adult learning styles refer to ways in which adults prefer to learn. According to Mckeracher (2004) it is “the preferred patterns of mental, emotional and psychological functioning, dealing with new information and constructing new knowledge”.

Another applicable learning theory is constructivism. Constructivism assumes that knowledge is individually and socially constructed by learners based on their interpretations of experiences in the world (Jonassen 2000:217). Knowles, Holton *et al* (2011) asserts that constructivism assumes that learners develop knowledge through interpreting their experiences in the world. The concept of adult learning also brings about the areas of adult learning namely “self-directed learning, critical reflection, experiential learning and learning to learn” (McKerecher 2004:203). Self-directed learning refers to the ability of adult learners to take control of their learning by planning it, implementing the plan, monitoring its execution and evaluating it. Critical reflection, on the other hand, focuses on learning that is based on reflecting on previous learning to determine its relevance to current learning. The concept of experiential learning refers to “the experience that adult learners bring into the learning environment and therefore influences the way they learn and the way they construct new knowledge” (Merriann 2001:3). Learning to learn is “the ability of the adult learner to develop skills of learning in different situations and through different styles” (Roberts 2010:9).

It is therefore important for academic staff to consider issues of adult learning when designing curricula and implementing it in higher education institutions because of the presence of adult learners in these institutions. Principles of adult learning should be kept in mind when discussing quality assurance of teaching and learning. There are some emerging issues within higher education such as distance education, cross cultural education, service learning and others that need to be considered to ensure quality academic programmes in the institutions, but these are not addressed in this study.

Evaluation of a learning programme is about determining the extent to which the programme has reached its intended aims.

In developing a programme provision should be made for its review to determine whether it is still relevant or not. Information obtained from the review of a programme can be used to determine if the programme needs to be improved, discontinued or replaced with another programme.

### **2.5.3 Facilitating learning**

In facilitated learning students are encouraged to take control of their learning and the lecturer becomes a facilitator and organiser. Teaching has now shifted to facilitating learning rather than being a process of transmitting knowledge from the lecturer to the learner. Activities used in facilitating learning include presentations, group discussions, role play, projects and case studies.

Smith and Damian (2005) identified “characteristics of facilitating learning as:

- problems are framed by the context in which they occur
- it encourages hands-on and interactive approaches to learning activities to allow learners to apply and interact equally with the activities and perform aspects of learning
- it establishes learning outcomes that are clear in their intent to achieve readiness for learning
- it gives learners the opportunity to collaborate and negotiate in determining their learning and assessment processes
- it acknowledges learners as co-producers of knowledge and skills
- it recognises that the prior learning and life experiences of learners are valuable foundations for constructing new knowledge and skills
- it uses a variety of learning styles in order to address the different learning styles of learners
- it values the social interaction involved with learning in groups”

The learning environment in today's higher education institutions requires recognition and appreciation of the knowledge, skills and attitude that the learner brings to the learning situation. This is because today's learners are exposed to so many sources of knowledge that they can no longer be treated as if they know nothing.

#### **2.5.4 Assessment**

Another aspect of quality assurance at institutional level is assessment. Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process and it serves the purpose of determining the extent to which the curriculum and instructional activities have an impact on student effort and achievement (Brookhart 2001:161). Through assessment the academic staff member is able to determine the achievement of learning outcomes. "It is the means by which academic staff members decide whether the approach they are using is effective with individual learners" (Du Toit 2009:33). It also provides an opportunity for students to assess their own learning and to grow. Through assessment academic staff members are able to improve the way in which they teach. Learning and teaching involve the development of strategies for facilitating learning and assessment, and each influences the other. Other purposes of assessment include diagnosing students' strengths and weaknesses, grouping students, grading, evaluating learning effectiveness and reporting on students' progress to the relevant stakeholders such as their parents. The functions of assessment include giving a general view of performance of students, establishing whether learning outcomes have been attained, providing feedback to academic staff on the quality of their professional work and the quality of the programme and evaluating students' aptitude, skills and values (Eisner 2002:202). Other aspects of assessment can be classified as assessment of student learning, assessment of teaching practice, self-assessment and evaluation of a learning programme.

##### **2.5.4.1 Assessment of learning**

Assessment of learning helps academic staff adapt teaching to the needs of students. It also helps to establish what students know and can do and leads to the improvement of student learning. Assessment of learning provides evidence of achievement to various stakeholders in education such as parents, lecturers, and the students themselves. It can be diagnostic, formative or summative. Diagnostic assessment is intended to inter alia help the academic

staff member get to know the learners' entry levels (Du Toit 2009:84; Lockett and Sutherland 2000:101). Formative assessment takes place as learning continues and it is used mainly to gauge to what extent the learners have achieved the outcomes of learning and learned to learn.

It is used to obtain feedback that can be used by the lecturer and the students to guide improvements in the on-going teaching and learning context (www.cmu.edu 2010). It is qualitative, continuous, and non-inclusive and often informal (Du Toit 2009:85). Summative assessment is meant to measure the level of success that has been obtained at the end of an instructional unit and can be used for grouping and grading and certification of students based on their performance (www.cmu.edu). Summative assessment is formal and conclusive (Du Toit 2009: 85; Lockett and Sutherland 2000: 101).

#### **2.5.4.2 Assessment of teaching practice**

Assessment of teaching practice aims to improve lecturer and student performance. Through assessment of teaching practice the lecturer gets feedback about the teaching that he/she uses and how effective they are. Such feedback assists academic staff members to improve their teaching. Academic staff members can get feedback from stakeholders such as peers, students, management and international scholars about their teaching. Feedback may be obtained through tracer studies, interviews, peer reviews, performance reports and student feedback on teaching. Academic staff members could use the feedback to identify their strengths and weaknesses and establish their staff development needs.

Assessment of teaching and learning can be viewed as complementary to each other and can help lecturers to improve their teaching and improve students' learning. The assessment of teaching and learning aims to benefit both the quality of student learning and the professional development of the lecturer (www.cmu.edu 2010).

#### **2.4.5.3 Self-assessment**

Self-assessment requires the academic staff member to identify his/her strengths and weaknesses and decide on a plan to improve the weak areas. It is a process that aims to assist the lecturer to improve his/her teaching and benefit the students. Self-assessment is a process whereby "an academic staff member collects data and analyses the information to



consider transforming teaching”. The unique benefit of self-assessment is “the close involvement of lecturers in the consideration of the effectiveness of their own teaching” (Taylor 2008:109). It is expected that academic staff members use self-assessment results as concrete evidence of their cutting-edge practice and to commit to transforming their teaching.

Both peer and self-assessment could be used by academic staff members in transforming their teaching. Peer mentoring involves two academic staff members who are both interested in mutual growth. One can have more skills, knowledge and experience than the other. It can also involve more academic staff members assisting another staff member to grow. The benefits of peer mentoring include enrichment of the mentor, increased exposure to ideas, high quality performance and speedier adaptation to a new role.

### **2.5.5 The teaching portfolio**

Evidence of one’s teaching practice can be built into a professional teaching portfolio. The teaching portfolio is “an aspect that draws from the professional development portfolio” (Du Toit 2009:6). It is among the activities that academic staff members engage in to document their activities. The professional development portfolio aims to assist a staff member in his/her own professional development and intrapersonal leadership and should help in the process of self-monitoring and self-assessment (Du Toit 2009:6).

Self-assessment as well as peer assessment is an integral part of the portfolio. A staff member can develop portfolios for the different engagements such as teaching, assessment, curriculum development and evaluation, research and community engagement. However, my study focuses only on the teaching portfolio.

The teaching portfolio is one aspect of quality assurance that is used in higher education institutions to improve teaching and learning. The teaching portfolio is a tool that academic staff members use to document and provide evidence of their scholarly work and education practice. The teaching portfolio is described as “a carefully selected, organised and accessibly presented, self-contained overview of one’s teaching activities” (Kaplan 2004:1; Seldin and Miller 2004:2; Knapper and Wright 2001:89; Du Toit 2009:6). The goal of a teaching portfolio is “to describe through documentation over an extended period of time, the full range of one’s activities as a lecturer” (Xu 2004: 8). From the description presented,

it is important to highlight that a portfolio presents carefully selected information on teaching and evidence of the effectiveness of teaching activities. Therefore, the academic staff member needs to provide his/her reflections on teaching activities as this is a basis on which the staff member can set action areas for improvement of his/her teaching. Academic staff members could use the teaching portfolio to reflect on their teaching and as evidence of their effectiveness in teaching. In addition, peer and self-assessment used together with the teaching portfolio are helpful in assisting academic staff members to reflect on their teaching.

The teaching portfolio serves many purposes, such as self-reflection and improvement and decision-making. Various reasons have been presented for the development of a teaching portfolio. The portfolio could include a personal statement, evidence of effective teaching and supporting material, peer reviews and student feedback – depending on the purpose for which the portfolio is intended as well as the requirements of the institution.

#### **2.5.6 Staff appraisal and development**

Another aspect of quality assurance at institutional level involves the use of staff appraisal and development in the institution. Higher education funding bodies, quality assurance agencies as well as the management of institutions is putting much pressure on academic staff to improve their performance. The institutions are now monitored for their efficiency and effectiveness through the assessment of outcomes and individual staff performance. Performance management is now an aspect used to assess the performance of individual staff members. Staff members are now required to develop performance outcomes and these are used to measure their performance. Tied to performance management is the issue of staff development. Institutions can use performance management to determine the professional development and skills needs of individual staff members. The quality of teaching and learning can be assessed through the use of performance management systems. The systems can be used to empower academic staff members in the institution. A staff member that excels in teaching and research can be identified and rewarded. This would help to motivate staff members to continue working towards improving the quality of teaching and learning. In cases where the performance of staff members is not satisfactory, they could be assisted through professional development to improve their weak areas.

Staff development can also be used for quality assurance purposes. In particular “learning and development, including lifelong learning and continuing professional development for employees, have been viewed as a strategic tool because of the potential to increase quality and performance” (Browel 2000:57).

Professional development of staff is an important aspect of ensuring that staff members have the requisite skills, knowledge and attitude/values to ensure transformation in the teaching and learning environment and therefore it should be included in policy. Academic staff members develop and implement curricula and they should be equipped with the skills that are necessary to develop and implement relevant curricula that are in line with the changing needs of society. The situation in contemporary institutions is characterised by continuous change, therefore academic staff should be continuously developed in order to equip them with the skills/knowledge/values/attitude that are relevant to cope with the change that is taking place. Quality assurance is also a very important aspect in higher learning institutions, and it therefore puts emphasis on the need to develop staff in order to improve their performance and the quality of their teaching. Another important factor for staff to be continuously developed is the fact that institutions themselves are competing for resources and for students, therefore it is important for an institution to have staff with the requisite skills to enable it to compete successfully with other institutions. Professional development could aid the competitive advantage of the institution (Browel 2000:58).

The three main areas of academic staff assessment are teaching, research and engagement or community involvement. The three concepts are discussed below.

The scholarship of teaching refers to “the process of professional learning and knowing about teaching and being able to make suggestions about how it can be demonstrated and assessed” (Kreber and Cranton 2000:476).

It is a process that involves reflecting on knowledge based on experience and research. It is also referred to as an aspect of teaching. Three perspectives of the scholarship of teaching have been presented by various scholars. The perspectives are discovery research that academic staff members engage in, excellence in teaching and applying education theory and research to practice (Kreber et al 2000:477; Trigwell and Shale 2004:525). The three perspectives view the scholarship of teaching in terms of staff undertaking research in order

to gain new knowledge and to be innovative, staff looking for opportunities to excel in their teaching and combining research, community engagement and theory in their teaching in order to improve student learning.

Research in education is conducted in many situations by a variety of individuals. The results of research are in most cases used to improve educational practice and to inform decision-making (Wiersma 2009:1). A kind of research that combines theory and practice is called action research. Staff members who engage in action research use the results from research to improve practice. In action research, “research informs practice and practise informs research” (Kemmis 2010:167). The most important purposes of research are to increase knowledge and to be innovative. Research is defined as “the systematic process of collecting, analysing and interpreting data in order to increase understanding of a certain phenomenon” (Leedy and Ormrod 2005:2) – higher education in the case of this study. Research is viewed as being highly organised in most cases in terms of collecting the data required, analysing and interpreting it. Educational research focuses on investigating behaviour patterns in the learners and other stakeholders in education, while education research is mainly about evaluation of different educational theories. Educational research is classified into basic and applied research.

Basic research tends to be more generally orientated and is meant to add to the existing body of knowledge, while applied research such as action research is specific orientated and is meant to highlight some innovation. Academic staff engages in both types of research for purposes of increasing knowledge and to inform and improve their teaching.

The scholarship of engagement is meant to bring academic staff and the communities they serve closer together. It came about as a reaction to the growing concern about the disparity between academic staff and the communities. Through the scholarship of engagement staff members find ways “to communicate to public audiences, work for the public good and most importantly generate knowledge with public participation” (Barker 2004:123). Academic staff members across faculties and disciplines engage in a host of activities such as research, teaching and other outreach functions to communicate and work with communities. The scholarship of engagement also involves the generation of knowledge with the participation of the communities, the use of open forums to

communicate with the public, research collaborations, establishing networks with the community and the general public.

Many higher education institutions assess the performance of their academic staff in the areas of teaching, research and community engagement.

Community engagement could take on many different shapes and forms within the context of higher education, such as distance education, community-based research, and participatory action research, professional community service and service learning. Community engagement is “the combination of teaching and learning, professional community service by academics and participatory action research applied simultaneously to identified community development priorities” (CHE 2006:11).

Many definitions of service learning have been presented, but for the purpose of this study only one definition from the Higher Education Quality Committee Criteria for Institutional Audits is discussed. Service learning is defined as “applied learning that is directed at specific community needs and is integrated into an academic programme and curriculum”. In service learning the learners apply their academic knowledge and skills to address real community needs. The communities are regarded as partners and their needs have to be considered and integrated into the curriculum. Models of service learning could be “community-based, discipline-based, problem-based, capstone courses, service internships and undergraduate community-based action research”.

Service learning must be planned, resourced and managed in a way that ensures that the needs of all stakeholders such as students, staff and the community are recognised. Students should be engaged in activities that will benefit the community and the students themselves and where the primary goals are to provide a service to the community and to enhance student learning through the service. The central characteristic of service learning is reciprocity. This form of community engagement is underpinned by the assumption that “service is enriched through scholarly activity and that scholarly activity, particularly student learning, is enriched through service to the community” (CHE 2006:23).

Four identified criteria for service learning are “the following:

- The service must be relevant and meaningful to the community, students and the institution. It must be relevant in improving the quality of life of the community as well as achieving module outcomes. The community must deem it worthwhile and the students' interests and skills must be valued
- the service must enhance academic learning through strengthening the accomplishment of learning outcomes and complementing learning resources
- it must ensure purposeful civic learning so that knowledge, values and skills make an explicit, direct and purposeful contribution to the preparation of students for active civic participation
- finally it must provide structured opportunities for reflection. Reflection assists in gaining a deeper understanding of module content, a broader appreciation of the discipline and an enhanced sense of personal values and social responsibility (CHE 2006:25)

In order to implement service learning successfully in higher education institutions it is important to provide the necessary resources, support for academic staff and students and to provide capacity development for both staff and students.

### **2.5.7 National and international benchmarking**

Institutions also engage in national and international benchmarking for quality assurance purposes. Benchmarking could be at national or international level. According to Smout (2002) benchmarking is a “formal and structured process of searching for those practices that lead to excellent performance and the observation and exchange of information about these practices”. For most institutions of higher education “the desire to learn from one another and to share aspects of good practice is almost as old as the university itself” (Schofield 2000:6). This could be done in various ways such as professional associations, visits and teams of national and international assessors. The main purpose of benchmarking is to learn from others in order to improve and to ensure that productivity and performance compares with the best even internationally. Benchmarking should be used to enable an institution “to set targets for the continuous improvement over time of its performance to achieve best practice” (Schofield 2000:16). According to Dey (2002) “benchmarking is a

continuous process of learning and not a once off event; a process that provides valuable information rather than simple answers; a process of learning from others rather than mere copying of ideas or practice; a time consuming and labour intensive process”.

### **2.5.8 Learning and teaching policy**

Another aspect of institutional quality assurance is the use of learning and teaching policies. Higher education institutions are experiencing much pressure from various stakeholders such as employers to prepare students for work and for the knowledge economy by ensuring that their graduates acquire the desired graduate attributes. There is a critical need within higher education institutions to improve the quality of student learning. University learning and teaching policies are now being developed to address the idea of graduate attributes, and these are to address issues such as lifelong learning, developing the students’ capacity to judge their own academic and professional development, graduate skills, knowledge society and mode 2 knowledge (Green, Star and Itanen 2009:19).

Learning and teaching policies are also perceived as a way for management to inform teaching and learning in higher education institutions that for a long time have been neglected. In addition, quality assurance has necessitated the need for learning and teaching policies in order to improve learning and teaching in higher education institutions. The learning and teaching policy would normally address the areas of curriculum development, facilitating learning and assessment. The emphasis in these areas is on the design and development of a relevant curriculum, providing a conducive learning environment through the use of appropriate teaching and learning strategies and resources and the provision of quality feedback to students.

The University of Botswana (UB) responded to the needs of the stakeholders and employers of its graduates by developing a “learning and teaching policy”. The policy covers the areas of teaching, assessment and professional development. The aim of the policy is to ensure that graduates acquire certain graduate attributes by the end of their studies to enable them to function effectively as professionally rounded citizens, both in their work environment and in any other engagements they may be involved in after graduation as professionally rounded citizens. The policy is guided by a philosophy that is based on intentional learning. Intentional learning is based on andragogical strategies that encourage

“active learning, the achievement of learning outcomes and the development of self-directed, independent learners who have learned how to learn” (UB LT Policy 2008:3). The philosophy of the UB learning and teaching policy is based on the university values of innovation, learner centeredness, lifelong learning, globalisation, equity and diversity, academic freedom, collaboration, academic progression and quality assurance (UB 2008:3). The goals of the policy are intended “to fulfil the university vision, mission and values”.

In developing learning and teaching policies, various problems have been raised, such as how graduate attributes could be defined, how they could be defined in each academic discipline, how to facilitate learning, evaluate the graduate attributes and how these are going to change higher education teaching and learning (Green 2009:20).

#### **2.5.9 Quality assurance officers and committees**

Higher education institutions set up committees that are charged with the responsibility of assuring quality in the institution. The committees may be at department, faculty or institutional level. The committee normally includes academic staff members, members from other academic support units, students, quality assurance staff and other relevant personnel.

The work of the committee involves the implementation of the quality assurance policy in the faculties and they work very closely with quality assurance officers and other relevant personnel.

### **2.6 Quality assurance models in higher education**

Higher education systems have been under pressure to become more responsive and accountable to their many stakeholders. The achievement of academic excellence in terms of quality in teaching, learning, research and scholarship is of major concern to the institutions. As a result, a number of quality assurance models have been developed to address the issue. The institutions have realised a need to employ the quality models in order to achieve academic excellence. It should be noted that the models were drawn from manufacturing and other industries and for a long time there has been much controversy regarding their suitability in education but of late they have been contextualised to higher



education and have been found to be effective. The main reasons why the models are now accepted in education are that service in higher education is similar to that of any other organisation; it is customer-driven and involves tangible processes that can be measured and improved. The quality of teaching and learning could improve with the provision of high quality educational support services. For purposes of this study only five models are discussed namely the “Malcolm Baldrige Criteria, ISO 9000-2000, Capability Maturity Model (CMM), the Six Sigma Model and Total Quality Management” (Mishra 2007:57).

### **2.6.1 Malcolm Baldrige Model**

The Malcolm Baldrige quality model is used in the USA as a national quality award for performance excellence. The education criteria for performance excellence are designed to “help organisations use an integrated approach to organisational performance management that results in:

- delivery of ever improving value to students and stakeholders, contributing to education quality and organisational stability
- improvement of overall organisational effectiveness and capabilities
- organisation and personal learning” (Mishra 2007:58).

According to the model, there are “seven major categories and several sub-categories” that focus primarily on learner centred excellence. The seven categories are outlined “as:

- leadership – it examines how an organisation’s senior leaders guide and sustain an organisation. The way the organisation addresses the ethical, legal and public responsibilities is also examined
- strategic plans – the organisation’s strategic objectives and action plans are examined; they also analyse how strategic objectives and action plans are deployed, changed and progress is measured
- students, stakeholder and market focus – it assesses how an organisation determines the requirements, expectations and preferences of the students, stakeholders and markets. Also of interest is the relationship with students and

stakeholders, factors that attract students and lead to student and stakeholder satisfaction and loyalty are examined

- measurement, analysis and knowledge – it explores how an organisation selects, gathers and analyses and improves its data, information and assets, including how the organisation reviews its organisational performance
- workforce focus – an organisation’s ability to organise, manage and develop workforce to utilise its full potential and also assess workforce capability and capacity to build an environment of high performance
- process management – an organisation’s core competencies and work systems and an examination of how it designs, manages and improves its key processes to achieve the organisation’s success and sustainability and the institution’s readiness to face emergency situations
- results – an organisation’s performance in all the six areas and improvements in student learning, budgetary provision, faculty and staff, results and leadership

The seven assessment areas are meant to address the entire institution’s functions and processes in order to determine their effectiveness. It is also important to know that the focus of the model is to improve quality and productivity.

### **2.6.2 ISO 9000:2000 Model**

Another model is ISO 9000:2000 which is derived from the Greek word *isos*, meaning uniform or equal. Before the 1990s the model was mainly used for “manufacturing industry to predict reliability of products and quality control”. It was in the 1990s when the model started to be used in other sectors including “education and training”. The ISO certification indicates that the organisation is able to “meet the needs and demands of its customers in a planned and controlled manner”. The focus of the model is on a well organised organisation and that the outcomes of programmes and courses meet the intended goals and needs of users, the emphasis is on continuous improvement.

ISO has “8 quality principles;

- customer focus, it recognises that the organisation depends on the customers and therefore should understand current and future customer needs, should meet customer requirements and strive to exceed customer expectations
- Leadership, leaders establish unity of purpose and give direction to the organisation. Their responsibility is to create an internal environment that could facilitate achievement of the organisation objectives
- involvement of people, stresses that people at all levels are the essence of an organisation and they should be involved for organisational benefit
- process approach, a desired result is achieved more efficiently when activities and related results are managed as a process
- systems approach to management, identifying, understanding and managing interrelated processes as a system contributes to the organisations effectiveness and efficiency
- continuous improvement, a permanent objective of the organisation should be continuous improvement of its performance
- fact based decision making, useful decisions are based on the analysis of data and information
- mutually beneficial supplier relationship, an organisation and its suppliers are interdependent and a mutually beneficial relationship enhances the ability of both to create value”

ISO 9000:2000 reaffirms that a quality management system should be the simplest one that works well; it need only be comprehensive enough to meet the quality objectives for the educational organisation. The standards for education have “21 elements in the four major areas of management responsibility, resource management, product realisation and measurement, analysis and improvement”.

Van de Berghe (2004) criticised ISO management system as being too time consuming and requiring huge volumes of paper. It has also been criticised for not being the best for

education and that it should be complemented by content related criteria. Van de Berghe (2004) suggested that the system can work if it meets the following criteria:

- Organisation is already well organised
- There is already a quality policy
- The organisation has been and is likely to remain fairly stable in terms of activities and staff
- There is a good understanding of all internal processes
- There is availability of standardised documents
- The organisation is financially sound
- Availability of an officer who is qualified and motivated to coordinate quality implementation
- The senior management believes in the value of certification
- The number of significantly different types of customer, product and services is limited
- The organisation is small with only few departments and a few dozen staff.

### **2.6.3 Capacity Maturity Model (CMM)**

The third model is the Capacity Maturity Model. It was originally intended as a tool to evaluate the ability of government contractors to perform a contracted software project, but could be used in other settings as a measure to assess the maturity of a process. The model is based on a concept of “key process areas that collectively achieve a set of goals important for enhancing process ability”.

It recognises “five maturity levels being:

- software process is characterised as ad hoc, and occasionally even chaotic. Few processes are defined, success depends on individual effort

- basic project management processes are established to trace cost, schedule and functionality. The necessary process description is in place to repeat earlier success on a project with similar application
- the project process for the processes is documented, standardised and integrated into a software process for the organisation
- detailed measures of the software process and product quality are collected. Both the software process and product are quantitatively understood and controlled
- continuous process implementation is enabled by quantitative feedback from the process and from piloting innovative ideas and technologies”

The process of CMM is in six steps:

- Selection of team members to undertake assessment and evaluation
- Administration of maturity questionnaire on a representative sample at the site
- Analysis of the responses to identify key areas that need emphasis
- Site visit of the team where team members conduct interviews and review document to judge whether the goals of key processes are achieved
- Team prepares a list of findings identifying strengths and weaknesses
- Team prepares a key process or profile showing where the organisation has and has not satisfied the goals of the key process area.

#### **2.6.4 Six Sigma Model**

The model was used by other sectors but by the 1990s it slowly got to be used by academic institutions to try to apply the model for quality assessment and improvement. The basis of the model is standard deviation in statistics and its main objective is to reduce variation and defects, increase customer satisfaction and increase profits. The model can be viewed as a metric, a philosophy and as a methodology.

As a metric, the model denotes a population's standard deviation of about 99.9997% satisfaction or conformance to standards. As a philosophy, the six sigma model is concerned with customer focus and creative process improvement. It believes that there is strong correlation between level of defects, costs and customer satisfaction. The teams work with the ultimate goal of reducing defects and aspire to reach perfection.

The methodology emphasises the process of achieving the six sigma level and it is "a systematic process covering 5 steps; define, measure, analyse, improve, control".

In order for institutions to apply the six sigma model, institutions need people who are trained in the methodology of six sigma. The model also emphasises team work and that is in tandem with the activities of an educational institution. The roles and the responsibilities of team members are outlined and it involves people in the process.

Six sigma views the quality improvement of educational services as possible through adapting the structures of the educational system to the market demands and customers' needs as well as other stakeholders' expectations. According to Diana (2003) the benefits of six sigma in higher education are "to:

- increase in the performance of educational services
- improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of the management processes in attaining the desired goals
- enhancing the capacity of the institution to achieve quality in all components that define the institution as a whole"

Institutions of higher learning could benefit from using six sigma since it aims at maintaining academic quality at high levels and improving it continuously. However, it should be noted that for six sigma to be successful there has to be "well-structured documentation, clear procedures, clearly defined tasks, activities, indicators and achievable goals".

### 2.6.5 Total Quality Management (TQM)

“Total Quality management” believes that what the consumer perceives as quality should be regarded as such. TQM is mainly driven by people, involves changes in people’s attitudes and deals with process orientation and continuous improvement of the process.

In addition, it strives for empowerment and autonomy of the people in using production process and asks people to continuously find ways in which they can adapt to the changing environment. The model is “a continuing improvement plan, with an effort to bring out the best for the stakeholders as well as the institution”.

TQM is concerned with “organisational improvement through identification and solution of problems by groups of employees at various levels in the structure”. Quality is regarded as what is understood as the customers’ perception of quality and there should be mechanisms in place to regularly establish the customers’ perceptions. TQM and quality assurance are complementary in the sense that “quality assurance is about efficiency and effectiveness as well as change and continuous improvement and TQM has improvement as its main goal”. The following are the “essential elements of TQM:

- quality is conceptualised as customers’ perceptions
- the aim is to identify and meet the customers’ requirements through the medium of processes that are error free
- a customer is anyone who receives the product or service
- by utilising the internal customer concept, the result of each process is viewed as a product therefore, evaluation takes place immediately
- central to TQM is self-improvement
- TQM requires superior quality information systems to provide timely measures of and feedback on performance
- requires involvement and commitment of all organisation members in quality matters and continuous improvement”

The 5 components of TQM are; “customer, continuous improvement, training and development, teamwork and measurement”. Any person who is affected by the product, process, and service is regarded as a customer. Continuous improvement must be maintained in order to allow innovation and excellence to take place. In cases where there is improvement, there should be zero defects. For TQM to be successfully implemented there should be continuous training and updating of staff. Improvement efforts should be geared towards reinforcing the commitment of all employees so as to lead to increased morale and gains in productivity. There should be team work and all stakeholders must be involved in order to ensure success. Monitoring progress and review of objectives leads to successful implementation of TQM. The success of TQM implementation is “the ability to monitor progress and review the objectives”.

Morley (2003) says that “quality in higher education should focus on total quality care that recognises each member’s efforts and contribution and an institutional culture of quality”. As such quality should be regarded as a process that enables critical dialogue with the institution, where there is ownership and facilitation of student learning and a strong culture of self-reflection of continuous care for the students’ quality course experience. Morley (2003) suggested 4 core activities that take care of quality in higher education; teaching and learning, student assessment, staff development and curriculum and courses. These form a protective belt to the overall student development and experience that is central to quality higher education.

It is also worth noting that TQM could be effective in higher education institutions in terms of improving customer satisfaction. Institutions are now under a lot of pressure from the stakeholders to aim for and deliver quality service to the customer. TQM should therefore be used in all aspects of the teaching and learning environment.

The following are “the potential benefits of TQM:

- continuous and sustained organisational improvement
- increased levels of external customer satisfaction
- tangible and significant cost savings



- focus on the importance of interdisciplinary team with combinations of academic and administrative staff
- improvements in employee morale, commitment and motivation
- a new way of managing the organisation which promotes companywide congruence, accountability and involvement”

However, there are potential problems with TQM in higher education institutions. One of the problems is identification of customers for the institutions. The customers are many such as students, parents, employers, government and these have different perceptions of quality. There is also a problem with the concept of error free since it seems not to support experimentation and research. The feedback systems in some institutions may not function properly and this will not assist in achieving TQM ideals. Finally, the institutions need to realise that TQM will not improve anything without the involvement and commitment of all the employees in the institution.

Some of the “identified benefits of the models include:

- the requirement for self-assessment against pre-determined criteria
- the requirement for institutions or departments to adopt a strategic approach to quality measurement and management
- improvement in customer service and employee morale, interdepartmental working conditions and student enrolment
- students incorporated as customers
- facilitating the identification of quality enhancement priorities”

Brooks and Becket (2007) also identified some “problems with the models such as:

- bureaucratic structures within institutions and lack of effective leadership
- the effectiveness of the models rely heavily on team approach that is a bit contentious to the traditional autonomous role of academics

- the debate on whether the student is a customer or co-producer in higher education
- inherent differences in quantifying the outputs of higher education for self-assessment purposes”

The models have different important aspects that I consider very crucial in quality assurance in higher education. Such aspects are: the workforce, continuous improvement, identifying strengths and weaknesses, customer satisfaction and high performance. However, the models all have their different emphasis, for example, TQM emphasises continuous improvement while CMM focuses on identifying strengths and weaknesses. In my view, all these are important and none should be above the other. In addition, the establishment of effective systems and processes is equally important and should be included in the models. Higher education institutions need an effective management methodology to address institutional quality and to achieve academic excellence. The models can be used in combination in order to achieve the desired academic excellence but that depends on the context of the institution.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter is meant to bring awareness of the various issues in relation to quality assurance in higher education. Of particular importance is the concept of quality and quality assurance and how various stakeholders interpret and understand the two concepts in order to apply them to their particular contexts. In addition, the fact that the two concepts are interpreted differently by different people is a clear indication of the dynamic nature of quality and its assurance.

The various aspects of quality assurance that higher education institutions use also bring in the differences in the institutions brought about by their different contexts in terms of resources, focus and their strategic missions. It is hoped that these differences assist the institutions in establishing their needs in terms of quality assurance and what would be appropriate for each institution. In situations where similarities are noticed, those can be used for the benefit of the institutions and their nations.

In line with the aspects discussed in this chapter, are the quality assurance models that are applicable to higher education institutions. It is worth noting that the models are only a

guide and should be selected in terms of their relevance to a particular institution. These are meant to guide institutions in their drive to achieve quality higher education that is every institutions 'dream.

## **CHAPTER 3 QUALITY ASSURANCE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Higher education in most countries is going through much expansion due to increased competition, scarce resources, and accountability to more stakeholders as well as mass education. All these have created much concern about the quality of higher education in both developed and developing countries. The World Bank also noted that the expansion in higher education has been unplanned and often chaotic and this has resulted in deterioration of the average quality of education and this could have serious consequences. More and more higher education institutions have been set up due to the increase in demand for places in higher education institutions and this has resulted in many African countries becoming concerned about the provision of higher education for profit. As a result, many higher education institutions in developing countries are finding it necessary to develop quality assurance policies and strategies to improve the quality of their teaching, research and community service, just as in developed countries. There is now an increased demand for accountability to the stakeholders and the consumers of higher education. In order to discuss this issue further it is important to start by exploring the education reforms that have taken place in some of the developing countries. A discussion of the nature of universities in such countries follows in a later section, and then the problems with higher education in developing countries as well as the solutions to the problems are explored. Finally, some examples of quality assurance activities in higher education from a selection of developing countries are explored.

### **3.2 Educational change**

In all countries efforts to improve, renew or transform the organisation, contents and methods of education are an on-going process (Youngman and Swartland 2000:3). As such governments periodically review their policies to achieve educational change in response to various economic, social and political perspectives. As a result, most governments of developing countries have started to reform their education systems after independence in order to align them with their new national goals.

The past two decades have witnessed an “unprecedented global attempt to attune education to the demands of the new economy and this has had an impact on education in major ways including fundamental curricular reforms” (Tabulawa 2009:87). Most developing countries have embarked on educational change that is meant to expand the supply of education, improve equity in education provision and to address issues of quality education. The reforms have greatly influenced the budget priorities of developing countries and the way in which they have made education accessible to the public. Institutions are facing much change and they need to respond to the change around them. One such change is to deliver a new kind of learner who “is creative, has critical thinking and problem solving skills, and a positive disposition towards team work” (Tabulawa 2009:87). There is now an urgent need for institutions to refine the learning opportunities they provide for students, their leadership practices and their operational structures (Bascia and Hargreaves 2000:197). The purpose of educational change should benefit the students. Educational change is viewed as a distinct approach that aims to enhance student learning and the purpose of education in many countries is to prepare students for life (Stoll 2006:123). Institutions are challenged by change around them to ensure that the education they offer promotes continuous learning. As a result education the world over is being reformed to “endow students with appropriate skills” (Tabulawa 2009:88). Therefore, most governments have had to adjust their budget priorities in order to cater for the reforms and this has in turn had an impact on how governments have made education available.

Various reasons have also been put forward as catalysts for reform, such as “change in the world economy, dissatisfaction with the state of education, return to education, and more efficient use of resources and education now being a priority in most countries” (World Bank 2000:1). In addition, the international community has put forward a number of initiatives that have made education a priority in developing economies. Such initiatives include the World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000.

Educational change also requires institutions to establish networks with communities to help academic staff members to deepen their own professional learning and extend their repertoire through serious enquiry into their practice (Stoll 2006:125). Another aspect of educational change that needs to be considered is capacity building. “Ensuring capacity for

lasting improvement is critical to address challenges of quality and equity” (Stoll 2009:116; Harris and Chrispeels 2006:8). Capacity building involves the continuous professional development of academic staff members in order to enhance student learning. Academic staff members are considered by most policy makers and educational change experts to be the centrepiece of educational change; therefore most reform efforts are directed at them and the involvement of academic staff members in the reform process is seen as critical (Bascia and Hargreaves 2000:131). Generic features of educational improvement focus on “learning and teaching, relying on facts to drive any improvement efforts, professional development that is of high quality, leadership and community engagement as well as external support” (Stoll 2009:117; Fullan 2009:108).

The last two decades of educational change suggest that much has taken place since researchers and practitioners in the field have attained experience in implementing and studying educational reform (Harris and Chrispeels 2006:4).

At the start of educational reform the focus was mainly on the academic staff member as a researcher and it left out student learning. As time passed the focus of educational reform was on linking institutional improvement with student learning. Institutions were provided with guidelines and strategies for implementation to promote classroom level change. The focus then shifted to improvement in all areas of the institution to address the shortcomings of the previous attempts at educational reform (Harris and Chrispeels 2000:7).

System-wide educational reform is an approach to restoring African education that first gained prominence through policy research of the “ World Bank and United States Agency for International Development” (USAID). The studies provide evidence of a crisis and deterioration of African education systems during the 1980s (Moulton, Mundy, Welmond and Williams 2002:2).

They also emphasise the need for African countries to reform their education systems by focusing on greater quality, equity and access. Most governments such as Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Botswana and others made an effort to reform their education systems in order to address the issues. It should be noted however, that some of the reforms either took too long to be implemented in some cases and in other cases the reforms did not benefit the countries at all.

More and more students have completed secondary education and there is an increased demand for places in higher education. According to Naidoo (2003) as “economies developed, higher education and its expansion have contributed much in terms of integrating national economies into an increasingly sophisticated and interconnected world”. The demand to raise the quality of higher education for all students is ever increasing. My study discusses education reforms only in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Lesotho with particular focus on reforms in higher education.

### **3.2.1 Education reform in Botswana**

The Botswana education system is still undergoing much change. Education in Botswana has always been a centre of focus so that even the country’s national plans place a great deal of attention on education. The government of Botswana has over the years set up National Commissions on Education to “evaluate the education system and to suggest ways in which it can be improved” (Tabulawa 2009:90). The first review of the education system in Botswana was done in 1975, followed by another one in 1992 and the recommendations of the commissions still have an impact on the education system. The main thrust of the National Commissions on Education is the “development and sustenance of a workforce that can apply advanced technology and respond competitively to the changing demands of the international economy” (Tabulawa 2009:90). As a result of the commissions, there is now increased access to education and the professional development of teachers has also been improved in terms of enrolments and quality; more students have been enrolled in higher education institutions and more programmes are being introduced in the institutions to respond to national, regional and global demands (Tabulawa 2009: 90).

The main goals of higher education in Botswana include “increased access for students, an education that is relevant and able to support both economic and societal needs of the nation, increased research capacity and development of an integrated single higher education system” (SARUA 2012:4).

Like many other developing countries, Botswana began a major programme of reform of its higher education system at the beginning of the 1990s.

The main focus of the reforms was on “increasing access to and equity in higher education, improving the quality of provision, ensuring the relevance of programmes to the needs of the learners and society and promoting a focus on research and development” (NDP 10). Most higher education reforms like in Botswana focus on higher education as a critical factor in the transformation to a knowledge economy and society.

After gaining independence in 1966 Botswana had to invest heavily in education and training due to its largely illiterate population at independence. Since then “education and training in Botswana has received about 25% of the annual national budget, one of the highest in the world. For instance, in 1999/2000, 23% of the nation’s budget was allocated to education, as well a significant portion of the capital budget” (Youngman and Swartland 2000:8). Much of the budget was invested in primary and secondary education, leaving higher education behind. For instance, at independence Botswana had no university of its own but depended on what was then referred to as the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS) which was based in Lesotho with an enrolment of 5 000 students shared between the three countries. This had a negative impact on access to higher education in the three countries. Then, in 1975, Lesotho decided to nationalise its campus and this resulted in Botswana and Swaziland relocating to Swaziland to establish a campus for their students. The partnership between Botswana and Swaziland was maintained until “1992 when the two countries decided to have separate campuses in their respective countries” (NDP 10 of 2007).

The National Development Plan 10 of 2007 highlights the commitment of the government “to continue its improvement of higher education during 2009 to 2016 and beyond”. The plan focuses on “three strategic goals based on the key goals of the White Paper on tertiary education of 2008, namely the development of the country’s human resources, research and innovation, and system and institutional capability”.

As a result, a range of projects and programme activities were started that included “the Tertiary Education Council (TEC), University of Botswana Medical School and the second university called Botswana International University of Science and Technology” (BIUST).

In 1999 the TEC was established to be in charge of “higher education policy coordination, planning and development, funding and quality assurance of tertiary education in



Botswana". TEC has now been replaced by BQA and the quality assurance activities that were done by TEC have been transferred to BQA. A white paper was developed by the council and parliament considered the paper in 2008. A number of problems were identified in the tertiary education system in Botswana, such as "the need for a more organised strategy to drive tertiary education, improved coordination and management of tertiary institutions, and a more organised strategy for human resource development and research and innovation, a clearer and more objective approach to funding public tertiary institutions" (White Paper 2008). The council has so far done work on the funding model for individual public and private tertiary institutions. It also facilitated a study on the national human resource development strategy that was meant to assist in the matching of skills with the labour market and the economic needs of society. Two sets of regulations were formulated and have been used in the registration of 26 public and private tertiary institutions; work has also started to accredit programmes in private institutions. The council experienced challenges in terms of "access, quality, relevance, competitiveness and sustainability of tertiary education in Botswana and these have become the main focus of the council during NDP 9".

The UB, however, identified six areas of focus during the current plan period namely "expanding access and participation, providing relevant and high quality academic programmes, intensifying research performance, strengthening engagement, improving the student experience and enhancing human resources for excellence in delivery".

In terms of expanding access to UB programmes, the institution aims to expand enrolments in all its undergraduate programmes. For example, enrolments increased from around 10 000 in 2003/4 to about 16 000 in 2007/8. In addition the institution aims to "increase undergraduate part-time and open distance learning programmes, expand the range of offerings for post-graduate diploma and master's programmes and to recruit undergraduate students for the Maun Campus by 2014/15" (UB 2008:10). Much work is also being done in terms of refocusing academic programmes to societal needs as well as building more facilities on the campus.

The second area of focus for UB is to ensure that the programmes offered in the institution are relevant and of high quality in order to meet the requirements and expectations of

students, employees and other stakeholders. Therefore the institution aims to deliver programmes that are “internationally recognised for their academic excellence, offer relevant programmes that are responsive to student requirements and economic and social development and to ensure that students are adequately prepared for life, work and citizenship” (UB 2008:11).

The third area of focus for the institution addresses the research performance of the institution with the aim of intensifying it. The institution aims to address this area through “encouraging more participation in research by staff and students, increasing research funding and research outputs as well as its impact” (UB 2008:12).

The fourth area of focus of the institution is meant to strengthen its engagement in the country, regionally and internationally.

The goals of the institution in this area include “to:

- develop enterprise through knowledge engagement and transfer
- embed community, cultural and civic engagement
- strengthen international and regional engagements”(UB 2008:14).

The fifth area of focus aims to ensure “a safe, welcoming, supportive and healthy environment for all students”. Finally, the institution aims to ensure that its human resources support its mission by “recruiting and appointing high quality people, rewarding and retaining them and encouraging individual growth, team work, trust and open communication”.

In addition work has already commenced in the construction of the teaching hospital and already the medical school has enrolled students into its programme. Construction of the second university has already started though the opening of the institution has been delayed. The second university is being established to “prepare science and technology specialists that are in high demand in the country. These specialists are needed to drive Botswana’s rapidly growing economy”. The main mandate of the university is to be “highly

research intensive with a focus on science, engineering and technology degree programmes” (www.biust.ac.bw)

The higher education reforms in Botswana have resulted in better coordination of higher education by the TEC. In addition more private higher education institutions have been set up and this has improved access to higher education as well as reducing the cost of sending students outside the country for tertiary education.

However, the reforms have also brought with them some problems such as the mushrooming of private tertiary institutions, some of which may not be credible. Another problem is that it has taken too long for the government to implement some of the recommendations of the national education commissions. It has also taken too long for the TEC to accredit programmes in both private and public tertiary institutions.

Furthermore, there are some challenges that are faced by Botswana in the higher education sector, such as “the need to improve access to tertiary education, ensuring that the curriculum is relevant to the national needs of the country, ensuring that tertiary education is effectively coordinated and to regulate cross border providers of higher education” (SARUA 2009:5).

### **3.2.2 Education reform in Zimbabwe**

Zimbabwe embarked on massive reforms of its education system in the 1980s soon after independence. Before independence mission schools were set up by the missionaries to provide formal education to Africans while the government provided education primarily to white children. African education was basically related to agriculture and industry. Africans were “to be educated but not equal to white education and their education was limited to elementary knowledge of agriculture, carpentry and building” (Kanyongo 2005:65). Africans had little access to education, their schools were generally poorly funded and their curriculum was different from that of the whites.

During the first decade of independence reforms in the education system focused on providing education for all. This resulted in more schools being built in areas that were regarded as marginalised; more resources were directed towards the professional

development of teachers and an increase in providing teaching and learning materials in schools. The interest was more on “accessibility to education than on quality and cost effectiveness” (Kanyongo 2005:65).

A separate ministry of higher education was established in 1988 to be responsible for tertiary education. More teachers were taken through professional developed programmes for the schools to reduce their heavy dependence on unqualified teachers. As a result, the education reforms that followed focused on relevance and quality of education and training. Education in Zimbabwe aims at “promoting national unity to contribute to national development, particularly economic development through the supply of professionally developed and skilled teachers and staff” (Kanyongo 2005:67). Zimbabwe’s education reforms resulted in “more skilled teachers, increased access to education, racial and gender equity, educated people power and an improved literacy rate”. However, the reforms were not executed smoothly in all areas. In some cases the reforms did not have set time frames and resources were not adequately provided.

As in other developing countries, higher education in Zimbabwe is undergoing changes mainly because of the rapid expansion that started in 1999.

The country has experienced a sharp decline in economic growth and this has led to “lower or reduced financial support for higher education; yet the demand for higher education is growing rapidly” (Kariwo 2007:45). Higher education reform in Zimbabwe is mainly “as a result of”:

- expansion and diversification of enrolment
- fiscal pressure as measured in low and declining per student expenditure and as seen in overcrowding lowly paid faculty, lack of academic equipment or libraries and dilapidated physical structures
- the demand for greater accountability on the part of institutions and faculty and on behalf of students, employers and those who pay
- the demand for greater quality and efficiency” (Kariwo 2007:46).

Expansion in higher education in Zimbabwe has been increasing since independence due to the increase in the demand for access to higher education institutions. At independence the country had “one university, and then in 1991 a second one was founded to increase access to higher education. At the moment there are about eight public universities and five private tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe” (Kariwo 2007:52). Other major contributors to the increasing demand in higher education in Zimbabwe are the increase in population and brain drain that have resulted in a lack of personnel to establish new departments and programmes. A significant amount of government expenditure is for “education and an increasing portion is now being invested in higher education. At the moment there are about 40 000 students in 12 higher education institutions in Zimbabwe compared to only 2 000 in 1989. About 8 000 students qualify annually for higher education but fail to get access” (Kariwo 2007:53). This state of affairs has put much pressure on the government to improve access that would lead to increased costs to government.

“The quality of higher education in Zimbabwe has been the responsibility of the institutions themselves. In addition, a council on higher education was established by an act of parliament in 1990. Part of its mandate is to oversee the quality of the work of universities and other higher education institutions. The council has so far only managed to register higher education institutions but little has been done in terms of admission of students and the quality of teaching and research. The council has been constrained by the lack of funds and lack of autonomy” (Kariwo 2005:57).

The reduction in “funding, high inflation experienced in the country, critical shortage of foreign exchange and brain drain have a negative impact on the institutions and the quality of higher education in general” (Kariwo 2007:58).

### **3.2.3 Education reform in Lesotho**

Another developing country that is still experiencing educational change is Lesotho. The country felt the need to reform its education and to focus it on “education with production and training for self-reliance” (Mudzidziwa and Seotsanyana 2002:14). Formal education in Lesotho was introduced by the missionaries. The schools were concerned mainly with “the

acquisition of literacy and the study of the bible, the spiritual values and teachings of the church, including religious observances and participation in the Christian community” (Mudzidziwa and Seotsanyana 2002:2). The churches continued to have control over the education system even after independence. However, the government felt the need to change the education system so as to make it different from the one of the colonial government that seemed not to respond to the developmental needs of the country.

As a result, the first national education reform in Lesotho was in 1978 in a conference dubbed “*Educational dialogue*”; another one followed in 1988 and its aims were to usher in an era of transformation and restructuring of the education system to respond to the needs of the nation” (Mudzidziwa and Seotsanyana 2002:16).

The main issues at the centre of the reform process were that “government wanted to create conditions for government takeover of schools to give direction to education. The first educational reform of 1978 wanted to refocus education in terms of education with production and training for self-reliance”.

The second reform of 1988 aimed to transform and restructure the education system. Government wanted to achieve “school control and to implement an appropriate education system that would respond to the needs of the nation” (Mudzidziwa and Seotsanyana 2002:7). The reform of 2000 made provision for free education from primary level. The reforms discussed above mainly focused on primary and in some cases secondary education; however, my study focuses on education reforms at higher education level.

Higher education in Lesotho also experienced some form of reform. The principal concerns of the reform process were “to improve access to higher education and to ensure that it was equitable, to ensure that higher education was relevant and more responsive to the demands of the labour market, and to enhance efficiency in higher education institutions” (Lesotho Review 2011:7). Lesotho has to improve access to higher education as one of its priorities. In addition, the cost of sponsoring students in tertiary institutions is becoming “unsustainable for the government. Another problem is that skills development does not adequately meet the demands of the labour market. In order to address these concerns, efforts are being made to revise the higher education curriculum to focus it more on science and technology and to develop skills and competencies that are relevant to the employment

needs of the country”(Mudzidziwa and Seotsanyana 2002:5). Furthermore, the higher education act of 2004 made provision for a legal framework that is meant to regulate higher education in the country. The act provides for the establishment, governance and funding of a council on higher education.

The reforms that the three countries have made and are still making in their education systems have a significant impact on the recipients of the education system. In the case of Botswana and Zimbabwe much has been done to reform higher education, though the economic situation in Zimbabwe seems to have slowed down progress in some areas. Therefore still more needs to be done in the case of Lesotho.

The three countries have made great progress in ensuring access to basic education for primary school learners but this is not matched by the level of access in higher education. The issue of access to higher education is not completely addressed since the countries still depend on South Africa and other countries to secure places for their students who need higher education.

### **3.3 The nature of higher education institutions in developing countries**

Many higher education institutions in developing countries are at different levels in terms of their size and funding and this is mainly due to the level of economic development of these countries. The different levels of the institutions have an impact on the quality of teaching, research and community engagement and as such the levels of quality assurance in the institutions also differ. Other areas in which these institutions differ are the qualifications of academic staff, working conditions of staff members, quality of teaching, learning and research, and community engagement.

Higher education institutions in many developing countries tend to have fewer staff members with the appropriate qualifications to carry out and supervise research. As a result, the research quality and output in the institutions is low. The other reason for the low research output is the poor working conditions in developing countries that result in many academic staff looking for additional employment to improve their living conditions, the result of which is that little time is spent on research and in many cases there are no incentives to encourage staff to carry out research and the resources are not available. Since

many staff members are engaged in two or more jobs, the quality of teaching and learning is affected. Some staff members would hardly use any innovative methods of teaching and this refusal results in low standards in teaching and learning.

### **3.4 Problems with higher education institutions in developing countries**

The main problem with higher education institutions in developing countries could be due to the increase in student enrolments and this has not been matched by the resources available. The World Bank has identified “four main problems with higher education in developing countries, namely severe resource constraints, internal inefficiencies, external inefficiencies and social equity”.

Many developing countries are experiencing severe resource constraints due to increased competition for scarce public funds. As a result, there are staffing problems due to “low salaries, low faculty qualifications, deterioration in infrastructure and overcrowding in the classrooms. In terms of internal inefficiencies, many institutions in developing countries experience high student-teacher ratios, high unit costs and in some cases duplication of programmes. Inefficiency exists in the two areas of graduate unemployment and declining research output. Many graduates from institutions in developing countries are unemployed as a result of the skills they have acquired that do not meet those needed in the labour market and a lack of established links between institutions and the industry. In some developing countries higher education still remains elitist in spite of many social groups needing access to higher education. Another problem with higher education institutions in some developing countries is political interference, where in some cases academic staff members are promoted on the basis of their political interests and not on the basis of their performance” (Materu 2007: 57).

The following “proposals have been presented to address the problems raised above:

- improving resources for the institutions
- diversifying the types of higher education institution in order to increase access to higher education
- to respond to demands for higher education by different social groups



- recognising and reacting to labour market needs
- improved curricula that embrace critical thinking and decision-making skills
- strong support and commitment to staff development
- cost sharing and engaging in income generating activities
- and strengthening of links between institutions and the industry” ( Materu 2007: 57)

### **3.5 Quality assurance in higher education in Botswana, South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe**

A number of developing countries in Africa such as Botswana, South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe have moved swiftly to establish quality assurance systems for higher education in their countries. For example, in Botswana the “Tertiary Education Council (TEC), which has now been phased out and replaced by BQA, was established in 1999 to provide services to both public and private institutions in the following areas:

- registration of tertiary institutions
- quality assurance of academic programmes
- planning and research
- advising the government
- initiating policy on tertiary education
- human resource planning and development
- budgeting and funding for public tertiary institutions”(TEC 1999:2)

The Directorate of Quality Assurance and Regulation in TEC was responsible for the registration of tertiary institutions, “ensuring maintenance of institutional standards through its quality assurance and accreditation systems and procedures”. TEC expected all tertiary institutions in Botswana to have “quality assurance mechanisms in place as a way of assuring stakeholders about the high standards of their programmes and other

achievements through outcomes. The key aim of quality assurance is “to monitor performance as well as ensure the achievement of quality outputs” (TEC 1999: 3).

In South Africa, as far back as 1998, a council called the “Council on Higher Education (CHE) was established to ensure a well-managed higher education system in terms of its quality, responsiveness and equity”(CHE 1999:2).

The council is responsible for advising the minister of higher education and training on all higher education policy matters and for quality assurance in higher education and training.

The main “responsibilities of CHE are the following:

- advising the minister of higher education and training at his/her request or proactively, on all policy matters related to higher education
- assuming executive responsibility for quality assurance and quality promotion within higher education and training, including programme accreditation, institutional audits, programme evaluation, quality promotion and capacity building
- monitoring and evaluating whether, how, to what extent and with what consequences the vision, policy, goals and objectives for higher education are being realised, including reporting on the state of South African higher education
- contributing to the development of higher education by taking initiatives to provide guidance on key national and systemic issues, producing publications, holding conferences and conducting research to inform government and stakeholders about immediate and long-term challenges of higher education”(CHE 1999:5)

The council has one permanent committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), which has executive responsibility for quality promotion and quality assurance in higher education. The “four main functions of CHE are:

- Institutional audits that are responsible for conducting audits of public and private higher education institutions systems for ensuring good quality of provision in the three core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement

- National review responsible for re-accrediting existing programmes in specific disciplines and or qualification areas
- Programme accreditation is responsible for accrediting the learning programmes in public and private higher education institutions
- Quality promotion and capacity development are charged with the responsibility of disseminating information and knowledge about quality assurance, preparing individuals and institutions to participate in implementing the HEQC quality assurance system (CHE 1998:7).

In the case of Namibia the “Namibian Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) was set up in 1991 to address higher education issues such as to advise the government in terms of the needs, demand, scope, organisation, structure, location, funding and admission criteria”(NCHE 1991:3).

The following are the “identified objectives of NCHE:

- to promote the establishment of a coordinated higher education system
- to provide access of students to higher education system
- to assure quality in higher education
- to provide advice on the allocation of funds to public education institutions”(NCHE 1991:3)

The functions of the commission include “accreditation of programmes offered in higher education institutions, ensuring that there is effective monitoring of the quality assurance mechanisms of the institutions, promoting access of students to higher education institutions and undertaking research as necessary or as the minister may require” (NCHE 1991:5).

Zimbabwe has established a council that is responsible for higher education and deals mainly with “registering and accrediting institutions of higher education, and regulating quality assurance in them”(ZCHE 2006:3).The main “objectives of the council are:

- to promote and coordinate education provided by institutions of higher education
- to act as a regulator in the dissemination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examinations, academic quality and research in higher education institutions”(ZCHE 2006:4)

The functions of the council “are to:

- advise the minister on higher education matters
- develop and recommend policy on higher education including the establishment of higher education institutions and advise the minister accordingly
- accredit higher education institutions
- design and recommend an institutional quality assurance system for higher education, a system whereby the course, programme and degrees offered by the institution are evaluated on a regular and objective basis (ZCHE 2006:6).

It should be noted that many developing countries are making many efforts to ensure the quality of higher education. This is because countries can no longer function in isolation, but need quality higher education that can match national, regional and international standards. In addition, the institutions themselves are also called upon to develop and implement their own quality assurance policies and systems to ensure the quality of their programmes.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The need for quality assurance in higher education is due to the various factors that have now put a lot of pressure on governments to ensure quality of higher education in various countries. This has resulted in the need for the countries to take note of the educational reforms that affect them and the need to offer quality education as important considerations when developing and implementing their quality assurance policies and practices.

It is equally important for the institutions to recognise the nature of the different higher education institutions and their problems in order for them to make informed decisions with regards to their quality assurance engagements.

The examples of the quality assurance initiatives in the different countries discussed in this study provides an understanding of the different levels of progress that the countries have made, the important functions that these initiatives play in terms of quality of higher education and an appreciation and recognition of the efforts that developing countries are committed to with regards to quality in higher education.

## **CHAPTER 4 QUALITY ASSURANCE AT UB**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Models and practices on quality assurance in higher education are not necessarily the same in both developed and developing countries. Certain quality assurance systems and practices in higher education tend to be better in particular social and institutional contexts that prevail in different countries. Different higher education institutions have their local imperatives that give each institution its own identity. As a result, the quality assurance practices and policies of higher education institutions may differ. For purposes of this study the UB quality assurance practices and policy are discussed in detail in this chapter.

In order to understand the quality assurance practices and policy at UB, it is useful to explore the contextual factors that have influenced the development of such policies and practices. Such contextual factors include the historical legacy of the institution, the role of the state, the economic environment and societal expectations of the institution. It is worth noting that the quality assurance practices and policies of many higher education institutions are greatly influenced by past practices in higher education locally and globally. Secondly, each institution develops its quality assurance practices and policy on the basis of past historical practices of the country; finally, the economic environment of the country has a great bearing on the effectiveness of the quality assurance system especially in developing countries due to declining budgets for higher education and the limited expertise on quality assurance in higher education. In addition, higher education institutions are experiencing much pressure from stakeholders concerning the quality of higher education.

This chapter addresses the contextual factors leading to quality assurance at UB, the quality management policy and the quality assurance practices of the institution.

### **4.2 Background to quality assurance at UB**

“Never before has the quest for quality in tertiary education been as relevant as it is in this era; this is so because tertiary education is regarded both as an investment and a social service and as a result, the quality of the education system, especially beyond secondary education, is proportional to the quality of human resources it produces”(Garegae 2006:77).

Therefore, quality assurance activities in an institution are a way of giving assurance to its stakeholders that there is value for money in the offerings of the institution. As a tertiary institution in the country, the UB also realised the need to have in place a quality assurance system that would ensure the achievement of the institution's vision. The other reason is that the institution was no longer the only higher education institution in the country and it had to compete for resources with other institutions that were being established in the country. Until 2007 five degree-offering tertiary institutions had been established in the country. UB is now no longer the only university in the country but it has to compete with other institutions. Before the establishment of other institutions, UB had to "enrol more students than it could accommodate; many students were sent abroad for higher education and this had an impact on what could be invested in the local university. For example, in the 2008 academic year 14 299 students were enrolled in different programmes in UB, and these were serviced by about 827 academic staff members" (UB 2008:6). The high enrolment figures and the reduction of government financial support had a negative impact on the quality of delivery in the institution. Therefore, in 2002, the institution decided to develop a "Quality Management Policy that would guide the quality assurance activities of the institution" and this policy is discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

In terms of the role of the state in higher education, the government of Botswana plays a major role in tertiary education through the provision of student grants and financing to the UB but has very little influence on the academic activities of the institution. The institution enjoys "autonomy from government in that academic policy-making is the prerogative of academics. The oversight and steering role of the government allows UB to develop its academic policies, including the quality assurance system, managing its own budgets and responding to changing market needs as necessary"(Mhlanga 2008:167).

The lack of political interference by the government has enabled UB to develop quality assurance policies that are mainly driven by academic values. Government provides an enabling environment for higher education institutions to function effectively by providing resources for the development and maintenance of infrastructure and providing students with the necessary grants.

It is important to note that the government of Botswana is greatly involved in facilitating student participation in tertiary education. So far all students who qualify for university entry have been able to get study grants from the government – even those who enrol in private tertiary institutions. The disbursement of funds is managed by the Department of Tertiary Education Financing in the Ministry of Education and Skills Development. The funding of tertiary education has been greatly supported by the country's vibrant economy. The country has managed to propagate its wealth through beef exports and diamond mining and these have benefited all in the country. In addition, good democratic governance of the country has ensured national stability since independence in 1966 and the country has been able to attract more foreign investment as well as skilled expatriate labour, including in university education. The UB relies on expatriate staff but this has a bearing on the quality of education in the institution due to the fact that expatriates are employed on a two- to three-year contract and there is no guarantee for renewal.

Furthermore, the government of Botswana has managed to “enhance access to university education through public subsidy of tertiary education but this position is sometimes seen as encouraging complacency on the part of students. If students do not pay fees, they tend to be less committed to their academic work and less responsible in making their choices in terms of areas of study to pursue and the quality of their learning” (Mhlanga 2008:128). Where students pay fees, they demand value for money from the service providers and this encourages institutions to observe quality. The University of Botswana enjoys a degree of autonomy due to the political situation in the country.

Secondly, the country's vibrant economy enables the government to provide a reasonable amount of subsidy to the institution.

In terms of serving the needs of the society, it is worth noting that most universities in developing countries are there to serve the interests of their societies. The reform of curricula is based on the needs of the society and the institutions themselves are viewed as key to social and economic development, including generating knowledge. Therefore, for an institution to remain relevant, it must serve the needs of the society. These expectations tend to vary as time goes on, depending on societal needs at any given time. These expectations also tend to be an important factor in the effectiveness of the quality



assurance system of an institution. However, the government of Botswana did not see a need to harmonise the quality assurance activities of the higher education institutions in the country due to the small number of institutions at that time, but this is now changing since the establishment of TEC in the country which was responsible for the development and monitoring of quality assurance activities of all tertiary education institutions in the country. For a long time UB has enjoyed a great deal of autonomy in developing its own quality assurance policy and practices. The policy and practices were mainly for self-assessment and improvement and the establishment of TEC added the dimension of accountability.

One such system is the affiliation of all institutes of health science, colleges of education and the college of technical and vocational education. At the moment there are six colleges of education, eight health training institutions and one college of technical and vocational education that are affiliated to the university. The role that UB plays in the affiliation process is to approve programmes and results, and to award diplomas of the institutions. UB also carries out regular affiliation visits to these institutions to check their facilities, staffing and programmes, and to offer guidance and support. The government engaged UB to quality assure the activities of these institutions through an affiliation process.

Society expects the UB and other higher education institutions to support the economic development in the country by producing the required labour and expertise; the institution should meet labour demands of both the public and private sector. As a result UB is now experiencing more stakeholder participation in its affairs. Such stakeholders include industry and both public and private sectors and these greatly influence the institution's quality assurance policy and practices.

The contextual factors discussed above have an impact on the "development and implementation of quality assurance policy and practices at UB. The institution has taken much effort in ensuring quality performance but some of the efforts have not borne any positive results so far. The country's strong economy and the government's strong commitment to development and support of higher education are major strengths that could help the institution achieve quality of delivery" (Mhlanga 2008:129).

### 4.3 UB quality assurance

UB, like other organisations, is mindful of the fact that it has to enhance its effectiveness in terms of the social and economic environment. As such the institution has to be “dynamic and responsive to such needs by engaging in numerous change programmes”(Dzimhiri 2009:1). One of these endeavours is the development of the strategic plans for the institution as a whole. The UB strategic plans have always emphasised the “need for the institution to serve the needs of the country and to ensure quality in all its endeavours. As a result, the development of the current strategic plan, Strategy for Excellence to 2016 and Beyond, is based on sustainability, quality and relevance and serving the development of the nation”(UB 2008:16). The strategic plan aims to “meet the development goals of the nation in Vision 2016, the national human resource strategy and the Tertiary Education policy” (UB 2008:16). The Tertiary Education Policy of 2008 has the following “three main goals that the institution aims to support:

- to ensure that the country has enough highly skilled, knowledgeable and competent graduates who are able to advance the economic and social development of Botswana
- the creation and discovery of knowledge through research and innovation to drive the uptake and application of new ideas that can be used to build Botswana’s capabilities and develop its economic capacity and social progress
- to ensure that the country’s tertiary education sector makes a difference in the future development of the country by engaging in reforms that will lift the performance of the sector as a whole”(UB 2008:16)

It is from these three main goals that the University of Botswana has developed its “six strategic priority areas in its strategic plan as:

- expanding access and participation meant to increase opportunities and levels of participating in tertiary education to achieve Vision 2016, National Human Resource Strategy goals and of advancing the economic development of the nation in a global economy

- Providing relevant and high quality programmes – quality and relevance are a key priority in meeting employee and stakeholder requirements and expectations
- Intensifying research performance – the strategic aim is to intensify research performance at a significantly higher level, with the strategic priority of intensifying research performance, internationally recognised for the volume, quality and impact
- strengthening engagement – to strengthen its engagement in the country, the region and internationally
- improving the student experience to be world class and comprehensive and this includes the provision of high quality student accommodation
- enhancing human resources for excellence in delivery – aims to build the UB human resources in order to support the institution’s mission of excellence in research, teaching, learning and engagement”(UB 2008:5)

The six strategic priority areas of the institution are meant to guide the institution in achieving its vision of being the “centre of academic excellence in Africa and the world”.

The institution also aims through its mission to “provide excellence in teaching and learning, advance knowledge and understanding through excellence in research and its application and to improve economic and social development by high impact engagement with business, the professions, government and civil society”(UB 2008:5).

As a result, various activities are now being implemented to support the institution’s quest for quality. These activities are based on the institution’s Quality Management Policy. The policy addresses quality in the areas of teaching and learning, student assessment and research and publications; these areas are discussed in more detail in the next sections.

#### **4.4 The UB Academic Quality Management Policy**

In my study policy entails the document itself and the activities undertaken in the institution. Various reasons are put forward regarding the reasons for institutions’ need for quality assurance policies and these could be due to both internal and external pressure. Some of the reasons include enhancing excellence in the institution, serving the interests of

external stakeholders, and in some cases, institutions feel it is fashionable to have such a policy. The quality assurance policy is therefore meant to ensure that the programmes offered are relevant and of good quality in order to ensure that they have a positive impact on the socio-economic development of the country and enable the institutions to remain competitive internationally. In the case of UB the main reason is “to enhance excellence in the institution in order to support the institution’s mission of being an institution of academic excellence in Africa and the world. In addition, the institution has experienced a number of significant changes, such as semesterisation, increasing student numbers, the expansion of degree programmes, diminishing government subsidy, competition from other institutions and the introduction of the Tertiary Education Council. Therefore there was a need to have well-coordinated quality assurance activities that are guided by policy” (UB 2003:7). As a result of this need a “Centre for Academic Development (CAD) was established in the institution to develop an institutional quality assurance policy, to devise mechanisms of implementing those in the institution and to make regular policy implementation reviews across all faculties”(UB 2003:8) . In the faculties quality assurance committees have been set up to support the implementation of the policy.

The University of Botswana (UB) has been making much effort to assure the quality of its programmes. One such system is the external examination for all its programmes. According to “Quality Research International the system involves the appointment of academics from other institutions to monitor the assessment process of an institution for fairness and academic standards. Their roles involve reading and approving examination papers, reading examination scripts, in some cases attending examination board meetings, monitoring standards and reporting on their findings”. However, in 2002 the institution revised its academic structure, implementing a semesterised system. With the implementation of the system it was agreed that “continuing with the external examiner system was not logistically or financially viable. It was realised that for the institution to achieve its vision a system of quality management needed to be in place” (UB 2003:7). As a result the senate approved the institution’s Quality Management Policy in 2003.

It is important to note that the policy is based on a model whose goal is to obtain ownership by academic staff. This aspect of ownership calls for the institution to make deliberate efforts to ensure that academic staff is empowered to implement the policy. The institution

also made deliberate efforts to involve staff in the development of the policy through running workshops for staff in order to get their input into the policy. In terms of the policy “quality is defined as ‘fitness for purpose’ and quality assurance refers to ‘a process whereby measures are put in place to ensure that outcomes of academic programmes and activities are of a prescribed standard”(UB 2003:7).

The policy aims to support the institution’s “efforts to achieve its vision and mission through the development and implementation of academic programmes that meet national, regional and international standards. It is based on the expectation that high quality standards are achieved and maintained and that academic programmes are internationally recognised”(UB 2003:8). The objectives of the policy “are to:

- provide guidance in developing and implementing internal and external quality assurance procedures and practices
- to ensure that academic programmes at the UB meet quality standards
- to ensure that graduates have attained skills and knowledge through the academic programmes that are valued by stakeholders
- to provide guidance in identifying internal and external standards and criteria consistent with internationally recognised standards
- to assist in maintaining and developing the quality of academic programmes through enhanced support processes
- to facilitate development of a culture of continuous quality improvement to achieve academic excellence”(UB 2003:8)

Also of importance to the policy is the commitment by the institution to improve continuously in order to achieve academic excellence. The same issues are outlined in more detail in the following principles of the policy:

- the policy should be contextualised and undergo continuous reflection
- improvement in the current internal quality assurance processes

- the policy needs to be clear to all those who use it and it should be communicated to the stakeholders
- the framework needs to be owned by the departments to develop their own standards and criteria
- there is regular assessment and review of the quality assurance practices of the institution.

The UB quality assurance policy is a self-initiated and self-driven initiative by the institution that has not been influenced by government or an external quality assurance agency. It was developed from an identified need by the institution to instil a culture of good practice and to ensure the regional and international competitiveness of the institution. The policy is also meant to be developmental in nature and to inform staff on quality assurance issues, taking into account where they are until the desired international benchmarks have been reached. Another important point to note is that the management of the institution believes that all important stakeholders like staff and students participate in the development of the policy.

However, the policy does not seem to have taken into account the relevant contextual factors that constrain its effective implementation, such as resources to accommodate the increasing student population in the institution. The other issue is the establishment of the Tertiary Education Council that found UB already autonomous in terms of its quality assurance policy and the fact that the government engaged UB to quality assure other institutions through the affiliation process. As a result, there is now a bit of confusion as to how UB should relate its quality assurance activities to the requirements of the council or who should be fully responsible for quality assurance of the affiliated institutions.

It also important to note that in as much as the management feels that the policy was developed with input from staff, the staff members feel that it was initiated by management and only circulated to staff for approval. They feel it is a “top-down initiative and they do not own it” (Mhlanga 2008:249). In my view, for any policy to be effective, it has to be owned and supported by all staff members that are to implement it.

#### 4.5 Quality assurance mechanisms at UB

In addition to the quality assurance mechanisms by the Tertiary Education Council (TEC), UB engages in two other levels of quality assurance; these are internal and external mechanisms. The internal mechanisms are continuous while the external ones are periodic, every four years for eight semester programmes and five years for ten semester programmes.

The internal quality assurance is done at department and faculty level and it assesses “seven quality aspects as follows:

- quality of programmes and courses – involves an assessment of quality in the design and implementation of courses and programmes by staff members
- quality of academic staff – issues of qualifications, scholarly work, continuous professional development, performance management system, appointments and promotions procedures are assessed
- quality of teaching and learning experiences – this aspect assesses students’ evaluation of courses and teaching, teaching portfolios, peer review and assessment by the head of department
- quality of student assessment is mainly concerned with the effectiveness of internal moderation of assessment of students
- quality in support services – assesses the quality of academic support services
- quality in resources and facilities – addresses the availability and appropriateness of classrooms, laboratories, ICTs and others
- quality in research – assesses research capacity at individual and departmental level, research relevance to the applicable discipline and UB, external research funding, research management, research findings and dissemination”(UB 2003: 6)

The external quality assurance mechanism at UB is done through external review of undergraduate and taught master’s programmes and external examination of master’s dissertations and research essays, MPhil dissertations and PhD theses. External reviewing of

programmes is done every four to five years and can include accreditation of programmes by professional bodies. The activities carried out during an external review include the selection and appointment of the panel, review of documents, interviews of staff and students, site visits, classroom observations and the production of a report.

The use of both internal and external dimensions of quality assurance at UB seems to support the idea that both can enhance institutional improvement and create a positive image of the institution to the outside world. This view supports the notion that internal and external quality assurance is complementary and not contradictory. For instance, at UB internal quality assurance is mostly emphasised but when it comes to the actual practice in the institution more attention is paid to external quality assurance than internal quality assurance. External quality assurance is fully supported in terms of financial and other resources whereas there is no budget for internal quality assurance activities in the departments.

In order to implement quality assurance at UB the following “activities are carried out:

- mandatory internal moderation procedures to ensure validity of student assessment and reliability of marking
- assessment and monitoring of academic honesty
- monitoring academic staff performance standards
- self-study reports
- standardised programmes and course development procedures
- an annual appraisal of what the department is trying to do (plan), what it has done, monitoring and evaluating processes and outcomes (reviewing) and making appropriate changes based on the data”(UB 2003:23)

In addition there is a Quality Assurance Support Committee (QASC) that is charged with the responsibility of ensuring quality at institutional level. The committee is made up of deans and directors of academic support departments and is supposed to meet regularly to review reports by departments and faculties on internal and external quality mechanisms. It has,



however, been noted that the committee does not meet as expected and it has not met since 2009. The departments are supposed to have Departmental Quality Assurance Teams (DQATS) to monitor quality at departmental level but these are also not functioning as expected.

#### **4.5.1 Quality assurance of programmes**

The University of Botswana is committed to ensuring quality academic programmes as one of its strategic objectives. As a result, external examiners are engaged for post-graduate programmes and external review of undergraduate programmes is undertaken to ensure quality of its programmes. There are also internal arrangements for programme approval and these involve the departments, faculties and the senate. For a programme to be approved it has to be presented to the departmental board, then to the faculty board and finally the senate for final approval. The elements that are checked through this approval process are “the following:

- the relevance of the proposed programme
- the appropriateness of course objectives and content
- the alignment of the course with departmental and institutional plans
- the alignment of the course with the learning and teaching policy
- assessment procedures”(UB 2003:20).

In addition, the course development should involve the industry or relevant professional bodies to establish its appropriateness and relevance to the needs of industry or the applicable profession. The Centre for Academic Development through its Academic Programme Review unit also plays a role in the quality assurance of programmes at the institution by checking that the requirements of course development have been appropriately followed. The institution is also committed to ensuring the quality of programmes by encouraging departments to accredit their courses with relevant professional bodies and this commitment is expressed in the institution’s strategic plan.

Furthermore, the institution has in place an academic programme review process that aims to ensure that the review of programmes is done in an organised and systematic way.

The aim of academic programme reviewing is to ensure that academic programmes at UB are responsive to the needs of the society and the market in which the graduates operate. The process involves self-assessment by the department to identify strengths and weaknesses; thereafter peers are invited from international countries to review the programme in question and produce a report. The department then uses the report to develop an action plan that is then presented to the Quality Assurance Support Committee. Thereafter the department implements the recommendations of the report. In some cases the recommendations need to be incorporated in the long-term strategic plan of the department. The institution shows much commitment to the process by allocating resources to it on an annual basis. The first cycle of external reviews was completed in 2010 and the process is now being reviewed to improve it.

Although the institution has taken much effort in ensuring the quality of academic programmes problems such as high mobility of staff, shortage of facilities, quality assurance practices not being implemented in all the departments and shortage of facilities are still being experienced and these have a negative impact on the quality of programmes. In addition, the Quality Assurance support committee has not met since 2009; other departments have been reviewed but are not able to implement the recommendations of the assessors due to resource problems, and the unit responsible for quality assurance in the institution has only one staff member who has to shoulder the negative attitude of academic staff members towards quality assurance issues.

#### **4.5.2 Quality assurance of teaching and learning**

Quality assurance of teaching and learning is a very important aspect in determining quality of delivery. The office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor-Academic Affairs, the senate and academic committees within the departments are in place to monitor this aspect.

Departmental self-reviews are used internally annually and submitted to management for planning and improvement purposes. The self-review looks at issues of staffing, methods of

assessing student learning, teaching loads, assessment of the teaching and learning environment and the availability of resources to support teaching and learning activities.

Departments are the main drivers of quality through the use of Departmental Quality Assurance Teams and programme advisory boards. Other activities that are used in the institution to ensure quality of teaching and learning include HOD assessment of other lecturers, student feedback of teaching and learning, teaching portfolios, the performance management system, appointments and promotion procedures, teaching improvement awards, teaching excellence awards, learning and teaching policy, induction of new staff members, academic honesty policy and professional development of staff. All are meant to encourage good practice in terms of teaching performance.

The HoD assessment of staff is conducted at the end of each academic year. It is meant to assess the lecturers' performance and to provide guidance and support.

Training and education institutions like UB have a key responsibility to "evaluate teaching and learning programmes, not only for ensuring feedback, taking corrective action and enhancing the quality of programmes, but more importantly, to remain more up to date and relevant to society" (Dzimbiri 2006:67). The evaluation of teaching was first piloted at UB in 1989 and the results were meant to "complement data from self-, peer and HOD evaluation" (Chilisa and Letshabo 2006:91). Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning (SECAT) was introduced in 1991 and it is done at the end of every semester. It is meant to give students an "opportunity to express their views about the course, what they enjoyed, the difficulties, appropriateness and adequacy of readings provided, and time allocated to the course"(Chilisa and Letshabo 2006:91).

After analysis of the responses by the office responsible for SECAT, feedback is then sent to the lecturers and the departmental head; this enables the lecturer to take note of areas worthy of improvement and strong areas to maintain. The feedback is also used for performance management at the end of the year.

A number of concerns have been raised by lecturers with regard to SECAT. According to Chilisa and Letshabo (2006) the concerns raised by the lecturers include the fact that the instruments used are unreliable and invalid.

In addition they “do not accommodate discipline-specific differences, the use of a single overall effectiveness of teaching score is not a reliable measure of teaching, students are not competent enough to judge instructors on mastery of content, classrooms are crowded and teaching facilities are inadequate; moreover, the indicators of teaching are based on foreign values where teaching facilities are adequate and standard within universities. In my view the tool should not be an evaluation of teaching by the students because they may not have the necessary skills to do so. Instead it should be regarded as feedback on their learning experience with regard to a particular course. Secondly, the fact that the instruments are provided only at the end of the semester poses a problem since current students do not benefit from improvements at this time. Thirdly, the use of the feedback in performance management at the end of the year may disadvantage the lecturers who are not very popular with the students or those that give much work”(Chillisa and Letshabo 2006:91).

A teaching portfolio is mainly developed by academic staff to provide evidence regarding the various activities they engaged in during the course of the year. Most departments in the institution use it also for purposes of promotion and rewarding excellent performance through the performance management system.

Efforts such as “Teaching improvement grants and teaching excellence awards (TIGS and TEAS) are meant to recognise excellence in teaching. As a result, academic excellence exhibited by staff and students is recognised and rewarded, and staff members who are committed to improving the quality of teaching and student learning are also rewarded”(UB 2003:5).

The main aim of TIGS and TEAS is “to reward good teaching and to motivate staff to embark on research-based activities that improve their teaching”(UB 2003:5). TEAS are those incentives that are given to staff members to recognise and reward excellence in teaching in a tangible way. They are meant to raise the profile of good teaching and improve the overall quality of teaching in an institution.

TIGS most probably encourage lecturers at UB to undertake “developmental work that is aimed at trying out innovative ideas, systematic enhancement of knowledge and skills through continuously engaging in self-assessment and supporting the learning behaviour of

students, including self-regulated learning. The overarching aim of TIGS and TEAS is to ensure that the institution's value of productivity is ensured through the setting and rewarding of high standards of performance underpinned by dedication to quality, continuous improvement and efficiency and effectiveness throughout the institution" (UB 2003:3). The other aim is to fulfil the UB mission, of advancing both the intellectual and human resource capacity of the nation and the international community. The awards are given every year and are presented to the awards committee for consideration. Nominations for the awards can be done by peers, students and staff members can nominate themselves.

The learning and teaching policy is meant to provide "guidance to staff members on the effective implementation of learning and teaching processes that are central to the institution's mission and vision"(UB 2003: 7).

UB aims to provide relevant and high quality programmes and these need to be guided by appropriate learning and teaching processes that are responsive to the changing environments in which the graduates live, work and contribute to society. The policy mainly focuses on "ensuring that graduates of the institution are adequately prepared for life, work and citizenship so that they effectively contribute to the economic and social development of the country, adapt to change and provide leadership"(UB 2003:7).

Staff induction involves new staff members to be exposed to various activities and policies within the institution. The induction is carried out twice a year and all newly appointed staff members and those that have been on study leave are expected to attend. All staff members need to undergo induction to be confirmed in their positions. The induction is carried out by the Centre for Academic Development through the Teaching and Learning Unit and it involves other departments such as the Academic programme Review Unit, the Educational Technology Unit, the library, the human resources division, IT department and others.

Through the learning and teaching policy the institution is committed to the development of its staff by means of workshops run by the Centre for Academic Development, IT department, office of research and others. It aims to provide development opportunities for staff, to establish and maintain Departmental Quality Assurance Teams (DQAT) to assist in

the development of programmes and appropriate learning and teaching strategies and to offer postgraduate qualifications in higher education, recognise contributions to learning and teaching through the appointment, promotion and review procedure and for continuing improvement of academic performance.

The academic honesty policy for students was approved by the senate in 2006. Its aim is “to ensure academic honesty and integrity in the students in order to attain academic excellence” (UB 2006:2).

The staff members also have policies that guide their professional conduct such as the disciplinary regulations and procedures, the ethics policy and others. The UB basic goal is to “ensure an environment conducive to learning that assists students to grow personally and professionally, and to enable them to attain academic excellence. All students are expected to carry out their learning with honesty and integrity; so are academic staff members as role models”(UB 2006:3). The institution values its reputation and that of its graduates and all forms of academic dishonesty are considered serious offences within the university community. All course outlines are expected to refer to the policy and all students are availed the policy at registration and during examinations. Examples of academic dishonesty cited in the policy include “the following:

- using other people’s materials, information or study aids in any academic work without authorisation
- providing any false or fabricated data, citation, whether written or verbal in one’s academic work
- assisting or attempting to assist any student in carrying out academic dishonesty such as cheating, plagiarism or providing false data and information
- engaging in plagiarism or representing words, ideas or information from another person as your own
- providing and using false academic records”(UB 2006:3)

The list is not exhaustive and other forms of cheating are regarded in the institution's examination regulations. It should, however, be noted that not all these quality assurance efforts are producing the desired outcomes.

For instance, the students' feedback on teaching and learning is supposed to get their views on the courses and the reviews are used for course evaluation purposes and for planning improvement. Unfortunately the institution does not have a system in place to monitor this improvement and the students are not guided in the areas to focus on when giving the feedback. Student evaluation of teaching and learning as a "quality assurance measure is supposed to provide important feedback that is used for continual course improvement; therefore the quality of the feedback is a very crucial aspect of the process"(Mhlanga 2008:284). Another problem with the evaluation by students is the large amount of paperwork involved due to large class sizes and the fact that the evaluation is done at the end of every semester; this does not seem to give departments enough time to implement improvements and to assist staff members in improving themselves and their courses. Furthermore, the students themselves do not get feedback regarding their evaluation of courses and the lecturers tend to be interested in the evaluation reports only when they apply for promotion.

According to Garegae (2006) the UB SECAT has limitations. Firstly, it is used and interpreted in the same manner in all faculties without taking into account differences in the various disciplines. Secondly, its rationale is open to debate. Thirdly, SECAT alone is not sufficient in giving appropriate feedback that can directly influence improvement in the teaching-learning process in higher education institutions.

Finally, students should be regarded as partners with lecturers in classroom quality assurance and their empowerment is crucial in order to contribute significantly to the success of quality assurance in higher education. Instead, the researcher proposes the use of portfolios as a better alternative because they provide immediate feedback to the lecturer that allows him/her to reflect as the course is taught.

Another alternative to SECAT according to Dzimhiri (2006) is tracer studies because they better reveal the impact of teaching and learning on the behaviour of the graduates with

regard to the application of the knowledge and skills gained during the time they spend at UB.

In my view students are different and likely to have different views about a course. Therefore it is likely that their feedback on the course may be influenced and this results in poor quality of feedback. According to Garegae (2006:61) the students may be “self-centred and hence more subjective in filling in the evaluation form. Secondly, due to the differences among the students, there is no guarantee that they interpret the question items in the way intended. Thirdly, administering the tool at the end of the semester raises questions of validity in terms of how much the students are able to remember how the components of the course fared. Finally, the timing of the evaluation also brings about issues of how well the lecturer can implement improvements in the course because suggestions made by the current group of students may not be applicable to the next group of students”.

Another area that presents some problems is the institution’s performance management system (PMS). PMS is a “strategic system that is used by most organisations to deliver sustained success through improving the performance of its teams and improving the capabilities of the individuals in the organisation as well as the teams” (Dzimbiri 2009:5). According to Armstrong 2000, the major characteristics of PMS are “the following:

- effective management of the organisation, performance and development of employees and stakeholder satisfaction
- it is a tool used for communication and involvement
- emphasis on the development and the initiation of self-managed learning process plans as well as the integration of individual and cooperative objectives
- a continuous and flexible process that involves managers and their juniors with a framework that sets out how they can best work out to achieve the required results
- focus on future performance planning and improvement rather than on retrospective performance appraisal
- provision of the basis for regular and frequent dialogue among managers, their juniors and teams on performance and development needs



- reliance on performance reviews to make decisions on performance-related pay as well as individual and team development plans
- a process for measuring outputs in the form of delivered performance compared to expectations expressed as objectives
- targets standards and performance indicators
- linking organisation mission, vision, values and strategic goals to divisional, department, individual, goals, objectives, tasks and targets”

The UB PMS was driven by the institution’s commitment to excellence and to have effective staff members for the business of the whole institution. The system has been implemented to ensure quality in all the processes of the institution and to manage and reward excellent performance. PMS has benefited the institution in a number of ways, such as faculties and departments now having strategic plans and annual plans, strengthening of regular feedback sessions with supervisors and staff, widening the scope of assessment to include peers in addition to HODs and students. However, the issue of rewards has not been successfully implemented for the past three years due to financial constraints.

The other issue that has been raised as problematic is the inability of the system to assess research appropriately; in some cases there has been resistance by staff to accept the system due to the fact that they do not understand how it can benefit them. Staff members also feel that issues such as class size and resource shortage should have been addressed before implementation of PMS. Part of this problem is the fact that student feedback is used for performance appraisal. Furthermore, concerns have been raised regarding the assessment of unplanned activities during the course of the year and how to plan for service since appointment to committees is not determined by the individual staff member. In addition to the above issues, the issue of large class sizes is a major problem at UB. These tend to be unmanageable and are a major concern to achieving quality in teaching and learning. However, the institution has put in place an infrastructure master plan that is supposed to provide the necessary infrastructure for the increasing number of students. For instance, some of the facilities are already operational while others are nearing completion.

Furthermore, it should be noted that like other HE institutions in the region, quality assurance at UB is influenced by regional and international trends. The institution aims to produce graduates that can function locally, regionally and internationally. This is evident in the Learning and Teaching Policy, Internationalisation policy, articulation policies and in the employment of staff from all over the world. UB is also interested in accrediting some of its programmes with regional and international professional bodies. This situation causes problems in some areas where graduates produced are not all absorbed by the labour market. Issues of poor working conditions at UB also make it difficult to attract international expertise to carry out important work in the institution. The following important questions regarding internationalisation of the policy should be asked:

Does the involvement of international experts, both in the development and implementation of the policy, make it a better policy?

Does the policy take into consideration the local imperatives of the institution?

There are other issues of concern regarding the policy, such as the following:

- the new funding model of the TEC
- competition from other tertiary institutions
- the government needs to support UB in implementing the policy through provision of resources
- the role of the government in shaping the structure of higher education in Botswana through the National Human Resource Strategy
- more accountability from UB is needed by the government.

There is no proper monitoring of the policy at UB. The effectiveness strategy has been in the pipeline since 2008 and has not yet been finalised.

The policy places much emphasis on the academic aspects but does not consider the support aspects of the institution.

### 4.5.3 Quality assurance of assessment of student learning

The UB, like other institutions of higher learning, has in place policies that govern the assessment of student learning to ensure its quality. The UB Quality Management Policy and the Teaching and Learning policy both address the issue of quality in the assessment of student learning.

According to the UB Quality Management Policy, “quality assurance mechanisms for determining quality of student assessment, both continuous and final, will be developed. In addition, in the absence of external examiners, departments shall develop systems that are coherent with the quality assurance framework approved by the senate. These systems shall include a minimum of internal procedures that ensure validity of student assessment and reliability of marking”. In terms of the Learning and Teaching Policy, the concept of learner-centeredness requires adapting existing methods of teaching and learning, adopting new ones and focusing on the achievement of learning outcomes. This specifically requires timelines and quality feedback in assessing students. In addition UB, through the policy, “aims to:

- encourage self- and peer review and highlight the important role of feedback and assessment in the learning process
- provide students with timely, detailed and quality feedback on their work in ways that promote learning and facilitate improvement and growth
- ensure that there is an environment that supports learning through streamlining assessment and avoiding over assessment
- ensure that students are appropriately assessed using a variety of assessment modes in a fair, transparent and equitable way in order to enable all students to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes
- ensure that academic standards set in UB meet appropriate national, regional and international benchmarks
- provide students with adequate opportunities that recognise prior learning experience and achievement”(UB 2006: 6)

At UB assessment is both formative and summative. Assessment consists of “continuous assessment that comprises tests, assignments and the final examination at the end of each semester”(Afemiche, Adeyinka and Peters 2001:19). The UB 2010 undergraduate academic calendar specifies that continuous assessment shall be made up of assignments, tests, presentations and others. Depending on the programme, “the ratio of continuous assessment to the final examination can be 2:3 or 1:1”(Afemiche and others 2001:19). Continuous assessment is internally moderated by the department and there is no external moderation of examinations; this has been replaced by external review of the undergraduate programmes as explained in the previous chapter.

One of the values of the university is academic integrity. Therefore the institution has put in place measures to ensure academic integrity in student assessment. These include the use of software like “Turnitin and Safe Assign to curb plagiarism, the academic honesty policy and general education courses to guide students in proper academic writing, including referencing”(Batane 2010:5). In addition the institution is required to ensure strict maintenance of quality through the “adherence to prevailing university examination regulations” (Ramatsu and Kupe 2008:61).

#### **4.5.4 Quality assurance of research and publications**

The quality of university performance is usually judged using its level of research output, both in quantity and quality. UB is a teaching institution and it encourages research to support teaching. The UB quality assurance policy on research stresses the need for “staff members to be assessed in their ability to perform research as individuals and as a department. It also stresses sound research management and the ability to access external funding for research” (UB 2003:10).

In order for the institution to be research intensive by 2021 as indicated in the UB research strategy of 2008, the institution aims to ensure improvement in terms of the qualitative and quantitative areas of its research performance. According to the strategy the research vision of UB is that by 2021 the institution will be a research intensive university internationally recognised for the value, quality and impact of its research. This vision is supported by the following “seven strategic research goals of the institution:

- to increase staff participation in research
- to increase and enhance student training in research
- to increase internal and external research funding
- to increase international collaborative research
- to increase the volume and quality of research output
- to enhance the impact of research
- to improve the integration of research and teaching”(UB 2003:10)

The two main drivers that necessitated the UB to transform its research performance are national and international levels. In terms of the “national level is the requirement by the tertiary education policy for institutions like UB to make a significant contribution to the new national research and innovation system of the country’s next stage of development. At the international level the institution needs to take cognizance of global trends such as the importance of collaboration in research among institutions in order to obtain synergies of expertise, facilities, data access and knowledge generalisation”(UB 2008:3).

As a result of the institution’s vision and strategic objectives on research, there are other policies and structures in place to support the research endeavour. The policies include Research and Development (2002), Intellectual Property Policy (2004), Ethics Policy (2004) and the policy on Centers of Study (2004). The structures that are already in place to support the UB Research Strategy include a “research committee, the research risks committee, faculty and departmental research committees, the Office of Research and Development, the office of International Education and Partnerships, the School of Graduate Studies, research centres and research institutes” (UB 2008:9).

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The UB quality Management Policy addresses various aspects that are central to ensuring quality in a higher education institution. In addition, various policies are being developed to enhance the implementation of the policy in the institution. Such policies include the learning and teaching policy, research policy, TIGS and TEAS, the Performance Management

System, SECAT and others. It is also important to note that the establishment of TEC was meant to further assist the institution in achieving quality. However, there are some concerns that need to be addressed regarding the policy and the activities that are carried out to support the policy.

Such concerns have to do with the way the policy was developed, the areas addressed by the policy, other policies and the implementation of the policy.

In developing the policy management feels that they involved staff whereas the staff feels that they were only consulted after the policy had already been developed by management. As a result staff members feel that the policy is a management issue and they do not own it. In my view, for the policy to be implemented effectively, the implementers themselves must own it.

There is a need for a holistic approach to quality assurance in an institution for it to be successful. The approach would entail taking into account the internal self-improvement aspect of quality assurance and the external aspects as determined by the stakeholders including the state.

Secondly, the policy addresses areas of programmes, teaching and learning, student assessment and research and publications. It is important to note that other areas such as finance, human resources, supplies and others are equally important in facilitating the implementation of the policy. In fact, one of the major complaints in the institution regarding the policy is that there is too much emphasis on quality in the academic area but there is no emphasis of quality in other areas that support the academic aspects of the institution. Some efforts have been made to address this concern but they are still to be implemented.

Thirdly, it has been noted with concern that other policies that have been developed to support the implementation of the institution's quality management policy have proven to be problematic as well. This then poses great challenges for the institution in achieving academic excellence.

Again, when it comes to implementing the policy, the institution has not been able to put in place a monitoring system to ensure its successful implementation. For instance, some of

the committees are not fully functional in other departments and faculties. It is also not clear who should be taking responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations by the external reviewers. It would also be impossible for CAD to try to take this responsibility due to the fact that the unit responsible for the reviews has only one staff member.

Finally, in developing a policy it is important to note the contextual factors that have a bearing on such a policy. There is also a need for the policy to take into account local, regional and international influences that have an impact on higher education but the regional and international influences should not be at the expense of local imperatives.

In addition “the extent to which staff members are involved in developing a policy, their level of ownership of the policy, and the ability of the process to take into account issues of context are key factors affecting the success of an institutional quality assurance policy” (Mhlanga 2008:316). Furthermore, it is important to emphasise three areas that are crucial in the successful implementation of a quality assurance policy:

- the policy should take into account the contextual factors of the institution
- there should be adequate provision of resources to implement the policy.
- provision of monitoring mechanisms need to be in place.

## CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research paradigm, the overarching research design and the methodology employed in this study. The research paradigm is presented first, in order to highlight the researcher's philosophical viewpoint. Then the research design is presented, focusing on the nature of the study and the strategies employed to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of the study. Thereafter the methodology used in this study is described in terms of the sample and participants, instruments, procedures, data collection and data analysis.

### 5.2 Research paradigm

The study aims to explore quality assurance practices and models used in higher education and to develop a quality assurance model for UB with specific focus on academic staff and what they are responsible for in terms of quality assurance at grassroots level. In this study, I found it relevant and useful to observe the current quality assurance practices at UB, Limkokwing (Gaborone campus) and BIUST as exemplars of higher education institutions in the country and to use such observations to develop a model that could help empower academic staff regarding quality assurance. This approach has proved to be useful for the following reasons:

- the researcher had an opportunity to get first hand details about the actual quality assurance practices in the institutions visited
- the researcher had much interaction with academic staff and this provided an opportunity for more discussions on their perceptions regarding quality assurance practices in their institutions

It is for these reasons that the researcher has opted to use mixed methods research, informed philosophically by pragmatism in this study. The approach focuses on applications and solutions to problems. Ivankoka, Creswell and Stick (2006:129) define mixed methods research as a procedure in which "the researcher uses a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods of enquiry when collecting and analysing data at some stage of the



research process within a single study in order to get a better understanding of the research problem”. This is explained in more detail in the next section.

The paradigm that is mostly associated with mixed methods research is pragmatism. Pragmatism focuses on applications and solutions to practical problems in what Feilzer (2009) calls, ‘the real world’. According to Denscombe (2008:16), pragmatism posts that the meaning of an expression is determined by the experiences or practical consequences of the use of the expression in the world. Its main aim is utility for all. Pragmatism implies:

- a focus in trying to understand and interpret a particular phenomenon (quality assurance in UB)
- being directly involved in the research project (the researcher conducting the interviews)
- having a practical interest in the study with the aim of continuously improving real practice (the researcher being a quality assurance officer at UB).

Pragmatism is a paradigm that identifies some assumptions about knowledge and enquiry that seems to support mixed methods. The assumptions include “the provision of a fusion of approaches instead of using only one; in mixed methods a third alternative is desirable to mix two approaches for good social research as the approach is expedient without necessarily allowing anything to go” (Denscombe 2008:273). The assumptions may overlap in some cases and they are not mutually exclusive. The researcher holds the view that using both methods would provide a wide spectrum in which to conduct enquiry into some aspect instead of using just one. In addition, using the two methods provided a deeper understanding of the ideas that the respondents provided in the questionnaires as well as enhanced the accuracy of the data collected. The pragmatic position calls for using a philosophical or methodological approach that works for the particular research problem of the study. Mixing may occur in a particular study if the researcher decides it will “help make the data collection and analysis more accurate or the inferences more useful” (Rocco, 2003: 22).

A paradigm is usually regarded as “worldviews or belief systems that guide the researcher’s inquiry” (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2002:3). A paradigm normally relates to a researcher’s

“ontological belief about the nature of reality, the epistemological belief or what is possible for one to know and axiological belief or that concerning ethics”. According to Rocco, Bliss, Perez-Prado and Gallagher (2003) researchers’ beliefs about reality, knowledge and values guide and frame their beliefs about research methods. In this study the researcher was of the opinion that it would be useful to use mixed methods research in order to obtain the perceptions of stakeholders regarding quality assurance practices because using quantitative aspect only did not seem to be able to generate adequate detail regarding these perceptions. It is the researcher’s belief that in order to get a deeper understanding of the respondents’ perceptions it is useful to engage with them through the use of interviews to express themselves more freely and to have room to explain further which is not possible when only questionnaires are used.

In keeping with the exploratory nature of this study and mixed methods approach, a combination of data were gathered through questionnaires and interviews for academic staff and the ministry of education officials (appendix II and III).

### **5.3 Research design**

This section presents the research design for this study, followed by the research methodology. The research design discusses the nature of this study and the unit of analysis. Validity and reliability are discussed in detail in 5.4 and 5.5. The strategies that were used to answer each research question are reported.

A research design outlines the plan used to answer the research questions of the study. It provides details regarding each stage of the research process up to its findings. A research design is “an architectural blueprint, a plan for assembling, organising and integrating information which results in specific research findings”(Merriam 2002:6). According to Motaung (2007) the research design should be seen as the action plan from the starting point to the end point where the starting point is an initial set of questions and the endpoint is a set of conclusions drawn from the study about the questions being investigated. The steps include data collection, analysis and reporting. The research design should have a logical sequence in order to assist researchers in obtaining data for the research questions.

It is important to note that the selection of the research design is determined largely by how the problem is shaped, by the questions it raises and by the outcomes desired. Certain questions “cannot be answered by qualitative methods, while others cannot be answered by quantitative methods”(Merriam 2002:6).

The study is an exploratory study, focusing on quality assurance in higher education in Botswana. The study was started in 2009- 2014, with room for further research on an on-going basis, in order to continuously improve.

The unit of analysis is quality assurance in higher education with particular reference to Botswana. Embedded in the unit of analysis are the perceptions of stakeholders with regards to quality assurance in higher education in Botswana. The study involved the use of 3 higher education institutions in Botswana being; UB, BIUST and Limkokwing (Gaborone campus) and the Ministry of Education officials. In this study, the perceptions of stakeholders are sought, recorded and analysed in an attempt to get a deeper understanding of the issue.

In order to address the research questions posed in Chapter 1, the study used a mixed methods approach. The approach involves adopting a research strategy that uses both qualitative and quantitative data within the same research project. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) it is research where the researcher uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts and language into a single study. According to Mosia (2002) using a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods tends to improve the validity of the study. In addition, the use of mixed methods enables “the use of triangulation in relation to data collection and provides the opportunity for presenting a greater diversity of divergent views from all the participants” (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2002:6).Triangulation involves the use of a number of approaches in investigating research questions in order to ensure confidence in the findings of a study. In the case of this study, questionnaires and interviews were used for purposes of triangulation.

Furthermore Creswell (2003) identifies various benefits of mixed methods research that the researcher found relevant to this study. Firstly, mixed methods research provides strengths that outweigh the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research. The qualitative

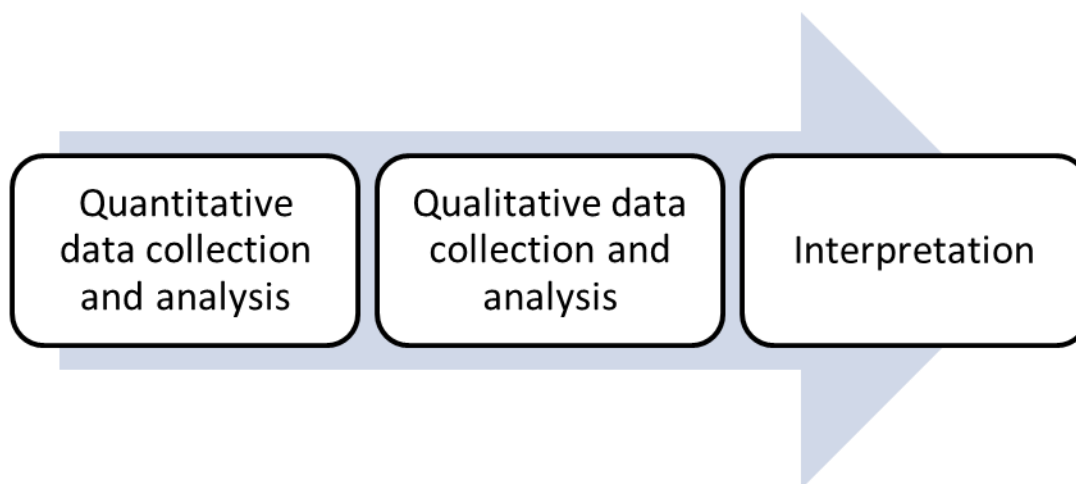
aspect provides more details of the context in which the respondents operate and how they view the context in terms of the quality assurance practices used. For instance, qualitative research unlike quantitative research is useful in understanding the context in which people operate. It is also useful in directly capturing the voices of the respondents. However, quantitative research does not seem to accommodate personal biases that qualitative research does. Secondly, mixed methods research provides more evidence for studying a research problem than either qualitative or quantitative research alone. Fourthly, researchers in mixed methods research tend to collaborate more than when they operate as strictly qualitative or quantitative researchers. Again, mixed methods research provides room for the use of multiple world views. Finally, it is practical since the researcher is free to use as many appropriate possible approaches to address the research problem. It is also practical because individuals tend to solve problems using both numbers and words.

Therefore using mixed methods in this study assisted in providing stronger evidence through the use of the corroboration of findings. In this case the qualitative aspect was useful in capturing the perceptions and views of stakeholders about quality assurance at UB; this was further corroborated by using quantitative aspects. It should also be noted that using mixed methods assisted in getting insights and understanding that could easily have been missed when using one method only. Different views and opinions of the various respondents had to be accommodated in the study. In addition, the researcher had to interact closely with the respondents in order to understand their interpretation of quality assurance in higher education and what they believe would be an appropriate model for UB. The other appealing aspect of mixed methods is its ability to specify clearly the sequencing and priority given to the quantitative and qualitative elements of data collection and analysis.

Mixed methods research can employ a variety of designs such as convergent parallel, explanatory sequential, exploratory sequential and embedded design. For purposes of this study only the explanatory sequential design is explained since it is the design that was used. The explanatory sequential design is where two methods are implemented sequentially. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2002), and Ivankoka, Creswell and Stick (2006) the design is characterised by the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data. The study gives priority to the

quantitative data and the two methods were integrated during the interpretation phase of the study. The researcher used qualitative findings to help interpret or contextualise quantitative results. The main advantage of this design is its ability to explore quantitative results in more detail. However, the limitation was the length of time needed for the two phases and the amount of resources needed to collect and analyse the two sets of data. The data from the questionnaires was analysed first before the interviews in order to explore the participants' views in more detail. The design is shown in figure 5.1 below:

**Figure 5.1 Data collection and analysis**



The qualitative data was analysed using existing qualitative techniques and quantitative data was analysed using existing quantitative techniques in order to maintain the data sets and ensure that the meanings drawn from the two sets of data was not lost. The results of the qualitative and the quantitative analysis were then combined at the level of interpretation of the results. This study employed triangulating questionnaire responses with the interview responses in an attempt to identify clear patterns that would result in a quality assurance model that would be more appropriate and relevant for UB.

It is also worth noting that mixed methods is mainly used to “improve the accuracy of data, to produce a more complete picture by using two approaches and to avoid biases inherent in using one approach as an aid to sampling and as a way of developing the analysis and building on initial findings using contrasting kinds of method”(Denscombe 2008:272). Mixed

methods research is valuable in the sense that it can capitalise on the respective strengths of each approach.

It is also important to highlight the fact that mixed methods research has some weaknesses. Such weaknesses include the fact that it is time consuming and in order to avoid this limitation the researcher started preparing for data collection much earlier in order to give enough time to other aspects of the study. In addition the researcher requested permission to conduct the research from the institutions well in advance in order to save time. The other problem with it is that it may require the use of more than one researcher but in this study the researcher requested assistance from the Department of Statistics at the University of Pretoria (STATOMET) for the analysis of data to avoid having two researchers for the study and to give the researcher enough time to complete the study.

The criteria used to test the validity and reliability of this study is discussed in the sections below.

#### **5.4 Validity**

Validity is used to establish the quality of research designs in the social sciences. The commonly used ones are construct validity, internal validity (credibility), external validity and reliability.

Construct validity in this study was demonstrated through careful analysis of the concept quality (section 2.2) and quality assurance (section 2.3). The concepts were further explored in the context of higher education followed by quality assurance in higher education in developing countries and leading to an assessment of quality assurance at UB (figure 1.1 conceptual framework). The whole concept of quality assurance in higher education in this study focuses on continuous improvement in pursuit of excellence and external accountability (section 2.4.2). The interview schedule was newly developed and this research was meant to validate and improve it through piloting the schedule. The suggestions made assisted in enhancing its construct validity for further research.

In quantitative research validity refers to “the extent to which the data collection instrument measures what it is supposed to measure” (Leedy and Ormrod 2005:92; McNiff 2006:131; Golafsham 2003:599; Bell 2005:65). It is a measure of the accuracy of the

research instruments being used in a study whereas in qualitative research validity refers to rigour or trustworthiness. This means establishing confidence in the findings of the study so that they accurately reflect the situation and are supported by evidence.

Validity in qualitative research can be descriptive, interpretive, theoretical, evaluative and generalisable. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:92) in quantitative research validity can be “internal or external. Internal validity is when differences observed on the dependent variable are a direct result of the independent variable and external validity is when the results of a study can be generalised to and across populations, settings and times”. Much as there are claims that internal validity does not apply to exploratory studies, efforts were made to improve the credibility of this study. These included, the researcher being responsible for collecting data and the use of computers to store and retrieve the data.

In order to ensure validity of the qualitative data collected the researcher used a variety of data sources instead of using just one. In UB data was sourced from heads of departments (HoDs), deans and deputy deans, lecturers and the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs. The other group of participants consisted of officers responsible for quality assurance in the ministry of education and the Head of the Quality Assurance Unit at Limkokwing and BIUST. More than one method was used to collect data on a particular aspect being investigated. For instance, the perception of stakeholders on the quality assurance policy and practices at UB was collected using questionnaires and interviews. Another aspect that used both the questionnaire and interview is the view of the stakeholders regarding the most appropriate quality assurance model for UB. Motaung (2007) asserts that “support from the conclusions and observations is obtained from more than one data source and this provides for congruence of a major theme or pattern in the data from these various sources, which leads to credibility of the findings”.

The researcher maintained contact with those who provided the qualitative data in order to corroborate their interpretation of the data. More consultations with the participants in the institutions were arranged to establish the validity of the qualitative data prior to the final draft of the study to ensure descriptive validity of the quantitative data.

In addition, all the data collected was recorded and stored both manually and electronically and given to my promoter to examine, prior to the final recording. The data was then captured by a team from the statistics department at UP and I had the opportunity to check and recheck the data before it could be analysed and this contributed to the credibility of the data. In cases where omissions were identified, these were discussed with the statistics team and corrected. The responses were coded to minimise human error except where open responses were provided.

External validity or generalizability refers to the applicability of the findings of a study in a wider context. However, this study does not attempt to generalise its findings but rather aims to add to knowledge on quality assurance in higher education with particular reference to Botswana. Guba and Lincoln (1981) maintain that qualitative research does not necessarily concern itself with generalizability of findings. The study does not aim to generalise its results due to the contextual nature of quality assurance systems and procedures.

### **5.5 Reliability**

Reliability, sometimes referred to as rigour in quantitative research, is “the consistency within which the data collection instrument yields a certain result when the entity being measured has not changed” (Leedy and Ormrod 2005:92; Kirk and Miller 2006:19; Golafsham 2003:598; Bell 2005:65). It is the consistency and trustworthiness of the results being obtained through the use of a research instrument such as a questionnaire. In the case of this study, the questionnaires could not be piloted due to resource limitations. Qualitative research refers to dependability instead of reliability and the need for qualitative researchers to ensure quality in the research process and the product. Reliability or dependability is needed in both qualitative and quantitative research. It calls on researchers to be fully accountable for data collection, analysis and interpretation. The researcher worked very closely with the consultants and much time was dedicated to checking and rechecking the data to ensure that it corresponds to the records and to ensure trustworthiness of the results. The researcher maintained consistent records with regard to the data as it was being collected in order to avoid mixing up the data or losing it in the process. Researchers need to assess documents and the legitimacy of their findings.



In this study, different strategies which were used to answer the various research questions provided varying levels of reliability. The literature review which provided insights into quality and quality assurance in higher education was extensive, up to date and was based mostly on reliable sources. In addition, further triangulation was provided through discussions with colleagues in the selected institutions on their experiences and opinions regarding quality assurance practices in their institutions.

In the analysis of quantitative data from the questionnaires, the main aim was to establish the experience and opinions of the participants in terms of quality assurance in higher education in Botswana. The data *were* categorised using mostly intuition and common sense. Merriam (1998) asserts that data analysis (especially in qualitative research) is highly intuitive and the researcher cannot always explain where an insight came from or how relationships among data elements were established.

Human error in the coding of the responses could add to threats of reliability in analysing open responses to the questionnaire but it is expected that the analysis would help in improving the coding of the answers for any future use of the questionnaire. The data from the questionnaire should provide emerging patterns from the different respondents over time and not a replication of the findings over subsequent use of the instrument.

It is expected that the perceptions of the various respondents with respect to quality assurance in higher education in Botswana, may change over time and this adds to the dynamic nature of higher education. It is also important to note the valuable lessons learned that can add to the improvement of quality assurance practices in higher education in future.

In this study, the findings are not to be generalised but may be applied to other contexts that are similar to UB. This is due to the different contextual factors that prevail in different institutions.

## 5.6 Research methods

### 5.6.1 Sample and participants

The sample for this study was based on purposive sampling. Purposive sampling seeks information rich cases that could be studied in depth. The sample is selected to provide rich information on a particular aspect or aspects and this enhances deep understanding of the aspects being studied. The sample was drawn from UB, Limkokwing campus in Gaborone and BIUST. At UB the targeted sample was 141 participants who consisted of the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academics, 7 Deans, 7 deputy Deans, 42 HODs, 42 chairpersons of quality assurance teams and 42 other academic staff members across the departments. From the targeted sample of 141, 33 completed the questionnaire and 38 participated in the interviews, a response rate of 50.35%. For Limkokwin the targeted sample was 31 comprising 1 quality assurance officer, 15 HODs and 15 academic staff members from the various departments. From the targeted 31 academic staff members, 25 completed the questionnaire and 1 interview was conducted, yielding a response rate of 83.9%. The targeted sample for BIUST was 8 comprising 7 HODs and the quality assurance officer. From the targeted sample 3 responded to the questionnaire, a response rate of 37.5%. In addition, a sample of 10 officers responsible for quality assurance in the ministry of education were targeted. 5 completed the questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 50%. The idea behind the choice of the sample was to get as many views as possible from a variety of stakeholders, especially respondents with quality assurance experience who could provide rich information that can guide the selection of a quality assurance model suitable for UB. According to Merriam (2006) in choosing the sample it is important to select information rich cases from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the study. In this case it was important for the researcher to select a sample from people that are directly involved in quality assurance policy and practices in order to learn in more detail their perceptions of quality assurance in higher education in Botswana and in particular, at UB. Hence, some prior knowledge of the case is crucial in applying purposive sampling as a strategy to select cases. In the case of this study the two main reasons for selecting UB, BIUST, and Limkokwing and ministry officials for this study are the following:

- Their accessibility to the researcher with minimal financial implications.

- The presence or availability of quality assurance systems in the selected institutions.

It is also worth noting that the findings of this study are transferable to similar institutions only.

### **5.6.2 Instruments**

The data collection instruments deemed most appropriate for this study were structured interviews and structured questionnaires. The instruments are described in more detail in this section.

#### **Interview schedule**

The interview schedule was designed and developed for academic staff members in the institutions and quality assurance officers. Structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data from the respondents regarding their institutions quality assurance policy and practices. The interview schedule was designed in consultation with the supervisor and the statistics team who commented on the structure and content of the items in order to enhance its construct validity. The interview schedule consists of 7 pages (appendix iv), made up of open and closed questions. The open questions required the respondents to provide:

- Their knowledge of the institutions quality assurance policy(6 items)
- Development of the quality assurance policy(1 item)
- Governments position on quality assurance in the institution(2 items)
- Reporting on quality assurance by the institution(1 item)
- Staff involvement in developing quality assurance policy(1 item)
- Mechanisms used to measure academic staff performance(1 item)

The interview schedule has space for further comments by the respondents. The closed questions (2 items) focus on training and support given to academic staff members with regards to quality assurance.

The interviews were mostly face-to-face and where this was not possible telephone interviews were used to involve as many respondents as possible and to get feedback immediately. The purpose of the interviews was to validate data obtained from the questionnaires. The value of interviews in this study is that individual respondents were interviewed on their experiences of quality assurance. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, how they make sense of the world and the experience they have in the world. It implies a direct concern with experience as it is lived, felt or undergone as is the case in this study.

After going through the quality assurance policy documents of the respective institutions it was important to get the views and opinions of those that formulate policy and those who implement the policy in the institution. In addition, the interviews helped the researcher in making a follow-up on any issues raised by the respondents. Furthermore, interviews were most appropriate in getting more information by interpreting non-verbal expressions of the respondents as well as using a multi-sensory approach to obtaining meaning.

It is also worth noting that interviews have a number of benefits such as allowing for flexibility with the respondent, developing a degree of relationship with the him or her and being able to get as much information as possible. However, some shortcomings of interviews include that they take much time to conduct, they tend to be costly in situations where you have to travel far to interview respondents, some of the data may be difficult to analyse and compare and in some cases the interviewer may be biased. For instance, there were times when the interviews would be scheduled but failed to materialise due to interruptions such as emergencies that required rescheduling of appointments. An interview has limitations and weaknesses but much depends on the cooperation of the interviewees. According to Fourie (2000:129) they might be “unwilling or uncomfortable in sharing what the interviewer hopes to get, more especially when the interviewer lacks proper skills in relation to listening, questioning, posing probing questions and handling people”. In some cases the interviewees agreed to be interviewed only to withdraw as participants at the last minute after seeing the interview schedule.

It is important to highlight that the researcher considered creating a climate conducive to interviewing by:

- making appointments with the respondents;
- being punctual for the appointments;
- emailing the areas of interest in advance to the participants before the interview;
- ensuring that the equipment needed for the interview like audio recorders was working and controlling the availability of note taking equipment and the interview schedule.

Participants were also asked to make suggestions that could assist in improving the usefulness and relevance of the schedule. The interview schedule would be further refined for future research.

### **Questionnaire for academic staff**

In addition to the interviews, structured questionnaires were developed to collect quantitative data from the respondents. In order to ensure that the questionnaires were appropriately constructed to obtain sufficient and useful data to enable the researcher to answer the research questions of this study, she presented them to the supervisor for advice and to colleagues in UB and the Department of Statistics at the University of Pretoria. The number of items in the questionnaire was kept to a minimum (18 items) to avoid frustrating the participants with a lengthy questionnaire. The questionnaires were used to determine the perceptions of the stakeholders regarding quality assurance at UB, BIUST and Limkokwin (Gaborone campus) and the model that they would find most appropriate for the institution. Since most of the respondents were within the institution, the researcher was able to follow up to improve the return rate.

The questionnaire consisted of 3 closed questions and 3 open items (appendix ii). The closed questions used a four point likert scale ranging from not at all to greatly. The open questions asked for the respondents' opinions regarding their institution's quality assurance policy. The questionnaire was developed over a period of 2 years 2010- 2012, based on the literature (section 5.4). In addition to background information, section B focuses on the respondents experience and opinion on quality assurance in higher education.

## Questionnaire for ministry officials

Another questionnaire was developed for ministry officials (appendix iii). It consists of section A (background information) and section B (experiences and opinions on quality assurance). Section B has 3 closed items and 3 open items. The closed items also used a 4 point likert scale ranging from not at all to greatly. The open items required the respondents to provide their opinions with regards to quality assurance in higher education in Botswana.

It is important to note that there are some advantages and disadvantages to a questionnaire, but in terms of the specific purposes of this study the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. According to Wiersma (2009) a questionnaire is still one of the commonly used strategies for data collection; however, the questions need to be constructed carefully in order to provide appropriate responses. In addition, a well-designed questionnaire improves the reliability and validity of the data. This means that the questionnaire should be well structured to address the research questions and needs to be administered carefully and effectively to the appropriate respondents.

The following are the main advantages of a questionnaire:

- less travelling and therefore minimal transport costs
- easy access to participants in remote locations
- anonymity of the respondents since names are not mentioned
- large quantities of information can be sourced from respondents within a short space of time
- questions can be carefully structured and pre-coded for easy processing

In this study open-ended questions were kept to a minimum and a follow-up to the questions was captured in the interviews.

However, questionnaires have some disadvantages:

- possibility of a high number of people not responding

- some respondents may not respond or brush through the questions without providing honest answers
- some respondents may be frustrated by the lack of interaction with the researcher..

In order to address some of the problems associated with questionnaires, the researcher ensured constant follow-up of the questionnaires given to the respondents. The researcher kept a record of all the questionnaires handed out and to which institutions and departments. The questionnaire had two sections, one addressing basic demographic data and the other one focusing on quality assurance policy and practices.

These two sections helped in establishing the views of the participants on their perception of quality assurance in higher education institutions in Botswana, their understanding of the quality assurance models used in higher education, their knowledge of the quality assurance policy of the institution and how they have or lack ownership of the policy and systems in place.

### 5.6.3 Procedures

Before actually collecting data using the questionnaires and the interviews, the researcher wrote letters to UB, BIUST, Limkokwing and the Ministry of Education to request permission to conduct the research. This was followed up by submitting the data collection instruments to the various institutions so that they could become aware of the areas that the researcher wanted to focus on. A research permit to carry out the research in the identified institutions was sought through the Office of Research at UB. The researcher phoned the different institutions to request permission to submit the questionnaire to the identified staff members and to request their availability for the interviews.

The following procedures were followed in respect of each research question:

**Research question 1:** The perceptions of stakeholders in terms of quality assurance in higher education.

Data for this question were collected through interviews and a questionnaire addressed to the HODs, deans and their deputies, chairpersons of departmental quality assurance teams, lectures, ministry officials and other stakeholders in charge of quality assurance.

**Research question 2:** Strategies applicable to quality assurance for UB.

Data for this question were collected through interviews and a questionnaire to the HODs, deans and their deputies, chairpersons of departmental quality assurance teams, lectures, ministry officials and other stakeholders in charge of quality assurance.

**Research question 3:** The needs of academic staff members of UB in terms of empowerment with regard to quality assurance.

Data for this question were collected through interviews and a questionnaire to the HoDs, deans and their deputies, chairpersons of departmental quality assurance teams, lectures and ministry officials in charge of quality assurance.

**Research question 4:** Quality assurance model relevant to the empowerment of academic staff at UB.

Data for this question were collected through interviews and a questionnaire to the HoDs, deans and their deputies, chairpersons of departmental quality assurance teams, lectures and ministry officials in charge of quality assurance.

## **5.7 Data collection**

The instruments used for data collection were mainly structured questionnaires and interviews and they were taken through a very intense process of checking for their appropriateness in terms of collecting data that is relevant only to the posed research questions. Before being used, the instruments were checked by my promoter and consultants from the Department of Statistics at the University of Pretoria. In addition, some colleagues at UB had the opportunity to comment and offer advice on the instruments.

The questionnaires were handed to the respondents and they were given time to respond to the questions. They were then collected and coded before being forwarded to the Department of Statistics at the University for analysis.

The analysis was then followed by interviews that were conducted mostly face-to-face or in some cases by telephone. Participation in the study was voluntary and this was highlighted



when requesting for participation from the two institutions because the researcher was interested mainly in getting a deeper and clearer picture of the quality assurance practices in the selected institutions. Mertens and McLaughlin (2004) contend that where the respondents participate out of their own free will there is a high likelihood to yield an accurate and realistic picture of what is being studied. The interviews highlighted the knowledge and experience that the respondents have with regard to quality assurance at UB. The interviewer took notes during the interviews to capture any additional information relevant to the study. The interviewer guided the questions and probed further in instances where the respondents raised some issues or provided more information. The responses were recorded by hand by the interviewer and the open spaces were used to record any further comments from the respondents. In most cases the respondents have hands-on experience with what is being studied and therefore have a lot of valuable information, which they can easily share without reservations. They usually speak from an informed position.

This study used mainly three sources of data, namely review of literature, document analysis and interviews and questionnaires. The review of literature was done first, followed by an analysis of the quality assurance practices at UB then finally, the interviews and the questionnaires. The review of literature provided insights into practices, trends and models of quality assurance used in higher education institutions, including UB. The documents provided insight into the practices, institutional plans and expectations in terms of quality assurance. The documents also provided much more in terms of the areas to be quality assured and the criteria used in evaluating quality at UB.

The first two sources of data were meant to provide background understanding of quality assurance in higher education and in particular UB. After the review of literature and the studying of policy documents at UB, more data were collected using questionnaires and interviews. An interview schedule was availed to the respondents. The respondents were deans, their deputies, heads of department, Deputy Vice Chancellor and the head of the Quality Unit at Limkokwing and BIUST. The respondents were familiar with quality assurance mechanisms used in higher education and in particular, at UB. The questionnaires were used to source the opinions of respondents regarding the quality assurance practices used at UB.

Qualitative data were collected directly from the respondents in “their work places or their natural work environment because qualitative enquiry shows concern for context; it assumes that human behaviour is context bound, that human experience takes its meaning and therefore is inseparable from social, historical, political and cultural influences” (Motaung 2007:142). For purposes of this study quantitative data were collected first, followed by qualitative data since most of the study is qualitative. Table 5.2 below presents the research strategies for the individual research questions of this study.

**Table 5.2 Research strategies with respect to the research questions**

<b>Strategy/Research question</b>	<b>Structured questionnaire</b>	<b>Structured interview</b>	<b>Data source</b>
What are the perceptions of stakeholders in terms of quality assurance in higher education?	x	x	Academic staff  Ministry of Education officers
Which strategies would be applicable to quality assurance for the University of Botswana?	x	X	Academic staff  Ministry of Education officers
What are the needs of academic staff members of UB in terms of empowerment with regard to quality assurance?	x	X	Academic staff  Ministry of Education officers
Which quality assurance model would be relevant for the empowerment of academic staff at UB?	x	X	Academic staff  Ministry of Education officers

### **5.7.1 Literature review**

The review of literature focused on quality assurance trends, policies and practices in higher education institutions and more specifically UB policy documents on quality assurance. Another issue of note is the expectations of the different stakeholders in terms of quality assurance in the institution. All these stakeholders have an important role to play in ensuring quality in the institution and their expectations and experience guide and influence the quality assurance policy and practices of the institution. All these helped the researcher in designing the questionnaire and interview schedules of the study.

### **5.7.2 Document analysis**

Document analysis is “a research method applied to written or visual materials for the purpose of identifying characteristics of the material”(Ary 2002:442). This stage involved the review of quality assurance policy documents at UB. These were the strategic plan for 2010 to 2016 and beyond, the Quality Management Policy and other institutional policies that support the quality assurance activities in the institution. It is important to note that the other institutional policies were mainly developed to augment the Quality Management Policy and to support the strategic focus of the institution, which is academic excellence.

The main advantages of document analysis as identified by Motaung (2007) are the following:

- comprehensive and historical information is provided
- interruptions to the respondents’ schedule is kept to a minimum
- biases about the information are limited
- In most cases the information already exists.

The researcher benefited largely from the document analysis as much of the documentation regarding the UB policies on quality assurance was available. The researcher’s involvement in quality assurance policy development and implementation helped in identifying the documents and getting as much historical information as possible regarding the policies and

their implementation in the institution. In cases where historical information was not easily accessible, it was possible to determine whom to contact to get the information.

However, there are also disadvantages to document analysis:

- a lot of time is spent locating the relevant documents
- incomplete information in some cases
- there is need for clarity about what is being done
- It is not a flexible way of getting data.

In this study the researcher obtained incomplete information, especially in cases where a policy was still being developed and had to be suspended for one reason or another. The other disadvantage was that the researcher had to rely to a large extent on what already exists in terms of policy and very little had been written about quality assurance policy implementation at UB.

## **5.8 Data analysis**

Tashakkori and Teddlie (2005) define mixed methods data analysis as “the use of quantitative and qualitative techniques, either concurrently or sequentially at some stage beginning with the data collection process, from which interpretations are made in a parallel, an integrated or an iterative manner”. Qualitative data in this study were recorded and transcribed into rich text that was interpreted and organised in order to establish relationships and arrive at conclusions or make sense of the data obtained. According to Miles and Huberman (2002) this approach is called “interpretational analysis and it involves examining the data for themes and patterns that can be used to describe and explain the phenomena being studied”. The data were analysed to establish themes and categories that cut across the data. The views of the different stakeholders were compared and contrasted according to the different interests they represent. Where there were differences in the views of the stakeholders regarding what is in the policy documents and what actually takes place on the ground, the researcher used what is called *discrepancy analysis*. Qualitative research tends to be analytic and interpretive and the researcher has to work through the data to identify or make sense of the same data. The researcher uses the data obtained

from the reports and the interviews to establish patterns and any subtle regularity in the data.

The main reasons for mixed methods analysis have been identified as representation and legitimation. Representation is the ability to extract adequate information from the underlying data while legitimation is about the validity of data interpretation. It is for these two reasons that this study engaged mixed methods data analysis to obtain as much information as possible regarding the perceptions of academic staff members and quality assurance policies and practices at UB and UP.

For purposes of this study the results from the interviews were used to corroborate those from the questionnaire since both tools were used to establish the perceptions of the academic staff and stakeholders regarding quality assurance at UB. The other purposes were complementarity and that refers to findings ways of establishing clarification of the results from one method with results from the other method, in some cases there could be contradictions that may lead to a reframing of the research question and expansion on seeking to expand the breadth and range of inquiry by using different methods for different enquiry components. It should be noted that the last three purposes do not apply in this particular study.

The other consideration that the researcher had to observe regarding data analysis is the source of the names to identify categories of data and in this study the categories were created after all the data had been collected a posteriori. The data analysis followed the seven stages of data analysis outlined by Tashakkori (2005):

- The use of data reductions in order to focus and sort, where necessary discard and organise to assist in making final conclusions
- reducing the data into appropriate and simplified configurations that can be easily understood
- data correlation is another step that involves correlating quantitative and qualitative data
- both data sets are combined to create new variables
- data from different sources are compared

- Finally, data integration where all data links are integrated into a coherent whole. It is worth noting that the steps were not necessarily followed as presented but were mixed depending on the data collected.

Quantitative data were analysed through available statistical packages like SPSS. For the questions that used the Likert scale the data were analysed statistically to determine the frequency of responses. The findings from this study are presented as text as well as in tables and diagrams where possible.

### **5.9 Researcher's role in the research process**

In this study the researcher was the only one involved in distributing and collecting the questionnaires as well as conducting the interviews. The following are main challenges faced:

- receiving the completed questionnaires
- participants not being available for appointments
- Confirming appointments with other institutions.
- participants not being comfortable with being recorded
- participants not being comfortable with the questions asked.

However, the researcher derived much benefit from being the one involved in distributing and collecting data since she could relate to many of the participants who are colleagues in UB and most of them participated in the study without any reservation. There was trust among the participants that the researcher had developed over time through her involvement in quality assurance activities in the various departments at UB. In addition, many of the staff members at UB were willing to share more information in terms of their perceptions of the quality assurance practices, both during and outside the interview.

The researcher made an effort to develop a record of her decisions on whom to interview and these were made on the basis of the availability of the participants. The results of all the interviews were kept safe and were forwarded to the Department of Statistics at the University as well as my supervisor for critical examination before the final recording.

In addition there was a team of colleagues who assisted in commenting on the research process, in particular the content and structure of the study and presentation of the findings after data analysis as well as editing the work. They served a very important role of quality assuring the work.

### **5.10 Ethical considerations**

The study used human beings as research subjects and for this reason it was important to take cognizance of ethical considerations associated with the study. The participants therefore needed to be protected from any harm that might befall them through their participation in the study. Secondly, the participants were informed of the nature and scope of the study so that they could decide whether they wanted to participate in the study or not. They were asked to complete a consent form prior to the interviews. All the stakeholders were assured of confidentiality and anonymity and their freedom to withdraw from the study if they so wished. They were assured that their participation was voluntary, they were informed of progress in the study, their privacy was ensured, a high level of integrity was maintained and they were in no way exposed to any harm by participating in the study.

### **5.11 Limitations of the study**

When a researcher is the main person for data collection certain limitations exist, the main one being that of introducing bias in the study. In order to ensure minimal bias by the researcher, she ensured adhering to proper ethical standards when collecting data. She ensured that she handled the data collection process with the utmost rigour. The researcher has indicated that the results of this study are not to be generalised to other institutions. The purpose of this study is to explore quality assurance practices in higher education institutions in Botswana, and in particular, at UB. However, the readers of this study are free to use the findings if they find them relevant and able to improve their own quality assurance practices.

Since this study is mainly qualitative, a lot of data were collected and it required to be managed properly and kept safely. There was a need for keeping the data safe to avoid omissions in the analysis of data.



The return rate of the questionnaire was very low due to the fact that many staff members were on leave during the time the data were being collected while other staff members withdrew from participating at the last minute. The point to take note of here is that in the return of questionnaires, there is always an element of self-selection in that only those respondents who have strong opinions about the subject feel compelled to respond. In the case of this study, the sample cannot be viewed as representative of the population and this is because the study was to get the perceptions of the stakeholders regarding quality assurance in higher education in Botswana without necessarily referring to all the stakeholders. However; the researcher took much effort in following up as many respondents as possible, conducting face-to-face and telephonic interviews and strictly keeping appointments.

In selecting the literature for the study, I had to limit it in terms of quantity, relevance and publication dates of the studies. The literature used in this study is not necessarily the only such references. The other important points to note in this study are:

- a lot of the discussions and conclusions reached are due to my interpretation of the literature and may be done differently by other researchers.
- some omissions may be present and it not necessarily mean that they are not important but that they were not thought of at the time.

There was a problem regarding getting the research permit from UB. This was a lengthy process that took up to two months to complete and that also depended on the availability of the research committee members.

In spite of the limitations indicated in this section, the value of this study should not be overlooked.

## **5.12. Conclusion**

This study focuses on the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry that have benefits and challenges. Through the study the researcher was able to experience some of the benefits and challenges of the methods, especially the interviews, questionnaires and the analysis of available documents. Some of the challenges included

the need for careful planning for the interviews and ensuring relevance of data collected as well as its reliability and validity.

The researcher had to bear in mind the importance of selecting appropriate data collection methods for the different research questions and the importance of triangulating the data collected.

The study provided the researcher with valuable learning experiences that are worth sharing with other colleagues who may be interested in embarking on a similar study or using mixed methods research. It is important to select the appropriate method for each research question carefully. It is also very important to plan one's time appropriately to avoid overlaps and clashes that can be frustrating at times. Proper record keeping is quite essential in any research process and has to be carefully managed from the onset. A researcher needs excellent organisational skills and has to be disciplined in order to obtain quality data for the study.

## **CHAPTER 6 EMPIRICAL STUDY**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Chapter 6 presents the data gathered and offers an explanation of the different sets of data. The focus of the data gathering was on getting a sense of the perceptions of the various stakeholders regarding quality assurance in higher education in Botswana. The reported perceptions of the stakeholders are based on the experience of quality assurance practices of higher education institutions in Botswana. The data were collected through the use of two questionnaires, one for academic staff members and another one for ministry officials as well as an interview schedule for academic staff members as explained in Chapter 5. In order to get maximum participation from the respondents in this study, I carried out data collection at a time when the institutions were in recess in order not to disturb teaching and other engagements. It was also a time that was feasible to get academic staff in their offices for the interviews. The presentation of findings starts with details of the respondents and the interview schedule. The findings are then presented per questionnaire and interview schedule through the use of visual representation; lessons learned from the data are outlined. The data sets and issues emerging from the study were expected to inform the findings made in the next chapter.

### **6.2 Data gathered by means of questionnaires**

This section presents data obtained from the questionnaire for academic staff members and the one for ministry officials. The data have both quantitative and qualitative aspects as explained in Chapter 5. Closed questions in the questionnaires provided quantitative data, while qualitative data were obtained from the open-ended questions. Quantitative data were analysed by consultants in STATOMET using SAS V9.3 running under Windows XP on a desktop computer. The consultants are members of staff in statistics department of the University of Pretoria. Quantitative data were presented first, followed by qualitative data.

The first data to be presented were from the questionnaire for academic staff members, followed by the one for ministry officials and lastly, data from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire and the interview schedule. The analysis of the questionnaire for academic staff members is based on 49 variables (V) included in 18 questions. From these 15 were closed questions and 3 were open-ended ones. The 15 closed questions were

analysed statistically and the three open-ended questions were analysed to establish themes in the responses. The analysis of data from the three open-ended questions is presented per question. The quantitative data were further analysed according to age, qualification and position in order to determine the highest response among the groups of respondents. In terms of the questionnaire for ministry officials, there were 43 variables (V) included in 17 questions. 14 of the questions were closed questions and 3 open-ended ones. The quantitative questions were analysed statistically and the qualitative ones were analysed to establish themes in the responses. A total of 9 themes were identified and these are in relation to the research questions of this study. The themes are presented in section 6.4.2 of this chapter. The quantitative data were further analysed (VV) in terms of age, position and years' experience to determine the highest response per group. The data set for the study is presented in Appendices VII-X. The institutions and the ministry are presented using pseudonyms, A, B, C, and D in order to ensure the confidentiality of the respondents.

The data collection process involved sending requests to the various institutions and in some cases making appointments with the relevant officials to further explain the purpose of the study. These were followed by the actual delivery of the questionnaires to the institutions. Finally, interviews were conducted once the appointments had been confirmed. It was not so difficult at first to identify and get into contact with the relevant officials in order to distribute the questionnaires and set appointments for the interviews. However, this did not go as planned in institution C due to the fact that the institution is moving to a new venue which is about 400 kilometres outside town. In the other institutions there were officials in charge who were instrumental in getting academic staff to respond to the questionnaires and even assisting in collecting them on my behalf. This really assisted in saving much time and enabling me to carry on with the other activities. It is also worth noting that the processes did not necessarily follow smoothly one after the other so that interviews had to be conducted while the collection of questionnaires was still going on.

### 6.2.1 Participation in and response to the questionnaire for academic staff members

Table 6.1 below represents the questionnaire response rate per institution, the proposed sample and the actual sample used in this study.

**Table 6.1 Questionnaire response rate**

Institution	Estimated population	Proposed sample	Actual sample	Response rate %
A	141	141	35	24.82
B	31	15	25	80.65
C	8	4	3	37.5

The poor response rate to the questionnaire is worth mentioning. The highest response was from institution B, then institution C and lastly, institution A. Various reasons were put forward for the poor response rate to the questionnaire by academic staff. The main reason could be that many of the academic staff members were either attending conferences or preparing for conferences. The other reason could be that the academic staff members were supervising teaching practice in various districts of the country, so it was difficult to get them in their offices. Many academic staff members were on leave since it was recess and they had leisure time to take a break before the start of the academic year. In institution B there had been some student unrest and the institution had been closed down, so many academic staff members were not available to respond to the questionnaires as I had planned.

The other point to mention here is my plans and expectations with regard to collecting data using questionnaires. Initially I had planned to hand out a total of 150 questionnaires in the institutions out of an estimated total of 190 academic staff members and to collect as many as 100. I had also expected that the academic staff would be able to answer the questions within a short period of time and return them as soon as possible. However, due to the unavailability of academic staff members in their institutions I only managed to give

out 100 questionnaires. It was also rather problematic to collect the questionnaires as some of the respondents tended to forget the questionnaires at home, while some said they could not find time to respond. So it came to a situation where I had to follow up the respondents up to four times in order to collect the questionnaires and only 20 were returned after a week. I finally managed to collect the remaining questionnaires only after a period of four weeks.

In terms of general issues in the questionnaires, the respondents understood the questions and did not have any problem with the content or terminology used. However, some concerns were raised regarding questions 7, 8 and 9. In question 7 some of the respondents felt that they do not really have an area of specialisation per se as their work demands that they be engaged in a number of activities, for instance teaching, research and course design. In terms of question 8 they felt that their previous work would still entail doing a number of activities and selecting merely one was not sufficient. In terms of question 9 there was also a concern regarding the position as some of the respondents said they were associate professor and deputy dean at the same time. In this case there were instances where one respondent would fit into one or two of the positions.

In reflecting on the process, I came to the conclusion that it is not always a good idea to collect data from academic staff during recess due to the various activities they engage in at such a time. Secondly, it would have helped much to indicate the time frame in which I could go back to collect the questionnaires to avoid travelling extensively in trying to collect them. In addition, I felt that there was a need to pilot the questionnaires before actually using them to take care of some of the issues raised with regard to the questionnaire items.

The next section presents the findings in relation to the background of the academic staff members who responded to the questionnaire. The point behind getting the respondents' background information was to establish any relationships between the background information and the perceptions that the respondents had about quality assurance practices in higher education institutions in Botswana.

## 6.2.2 Findings from background information

In this section I present the findings in relation to background information of the respondents. Section A of the questionnaire required the respondents to provide background information regarding their institution, faculty, employment status, gender, age, qualification, area of specialisation, previous work experience, current position, numbers of years in current institution, core duties and association with quality assurance. The findings per the background details of the respondents are presented in the next sections. The summaries of data comprising frequencies of variables per data set are presented in Appendices vi-x.

- Institution

Table 6.2 below presents the findings in relation to the institutions that participated in this study.

**Table 6.2 Respondents per institution (V3)**

Institution	Frequency	Percentage
A	33	23.4
B	3	4.92
C	25	40.98

The total number of respondents from the three institutions is 61 of the estimated 160 that were proposed for the study; this represents about 38% of the targeted sample.

- Faculty

The respondents were from various faculties. As many as 61 academic staff members responded to the questionnaires; only an estimated two did not indicate their faculty. In the distribution of questionnaires I tried mainly to get as many responses from the academic staff members without necessarily focusing on their faculty, but it was interesting to note

that some faculties were more forthcoming than others. Unfortunately, in the other faculties there were many academic staff members participating in teaching practice supervision.

- Employment status

In terms of employment status the responses are represented in Table 6.3 below.

**Table 6.3 Employment status of the respondents (V5)**

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Employment status</i>					<i>Total</i>
		<i>Missing</i>	<i>Permanent</i>	<i>Temporary</i>	<i>Part-time</i>	<i>Full time</i>	
A	Frequency	2	23	0	1	7	33
	%	6.06	69.70	0	3.03	21.21	100
B	Frequency	2	13	1	1	8	25
	%	8	52	4	4	32	100
C	Frequency	0	3	0	0	0	3
	%	0	100	0	0	0	100

A total of 61 respondents responded to the questionnaire. In institution A, out of the 33 respondents 1 is temporary full time while another is on contract and I classified these under missing from the total. My interpretation of the high number of academic staff on permanent employment (69.70%) followed by those on full time (21.21%) is an indication that the majority of staff is employed on either permanent or full time basis. The other reason could be that most of the questionnaires were distributed during working hours, between 0800 hrs. and 1700 hrs., and in most cases staff that is employed as part time or



temporary work at other places during the day and only come to the institution for evening classes.

For institution B, 2 respondents did not indicate their employment status. The highest number of respondents was those in permanent employment (52%), followed by full time at 32% and the lowest in part-time and temporary employment. My first interpretation of this could be that the institution is trying to get more of its staff on permanent and full time employment to ensure stability and continuity of its programmes. Secondly, as a private institution that depends on government sponsorship of students, there is need for it to have a certain staff complement on permanent and full time basis that will ensure continuity and availability of courses for the institution to maximise its profits.

In institution C, 100% of those staff members who responded to the questionnaire are on permanent employment. This could be due to the fact that the institution is newly established and it is still recruiting staff members. The other reason could be that the institution was mainly established to increase the country's human resource in science and technology, therefore, the government is spending a lot of money in recruiting and training staff in these areas to ensure a regular and steady supply of graduates with science and technology qualifications. Another reason that seems to apply to the 3 institutions could be the fact that a lot of employees get some degree of satisfaction and stability in permanent and full time employment than in part time and temporary engagements.

This question also posed a number of challenges in institution A, mainly because it did not cater for staff employed on temporary full time basis and those on contracts. The questionnaire needs to be improved in this area for any future use.

- Gender

In Table 6.4 the gender of the respondents presented.

**Table 6.4 Gender of the respondents (V6)**

Institution	Frequency		Gender		
	%	Missing	Male	Female	Total
A	Frequency	0	22	11	33
	%	0	66.67	33.33	100
B	Frequency	0	12	13	25
	%	0	48	52	100
C	Frequency	0	3	0	3
	%	0	100	0	100

In all the 3 institutions, there were more males than females. Institution A has 66.67% males, B has 48% male and C has 100% male. My search from available statistics from the 3 institutions in this area yielded no results, but my interpretation is that in a number of developing countries there is a tendency for males to acquire higher qualifications as compared to females and higher education institutions employ people with higher and better qualifications. My other assumption is that most of the respondents who returned the questionnaire are male.

In terms of the relationship between gender and association with quality assurance, it was interesting to note that the trend in the 3 institutions could not support the commonly held view that women tend to be more involved in quality assurance than men. More men in the 3 institutions have association with quality assurance. Morley (2003) says that women tend to be caring and that is reflected in their quality of teaching. Morley also sees quality responsibility as providing an opportunity for women to be included and valued and to offer them a career pathway. These views are however, not supported by the findings from the 3 institutions.

- Age

All 61 respondents for the questionnaire indicated their age. Respondents comprised academic staff from the participating institutions whose ages ranged from 23 to 62 years. The ages of the participants were analysed and grouped as follows: under 35 years (lower), under 45 years (middle) and 45+ years (older) to establish the category with the highest number of respondents. See Table 6.5 below.

**Table 6.5 Age ranges of academic staff (V7)**

Institution	Frequency	missing	Age			Total
			23-34 (Lower)	35-44 (Middle)	45+ (Older)	
	%					
A	Frequency	6	5	6	16	33
	%	18.18	15.15	18.18	48.18	100
B	Frequency	8	9	7	1	35
	%	32	36	28	4	100
C	Frequency	0	0	1	2	3
	%	0	0	33.33	66.67	100

A total of 61 academic staff members in the 3 institutions responded to the questionnaire. In institution A, the highest age range was 45 and above at 48.18%, followed by 35-44 at 18.18% and lastly 23-34 years at 15.15%. 18.18% of the respondents did not indicate their age. My interpretation of the findings is that the institution was established more than 25 years ago; as such it has over the years maintained staff members from as far as 20 or so

years ago. Again for a long time the institution was the only one in the country and did not compete for staff with any other institution locally. In addition, due to the fact that it was the only institution in the country, government could spend a lot of resources on the institution and it was perceived as being the best employer with better resources.

For institution B, the highest age range is 23-34 at 36%, followed by 35-44 at 28% and lastly, 45 and above at 4%. As many as 32% of the respondents did not provide their age. In my view, the high concentration of respondents in the lower age ranges is due to the following reasons:

- The institution is relatively new in the country and therefore attracts younger people who constitute the majority of unemployed people.
- It is a university of technology and it is mostly the younger generation who tend to be more attracted to technology than the older generation
- A lot of the older generation are now more settled in their current jobs and would not want to make any career change compared to the younger generation.
- A lot of private institutions in Africa are generally known to be unstable and not well resourced; therefore the older generation would not want to go to such institutions for fear of losing their jobs and risking their reputation in institutions that are likely not to last longer.

In institution c, there are older members of staff (66.67%) than the younger ones (33.33). As I have already mentioned in the literature, the institution is newly established and most of the staff members that were available are those in senior or management positions and these are mostly older and more experienced. A lot of the younger members of staff were still undergoing further training.

- Qualification

This section provides details with regard to the qualifications of the respondents. See Table 6.6. The qualifications were classified into groups of junior, middle and senior as presented in the table.

**Table 6.6 Qualifications of the respondents (V8)**

Institution	Frequency %	Qualification				Total
		Missing	Junior (Bachelors and Honours)	Middle (Masters)	Senior (Doctoral)	
A	Frequency	0	0	15	18	33
	%	0	0	45.45	54.55	100
B	Frequency	0	13	12	0	25
	%	0	52	48	0	100
C	Frequency	0	0	3	0	3
	%	0	0	100	0	100

All 61 respondents provided their qualifications. In institution A, the majority of the respondents (54.55%) have senior or higher academic qualifications and lastly those in the middle (45.55%). This could be due to the institutions training policy that encouraged academic staff members to do their doctoral degrees in order for the institution to increase its programmes and in turn increase access to higher education. My other assumption is based on the fact that the institution enjoyed a lot of resources for a long time and could afford to train most of its staff members at doctoral degree. The other reason could be that the institution was established as a national institution, funded by the state to train graduates who can work in government departments and contribute to the socio-economic development of the country, however, the institution is now aiming to improve its research engagements and as such attracts more people with higher qualifications who can drive the research initiatives of the institution. Furthermore, a lot of the programmes offered in the institution are degree level programmes and the TEC requirement in terms of minimum

qualification of academic staff in degree offering institutions is Master's degree that could explain why there were no respondents with junior degrees.

In institution B, the majority of the respondents has junior degrees (52%) followed by those with Masters Degrees (48%). The prevalence of academic staff with junior degrees in this institution may be due to the nature of the institution, that is, an institution of creative technology that tends to attract more people with junior degrees than those at Masters and Doctoral degrees. Again, the institution offers programmes at degree and diploma levels and their staff complement satisfies the TEC requirements for registration of institutions in terms of the qualifications of the academic staff members.

In terms of institution C, all the respondents have master's degrees. There are two assumptions to this:

- When the institution started it engaged in a major recruitment drive that targeted young professionals and these were to be taken for further training before the institution could enrol any students
- The country is now focusing on improving science and technology and a lot of resources are being channelled towards training young professionals who can drive the country's science and technology needs.

#### Area of specialisation

The respondents were asked to identify their areas of specialisation in terms of teaching, research, student support and course design; see Table 6.7.

**Table 6.7 Areas of specialisation of academic staff (V9)**

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Area of specialisation</i>					<i>Total</i>
		<i>Missing</i>	<i>Teaching</i>	<i>Research</i>	<i>Student support</i>	<i>Course design</i>	
A	Frequency	14	19	0	0	0	33
	%	42.42	57.58	0	0	0	100
B	Frequency	5	16	4	0	0	25
	%	20	64	16	0	0	100
C	Frequency	1	2	0	0	0	3
	%	33.33	66.67	0	0	0	100

Of the 61 respondents, 20 did not indicate their area of specialisation. The reason for the high number of respondents who did not select their area of specialisation was mainly due to the fact that many academic staff in the institutions are engaged in teaching, research and course design as their main duties, so most found it difficult to identify just one of the duties as core.

In the 3 institutions, the highest percentage is represented by the respondents who selected teaching followed by those who could not select only one of the duties as core. This is an aspect that needs to be improved for any future use of the questionnaire.

- Previous work experience

The respondents, academic staff and management were asked to select their previous work experience from the list comprising **lecturing**, **research**, **management** and **quality assurance**. The findings with respect to the previous work experience of the academic staff members are presented in Table 6.8.

**Table 6.8 Previous work experience (V10)**

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Previous work experience</i>					<i>Total</i>
		<i>Missing</i>	<i>Lecturing</i>	<i>Research</i>	<i>Management</i>	<i>Quality assurance</i>	
A	Frequency	0	24	4	5	0	33
	%	0	72.73	12.12	15.15	0	100
B	Frequency	1	16	2	6	0	25
	%	4	64	8	24	0	100
C	Frequency	0	3	0	0	0	3
	%	0	100	0	0	0	100

60 out of the 61 academic staff members who responded to the questionnaire made a selection in terms of their previous work experience. None of them selected quality assurance.

In institution A, the majority (72.73%) selected teaching, 15.15% selected management and 12.12% selected research. From the findings, it was interesting to note that from those who selected teaching the majority of them, 15 in all, have a lot of association with quality assurance and the rest have a little association with only 1 having no association at all with quality assurance. The other point worth mentioning is that the majority of respondents who selected teaching are in positions ranging from lecturer to professor and only one of them has less than 1 year in their current position while the rest have 1-5 years and above. The majority of the respondents selected **teaching** followed by **management**, the lowest being research.

From those that selected management, all of them have a lot of association with quality assurance mainly because the quality assurance office in the institutions mostly works with the departments through HODs, Deans and their deputies. Secondly, being in management



they are also expected to drive the quality assurance process and practices of the institution.

4 of the respondents selected research, 3 of them have a lot of association with quality assurance and only one had no association at all. Their positions ranged from lecturer to associate professor, with 1-5 years and above in their current position.

My assumptions from these findings are:

- Institution A has for a long time been focusing on teaching in order to respond to the socio- economic needs of the country and it was only about 5 years ago that the institution emphasised research
- Given the positions that the respondents have in the institution, they are likely to be responsible in driving the quality assurance initiatives in the institution.
- In terms of their experience in the current positions, it is most probable that they have been exposed to the institutions quality assurance policy that was implemented in 2008.

For institution B, 64% selected teaching, 24% management and 8% research. Only 4% did not select any of the options. From those that selected teaching, 7 have a lot of association with quality assurance, 8 have a little association and 1 did not select any option. Their positions ranged from lecturer to HOD. 1 has less than 1 year experience and the rest 1-5 years and above in their current positions.

From the 2 that selected research, 1 is a lecturer with between 1-5 years in the current position, and the other one an assistant lecturer with less than 1 year in the position and both have a little association with quality assurance.

6 of the respondents in the institution selected management and their positions ranges from assistant lecturer to HOD. 2 have a lot of association with quality assurance, 2 a little association and 1 has no association at all. Two of them have 1-5 years' experience in their current positions while 4 have above 5 years' experience.

My assumptions from the findings are that:

- The institution's quality assurance policy may be known by academic staff in management and in teaching, especially those with more years' experience.
- The policy may still be in the process of being developed and not all the academic staff members are familiar with it

In terms of institution C, all (100%) selected teaching and 1 has no association with quality assurance while 2 have a little association. Their positions range from assistant lecturer to HOD. My only assumption here is that the institution could still be in the process of developing its quality assurance policy.

The respondents were also asked to specify their current position in the institution, and the findings are presented in the next section.

- Current position

This section presents the findings in terms of the current positions of the respondents. The positions were classified as **junior, middle and senior management**. Junior staff consisted of assistant lecturers and lecturers; middle is made up of senior lecturers and HoDs, and those in senior management are made up of deans, deputy deans, associate professors, professors and DVC-AA. See Table 6.9.

**Table 6.9 Current positions of academic staff (V11)**

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Current position</i>				<i>Total</i>
		<b>Missing</b>	<b>Junior</b>	<b>Middle Management</b>	<b>Senior Management</b>	
A	Frequency	0	17	9	7	33
	%	0	51.52	27.27	21.21	100
B	Frequency	0	16	9	0	25
	%	0	64	36	0	100
C	Frequency	0	2	1	0	3
	%	0	66.67	33.33	0	100

All the 60 respondents selected one of the positions. Most academic staff members in the 3 institutions fall in the junior category, followed by those in middle and lastly, the senior members of staff. My assumption is that there could more junior level positions than they are in the middle and senior positions. Again, in most institutions in Africa it is a lot easier to fill positions at lower levels than at senior levels. This could mainly be due to the conditions of service that are in most cases not attractive to academics with a lot of experience.

In institution A, all the respondents in middle and senior management have a lot of association with quality assurance. They also have 1- 5 years' experience and above in their current positions. The majority of those in junior positions, (9), have a lot of association with quality assurance, 4 have a little association and 2 have no association at all. Their years' experience ranges from 1-5 years and above.

In institution B, more of the respondents (64%) are at junior positions mainly because the institution does not have many programmes beyond degree level. All the respondents have some association with quality assurance. The majority of those in junior positions (13) have

1- 5 years' experience in their current positions. There are a number of assumptions that I arrived at regarding the findings that I have presented above. One of those is the fact that the institution is a private institution that is still new in the country and needs to ensure that it satisfies the requirements of the TEC in order for it to remain competitive in the country. Again, as a private institution, it needs to protect its reputation by ensuring that it maintains high standards for it to get returns on its investment in the country.

In institution C the highest percentage (66.67%) are in junior positions and the rest (33.33%) in middle management. All the respondents have a little association with quality assurance. The assumption in this regard is that the institution, just like others in the country could be having more positions at the lower levels than the senior ones. Again the institution is engaged in a major recruitment drive and its main focus was to get as many young people as possible and to train them so that the institution does not run short of qualified and experienced academic staff in future since its intention is to provide a steady supply of science and technology graduates for the country.

The respondents were also asked to indicate their number of years in the current institution. The findings are presented below.

- Number of years in current institution

In this section the findings with respect to the number of years of the academic staff members in the current institution are presented. See Table 6.10.

**Table 6.10 Number of years in current institution (V12)**

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Number of years</i>				<i>Total</i>
		<i>Missing</i>	<i>Less than 1 year</i>	<i>1 to 5 years</i>	<i>More than 5 years</i>	
A	Frequency	0	3	9	21	33
	%	0	9.09	27.27	63.64	100
B	Frequency	0	4	12	8	25
	%	0	16	48	32	100
C	Frequency	0	0	3	0	3
	%	0	0	100	0	100

Of the 61 respondents those with more than five years in the 3 institutions were the highest followed by those with one to five years and lastly the less-than-one-year group. The findings and assumptions with regards to number of years in the current institution have already been discussed in the previous section. An interesting point to note here is that in institutions A and B, the respondents with 1-5 years in the institution have a little to a lot of association with quality assurance. This could be due to the fact that they have had exposure to their institutions' quality assurance policies. The next section presents the findings with respect to the core duties of academic staff in the institution.

- Core duties of academic staff

The respondents were provided with a list of up to six duties to choose from and they were allowed to choose as many as they wanted. See Table 6.11.

**Table 6.11 Core duties of academic staff (V13-V18)**

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Missing</i>	<i>Core duties</i>					
			<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>%</b>							
A	Frequency	0	<b>30</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>%</b>	0	<b>90.91</b>	<b>72.73</b>	<b>42.42</b>	<b>9.09</b>	<b>6.06</b>	<b>18.18</b>
B	Frequency	1	<b>21</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>%</b>	4	<b>84</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0</b>
C	Frequency	0	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>%</b>	0	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33.33</b>	<b>33.33</b>	<b>33.33</b>

**Key:** 1 Teaching 2 Research 3 Community service 4 Administration 5 Material Development 6 Course Coordination

In institution A, 9.09% selected administration only as their core duty. They all have Doctoral degrees and all of them have a lot of association with quality assurance. In addition, they are in middle and senior management positions in the institution. Furthermore, teaching is the area that benefited most from their quality assurance experience. Another group of respondents in the institution (15.15%) selected teaching only as their core duty and all of them selected teaching as an area that benefited most from their quality assurance experience. From those that selected teaching only, the majority have a lot of association with quality assurance. There was also a group of respondents in institution A who selected teaching, research and community service. Teaching seems to be the core duty in institution A due to the fact that the institution was for a long time focusing a lot on teaching as a core duty of the academic staff. The other reason could be that the institution gives a lot of priority to teaching than the other areas.

In institution B, 84% selected teaching only as their core duty and just like in institution A they also said teaching benefited most from their quality assurance experience. There was also a group of respondents who selected materials development in addition to teaching. Unlike institution A, a small percentage of respondents (8%) selected either research or community service as one of their core duties. In my view, the high number of respondents who selected teaching only as their core duty could be due to the nature of the institution being more focused in teaching than in the other areas. Secondly, the institution may not have enough qualified academic staff members to drive the institution's research engagements.

For institution C, all (100%) selected teaching and research as core duties and they selected teaching as the most important area that benefited from their quality assurance experience. None of the respondents selected community service. My assumption is that the institution may not yet be ready to encourage staff to do community engagements since they are still establishing their departments.

The academic staff members were also asked to describe their involvement in quality assurance and the findings are presented in the next section.

- Involvement in quality assurance

The next section presents the findings of the study in relation to the academic staff members' involvement in quality assurance. See Table 6.12.

**Table 6.12 Involvement in quality assurance (V19)**

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Level of involvement</i>				<i>Total</i>
		<i>%</i>				
		<i>Missing</i>	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>A little</i>	<i>A lot</i>	
A	Frequency	1	3	7	22	33
	%	3.03	9.09	21.21	66.67	100
B	Frequency	1	1	14	9	25
	%	4	4	56	36	100
C	Frequency	0	0	3	0	3
	%	0	0	100	0	100

For institution A, 66.67% of the respondents have a lot of involvement in quality assurance and 21.21% have a little involvement. Only 9.09% have no involvement at all and 3.03% did not indicate their choice. My assumption from these findings point to the fact that, the institution is now focused in self-improvement and accountability to its stakeholders. This is due to the fact that the institution is no longer producing graduates for the local market only but has to aim at supplying the regional and international markets. Secondly, in order to compete globally it has to ensure that the quality of its programmes is improved and recognised by the international market. Thirdly, the institution now needs to meet the requirements of the newly introduced TEC in order to continue getting funding from the government.

In institution B, 56% of the respondents have little involvement in quality assurance while 36% have a lot of involvement. 4% are not involved at all and another 4% did not select any of the options. It is my assumption here that the institution is still trying to get as many academic staff members involved in quality assurance. The challenge that they could be experiencing is mainly because quality assurance is a new concept in the country and its



uptake by a lot of staff members is a bit slow. Again during one of my visits to the institution, it was revealed to me by one of the respondents that the quality assurance office is manned by only one officer.

In institution C, all the respondents (100%) said that they have a little involvement with quality assurance. The main reason for this could be that the institution is still in the process of finalising their policies and they are still developing and implementing their programmes

The findings and assumptions have already been presented in relation to gender, area of specialisation, previous work experience, current position and number of years at the current institution.

In terms of the findings regarding section A of the questionnaire for academic staff members, the respondents were drawn from various faculties in the institutions studied. Both males and females are represented and they have different employment status as well as different age ranges. In terms of their qualifications, they belong to various groupings as indicated in the presentation of findings. The respondents' areas of specialisation are varied even though none of them have had any quality assurance experience in the past five years. Furthermore, respondents in junior up to senior positions are represented and they have had years of experience, ranging from one to five years. Most of them are somewhat involved in quality assurance. The next section presents the findings with respect to section B of the questionnaire for academic staff.

### **6.2.3 Findings in section B**

In this section the findings with regards to academic staff members' experiences and opinions of quality assurance are presented per institution. Question 13 requested the respondents to score their experiences and opinions of quality assurance from their previous and current positions. In question 14 they were asked to indicate their knowledge of the institution's quality assurance mechanisms. The two questions provided a scale of the following four options: **vast**, **moderate**, **slight** and **non-existent**. In question 15 the respondents were asked to rank the top three areas that benefited from their quality assurance experience. The findings in relation to the experiences and opinions of quality assurance of the respondents are presented below.

- Experiences and opinions of quality assurance from previous and current positions.

Table 6.13 presents the experiences of academic staff members regarding quality assurance from their previous and their current positions.

**Table 6.13 Experiences and opinions of quality assurance (V20-28) in institution A**

<i>Area</i>	<i>Score</i>						
	Frequency %	Missing	Non- existent	Slight	Moderate	Vast	Total
<b>Experience in development of QA policy from previous work</b>	Frequency	1	10	6	13	3	33
	%	3.03	30.30	18.18	39.39	9.09	100
<b>Experience in implementation of QA policy from previous work</b>	Frequency	1	7	5	16	4	33
	%	3.03	21.21	15.15	48.48	12.12	100
<b>Involvement in development of QA policy in current work</b>	Frequency	0	8	5	13	7	33
	%	0	24.24	15.15	39.39	21.21	100
<b>Involvement in implementation of policy in current work</b>	Frequency	0	3	3	12	15	33
	%	0	9.09	9.09	36.36	45.45	100
<b>Policy in enhancing teaching is effective</b>	Frequency	1	3	9	13	7	33
	%	3.03	9.09	27.27	39.39	21.21	100

<b>Policy in enhancing student assessment is effective</b>	Frequency	1	3	11	13	5	33
	%	3.03	9.09	33.33	39.39	15.15	100
<b>Policy in enhancing research is effective</b>	Frequency	1	3	14	11	4	33
	%	3.03	9.09	42.42	33.33	12.12	100
<b>QA experience improved effectiveness as an academic staff member</b>	Frequency	1	3	4	19	6	33
	%	4	9.09	12.12	57.58	18.18	100
<b>QA experience empowered the academic staff member</b>	Frequency	0	2	7	18	6	33
	%	0	6.06	21.21	54.55	18.18	100

In terms of the 33 respondents from institution A, 3.03% did not indicate score in terms of experience in the development of quality assurance policy in their previous work. The highest score was moderate experience (39.39%), then those that selected non-existent (30.30%), followed by slight (18.18%) and finally those with vast experience (9.09%).

The respondents who selected slight to vast experience in the development of quality assurance policy from their previous work, have previous work experience in teaching, research and management. My assumption from these findings is that the respondents might have participated in the development of policy through the institution's consultation process in developing and approving policies in the institution.

With regards to experience in implementation of quality assurance policy in their previous work, those with moderate experience were the highest (48.48%), followed by non-existent (21.21%), then slight (15.15% and finally, vast (9.09%).

In comparing the two variables above, there are more respondents (48.48%) who have moderate experience in implementing the policy as compared to those who have moderate experience in developing the policy (39.39%). It was also interesting to note that the percentage of respondents who selected vast experience increased with regards to implementation and not development of policy. However, in comparing those that selected slight, the percentage for implementation of policy was less than the development of policy, the same applies to non-existent.

My assumptions from the findings are:

- The institutions already had quality assurance policies in place and the respondents may have been more involved in implementing the policy than in its development.
- In some of the institutions, the policy is developed somewhere and the academic staff get involved in providing feedback at implementation stage.

In terms of involvement in the development of quality assurance policy in their current job, the highest responses are moderate (39.39%), followed by non-existent (24.24%), then vast (21.21%) and finally, slight (15.15%). However, in terms of involvement in implementing the policy, most respondents selected vast (45.45%), followed by moderate (36.36%), then slight and non-existent at (9.09%) each. In comparing the two variables there is a high percentage of respondents who are greatly involved in implementing the policy as compared to those who are greatly involved in developing the policy. Again, 24.24% say they are not at all involved in the development of policy whereas 9.09% say they are not involved in implementing the policy.

My assumptions from the findings are that there could more involvement of academic staff in implementing the policy as compared to its development because staff members are required to implement the policy in their day to day activities. Again, their performance is assessed on the basis of their implementation of quality assurance policy in teaching and research.

With regards to the effectiveness of the institution's policy in teaching, the majority of the respondents selected moderate (39.39%), followed by non-existent (27.27%), then vast (21.21%) and finally, slight (9.09%). 3.03% did not indicate their choice. In terms of the effectiveness of policy in student assessment, the highest response was moderate (39.39%), followed by non-existent (33.33%), then vast (15.15%) and finally, slight (9.09%). With regards to effectiveness of the policy in research, most of the respondents selected non-existent (42.42%), followed by moderate (33.33%), then vast (12.12%) and finally, slight (9.09%). 3.03% did not make a selection. In comparing the effectiveness of the policy in the 3 areas of teaching, student assessment and research, the highest number of respondents (42.42%) selected none existence of policy in research and the lowest effectiveness (9.09%) in the 3 areas. My assumption is that the respondents may not be aware that there is a research policy in the institution. The other reason could be that the policy itself may not have been communicated sufficiently to the academic staff members.

In terms of the effectiveness of academic staff members due to quality assurance experience, 57.57% selected moderately, 18.18% chose greatly, 12.12% selected slightly and 9.09% opted for not at all. 4 % did not select any of the options.

With regards to empowerment due to quality assurance experience, 54.55% say they are moderately empowered, 21.21% are slightly empowered, 18.18% greatly empowered and 6.06% not at all.

It can be argued that the high percentage of moderate effectiveness and empowerment of academic staff could be as a result of the institution not providing enough opportunities for academic staff to be involved in the development of the quality assurance policy. Secondly, the academic staff may not notice the effectiveness because they feel that implementation of the policy is just one of the engagements that they need to do without necessarily appreciating the importance of such engagements.

Table 6.14 below presents the respondents' experiences and opinions of quality assurance in institution B

**Table 6.14 Experiences and opinions of quality assurance (V20-28) in institution B**

<i>Area</i>	<i>Score</i>						
	Frequency %	Missing	Non- existent	Slight	Moderate	Vast	Total
<b>Experience in development of QA policy from previous work</b>	Frequency	0	5	6	11	3	25
	%	0	20	24	44	12	100
<b>Experience in implementation of QA policy from previous work</b>	Frequency	0	5	10	7	3	25
	%	0	20	40	28	12	100
<b>Involvement in development of QA policy in current work</b>	Frequency	0	8	9	4	4	25
	%	0	32	36	16	16	100
<b>Involvement in implementation of policy in current work</b>	Frequency	1	6	5	9	4	25
	%	4	24	20	36	16	100
<b>Policy in enhancing teaching is effective</b>	Frequency	1	3	7	10	4	25
	%	4	12	28	40	16	100

<b>Policy in enhancing student assessment is effective</b>	Frequency	2	2	7	9	5	25
	%	8	8	28	36	20	100
<b>Policy in enhancing research is effective</b>	Frequency	0	10	5	9	1	25
	%	0	40	20	36	4	100
<b>QA experience improved effectiveness as an academic staff member</b>	Frequency	3	2	6	10	4	25
	%	12	8	24	40	16	100
<b>QA experience empowered the academic staff member</b>	Frequency	1	2	6	9	7	25
	%	4	8	24	36	28	100

In terms of the respondents 'experience in the development of quality assurance policy from their previous work, the highest was moderate (44%), followed by slight (24%), then non-existent (20%) and finally, vast (12%). With regards to experience in implementation of quality assurance policy from previous work, the highest response was slight (40%), followed by moderate (28%), then non-existent (20%) and finally, vast at (12%).

In comparing the two variables, there are more respondents with moderate experience in developing quality assurance policy from their previous work compared to those with moderate experience in implementing the policy from their previous work. On the other hand, there are more respondents with slight experience in implementing quality assurance



policy from their previous work compared to those with slight experience in developing the policy from their previous work.

In my view, since the institution was started when TEC was already in existence, they could have learned a lot from the council with regards to how to go about developing and implementing quality assurance policy in their institution. Secondly, they could also have learned from other more established institutions on what to avoid when developing and implementing quality assurance policy.

With regards to respondents with experience in developing quality assurance policy in their current work, the highest response was slight (36%), followed by non-existent (32%), then moderate and vast (16%) each. In terms of respondents with experience in implementing the policy in their current jobs, the highest was moderate (36%), followed by non-existent (24%), then slight (20%) and finally, vast (4%). 4% did not indicate their option.

In comparing the two sets of responses above, there are more respondents with slight experience in developing policy as compared to those with slight experience in implementing the policy. Whereas, there were more responses from respondents with moderate experience in implementing the policy as compared to those with moderate experience in developing the policy in their current work. My assumptions are that the institution developed the policy at a time when a lot of the academic staff members were not yet recruited and they only came in at implementation stage. Secondly, there is high staff turnover in a lot of institutions in the country as such; the academic staff who was involved in the development of the policy may have long left the institution.

In terms of the effectiveness of the quality assurance policy in teaching, the highest response was moderate (40%), then slight (28%), then vast (16%) and non-existent (12%). The other 8% did not select any of the options. With regards to student assessment, the highest was also moderate (36%), then slight (28%), then vast (20%) and finally, non-existent and missing (8%) each. In terms of the effectiveness of the policy in research, the highest was non-existent (40%), followed by moderate (36%), then slight (20%) and finally vast (4%).

In comparing the effectiveness of the policy in the 3 areas of teaching, student assessment and research, the highest number of respondents (40%) selected none existence of policy in research and moderate effectiveness in teaching, and the lowest is vast effectiveness (4%) in research.

My assumptions from the above are that the research policy may not be fully implemented in the institution. Secondly, due to one officer in the quality office there could be problems with driving the quality assurance policy of the institution and sensitising the academic staff members about it.

In terms of the effectiveness of academic staff members due to quality assurance experience, 40% selected moderately, 24% chose slightly, 16% selected vast and 8% opted for not at all. 12 % did not select any of the options.

With regards to empowerment due to quality assurance experience, 36% say they are moderately empowered, 28% are vastly empowered, 24% slightly empowered and 8% not at all. The other 4% did not select any of the options.

Much as the majority of the academic staff members feel they are moderately effective due to their quality assurance experience, the percentage of those that are moderately empowered by their quality assurance experience is a bit low. This in my view indicates that the academic staff members are appreciative of the policy and its benefits to them but the institution still needs to provide more opportunities for their empowerment.

Table 6.15 below presents the respondents' experiences and opinions of quality assurance in institution C.

**Table 6.15 Experiences and opinions of quality assurance (V20-28) in institution C**

<i>Area</i>	<i>Score</i>						
	Frequency %	Missing	Non- existent	Slight	Moderate	Vast	Total
<b>Experience in development of QA policy from previous work</b>	Frequency	0	0	3	0	0	3
	%	0	0	100	0	0	100
<b>Experience in implementation of QA policy from previous work</b>	Frequency	0	1	1	1	0	3
	%	0	33.33	33.33	33.33	0	100
<b>Involvement in development of QA policy in current work</b>	Frequency	0	1	1	1	0	0
	%	0	33.33	33.33	33.33	0	100
<b>Involvement in implementation of policy in current work</b>	Frequency	0	0	2	1	0	0
	%	0	0	66.67	33.33	0	100
<b>Policy in enhancing teaching is effective</b>	Frequency	0	0	2	1	0	3
	%	0	0	66.67	33.33	0	100

<b>Policy in enhancing student assessment is effective</b>	Frequency	0	0	2	1	0	3
	%	0	0	66.67	33.33	0	100
<b>Policy in enhancing research is effective</b>	Frequency	0	0	1	2	0	3
	%	0	0	33.33	66.67	0	100
<b>QA experience improved effectiveness as an academic staff member</b>	Frequency	0	0	2	1	0	3
	%	0	0	66.67	33.33	0	100
<b>QA experience empowered the academic staff member</b>	Frequency	0	0	2	1	0	0
	%	0	0	66.67	33.33	0	100

In terms of experience in development of policy in their previous work, all the respondents (100%) selected slight experience. With regards to implementation of the policy, the percentage of respondents is 33.33% each for non-existent, slight and moderate experience. My assumption is that the institution recruited academic staff from organisations that are not necessarily higher education institutions.

With regards to involvement in the development of policy in their current work, the responses were 33.33% each for nonexistence, slight and moderate. In terms of implementation of the policy in their current work, 66.67% selected slight and 33.33% selected moderate. In my view, this may be due to the fact that at the time of collecting data for this study, the institution had not yet started offering a lot of their programmes.

In terms of the effectiveness of the institution's policy in teaching, slight was selected by 66.67% followed by moderate at 33.33%. With regards to the effectiveness of the policy in student assessment slight was 66.67% and moderate at 33.33%. In terms of research, 33.33% selected slight and 66.67% selected moderate.

The above responses show a high percentage in slight effectiveness of the policy in teaching and student assessment and a low percentage in moderate effectiveness for teaching and student assessment.

In terms of the effectiveness of academic staff members due to quality assurance experience, 66.67% chose slightly, and 33.33% opted for moderately.

With regards to empowerment due to quality assurance experience, 66.67% say they are slightly empowered, 33.33% are moderately empowered.

My assumption is that the policies may be at their initial stages of implementation; therefore it is still too early to assess their effectiveness.

The next section presents the findings with regards to the respondents' knowledge of their institutions' quality assurance policy.

- Knowledge of the institutions' quality assurance policy

The respondents were asked to describe the extent of their knowledge of the institution's quality assurance policy with regard to teaching, research and publications, student assessment, community service, programme development and course coordination. The options that were provided to measure the levels of knowledge are: non-existent, slight, moderate and vast. See Tables 6.16-6.18.

**Table 6.16 Levels of knowledge of quality assurance policy (V29-V34) for institution A.**

<i>Policy</i>	<i>Level of knowledge</i>						<i>Total</i>
	<b>Frequency</b> %	<b>Missing</b>	<b>Non-existent</b>	<b>Slight</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Vast</b>	
<b>Teaching</b>	Frequency	0	0	3	12	18	33
	%	0	0	9.09	36.36	54.55	100
<b>Research and publications</b>	Frequency	0	0	3	19	11	33
	%	0	0	9.09	57.58	33.33	100
<b>Student assessment</b>	Frequency	0	0	4	14	15	33
	%	0	0	12.12	42.42	45.45	100
<b>Community service</b>	Frequency	2	4	8	13	6	33
	%	6.06	12.12	24.24	39.39	18.18	100
<b>Programme development</b>	Frequency	0	1	7	17	8	33
	%	0	3.03	21.21	51.52	24.24	100
<b>Course coordination</b>	Frequency	1	2	4	16	10	33
	%	3.03	6.06	12.12	48.48	30.30	100

Out of the 33 respondents, the highest percentage was those with moderate knowledge of policy in research and publications, followed by vast knowledge of teaching policy, then programme development, course coordination, student assessment, and community service.

It was interesting to note that out of the 30 respondents who selected moderate to vast knowledge of the institution's policy in teaching, the majority of them (46.67%) are those

holding junior positions (Assistant lecturer and lecturer) followed by those in middle management (Senior lecturer, HOD, Deputy Dean) at (26.06%) and the lowest (27.27%) were those in senior positions (Dean, Associate Professor and professor). Secondly, all the respondents selected teaching as one of their core duties. In addition, 76.67% of them selected teaching as the most important area that benefited them from their quality assurance experience.

In terms of research and publications, out of the 30 respondents who selected moderate to vast knowledge of the policy the majority (46.67%) are in junior positions, followed by those in middle management (36.67%) and the lowest (16.67%) are in senior management. Again, the highest (40%) selected research as an important area that benefited from their quality assurance experience. Furthermore, 70% selected research as one of their core duties.

With regards to student assessment, the highest option selected by the respondents was vast experience (45.45%), followed by moderate (42.42%), then slight (12.12%). Those who selected vast experience cut across the various positions in the institution.

In terms of community service, the highest response was moderate (39.39%), then slight (24.24%), followed by vast (18.18%) and finally, non-existent (12.12%). The other 6.06% did not select any of the options. From those who selected moderate and vast knowledge of the policy, the majority are spread across junior and middle management positions and only a small percentage in senior management.

With regards to programme development, moderate was highest (51.52%), then vast (24.24%), followed by slightly (21.21%) and finally, non-existent (3.03%). From the 25 who selected moderate and vast, the majority of them (44%) are in junior positions, followed by those in middle management (36%) and finally senior management (20%).

In terms of course coordination, the highest option selected was moderate (48.48%), followed by vast (30.30%), then slightly (12.12%) and finally, non-existent (6.06%). The other 3.03% did not make any selection. From the number that selected moderate and vast (26), the majority (80.77%) did not select course coordination as one of the top three areas that benefited from their quality assurance experience, the remaining 19.23% selected it. It was

also interesting to note that those that did not select course coordination are in positions ranging from junior to senior positions in the institution.

My assumptions from the above findings with regards to institution A are:

- A lot of the respondents might be involved in teaching due to the nature of the institution; being a national university with emphasis on producing graduates who can contribute to the socio-economic development of the country. Teaching was therefore a priority in the institution for a long time
- In most cases, people in senior positions do less teaching but do more in research and in mentoring junior members of staff
- Staff in junior positions might still be working towards their reputation in research and therefore tend to put more effort in research
- Much as community service is one of the core duties of academic staff members, the aspect is given a small percentage in assessment of performance; as a result most academic staff members may not pay much attention to it.
- In most cases issues of course development are handled by HOD and or senior lecturers and those in senior management are there to approve and advise.
- A lot of senior members of staff might fear change and are more comfortable with the status quo.

Table 6.17 presents the findings for institution B.



**Table 6.17 Levels of knowledge of quality assurance policy (V29-V34) for institution B.**

<i>Policy</i>	<i>Level of knowledge</i>					<i>Total</i>	
	<b>Frequency</b> %	<b>Missing</b>	<b>Non-existent</b>	<b>Slight</b>	<b>Moderate</b>		<b>Vast</b>
<b>Teaching</b>	Frequency	0	1	6	10	8	25
	%	0	4	24	40	32	100
<b>Research and publications</b>	Frequency	2	13	6	2	2	25
	%	8	52	24	8	8	100
<b>Student assessment</b>	Frequency	0	1	6	10	8	25
	%	0	4	24	40	32	100
<b>Community service</b>	Frequency	0	9	5	8	3	25
	%	0	36	20	32	12	100
<b>Programme development</b>	Frequency	0	1	6	9	9	25
	%	0	4	24	36	36	100
<b>Course coordination</b>	Frequency	0	1	7	10	7	25
	%	0	4	28	40	28	100

Out of the 25 respondents to the questionnaire, 40% had moderate knowledge of the institution's policy on teaching, 32% have vast knowledge, 24% slight knowledge and 4% non-existent. From the 18 respondents who selected moderate to vast knowledge, 50% are in junior positions and the other 50% in middle management. Again, 83.33% of them selected teaching as one of their core duties. In addition, 66.67% selected teaching as the most important area that benefited from their quality assurance experience.

In terms of research and publications, the highest percentage (52%) was for non-existence, followed by slight (24%) and the rest of the options were 8% each. Out of the 19 respondents who selected non-existent and slight, 78.95% are in junior positions in the institution and 21.05% are in middle management. Furthermore, only 26.32% selected research as one of the important areas that benefited from their research experience.

With regards to student assessment, 40% selected moderate, 32% vast, 24% slight and 4% non-existent. Out of the 18 respondents who selected moderate and vast, 55.56% are in junior positions and 44.44% are in middle management. In addition, 61.11% selected student assessment as one of the 3 important areas that benefited from their quality assurance experience and 38.89% did not make a selection.

In terms of community service, 36% selected non-existence, 32% moderate, 20% slight and 12% selected vast. Out of the 14 that selected non-existence and slight, 85.71% did not select community service as one of their core duties or an area that benefited from their quality assurance experience.

With regards to programme development, 36% each selected moderate and vast, 24% slight and 4% non-existent. Out of the 18 that selected moderate and vast, 55.56% are in junior positions and 44.44% are in middle management. Furthermore, 55.56% selected programme development as one of the top three areas that benefited from their quality assurance experience.

In terms of course coordination, 40% selected moderate, 28% each selected slight and vast and 4% non-existent. Out of the 17 respondents who selected moderate and vast, 64.71% are in junior positions and 35.29% in middle management. In addition, 70.59% did not select course coordination as one of their core duties or as an area that benefited from their quality assurance aspects.

My assumptions from the above findings with regards to institution B are:

- The quality assurance policy may not have been well communicated to the academic staff members

- A lot of the staff members are new and therefore, may not yet aware of the institution's quality assurance policy
- The institution might have made a lot of effort in communicating the policy on teaching and on programme development.
- There could be a lot of emphasis on teaching to the disadvantage of other areas like research and community service.
- Table 6.18 presents the findings for institution c.

**Table 6.18 Levels of knowledge of quality assurance policy (V29-V34) for institution C.**

<i>Policy</i>	<i>Level of knowledge</i>						<i>Total</i>
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Missing</b>	<b>Non-existent</b>	<b>Slight</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Vast</b>	
<b>Teaching</b>	Frequency	0	1	2	0	0	3
	%	0	33.33	66.67	0	0	100
<b>Research and publications</b>	Frequency	0	1	1	1	0	3
	%	0	33.33	33.33	33.33	0	100
<b>Student assessment</b>	Frequency	0	1	2	0	0	3
	%	0	33.33	66.67	0	0	100
<b>Community service</b>	Frequency	0	1	2	0	0	3
	%	0	33.33	66.67	0	0	100
<b>Programme development</b>	Frequency	0	2	1	0	0	3
	%	0	66.67	33.33	0	0	100
<b>Course coordination</b>	Frequency	0	1	1	1	0	3
	%	0	33.33	33.33	33.33	0	100

Out of the 3 respondents from institution C, 33.33% selected non-existence in terms of level of knowledge of institution's policy in teaching and 66.67% selected slight. The one that selected non-existence is in junior position and the rest are in middle management. All of them selected teaching as one of the 3 important areas that benefited from their quality assurance experience.

In terms of research and publications 33.33% each selected non-existence, slight and moderate. The 66.67% that selected non-existence and slight are in junior positions and the one who selected moderate is in middle management. All of them selected research and publications as one of the important areas that benefited from their quality assurance experience.

With regards to student assessment, 33.33% selected non-existence and 66.67% selected slight. They all selected research as one of the areas that benefited from their quality assurance experience, and as one of their core duties.

In terms of community service, 33.33% selected non-existence and 66.67% selected slight. All of them did not select community service as an area that benefited from their quality assurance experience.

Out of the 3 respondents, 66.67% selected slight and 33.33% opted for moderately. All of them did not select programme development as one of their core duties or an area that benefited from their quality assurance experience.

With regards to course coordination, 33.33% each selected non-existence, slight and moderate. Their positions range from junior to middle management. Course coordination does not appear as one of the core duties of the respondents.

My assumptions from the above findings with regards to institution B are:

- The institution's policies may not be developed yet
- The policies may not be well communicated

The next section presents the findings with regards to the top three areas that benefited from quality assurance experience

- The top three areas that benefit from quality assurance experience

For institution A, the area that most respondents (75.76%) selected as the most important area that benefited from their quality assurance experience is teaching, followed by research and publications (45.45%) and the least important (40%) is student assessment.

For institution B, most respondents (60%) selected teaching as the area that benefited most from their quality assurance experience. The important area selected by respondents (12%) was research and the least important was student assessment, community service or course coordination (4%) each. The respondents that selected teaching as the most important, an equal percentage also indicated that they have moderate or great knowledge about the institution's policy in teaching.

For institution C, most respondents (66.67%) selected teaching as an area that benefited most from their quality assurance experience followed by research and publication and finally student assessment (33.33%) each.

The three institutions indicated that teaching is the one area that benefited the most in terms of quality assurance experience. The assumption drawn from that is the fact that the institution could be putting a lot of emphasis and resources on teaching to the disadvantage of other areas like research and student assessment. The other assumption is that the institutions may not really regard community service as a priority area for assessment and that is why the respondents regard it as the least important.

### 6.3 Findings from the questionnaire for institution D

The presentation of the findings from the questionnaire for institution D starts with the response rate of the questionnaire followed by findings from Section A and Section B.

There was a good response in terms of numbers. See Table 6.19.

**Table 6.19 Questionnaire response rate for institution D**

Institution	Proposed sample	Actual	Percentage Rate
D	10	5	50

In institution D the officials were more willing to respond to the questionnaire as they felt that it addresses issues of interest for their institution. Unfortunately, the targeted sample

could not be reached because the institution is still new and still in the process of recruiting more people.

In terms of the questionnaire items, the respondents said that the questions were easy to respond to and they did not take too long to answer the questions. In fact, the questionnaires were returned to me within a week of distributing them. The only issue that was raised was with regard to Question 1, which requested the respondents to indicate their departments. The fact that the departments in the ministry are still being rearranged to accommodate the unit made it difficult for the respondents to indicate their relevant department. As a result none of the respondents answered Question 1. The next section presents the findings from section A of the questionnaire.

### **6.3.1 Findings from Section A**

Section A of the questionnaire requests the respondents to provide details regarding their background in terms of their department, employment status, gender, age, qualification, area of specialisation, previous work experience, current position, number of years in the current position, core duties and their association with quality assurance. The next section presents the findings in relation to the respondents' employment status.

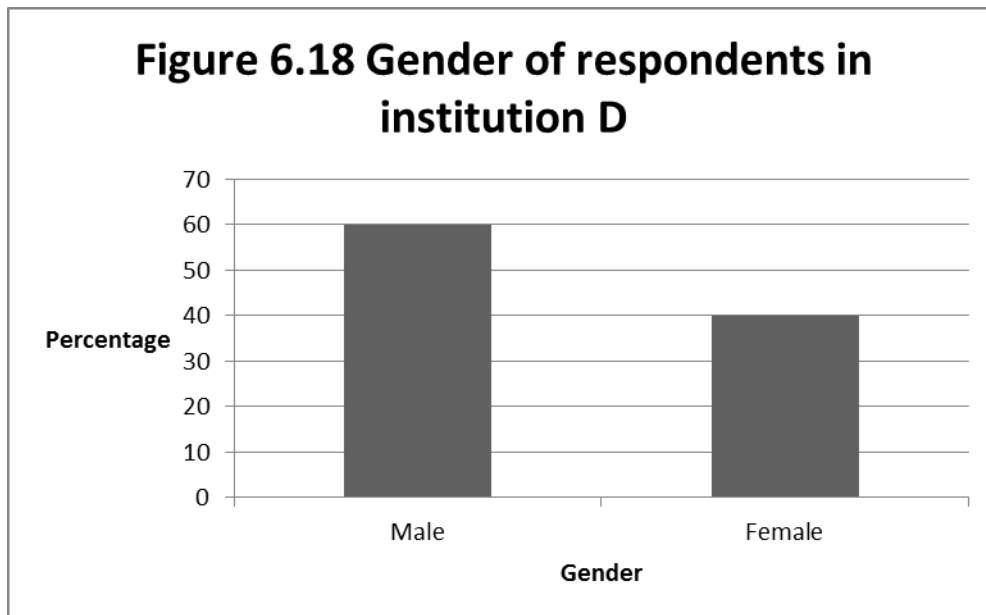
- Employment status

The five respondents indicated that they are all employed on a permanent basis. The researcher's assumption in this regard is that in most cases the ministry employs people on a permanent basis or contract and it is not often that officials are employed on part-time basis.

- Gender

Figure 6.18 presents the findings with regard to the gender of the respondents.

Figure 6.18 Gender of the respondents in institution D



From the total of five respondents 60% were male and 40% female. All the respondents have a lot of association with quality assurance. Their positions range from Director to senior education officer. My assumption is that the respondents may have a lot of experience handling quality assurance issues in higher education institutions in Botswana. The next section presents the ages of the respondents.

#### Age

The respondents were asked to provide their age and the findings are presented in Table 6.20 below.

**Table 6.20 Age of the respondents**

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Lower	2	40
Older	3	60

The age of the respondents ranged from 47 to 58 years. The ages were classified as lower (47 to 50 years) and older (above 50 years). Of the five respondents 40% are classified as having a lower and 60% having an older age. The age of the respondents appears to have much to do with the fact that they have been employees of the ministry for a long time and



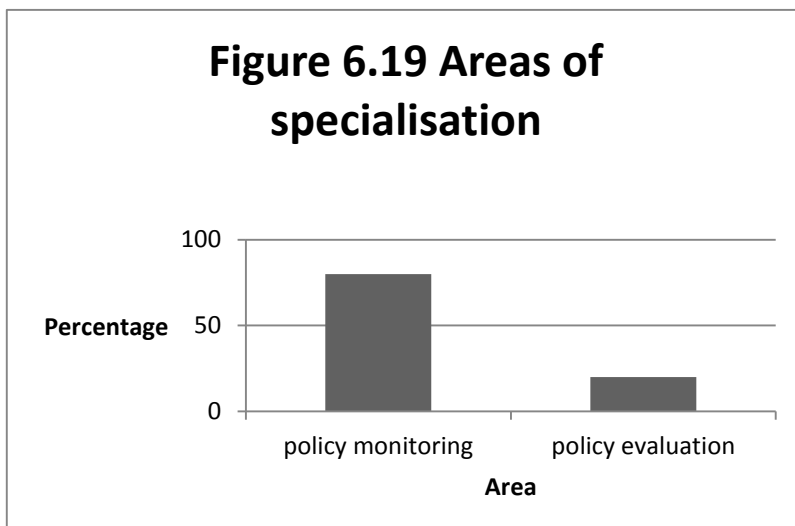
the fact that their roles are mainly supervisory. The next section presents the findings in relation to the qualification of the respondents.

- Qualification

The respondents were provided with four options to choose from, namely bachelor, honours, master’s and doctoral degree. All five respondents said that they had obtained a master’s degree. My view of qualifications is that since the officials are expected to advise tertiary institutions they are expected to be on the same level or higher as the lecturers in the institutions. Again, they all have work experience ranging from Education officer to principal education officer. The respondents were asked to provide details regarding their area of specialisation and these are presented in the next section.

- Area of specialisation

In terms of their area of specialisation, the respondents were provided with three areas to choose from. The areas are **policy development**, **policy monitoring** and **policy evaluation**. See Figure 6.19.



Out of a total of five respondents, 80% selected **policy monitoring** and 20% selected **policy evaluation**. None of the respondents selected **policy development**. My interpretation of this is that the unit in the ministry is more focused **on monitoring** and **evaluation of policy**

that is already in existence and has little to do with **policy development** unless it is a new policy that is still to be developed. The other issue is that in Botswana, as discussed in the literature, the institutions are expected to develop their own policies through guidance from TEC and the ministry is responsible for monitoring its implementation. The next section presents the findings in relation to the officers' previous work experience.

- Previous work experience

This question requested the officers to indicate their work experience in the past five years. See Table 6.21 below.

**Table 6.21 Previous work experience**

Position	Frequency	Percentage
Senior Education Officer	3	60
Chief Education Officer	1	20
Education Officer	1	20

Of the five respondents 60% are senior education officers, 20% a chief education officer and the other 20% an education officer. The respondents all have work experience ranging from 1-5 years and above. Since this is a new unit the officers that have been appointed were mainly transferred from various departments in the ministry. The next section presents details with regard to the current positions of the respondents.

- Current position

The respondents were asked to indicate their current positions from the five options available; none of them selected Chief Education Officer or Education Officer. Their responses are presented in Table 6.22 below.

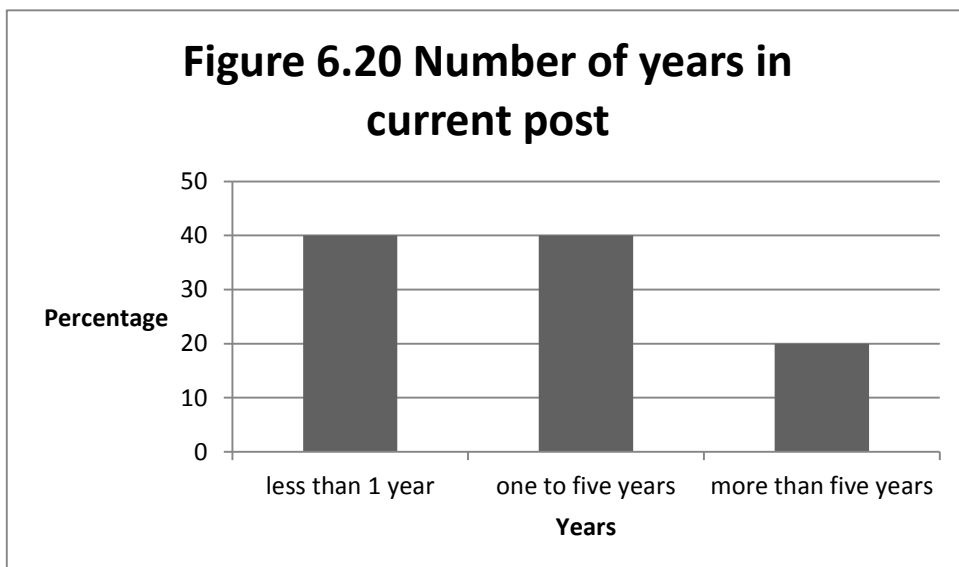
**Table 6.22 Current positions**

Position	Frequency	Percentage
Director	2	40
Senior Education Officer	1	40
Principal Education Officer	2	20

In terms of their current position, 40% are directors, another 40% senior education officers and 20% principal education officer. 80% of the respondents have experience in policy monitoring and 20% are experienced in policy evaluation. The officials are mainly in senior positions since their previous experience shows that they have been in senior positions for the past five years. The next section provides details with respect to the number of years that the respondents have been in their current positions.

- Number of years in current position

The respondents were provided with three options to choose from and their responses are presented in Figure 6.20 below.



Of the five respondents 40% less than one year experience, another 40% one to five years and 20% more than five years in the current position. This may be due to the fact that the officials are from within the ministry and some have just been transferred in their current positions. The next section presents details of the respondents' core duties.

- Core duties

The respondents were asked to select their core duties from the three options provided. With regard to their core duties, of five respondents 40% selected **policy development** and 60% did not select. All five respondents selected **policy monitoring** and 80% selected **policy evaluation**. The next section presents the findings regarding the respondents' involvement in quality assurance.

- Involvement in quality assurance

The respondents were asked to describe their involvement in quality assurance, using the three options provided. All five respondents said that they are much involved in quality assurance. In addition to that, they all have experience in policy monitoring and evaluation. In my view this may be due to the fact that most of them have been involved in quality assurance in one way or another in their roles as ministry officials.

The data provided in relation to the officials' background shows that the respondents have high qualifications and have much experience. In addition they have knowledge of policy development, monitoring and evaluation and can therefore provide valuable guidance to higher education institutions in terms of their quality assurance policies. Furthermore, they said that they are greatly involved in quality assurance and in my view this is an indication that the respondents know the role and importance of quality assurance in higher education and are able to provide relevant information to the study. In terms of their positions, the respondents hold senior positions and are therefore in good standing to provide the study with information that is based on their experience. In section 6.3.2 the findings with regard to section B of the questionnaire are presented.

### 6.3.2 Findings from section B

Section B of the questionnaire requested the respondents to provide details regarding their opinions and experiences. The section consists of six questions, question number 12 to 17. In question 12 the respondents are required to score the statements that relate to their experience in **quality assurance policy development, implementation and monitoring**. Question 13 asked them to score in relation to their knowledge of mechanism for quality assurance in the areas of teaching, research, student assessment, community service, programme development and course coordination. The next section provides the details of the responses in relation to the respondents' experience in quality assurance.

#### Experience and involvement in quality assurance policy

The respondents were asked to select their answers from the scale provided which ranged from non-existent, slight and moderate to vast. See Table 6.23 below.

**Table 6.23 Experience and involvement in policy**

Area/score	Frequency %	Moderate	Vast	Total
<b>Development of policy from previous work</b>	Frequency	0	5	5
	%	0%	100%	100
<b>Implementation of policy from previous work</b>	Frequency	1	4	5
	%	20%	80%	100
<b>Development of policy in current work</b>	Frequency	0	5	5
	%	0%	100%	100
<b>Implementation of policy in current work</b>	Frequency	0	5	5
	%	0%	100%	100
<b>Monitoring of policy in current work</b>	Frequency	0	5	5
	%	0%	100%	100

In terms of experience in the development of quality assurance policy from their previous work, all (100%) of the officials said they have vast experience. 80% have much experience in the implementation of quality assurance policy; 20% has moderate experience. Five said they are greatly involved in the development of policy in their current position, five said they are greatly involved in the implementation of policy in their current position; five are involved in the monitoring of policy in their current position. All five respondents did not select **non-existent** or **slight** in relation to the statements given. My assumption from the findings is that the respondents have been involved with higher education institutions in Botswana and gained a lot of experience even before the establishment of TEC. In addition, their roles have been kind of support and supervisory to the higher education institutions

since most of the institutions were national and depended on the government for funding. The next section presents the findings in relation to the respondents' knowledge of the institution's mechanisms for assuring quality in various activities of the institution.

- Knowledge of institutions quality assurance mechanisms

The respondents were provided with a scale that had four options to select from, none of them selected not at all. See Table 6.24.

**Table 6.24 Knowledge of the institutions quality assurance mechanisms**

Area/score	Frequency	Slight	moderate	Vast	Total
	%				
<b>Teaching</b>	Frequency	0	2	3	5
	%	0%	40%	60%	100
<b>Research and publications</b>	Frequency	0	3	2	5
	%	0%	60%	40%	100
<b>Student assessment</b>	Frequency	0	1	4	5
	%	0%	20%	80%	100
<b>Community service</b>	Frequency	1	2	2	5
	%	20%	40%	40%	100
<b>Programme development</b>	Frequency	0	2	3	5
	%	0%	40%	60%	100
<b>Course coordination</b>	Frequency	0	2	3	5
	%	0%	40%	%	100

With regard to their knowledge in terms of policy in teaching, research, student assessment, community service, programme development and course coordination, 60% of the five respondents said they have vast knowledge of the institution's policy in teaching, 40% said they have moderate knowledge. In addition, those with vast knowledge also have great experience in policy development, implementation and monitoring both in their previous work and in their current positions. My assumption is that the officers were at some point of their careers involved in development of policy in other institutions that may not necessarily be higher education.



60% of the five respondents said they have moderate knowledge of the policy on research and publication; 40% said they have vast knowledge. My assumption is that the respondents are not fully exposed to research since higher education institutions in Botswana were mainly established to produce graduates who could work in the offices.

In terms of student assessment 80% of the five respondents said they have vast knowledge, 20% said they have moderate knowledge. Regarding community service, of the five respondents 40% said they have moderate knowledge, another 40% have vast knowledge and 20% has slight knowledge. My assumption is that the officers might have been involved in the moderation of examinations in higher education institutions due to their supervisory roles in those institutions.

In programme development 60% of the five respondents said they have vast knowledge, 40% have moderate knowledge. In course coordination, 60% have vast knowledge and 40% have moderate knowledge. It is in the area of community service only where 20% of the respondents selected slightly in relation to knowledge of the institution's mechanism for assuring quality in community service. The rest of the responses from the five respondents show that they have knowledge of what the institution is doing in terms of quality assurance. In my view, this may be due to the fact that the respondents have been involved in one way or the other in the implementation of policy in the institutions before the establishment of TEC. In terms of community service, my assumption is that the area may not really be given much prominence even in the institutions themselves.

The next section presents the findings in relation to the top three areas that benefit from the respondents' quality assurance experience.

- Top 3 areas that benefit from quality assurance experience

The respondents were provided with a list of six areas to select from and their responses are presented in Table 6.25.

**Table 6.25 Top three areas that benefit from quality assurance experience**

Area	Percentage
Teaching	75
Policy implementation	40
Policy monitoring	20

With regard the top three areas that benefit from their QA experience, of the five respondents three (75%) benefit most by teaching, followed by two (40%) by implementation of policy and lastly, two (20%) by the monitoring of policy. My assumption from the findings is that the officials may have been employed as lecturers in higher education institutions before joining the ministry and their experience in policy was gained as a result of their roles and duties in the ministry.

The findings with regard to questions 12 to 14 indicate that the respondents have experience in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policy from their previous work and in their current work. The respondents also have knowledge of the quality assurance mechanisms that the institution is using. This is an indication of their experience in quality assurance and is helpful in providing relevant information to the study.

#### **6.4 Findings from the interview schedule and open-ended questions**

This section starts by presenting the response rates to the interviews per institution, followed by the analysis of the responses by the participants. In the analysis of the participants' responses I have endeavoured to capture their views as they expressed them during the interviews.

##### **6.4.1 Participation in and response to the interviews**

Just as is the case in the questionnaire the response to requests for interviews was low. In the case of institution A there were many postponements and unexpected interruptions of the appointments for interviews.

In some cases the HoDs and deans were engaged in activities outside the institution and those that were acting did not seem willing to be interviewed. As a result the targeted number for the interviews was not achieved; only about 40% of the proposed 70 respondents were reached.

In the case of the other institutions, there was much willingness on their part to be interviewed and appointments were honoured. The targeted number of people to be interviewed was almost achieved since it was between 50% and 100%. It was also difficult to get officials in the ministry for an interview, mainly due to the newness of the office as I have already mentioned as such officials were hardly available in their office. Table 6.26 presents the response rates per institution against the targeted numbers.

**Table 6.26 Interview response rate**

Institution	Estimated population	Proposed sample	Actual sample	Response Rate %
A	70	70	32	45.71
B	2	2	1	50
C	2	2	0	0
D	5	5	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	79	79	33	41.77

#### 6.4.2 Interview data

Data from the interviews are presented in terms of the emerging themes that were established in the responses of the various participants. In some cases the themes overlap and such overlapping is highlighted. A total of nine themes were identified and these are presented per institution:

- i. Knowledge of policy
- ii. Policy development
- iii. Government position on quality assurance by the university
- iv. Reporting on quality assurance
- v. Performance management mechanism
- vi. Support and training for academic staff
- vii. Preferred quality assurance model
- viii. Opinions regarding the institutions quality assurance policy
- ix. Opinions on quality improvements/changes to policy

#### **6.4.2.1 Knowledge of policy (V5-V22)**

There was general agreement by management and staff that there is a policy or a number of policies that address various quality assurance aspects in the institutions. The policies are with regard to academic programme development, teaching, student support, student learning, assessment and research by faculty.

##### Academic Programme Development Policy

Responses from institution A indicated general awareness of a policy that addresses academic programmes development. However, the respondents said they were more familiar with the procedure for programme development than with the policy. This view was expressed by one of the Deputy Deans (V1-36) who said:

*.....I know there is a policy that we normally use though I am not sure of the name but I am more familiar with the procedure than the policy.*

Some of the respondents said that much as the policy exists, their interaction with it is only limited to when they need to develop new programmes or review existing ones. They only get to use it as and when the need arises and in most cases they rely on the procedures and

advice from the officer responsible for quality assurance in the institution. In fact, one HOD (V1-28) said:

*.....There are guidelines for the stages of programme development that we use when developing a programme, but I am not too familiar with the policy.*

There were also other respondents who expressed their lack of knowledge of a policy that deals with academic programme development. One academic staff member (V1-25) expressed the view that there is no policy that is being used but they rather depend on guidance from the faculty handbook and calendar. The same view was reiterated by another academic staff member (V1-22) who said that he is not aware of the policy but there is some kind of guidance that they get when developing their programmes. The issue of lack of knowledge of the policy was also reiterated by one newly appointed HOD who said that they have not really developed any new programmes and therefore does not know if any policy exists in that regard.

The views expressed by the respondents indicate a general lack of familiarity with the policy even if it exists, this could mainly due to the fact that there is more guidance in the form of procedures that the departments use when developing their programmes. The other issue is that the departments may only use the policy when there is need to develop a new programme. In addition, the departments tend to rely on the officer responsible for quality assurance in the institution to guide them through the development of their programmes.

The institution has in place induction of new staff members which also addresses the quality assurance policy of the institution. The process is meant to create awareness of the various quality assurance policies of the institution. However, my discussion with some of the HODs and academic staff members point to high workloads as impacting on their ability to familiarise themselves with the policy.

It can be argued that there is lack of consistency when it comes to knowledge of the policy with regards to the development of new programmes, the academic staff members are provided with guidance in the form of guidelines but not much on the policy itself. Providing proper guidance and information on the policy could assist in ensuring that they develop

quality academic programmes. Furthermore, if the academic staff members know the policy they will be able to contribute ideas towards its improvement.

In terms of institution B, the officer indicated that there is a policy that they use and it includes involvement of the industry in order to ensure relevance of their programmes. He also mentioned that the academic staff members are made aware of the policy during induction and each one is provided with a copy of the policy. In my view, this could be an indication of the commitment that the institution has in ensuring that the academic staff members are aware of the policy.

### Policy on teaching

For institution A the respondents expressed knowledge of the policy and my assumption from that is that the policy could be quite recent (2008) and the institution embarked on workshops for faculties and departments to sensitise the academic staff members about the policy. The respondents however expressed different views as to how they use the policy. Some of them expressed the view that they use the policy optionally (V1-36). A similar view was echoed by (V1-31):

*... We use the learning and teaching policy though we use it occasionally since we base our teaching mostly on own background in teaching.*

An HOD (V1-35) also provided the view that the policy is being used even though it was initially rejected by academic staff members. His view was that the policy was mainly rejected because it tended to put more emphasis on skills yet the academic staff felt that the university is for knowledge and not necessarily skills.

It could be argued that the academic staff knows that there is a policy that they can use in teaching but the departments regard its use as optional. The other point to mention here is that the academic staff members are left to decide on whether to use the policy or not and in most cases they rely on their own background in teaching. This could pose a few challenges to those that have no teaching background and could raise issues regarding the quality of teaching in the institution. Again, much as the institution sensitised the academic staff members about the policy there seems to be no particular guidance as to its implementation yet that would guide the institution on the effectiveness of the policy in

ensuring that the graduates get the requisite skills to function effectively anywhere in the world.

For institution B, the officer indicated that they use one policy that addresses programme development and teaching and such a policy is mainly focused on individual faculties due to their different engagements.

In my view, the policy is mainly based in the faculties and they use it according to their needs. However, what does not seem to come out clearly is the way its implementation is monitored across the faculties.

#### Policy on student support

Respondents from institution A expressed the view that there is a policy that they use in addition to other documents that they have in their various departments. One HOD (V1-31):

*.....there is an informal approach to the learning and teaching policy that is in use, but we also use guidance and counselling, exchange programmes and others.*

The other respondents said that they do not really use a policy per se but rather rely on other documents in the institution. The view was further supported by (V1-34):

*..... we mostly use publication materials from student affairs, course outlines, the calendar and prospectus.*

The same view was reiterated by (V1-25):

*There are visiting hours that we normally provide for our students and the tutorial hours are availed for the students in the course outline. The available visiting and tutorial hours are also provided on line.*

Two other respondents (V1-27, V1-32) expressed the view that there is dependence on the student handbook that stipulates office hours, tutorials and course outlines. However, the major challenge is the teaching loads that are too much and they impact negatively on their availability for consultation and for tutorials. In fact (V1-27):

*..... There are office hours for those that need help but it would be nice if there were tutorials but the teaching loads are too much for us. We do not seem to care about the quality of our*

*graduates since we have no control on the intake. There is no balance between staff and student intake so we tend to compromise quality.*

The views expressed by the respondents in this institution point to a situation where the academic staff are left to their own devices in terms of how to go about providing support to their students. This is blamed on the lack of consistency in implementing the policy as well as the high teaching loads that academic staff members have in their various departments. In fact one former HOD said that there is a challenge when it comes to student support in practical subjects where one lecturer has to supervise up to 100 students and this does not allow for any follow up on students who could be having problems with the concepts. It would help a lot if there was proper implementation of the policy regarding student support but that also needs to be supported by adequate resources. This would ensure quality of students that graduate from the institution.

In institution B, the officer mentioned that there is no particular policy that deals with student support but that is captured in the faculty guidelines and the student handbooks. It could be argued that the institution does not seem to put a lot of emphasis on student support yet that is a crucial aspect that will ensure quality of their graduates.

#### Student learning

The views expressed by respondents from institution A point to the fact that the policy that is used for teaching and student support also includes issues of student learning. According to (V1-31);

*..... We use the learning and Teaching policy mostly since it relates to teaching and student support, student pillars and performance management through programme retention.*

Furthermore, the other respondents indicated that they use a particular policy and documents in addition to other interventions that are provided in the institution. This is further supported by (V1-34);

*..... we use course outlines, the learning and teaching policy and other CAD training on teaching and assessment*

The view is further reiterated by (V1-21);



*..... there are other academic policies that we use including the academic honesty policy and we pick the relevant ones that can assist us.*

Other respondents also mentioned the fact that they rely a lot on their own experience and background as teachers.

In my view, the academic staff members are left to implement the policy on student learning in the manner that they see fit. There seems to be no guidance with regards to what would work in the case of the institution, but rather on what they feel could work and in other cases basing on their own experience. The issue of student learning could benefit a lot from a guided position by the institution that takes on board the experience of the lecturers and how new entrants to the system can be assisted in order for them to support their students effectively.

Institution B also seems to have similar situation like A where the academic staff depend on a variety of documents to support student learning. The officer indicated that there is no particular policy that deals with that but the various available documents are used by the staff members as they see fit.

#### Student assessment

The respondents in institution A pointed to the fact that there is no particular policy that they use but rather depend on what is agreed on in each faculty or department and on what they know from their own experiences and background. This view is reiterated by a number of respondents such as (V1-28):

*.....there is no policy per se, it is an area of concern as we are really on our own but as departments we seem to know what to do.*

A similar view was expressed by (V1-32):

*...there is moderation by the department guided by the departmental policy on quality assurance and that is all we use.*

Other respondents pointed to the fact that assessment are dependent on the lecturer and the course they teach. Another respondent (V1-19):

*.....it is entirely at the discretion of the lecturer since there is no guide as such but we are expected to have 2 assessments and an examination, but there is no recipe for the assignments or tests. It is entirely dependent on the course.*

The other respondents mentioned that fact that they rely on examination guidelines and also on their own background.

It was also interesting to note that one faculty has taken the initiative to develop draft assessment guidelines out of concern due to inconsistencies in assessment of students' work. One HOD from the faculty emphasised that there was need to standardise assessment especially because some academic staff members do not have a teaching background and that compromised the quality of student assessment.

For institution B, the officer said that the academic staff members are expected to use the assessment and evaluation policy and the criteria for student assessment. This is to be used by all the departments in the institution. However, he mentioned that they experience a number of challenges with new staff members who need to be taken through the policy and guided as they implement it. In my view, the institution seems to be paying a lot of attention to the issue of assessment and have in place measures to ensure that the policy is implemented in the departments.

#### Research by faculty

Respondents from institution A confirm that they do research but most of it is not guided by the institution's policy on research.

The respondents indicated that there are some guidelines and various policies that they use even though they are not really used by all the academic staff in the departments. One respondent (V1-21) confirmed that:

*.....the strategic plans have a research portion and the office of research also provides some guidelines however, the policies and guidelines are not known by many academic staff.*

A similar view was also expressed by another respondent (V1-24):

*.....I believe there are some guidelines provided by the office of research but what I see in the departments is that we tend to do our own thing.*

The other respondents indicated that they do research on their own without any guidance. According to one respondent (V1-25):

*.....I do research but nothing guides me, even though there are some guidelines provided by the office of research, I really do not pay attention to them.*

Another respondent (V1-19) supported the view and even went further to provide more explanation of his engagement in research. He said:

*..... I am not aware of any policy, I only align my research with what others are doing and there is no template related to that. I really do my own thing and publish on my own. There are some guidelines from the office of research and these are mainly used to request for funding and they are not compulsory. My research tends to be more on the need to satisfy my performance assessment at the end of the year.*

This lack of uniformity in the research engagements in the institution and the fact that the research drive tends to be more on achievement of performance related objectives was also reiterated by respondent (V1-22):

*..... There are performance management instruments that we need to satisfy at the end of the year but there is nothing guiding us in terms of the quality of our research. There is actually no document that I know that provides such guidance.*

In addition, respondent (V1-20) also mentioned and supported the fact that research in the institution is mainly driven by the need for promotion because in order to be promoted there is need for an academic staff member to have done some research. Furthermore, respondent (V1-23) also indicated that there is lack of uniformity in their research engagements in the institution mainly due to the lack of guidance such that they end up creating their own themes as individuals.

One academic staff member mentioned the lack of support and guidance especially for young researchers, mainly because academic staff does their own research without any kind of guidance. Respondent (V1-27) said:

*..... I really do research out of my own interest, there is no mentorship for young researchers and it is very frustrating since there is no guidance. There are some workshops run by the office of research but it does not help to just attend and not be able to actually carry out any research.*

The other aspect that seems to affect research in the institution was expressed by respondent (V1-31) who mentioned the fact that there is some guidance on research provided in the performance management manual because it provides the Key performance areas that the academic staff member needs to follow, however, high teaching loads greatly affect research performance as well as lack of funding.

In terms of institution B, the officer mentioned that they use a document that sensitises academic staff members to issues of ethics in research but they are in the process of developing a research policy in the institution. My assumption is that there could be issues of staffing in the institution, especially staff at higher levels of qualifications who have some experience in research to guide the development and implementation of a research policy in the institution. Secondly, it could be argued that the institution does not seem to pay a lot of attention to research and that may be due to their history and culture.

#### **6.4.2.2 Policy development (V23-25, V35-36)**

The question asked for this theme determined who is responsible for developing the institution's quality assurance policy and how academic staff members are involved in policy development. Responses from institution A point to the fact that there is some consultation through committees even though there are some challenges present in the approach. The respondents said that in most cases the management of the institution uses the available committee structures to develop the quality assurance policy. Respondent (V1-25) highlighted that the committees represent the academic staff members and they circulate the draft policy for feedback from the rest of the staff members.

Other respondents in the institution mentioned that fact that there is involvement of academic staff though their ownership of the policy tends to be lacking. This view was further reiterated by respondent (V1-31):

*.....I was involved in one of the committees that developed the policy, people are selected to participate in the committees but there is lack of ownership and the perception that the policies are developed by management only. The other thing is that the institution uses a lot of consultants and these are not UB led but rather led by the consultants themselves.*

This lack of ownership of the policy by the academic staff members was also emphasised by respondent (V1-19):

*..... I think the Centre for Academic Development develops the policy, I do not see our fingerprints in it as academic staff members, it is actually more of cut and paste and there is no challenge at all.*

Furthermore, another respondent (V1-26) seems to blame the fact that though academic staff members are involved they do not seem to put their minds to the development of the policy due to their heavy teaching loads. Respondent (V1-29) reiterated the fact that the involvement of academic staff in the development of policy needs to improve by involving more staff members not only at approval and implementation stage but also throughout the development of the policy. In fact, other respondents (V1-24 and V1-24)) even said that academic staff involvement is marginal and in some cases non-existent and even orientation of new HODs on the policy is not provided.

Institution B also employs a similar approach to policy development through consultation with academic staff in their departments. The institution has in place an Academic Quality Assurance office that drives the development of policy but also engages with the departments to provide their input to the policy.

#### **6.4.2.3 Government position on quality assurance by the university (V26-31)**

There are a number of opinions that academic staff members have regarding government's official position on quality assurance by the university but in a lot of the responses they point to the fact that the knowledge is really not clear to every member of staff.

Some respondents in institution A emphasise the fact that much as there is an institution that is tasked with the responsibility of communicating this position that is not really clear.

The respondents also blame this situation on the institutions' lack of capacity to handle the task. Respondent (V1-31) said:

*.....the position is actually very bleak, the assumption is for TEC to assure quality in the institution, but implementation of that is very weak.*

A similar view was reiterated by respondent (V1-35):

*.....I do not think the government is really interested, there is lack of interest and no commitment by the government. Quality assurance is almost left to the institutions and it is not encouraging at all. TEC does not seem to have the capacity for the challenge.*

Other respondents said that they really do not know what is expected from their institution but they are aware of TEC though they really do not have any interaction with the council. There is also lack of communication regarding what the government expects from their institution.

In other instances the respondents said that they only know through their own interest as citizens of the country but not necessarily that they are aware of the expectation. This lack of awareness was reiterated by respondent (V1-30):

*.....I am aware only as a citizen that the institution needs to produce programmes that are viable and graduates that are relevant. We are a bit far from TEC and do not know their relationship with us as an institution.*

Respondent (V1-32) also raised a similar issue of really not knowing the expectation but that the institution is expected to produce quality graduates for the market. Other respondents were of the opinion that the institution has a responsibility to the country to produce quality human resource for the country and overseas market in order to ensure competitiveness of the country.

In terms of how far the academic staff knows the government's position on quality assurance, the respondents said that the academic staff knows the position only basing on what they might have heard in their own personal interactions with other colleagues, but the position has not really been formally communicated to them.

It was also clear in institution B that they also do not know what the position is even though they are very much aware of TEC and have actually worked with the council.

The lack of knowledge by the academic staff members on what the government expects is in my view, due to the fact that the institution operated for a long time before the establishment of the council, as such the institutions were in charge of their own quality assurance. Secondly, in some cases the government depended on the institutions themselves to quality assure other institutions as in the case of institution A. Thirdly, there could be an element of academic staff feeling that the involvement of TEC could be an element of interference and control on their activities, therefore the institutions did not feel the need to upset the status quo by getting too involved with TEC. Again, there could have been an element of lack of resources by TEC to actually make their presence felt especially in older and more established institutions. In addition, there could have been some agreement with TEC that the older institutions will be gradually taken on board without disturbing their operations.

#### **6.4.2.4 Reporting on QA (V32-34)**

The question asked here aimed to establish if the university is expected to do any sort of reporting to government, professional bodies or national, regional and international quality assurance agencies. The respondents highlighted the fact that there is need for the institution to report to government and other quality assurance agencies due to various reasons such as funding and the agreements that the institution has with such organisations.

In institution A, respondents (V1-25, 36, 33 34, 19, 31, 26, 29, 27, 23, 24) agree that first and foremost, the institution has to report to government since the institution is funded by the government and it has to be accountable for the resources it is given. Respondent (V1-24) reiterated the fact that;

*..... We certainly need to report to government since we get funding from them and we have to account for the funds and make justification for requesting for more funding.*

Other respondents also highlighted the fact that the institutions also need to report to other agencies like the regional and international ones as well as the accreditation councils for the various programmes. Respondent (V1-29):

*..... The institution is funded by government therefore it is expected to report to government in terms of the quality of graduates and the quality of research. And since the institution has international links it also has to report its activities to the international bodies.*

The same view was reiterated by respondent (V1-34):

*.....the institution needs to report to government that is funding us and the programmes we deliver. The institution also has bilateral agreements with other bodies and it is expected to report to them. In addition, the institution has accreditation agreements and they expect the institution to provide their quality assurance reports.*

Respondent (V1-36) also reiterated the fact that the institution belongs to national, regional and international networks that require reports on an annual basis. In fact, respondent (V1-31) emphasised the fact that the institution is mandated to provide reports to the various agencies due to the agreements that the institution has with those agencies.

The situation in institution B is similar in certain ways to institution A. The officer mentioned the fact that they report to TEC on their quality assurance activities annually and they believe that the reports end up providing information to government on their quality assurance activities. In addition, the institution provides reports to other organisations that it is affiliated to as well as providing reports to its main campus in Malaysia.

Various assumptions can be drawn from the findings in this area. The first assumption is that the institutions depend a lot on government for their funding; either through subventions or paying fees for students therefore, the institutions may need to report to government in order to continue getting the funding. Secondly, the institutions also need to satisfy the national, regional and international market; as such they need to communicate their achievements and challenges to the market as a whole. Thirdly, some professional bodies require institutions to provide them with reports in order for them to be able to accredit



their programmes and to register their graduates so that they can be issued with practicing certificates.

#### **6.4.2.5 Performance management mechanisms (V38-40)**

The question relating to this theme aimed to establish the mechanisms that are in place to ensure that academic staff members meet institutional requirements in terms of performance. There was general agreement in the responses for academic staff, middle management and senior management on the existence of some mechanism for ensuring that academic staff members meet requirements in terms of performance. However, the respondents also raised some challenges with the mechanisms.

Responses from institution A confirm the fact that there are a number of mechanisms for assessing academic staff performance such as PMS, SECAT, criteria for appointment and promotion of staff, peer review and others. However, one respondent (V1-19) observed that:

*.....PMS is an assessment tool that is in use but there are no norms and standards per se. It is only linked to the already existing policy. There is no on-going drive but it is only done at the ends. There is no feedback on end of semester reports; it is one way traffic, no engagement, no feedback.*

The same sentiment is expressed by respondent (V1-36):

*...PMS is there though it is not done properly; there is no follow up and no development of staff. SECAT is also not as effective as it is generally abused by students and staff.*

The element of abuse is raised by a number of respondents (V1-33) who are of the view that the tools are not properly used to benefit all but rather they tend to be abused to satisfy certain individuals. Other respondents feel that the lecturers use the system to appease the students without really allowing the students to be objective when assessing lecturers.

The other concern raised by the respondents concerning the assessment tools is the fact that students are not trained to understand the importance of their assessment of academic staff. In fact one of the respondents (V1-30) said:

*.....SECAT should be abolished, the concept is good but our students are not trained to understand its essence.*

The respondents also raised issues with the timing of the assessment. One respondent (V1-23) indicated that the assessment is only done at the end of the year and the HODs are not empowered to scrutinise academic staff performance throughout the year. The fact that the assessment is only done at the end of the year brings in another challenge with regards to follow up. In addition, respondent (V1-31) said:

*.....The current PMS is not so user friendly, there is no synchrony between midterm and final review, the rating is a bit rigid and understaffing is a challenge when it comes to peer – review. It could help if it is done quarterly. The SECAT is not objective.*

However, one senior lecturer (V1-20) hailed PMS as being of importance and benefit to him:

*.....PMS really motivated me to improve my performance, I used to be lax but now I know that if I do not do the assessment I am going to suffer since I will not get promoted. It is actually one of the best things to happen in the institution.*

A similar situation prevails in institution B in terms of the availability of various mechanisms for assessing staff performance such as staff appraisal system, class observations and student-lecturer evaluations. However, the officer mentioned that the mechanisms are still working well for the institution though they have not yet reviewed the mechanisms.

In my view, the issues and concerns raised by the respondents could mainly be due to flaws in implementing the systems that are already available. The challenges with implementation are due to resource constraints that the institutions experience. There is now competition among high education institutions for the already limited resources. Secondly, many academic staff members now find better opportunities in new institutions that are being established in the country; therefore, they leave the old institutions that have not improved their working conditions in a long time. Even the timing of the assessments could be a problem due to the fact that the institutions cannot afford to do the assessment many times

during the course of the year. The general lack of training for both staff and students could be due to resource constraints that are prevalent in the institutions.

#### **6.4.2.6 Support and training for academic staff on QA (V41-42)**

The options for this theme required the respondents to select Yes/No. In terms of support with regards to development, the majority of the respondents in institution A selected “no”. Regarding training, the options were selected equally by the respondents.

The respondents in institution B selected “no” for support and “yes” for training.

In the two institutions, there seems to be no support with regards to developing academic staff. My assumption is that there could resource constraints that handicap this important aspect. Another reason could be that the academic staff may feel that quality assurance is an additional load to their already huge teaching loads. The other problem could be due to the fact that in the two institutions human resources responsible for quality assurance is very thin.

#### **6.4.2.7 Preferred quality assurance model for UB (V43-45)**

The respondents were asked to provide their opinions regarding the quality assurance model that would be suitable for their institution. The responses point to a general lack of knowledge among academic staff members with regards to quality assurance models that are available.

In institution A the respondents expressed the view that they are not very familiar with the available models, but they offered some suggestions as to what can be done to enhance the quality assurance practices in the institution. One respondent (V1-30) said:

*...I really do not know the models but I feel that there is a lot that we can do as an institution in order to improve our practices and procedures.*

The view was also reiterated by respondent (V1-24) who said that he is not aware of the models but feels staff members should know the available models in order to make a decision on one or a combination that can work for the institution. In addition, other

respondents are of the view that the institution needs a model that will guide it to achieve its vision, or one that is relevant and practical.

The element of practicality and relevance is also highlighted by respondent (V1-26):

*... The model should depend on the focus of the institution, whether it is research based or teaching based.*

Another respondent (V1-32) reiterated that:

*...I really do not know much about the models but I believe we can learn from others regionally and internationally and take that which is relevant to us as an institution.*

The other aspect regarding the model that the respondents highlighted is the issue of staff involvement in implementing the model that the institution selects. Respondent (V1-36) reiterated that fact that the institution needs a model that can be effectively implemented by all academic staff members. The view was also supported by another respondent (V1-21) who feels that the model that the institution selects should involve all staff members so that they can relate to it and use it on a daily basis.

In institution B the officer indicated an understanding of some models available but said that the models are really not relevant but he would rather suggest that institutions create their own model that they can modify in order to be relevant.

It could be argued that academic staff members may not be too familiar with the issue of quality assurance models and this may be due to the fact that the issue of quality assurance is really new in the country and not many people are too familiar with it. The other reason could be that the institutions have resource challenges, with staff members having huge teaching loads and that does not give them any opportunity to study the available models. The other view could be that the issue of quality assurance is generally regarded as a management issue and academic staff may not see the need to have an understanding of the available models.

In addition, the academic staff members made suggestions regarding the model and they emphasise relevance and practicability. It can be argued that this may be due to the fact

that the institutions tend to rely a lot on consultants to develop their policies and these tend not to be relevant to the institutions. In addition, the academic staff tends not to own the policies but view them as management engagements that are meant to control them.

#### **6.4.2.8 Opinions regarding the institution's QA policy (V41-V46)**

The questions from the open ended part of the questionnaire requested the respondents to voice their opinions regarding the institution's quality assurance policy. The other related question asked for the respondents' opinions on who should monitor quality in the institution. The general message from the respondents points to the fact that the policy needs improvement in terms of its development and implementation. This view is shared by most of the academic staff members, middle and senior management in the institutions.

Respondents in institution A expressed the view that the way the policy is implemented in the institution is not systematic. This view was emphasised by one senior member of staff (V1-157):

*..It has to be strengthened because there is no systematic way in which the university does it at course level. Every faculty does its own way.*

A similar view was expressed by a lecturer (V1-99) who emphasised the fact that the policy is not really effective because of lack of uniformity in course instruction in the departments. In the end every lecturer assesses students as and how they deem best. In addition, respondent (V1-96) reiterated the fact that the policy is poor mainly because it is not coordinated and almost spontaneous. The issue of lack of coordination is further highlighted by respondent (V1-005):

*It is uncoordinated between different assessable areas for academic staff. Departments are left to make their own interpretations of the QA policy with varying degrees of success and reliability.*

The other respondents pointed to the fact that the policy is not emphasised and therefore not enforced in the faculties. According to respondent (V1-054), the policy is not clearly

emphasised in the institution and in some cases the emphasis is not consistent. Respondent (V1-004) reiterated the fact that the policy and structures are in place but their degree of enforcement is not really up to standard and there is need to execute the policy more effectively. In addition, other respondents are of the view that the policy is really not coherent and not clearly articulated across the faculties.

The respondents also raised the issue of lack of support of the policy by academic staff members. Respondent (V1-027) highlighted that the policy is a positive approach but it is passive and too slow and in some cases some lecturers tend not to support it. In addition, respondent (V1-033) also reiterated the fact that the policy is largely top-down with the result that it does not command a lot of support and ownership at the bottom end. Related to that is the view that the policy is not effective due to the fact that the feedback that is provided by the practitioners is never taken into consideration or implemented. The issue of lack of appreciation of the policy by the academic staff members is further reiterated by respondent (V1-105) who is of the view that the policy is not publicised well enough and as a result it may not be appreciated by many academic staff members.

It should however be noted that other academic staff members view the policy as good and improving in certain aspects. There are those who actually feel that the policy has done a lot in improving the quality of teaching and learning in the institution and others who feel that it is robust and being monitored effectively in the institution.

In terms of their opinions regarding who should monitor the policy, the academic staff members provided various opinions regarding the issues. Some respondents are of the view that quality assurance should be monitored by the academic departments themselves through committee structures that are already in place. Respondent (V1-033) expressed the view that the policy should be monitored at department level as the drivers of the policy would be the subject specialists.

There were also some respondents who are of the view that the policy should be monitored by senior management or staff at supervisory level. In addition, some respondents said that the policy needs to be monitored by all academic staff members. They feel that it is the

responsibility of every staff member to monitor quality in the institution. Respondent (V1-026) emphasised the fact that there should be a commitment and ownership by all staff members. Respondent (V1-122) also reiterated the fact that all academic staff and staff from CAD, HODs, Deans and their deputies should be responsible for monitoring the policy. Furthermore, respondent (V1-004) also supported the view that:

*... Each individual should be able to monitor their own path as they need to be trained to do so. Intrinsic strategy is better than monitoring from outside or above. There should be structures in place to support that as well.*

The other respondents were of the view that quality assurance should be monitored by an officer appointed or unit to be responsible for quality issues in the institution. Respondent (V1-002) reiterated the fact that people on the ground should provide valuable feedback to relevant officers who are tasked with monitoring quality assurance issues and there should be constant flow of information between the two. In addition, respondent (V1-157) supported the idea of a quality assurance unit which takes care of all programmes in the institution but also advised that the unit must be visible to all departments and not only those that are developing or reviewing their programmes. The view was further reiterated by respondent (V1-054):

*...there should be an independent body, maybe internal QA department or internal audit who defines what good quality is and the body can work with HODs, faculties, departments to determine if each is adhering to the set quality standards.*

In my view, the implementation of the policy in the institution may not be well coordinated due to the fact that there are not many officers responsible for quality assurance in the institution. Secondly, there is no follow up of issues due to resource constraints in the quality office of the institution. Again, HODs have a lot of responsibilities that at times overwhelm them and quality assurance becomes an extra burden that they are not able to accommodate. In addition, the issue of lack of support or ownership of the policy could be because the academic staff members view it as a management initiative that does not really

concern them much especially that the policy is not implemented uniformly across the departments.

With regards to institution B some of the respondents mentioned that they are not familiar with the policy and therefore cannot be able to make any reference to it. Respondent (V1-230) said that the policy is not clear to staff as they do not even have a copy of the policy. This lack of communication of the policy was further reiterated by respondent (V1-259) who said that the policy is never communicated to academic staff in the institution. In fact, respondent (V1-241) even went further to recommend that the institution needs to avail all academic quality assurance policies to all academic staff for appreciation. Another recommendation by respondent (V1-215) was for the institution to create more awareness of the policy through training of academic staff in order to ease implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policy.

Other respondents in institution B felt that the policy needs to be improved in a number of ways. For instance, respondent (V1-253) is of the view that a lot has to be done in the departments because in some cases the positions held by certain people in the institution do not match with their qualifications. Other respondents said that there is need for more qualified personnel in the institution.

However, some respondents in institution B feel that the policy is good and making positive developments though it is minimal. Respondent (V1-245) expressed that view that the policy is making drastic and incremental improvements in assuring quality in learning and teaching and assessment especially with regard to management of examinations.

In terms of the respondents' opinions with regards to who should monitor quality assurance in the institution, the respondents provided various views. Some respondents said that there should be an independent quality assurance unit/ department that have authority over quality assurance issues in the institution. There was also the view that the unit or department could be supported by the academic departments.

Other respondents also felt that quality assurance should be monitored by the lecturers themselves and other stakeholders. Respondents (V1-255) said:



*.. All the academic staff. There should be collective responsibility for quality assurance. While there should be permanent quality assurance structures in place the responsibility of monitoring should be rested on every academic staff member.*

The view was also reiterated by another respondent (V1-251) that all stakeholders in the institution should take responsibility for monitoring quality assurance at their level of operation.

Still in institution B, other respondents felt that the monitoring of quality assurance should be the responsibility of management or HODs who are experts in the area.

It could be argued that the institution has not made enough effort in sensitising academic staff on the quality assurance policy due to the fact that the institution is still new and the policy itself may still be new. The other reason could be that for a long time the institution did not have an officer responsible for academics and that could have affected implementation of the policy. Thirdly, the academic staff may really not be sure of who should be responsible for monitoring quality assurance since it is an area that they are not familiar with and they do not regard it as their responsibility.

Respondents in institution C did not provide much in terms of the policy and who should monitor it because their policies are still being developed and not yet fully implemented.

Respondents in institution D were of the opinion that the policy is good and making a lot of improvements in the institutions, however, they felt that the policy needs to be improved in certain areas. The respondents have really not provided the areas that need improving.

In terms of who should monitor quality assurance in the institutions the officers are of the view that the institutions themselves and TEC should monitor quality assurance. This could be due to the fact that the institution does not have capacity to monitor quality assurance but relies on assistance from TEC.

#### **6.4.2.9 Changes/improvements to the institution's QA policy (V47-V49)**

With regard to the respondents' opinions on the changes or improvements to the institution's policy, the view that cut across most of the responses was that the policy needs

to be clear and well communicated and there should be more staff member involvement in training. The responses were mainly from institution A and B.

Respondents from institution A are of the view that academic staff needs to be trained on quality assurance issues. Respondent (V1-027) suggested workshops, mentoring of team members, branding and marketing of the policy to all staff members. The respondents also said that the training would also help in standardising quality assurance activities across the departments. Other respondents suggested benchmarking with other institutions to ensure that the policy is in line with what other higher education institutions are doing.

The other issue raised by the respondents is that the policy needs to be inclusive and cover all aspects of education. Respondent (V1-033) reiterated that:

*....the policy should be driven from the bottom, which would be the departments and must reflect the felt needs of this level of staff.*

In addition, some respondents are of the view that the policy needs to be clear to all academic staff members. Respondent (V1-054) emphasised that:

*...There should be a quality assurance policy that is clear for all core duties; teaching, research and community service as separate duties and each assessed according to set standards in conjunction with the quality assurance department.*

Some of the respondents in institution A provided some improvements concerning various areas of the policy. Respondent (V1-112) said that the institution should continue to insist on quality assurance reports each time students' results are considered. He also suggested that quality assurance issues should form part of the departmental strategic plans. Another respondent (V1-004) suggested the use of plagiarism software for all on line courses, standardisation of assessment for undergraduate courses and the provision of guidelines for all post graduate courses. Respondent (V1-066) also made a number of suggestions regarding the institution's quality assurance policy such as:

*..Stating the role of every stakeholder, developing effective instruments to assess teaching and making students aware of the instrument and using PMS appropriately to benefit quality assurance.*

Another respondent (V1-005) also suggested that the institution should review its programmes regularly and provide feedback from graduates. He also suggested the establishment of standing committees in the faculties that are responsible for quality assurance issues. The other view by respondent (V1-157) emphasises the need for CAD to be more visible to the departments and not just at the time when they are reviewing their programmes.

Respondents from institution A also provided additional comments that touched on a number of areas that were discussed during the interviews. The comments provided further information regarding the perceptions of the academic staff with regards to quality assurance practices in their institution.

One respondent (V1-30) said:

*...A lot of the policies in the institutions are developed somewhere and then come to the faculty boards for approval and implementation.*

Another respondent (V1-26) said:

*.. We only refer to the policies when we need to use them but not all of us are really familiar with them.*

Respondent (V1-19) also expressed the view that the policies are only known by those in management but others are still in their comfort zone since the policies are not really filtered down to them.

Respondent (V1-28) suggested that the policies should be provided as a tool kit to all members of staff at induction and there should be refresher courses even for older members of staff.

With regards to SECAT one respondent (V1-25) expressed the view that:

*...SECAT is a good tool for quality assurance purposes but it is not effectively used and it needs improvement. It is more used as an issue of you scratch my back, I scratch yours and the students use it to punish lecturers.*

The same respondent went on to explain that PMS is a good tool but lack of its understanding by academic staff make it punitive instead of being developmental in nature. In addition, another respondent (V1-35) from institution A lamented the fact that once you join the institution you are expected to swim and make your own path. This is due to the fact that the environment is not supportive even for research due to lack of funds. He suggested that the institution needs to rise up to the challenge of getting funds for research.

The suggestions made by the respondents highlight the fact that the quality assurance policy is not clear to all in the institution and its implementation is not well coordinated. This could be because the institution does not really have an office responsible for quality assurance across the institution. Secondly, the responsibility for implementing the policy is left to the department without any clear support and monitoring.

Respondents from institution B suggested a number of improvements to the institution's quality assurance policy. However, some of them feel that they are not even familiar with the policy and therefore could not provide any suggestions. In addition, others felt that there is no clarity between policy and procedures and they could also not provide any suggestions for improvement of the policy.

Respondent (V1-215) suggested that the policy should be the responsibility of all staff members in the institution and not just the quality assurance office. He also said that there is no central structure to support the policy as such there is need for a broadened university wide structure at departmental level. Other respondents feel that the policy should engage all stakeholders in the institution. In addition, some of the respondents suggested that the institution should employ more staff with relevant qualifications in quality assurance. Furthermore, the respondents said that the institution should provide more training for staff on quality assurance and establish proper channels of communication.

Respondent (V1-256) called on the institution to develop a more detailed quality assurance policy which addresses all fundamental areas of the institution. Another respondent (V1-

245) added the dimension of research and suggested that more efforts need to be focused on research to inform teaching and learning. The view was also supported by respondent (V1-243) who suggested a more proactive approach to research and development.

It could be argued that the institution's quality assurance policy is not available to all members of staff due to the fact that the institution took long to establish the quality assurance office. The second reason could be that there is shortage of qualified personnel in the quality assurance office who could ensure greater awareness and proper implementation of the policy.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

The presentation of findings from the questionnaire and the interviews aims to bring together the major themes as captured in the responses.

The interview responses raised central points that address issues of quality assurance in higher education institutions, especially with regard to policy development, implementation and the improvements that are needed in the policy. It is my hope that even in situations where the respondents provided differing views; they can be explored in future research engagements. As much as the various groups of respondents provided different and in some cases differing views, it added to the richness of the study through comparing those views.

The responses to the questionnaire items provide valuable insights into the respondents' views with regard to the research questions of the study. The data from the open-ended questions also reinforced identified themes that arose from the research questions posed. It is hoped that some of the issues raised in this study, though not anticipated, can be used for further research.

It is also worth mentioning that the involvement of the various stakeholders provided a broader picture and views regarding quality assurance in Botswana and not necessarily in institution A only.

The findings are an effort to highlight ideas from the literature and to identify gaps with regard to policy in an effort to establish areas that need improvement. These are elaborated on in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 Introduction

This study was formulated from my personal experience in quality assurance, as well as from shared ideas with colleagues and other interested parties. The study has resulted in a deeper understanding of the perceptions of the various stakeholders regarding quality assurance in higher education in Botswana, especially at UB and the quality assurance model that will be relevant for UB. The data collection methods employed and the sample selected made it possible to obtain these perceptions from the respondents themselves. This study is meant to inform the institution being studied and other similar institutions on quality assurance practice as exemplar. The chapter brings all the findings of the study to the fore, presents conclusions and provides proposals for the way forward. The chapter starts by providing a summary of the concepts, procedures and the findings of the study from the previous chapters.

### 7.2 Summary of the research process

The main aim of this study is to explore aspects of quality assurance in higher education in developing countries and to explore further those that can be used to empower academic staff at UB to take responsibility for ensuring quality of teaching and learning in the institution. The overall research question is, *What empowerment strategies can be used to empower academic staff at the University of Botswana in terms of quality assurance?* The question arose due to the adoption of the Academic Quality Management Policy by the University of Botswana that seeks to ensure quality of academic programmes that are relevant to the economic needs of the country. The policy recommends the establishment of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms in faculties. The internal mechanisms are meant to address quality assurance of programmes, academic staff members, teaching and assessment, while the external aspect deals with the external review of programmes and external examining of master's and PhD programmes. The Academic Quality Management Policy is meant to guide the institution in managing the quality of its academic programmes and is therefore central to all the programmes at UB. It is also worth noting that the internal and external quality assurance of programmes is a practice that is used in both developed and developing countries.

The literature highlights the importance of quality and methods of ensuring its assurance in higher education institutions. Also important is how well the staff members know and understand the policy to implement it effectively.

The study used mixed methods research in its design and data collection. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected; quantitative data was analysed first followed by qualitative data. The University of Botswana was the main institution of study. The sample was made up of management and lecturing staff at UB, the Head of the Quality Unit and lecturing staff at Limkokwing, lecturing staff at BIUST and officers from the Ministry of Education who are in charge of higher education. The data collection techniques used in the study were questionnaires and interviews. The responses from the questionnaires and the interviews were sufficient to draw conclusions for this study. Quantitative data as presented in Chapter 6 were analysed using available statistical packages while qualitative data and data from the open-ended questions were analysed through the use of thematic content analysis. The analysis of data was done through the assistance of consultants from the Department of Statistics at the University of Pretoria.

The section below presents the findings, their analysis and interpretation in relation to the research question and sub-research questions. It is important at this point to highlight the fact that the findings of this study confirm what I have learned in my experience in the area of quality assurance in higher education and from my interaction with relevant stakeholders in higher education. Of particular importance is the need for academic staff to be aware of and knowledgeable about the institution's quality assurance policy to implement it effectively. This will result in the empowerment of staff members and in turn, improved quality of academic programmes which the institution strives for.

### **7.3 Research findings and their analysis**

This section of the study provides the extent to which the findings of the study answer the research questions in order to highlight what might be lacking. The findings are discussed in relation to the knowledge, experiences and perceptions of the various stakeholders regarding quality assurance in higher education in Botswana and what they regard as the appropriate quality assurance model for UB.



Important points that are worth mentioning in relation to the findings of this study are the following:

- The respondents of the questionnaire for academic staff ranged in age from 23 years to 62 years and they were grouped as 34 years and below, 35 to 44 years, and 45 years and above. The ministries of education officials were from 47 to 58 years in age and they were grouped as 47 to 50 years and those above 50 years.
- The positions of academic staff members ranged from assistant lecturer to DVC-AA and they were grouped as assistant lecturers and lecturers, senior lecturer and HODs, then deputy-deans, deans, associate professors, professors and DVC-AA. The ministry of education officials ranged from education officer to director and they were grouped as education officer and senior education officer, the principal education officer, chief education officer and director.
- The participants had knowledge of quality assurance in higher education.
- The participants' experience ranged from 1 year to more than five years.

### **7.3.1 Research questions and their findings**

The first research question to be addressed is, *What are the perceptions of stakeholders in terms of quality assurance in higher education?* This question addresses four areas in terms of quality assurance, namely experience in development and implementation of quality assurance policy, effectiveness of the policy, opinions regarding the policy and support or training of staff to develop them to be able to implement the policy. The question was addressed through the use of both questionnaires for academic staff members and ministry officials; the respondents were drawn from academic staff members and ministry of education officials. Majority of academic staff members in institution A and B, indicated that they have moderate experience in the development and implementation of quality assurance policy from their previous work. But in terms of development and implementation of quality assurance policy in their current positions, for institution A the majority of the respondents have vast experience in implementation of the policy in their current job but moderate experience in the development of policy. For institution B, the majority have slight experience in development of policy and moderate experience in its implementation. The findings indicate that most academic staff members in the two

institutions have experience in implementation of the policy as compared to its development. From the literature in the previous sections there is great importance of staff members' involvement from the development of the policy up to its implementation. This could be because academic staff members are expected to be the implementers of the policy and they need to own it in order to implement it effectively. From my experience and interaction with academic staff members it is clear that they may find it difficult to implement the policy due to their minimal involvement in its development. This state of affairs affects the institution's quest for quality academic programmes that should be the responsibility of every academic staff member. There is also a need for the institution to instil a culture of quality into the day-to-day activities of the academic staff members and this can be achieved through their involvement in developing quality assurance policies.

Regarding the institution's effectiveness of its quality assurance policy in the areas of teaching, student assessment and research, for institution A most of the academic staff members state that the effectiveness of the policy in teaching and student assessment is only moderate and for research it is non-existent. For institution B most of the respondents selected moderate effectiveness for teaching and student assessment, like institution A the effectiveness on research is non-existent. The view expressed here by the academic staff members highlights an area that is very important in any institution that aims for quality. It is equally important in Botswana for higher education institutions to have in place quality assurance policies that are effective in the areas that are traditionally regarded as important in higher education. This is because one of the roles of the Tertiary Education Council is to ensure the existence of such policies in the institutions and equally important is their effectiveness. As a response to this need the Tertiary Education Council developed a quality assurance manual that specifies agreed standards and criteria to be used by higher education institutions in the country, to evaluate the effectiveness of their policies and to ensure their contribution to quality tertiary education in the country.

In addition, academic staff members in institution A said that their quality assurance experience has moderately improved their effectiveness and empowered them as academic staff members, however, for institution B the situation is different as most respondents said the experience has slightly improved their effectiveness and empowered them. The views expressed by the academic staff members in this regard point to shortcomings in the

implementation of the policy and its benefits to them as important stakeholders in the quality assurance process of the institutions. The institutions need to ensure that the policies they implement contribute to the improvement and empowering academic staff through activities that are inclusive in order to contribute to the quality of academic programmes in the institution.

Regarding the ministry of education officials it is interesting to note that none of the respondents has any or slight experience in terms of development and implementation of quality assurance policy from their previous work. My assumption is that it is due to their experience and role in terms of being responsible for the implementation and monitoring of quality assurance policy in higher education in Botswana. Most of the respondents agreed that they have great experience in the development and implementation of quality assurance policy from their previous work.

In terms of experience in the implementation and monitoring of quality assurance policy in their current work, all the respondents' said that they are greatly involved. The involvement of the ministry of education officials should be a benefit to higher education institutions in Botswana since the officers should be able to assist the institutions in ensuring effectiveness of institutional quality assurance policies. It is, however, worth noting that the tertiary education unit in the ministry was set up only in 2012 and it is still in the process of getting the required staff and other resources.

Most of the academic staff members indicated that their quality assurance experience benefited them most in teaching, followed by research and publications, then student assessment, followed by community service and programme development, and finally, course coordination.

Most of the academic staff members in institution A and B indicated teaching as their core activity; this could mainly be due to the fact that the institution has for a long time focused more on teaching and less on research. This is now changing as the institution aims to improve its research output and initiatives are already in place to achieve this goal. It is also important that the academic staff members derive some benefit from programme development since in my view they continuously need to improve their programmes and they need to be aware of what is expected of them. The review of academic programmes at

UB is the responsibility of the departments and staff members need to be aware of the importance of these reviews as a quality assurance measure.

Most ministry of education officials on the other hand said that their quality assurance experience benefited them most in terms of development of quality assurance policy, followed by the implementation of the quality assurance policy, then monitoring and evaluation of quality assurance policy; programme development and course coordination are the lowest.

Regarding their opinions in relation to the institution's quality assurance policy, most of the academic staff members said that the institutions' quality assurance policy is not effective and needs improvement. Only a small percentage said that it was effective. The same view was highlighted by the ministry officials in the sense that most of them said that the quality assurance policy for higher education is not effective and needs to be improved, and the rest of them said that it is good. The views expressed by the academic staff members and the ministry officials emphasise the point made previously regarding the need for the institution to review its quality assurance policy to ensure its effectiveness. It is also important at this point to get feedback from staff members so that the policy can be improved for the benefit of all the stakeholders. It is also the responsibility of tertiary institutions in Botswana to ensure continuous improvement of their processes and procedures.

With regard to the monitoring of quality assurance policy in the institution, most of the academic staff members expressed the view that the policy should be monitored by academic staff members themselves and by the management of the institution. It is also interesting to note that the ministry of education officers agreed that quality assurance policy in higher education should be monitored by the academic staff and management. In my view, academic staff members should be able to self-assess own practice to determine their effectiveness in implementing the institution's quality assurance policy. Self-assessment should be able to guide the academic staff members in their weak areas so that they can improve. The management of the institution would then be able to identify weak areas from the self-assessment and try to design interventions that can assist staff members to improve those weak areas. According to Bornman (2004) self-assessment is one of the

integral aspects of quality assurance and a critical tool for that matter. The institution could therefore derive much benefit from staff self-reflection in order to improve the monitoring of its quality assurance policy.

The findings from the qualitative data as presented in Chapter 6 show that most of the academic staff members in the two institutions agree that there is no support provided to ensure their systematic development with regard to quality assurance. An equal percentage of respondents also highlighted the fact that there is some kind of training in relation to implementation of the quality assurance policy. For institution B, more respondents agree that there is some training provided for academic staff. An important point to mention here is that quality assurance is about being consistent and systematic and this should be reflected in the policy and practices of an institution. The institution and all the stakeholders in the institution should be clear about the quality assurance practices and this need to be maintained consistently.

It is worth noting that the perspectives on quality assurance in higher education (section 2.4.2) emphasise the need for internal quality assurance systems to be concerned with self-improvement and to be controlled by the academic staff members themselves. This aspect recognises and appreciates academic autonomy and the fact that the system relies on the academic staff members. There is also emphasis on the institutions to continuously reflect on their practice and improve where necessary. Another important factor to note is the need for institutions to be accountable to their external stakeholders. The institutions are expected to continuously respond to the needs of their external stakeholders in order for them to remain relevant and competitive. Literature on quality assurance in higher education supports the fact that a successful quality assurance system should use both internal improvement and external accountability. The other aspect to consider is the fact that staff development can be used as a strategic tool for quality assurance because of its potential to increase quality and performance. According to Browel (2000) the competitive advantage of an institution can be improved through professional development of staff.

In my view, the findings with regards to research question 1 suggest that higher education institutions in Botswana may not be paying a lot of attention to self-improvement and the need for academic staff to take full responsibility for quality assurance in their institutions.

The other aspect that does not seem to be addressed adequately by the institutions is staff development especially in terms of support given to staff to ensure their systematic development with regards to quality assurance.

The second research question addressed in this study is, *What strategies are applicable to quality assurance for UB?* The participants were academic staff members. The main areas addressed through this research question are knowledge of policy, the people involved in its development, and government's position on quality assurance by the institution. Both questionnaires and the interviews were used to address this question. Most of the academic staff members in institution A say that they have moderate knowledge of the institution's policy with regard to research and publications, then teaching and finally community service. However, majority of the respondents are more aware of the procedures than policy for programme development since they only use the policy when they develop or review their programmes. For teaching the policy is there and being used even though it is not used uniformly across the institution. In addition, the academic staff is aware of the policy on student support, student learning and student assessment but in most cases they use other documents like the student handbook and also rely a lot on their own experience as lecturers. In terms of research, the academic staff point to a lack of awareness of a policy on research and most of them do their own thing since according to them there is no support or training provided for junior staff members. In most cases their research is motivated by the need for promotion.

For institution B and C most of the respondent's have moderate knowledge of the institutions policy in teaching, then research and student assessment. Most of them in the two institutions regard teaching as one of the core duties and an area that benefited most from their quality assurance experience. For the 3 institutions community service does not appear as an area that has a quality assurance policy and has not really benefited from the respondents' quality assurance experience.

The findings from the qualitative data show that most of the academic staff members have knowledge of quality assurance policies in the institution that relate to teaching, academic programme development, student support, student learning and assessment but the same is not true for research by faculty . Middle management of the institution, comprising senior

lecturers and HoDs, know the policies and all senior management members of the institution, made up of deputy-deans, deans, associate professors, professors and the DVC-AA know the policies. This in my view is an area that needs to be addressed by the institutions since academic staff members need to have an understanding of the policies that are available in the institution and it is important for them to know their role in implementing the policies.

In terms of who develops the institution's quality assurance policy (question 4 in the interview schedule) the data collected through interviews shows that most academic staff members in the institutions A and B say that the policy is developed by management and the Centre for Academic Development through consultation with departments in their committees, the same response was obtained from middle and senior management of the institution. However, the respondents are of the view that they lack ownership of the policies due to high workloads, lack of commitment on their part and over reliance on consultants to develop policies for the institutions. The view expressed here shows that much as there is some element of involvement of academic staff in the development of the quality assurance policy in the institutions; they still maintain that it is not sufficient due to their unfavourable working conditions. Academic staff members need to be involved in the development of the policy since they are the ones that implement the policy in their day-to-day activities. The involvement of staff in the development of the quality assurance policy of the institution is central to the achievement of quality teaching and learning. It should also be noted that the academic staff members are best suited to detail appropriate procedures and processes for driving the institution's quality assurance system. According to Mhlanga (2008:215), in situations where "academic staff members lack ownership of the quality assurance policy it poses serious implications on its implementation". It is my view that this is an area that the institution needs to focus on for the policy to be effectively implemented and to ensure academic staff empowerment.

With regard to the institution being expected to report to the government or any national, regional and international bodies, most of the academic staff members say that they know that the institution is expected to report to government as the main funding body of the institutions so that they can account for the funds and make justification for requesting for more funds. In terms of other bodies the institutions know that through their collaborations

with regional and international bodies, accreditation and affiliation arrangements, there is need for them to provide such bodies with quality assurance reports. The reports are meant to provide information on conformance to standards and for continuous improvement.

The findings of the study indicate that most of the academic staff members have slight knowledge of the government's position on quality assurance by the university, and most of them do not know if other academic staff members know the position. However, most of the academic staff members in middle and senior management say that the government expects the institution to have a quality assurance policy in place and they realise that academic staff members know very little about the position of government with regard to quality assurance policy. Those that know the position only know it through their own curiosity as citizens of the country. They know that as an institution they have a responsibility to produce quality graduates who can serve the country and the international community. The respondents blamed this lack of knowledge on the management of the institution and the TEC for their inability to communicate and interact with them on such important issues. The sentiments expressed in the previous section also apply in this context in terms of creating awareness of the different role players and their roles in tertiary education in Botswana.

Important aspects that are worth noting in relation to the findings for research question 2 point to the fact that the practices in higher education institutions in Botswana take cognisance of the need for internal quality assurance systems to be in place in the institutions. This is evidenced by the knowledge of policies by academic staff members and the consultations that take place during the development of policies. However, the findings tend to reveal that the academic staff members are not aware of their accountability to external stakeholders.

In my view, the institutions are doing their best to implement the perspectives on quality assurance in higher education as discussed in the literature though it seems to be limited to the internal processes available in the institutions. However, the other important perspective of external accountability does not seem to be fully addressed as evidenced in the findings with regards to research question 2. The role that TEC plays and the expectation



that government has on the tertiary institutions in the country do not seem to be fully addressed by the relevant authorities.

The third research question that was addressed in this study is, *What are the needs of academic staff members at UB in terms of empowerment with regard to quality assurance?*

The question addresses the areas of change or improvement to the quality assurance policy of the institution, staff involvement in developing quality assurance policy and staff knowledge of performance management mechanisms in the institution. The study addressed the question through the use of questionnaire and interviews. Academic staff members in the institutions are of the opinion that there is need to create awareness of the policy. This is due to the fact that in the institutions there seems to be conflicting views regarding the availability of the policy. Secondly, the academic staff members also raised the issue that the policy is not implemented uniformly in the departments such that it seems as if it is optional. Thirdly, the academic staff members suggested that there should be training and mentoring of staff on the policy since at the moment such is not well provided in the institutions. The same view is shared by the ministry of education officials who emphasise more staff involvement and training, as well as the need for the policy to be clear and well communicated to staff members. Finally, the academic staff members made some suggestions regarding the policy and these include; regular reporting by the departments on their quality assurance activities, proper use of strategic plans for planning, regular reviews of programmes and courses, strengthening SECAT and PMS, more support and mentoring of new staff members. Quality teaching and learning are central to any institution of higher education; therefore it is important that initiatives are in place to ensure that all staff members are provided with support and training with regard to the quality assurance policy. The University of Botswana aims to ensure quality academic programmes that are responsive to the needs of the country. This should also be reflected in the approach that the institution uses to ensure that all academic staff members know and understand the policy and also participate in the achievement of the institutional goals.

Regarding staff involvement in developing a quality assurance policy, most of the academic staff members in institution A and B say that they are involved through consultation in their departments. The majority of staff members in middle and senior management say that academic staff members are involved through consultation in their departments. The view

of most of the academic staff members is for more staff involvement in the development of the policy and the need to reduce teaching loads for staff so that they can contribute a lot in the development of the policy. The respondents from institution A also called for proper orientation of new HODs.

Most of the academic staff members say that there is availability of a performance management system and other initiatives like SECAT, criteria for promotion, peer reviews to ensure that they meet institutional requirements with regard to performance. However, some concerns were raised in institution A regarding the effectiveness of the mechanisms. For instance some feel that SECAT is not used appropriately by both students and staff. In addition, they feel the students have not been sensitised to the value and importance of the tool. Regarding PMS the respondents feel that it does not provide for feedback and continuous monitoring since the evaluation is only done at the end of the year. Secondly, the rating used is rigid and under staffing is a big challenge when it comes to peer review. There were other respondents who view the tools especially PMS, as motivating and driving academic staff to do their best. For institution B the opinion of the officer is that the system they have is still working well for them even though they have not really had an opportunity to get the views of other staff members regarding its effectiveness.

In terms of research question 3, a number of important points are worth mentioning especially with regards to literature. Firstly, UB Quality Management Policy is based on a commitment to improve in order to achieve academic excellence. Secondly, the policy is based on a model whose goal is ownership by academic staff. However, the findings of this study do not support literature on quality assurance especially regarding continuously reflecting on the policies and improving them. The other concern is implementation of the policy in the institutions which seems to be optional in some cases. This does not seem to support literature on quality assurance because according to Fourie (2003), for a quality assurance system to be successful the following four components should be present:

- Commitment by all staff members to ensure maintenance of the product or service
- The enhancement of the product or service should be the responsibility of all staff members

- Everyone in the institution should understand, take and use ownership of the system in place to maintain and enhance quality
- Effective structures and mechanisms should be in place to ensure continuous quality improvement.

The fourth research question posed in this study is, *Which quality assurance model is relevant to the empowerment of academic staff at UB?*

The findings from this study and my interaction with academic staff members in the institutions used in this study regarding this research question point to a lack of knowledge or awareness of the available quality assurance models for higher education institutions. However, in institution B the officer indicated that he is aware of some of the quality assurance models through his own research. He suggested that the available models can be used to create a relevant model since most of them do not seem to be relevant to our situation in Botswana. What transpired in my discussions with the respondents is their interest in a quality assurance system that is practical, relevant and inclusive of all the stakeholders. It should be effective in ensuring that the country achieves its strategic objective of quality and relevance of higher education. Some of the academic staff members in institution B also suggested benchmarking with other institutions in order to determine a model that will work best for their institution. In my view it is also important for the stakeholders to have knowledge of the models in order to be able to make a decision on one that can assist them in carrying out their activities. The literature presented in this study provides some information about some of the models available, their strengths and shortcomings so that the institutions can decide on the one they find relevant to their needs.

In view of the findings for research question 4, my proposal is for a quality assurance model that addresses the needs of all the stakeholders, empowers staff members and also focuses on continuous improvement. In terms of the literature (section 2.5) the model that could be more appropriate for empowering academic staff members at UB in terms of quality assurance is TQM. This is because TQM is driven by people, involves changes in people's attitudes and deals with process orientation and continuous improvement of the process. Again, TQM strives for empowerment and autonomy of the people which would apply in the

context of UB since academic staff members pointed to the fact that they are not really empowered when it comes to quality assurance. In addition, the main goal of TQM is improvement which is also central to quality assurance. In the context of UB, the vision of the institution is about academic excellence and that can be achieved if the institution addresses its commitment to continuous improvement in order to achieve academic excellence. Furthermore, TQM requires the involvement of all members of staff in quality issues and continuous improvement, which would be of benefit to UB in terms of ensuring that academic staff members are all involved and take ownership of the institution's quality assurance process. Another important point to mention with regards to TQM as a suitable model for UB is the need for continuous training and updating of staff. The findings indicate that training is really not done effectively in terms of quality assurance and the fact that the academic staff members may not really be aware of government expectation is an indication of a shortcoming in terms of training and updating staff on the developments on higher education in the country.

#### **7.4 Summary of issues from the findings**

The section on the findings of this study has brought to the fore important issues that are worth mentioning in this section. It is through the summary that I highlight those that in my opinion are pertinent and it is up to the institution to select and refine those that can be beneficial to them.

##### **7.4.1 Academic quality assurance and staff empowerment**

The need for quality and its assurance is now central to higher education institutions throughout the world. As such quality assurance policies are important aspects in higher education institutions. They assist in guiding the institution in determining activities that result in quality education. The University of Botswana has acknowledged the need for having a quality assurance policy in place and central to this is its implementation and effectiveness. The effectiveness of the policy depends to a large extent on how much the academic staff members know the policy and how they implement it in their day-to-day activities. However, the findings of the study point to a lack of proper coordination of the implementation of the policy in the institution. This results in lack of knowledge of the policy, lack of ownership and lack of commitment to its implementation. Therefore, the

level of involvement of academic staff in the development of the policy, their level of ownership of the policy and contextual issues play a pivotal role in determining the success of the institutional quality assurance policy. This in itself would lead to their empowerment and a quality culture will prevail.

#### **7.4.2 Working environment and quality assurance**

The quest for quality is of central concern to higher education institutions. The institutions therefore need conducive working environments that will ensure the full participation of all the stakeholders in order to achieve quality. At the University of Botswana high teaching loads and understaffing tend to impact negatively on the quality initiatives of the institution. As a result, staff members view quality assurance as an added burden to their already high teaching loads and therefore tend to give it very little attention.

#### **7.4.3 The role of other important stakeholders in quality assurance**

The government of Botswana has put in place a council that is tasked with the responsibility of ensuring higher education institutions develop and implement quality assurance policies. However, the findings of this study point to a situation where the academic staff is not even aware of what the government, through TEC, expects from their institution. This in my view also impacts on the relationship that the institution has with TEC to point where academic staff do not know what their contribution should be to the achievement of quality higher education in the country.

#### **7.4.4 Institutional culture and focus**

The institution has traditionally been focused on teaching, research and community engagement. However, teaching seems to have enjoyed more focus to the disadvantage of other areas. The institution has even developed and implemented policies that seem to focus more on teaching. The findings of the study actually point to more awareness of policies on teaching and very little on research. In fact the research engagements of the institution seem to be dependent on the academic staff themselves and what they want to achieve as individuals. Proper mentoring and development of junior staff members on research seems to be left to the individual staff members. It should be noted that the institution now wants to shift focus to strengthen its research output. It is therefore,

important for the institution to ensure that this commitment is known and being implemented in the departments.

## **7.5 Implications of the study**

The findings of this study point to a number of key issues that are meant to assist the institution in its future quality assurance activities and research engagements.

In terms of policy, the institution has not followed an implementation plan that could have ensured proper coordination of the implementation of the policy. Such a plan could have taken into account the needs of the different role players in the quality assurance activities of the institution in order to ensure the achievement of the institution's mission and vision.

Secondly, the institution has not paid much attention to its changing focus and ensures that resources are in place to ensure that it achieves its goal of strengthening research outputs of the institution.

The institution has not paid particular attention to the important role that TEC and the ministry of education plays in ensuring quality programmes of higher education institutions in the country. As such, there should be a closer working relationship between the relevant stakeholders.

This study is also meant to provide further opportunities for sharing the findings and recommendation with other institutions. Other institutions may also use the findings of this study to improve their own practice.

## **7.6 Conclusions and recommendations from the study**

This study raises important issues that have implications for quality assurance in higher education in Botswana, in particular for UB. The learning experience from the study has provided me with insights that enable me to make some proposals for future action and future research. Therefore, in this section, I present key conclusions from the study and provide recommendations for future action as well as for future research.

### **7.6.1 Conclusion 1**

The University of Botswana developed and implemented its Quality Management System as a way of ensuring quality of its academic programmes as well as to make a positive contribution to the country's higher education landscape. However, proper coordination of the implementation of the policy was not given the attention it deserves. In terms of the literature on quality assurance, the institution has not been able to involve the academic staff members in the development and implementation of the policy. Again, there seems to be a lack of systems in place to reflect on the effectiveness of the policy in the institution. Furthermore, the needs of academic staff members may not be fully addressed even though literature on quality assurance emphasises the need to address the needs of all the stakeholders.

#### ***Recommendations***

- The institution should ensure proper coordination of the implementation plan of the academic quality assurance policy.
- There is need to review the policy in order to take care of some of the changes that have taken place in the country's higher education landscape.
- Research needs to be conducted to establish the needs of academic staff members with regard to quality assurance in the institution.

### **7.6.2 Conclusion 2**

Quality assurance policy is central for tertiary education in Botswana and its effectiveness depends on the environment that prevails in higher education institutions in order for them to drive the economic and social transformation of the country as expected. According to the perspectives on quality assurance, the institution may not have done enough to ensure internal improvement of its systems in order to ensure academic excellence. Again, one of the potential benefits of TQM is improvements in employee morale which does not seem to be the case at UB and that impact negatively on the quality culture that the institution aims for.

### ***Recommendations***

- The institution should pay particular attention to the working conditions of academic staff to ensure their full participation and commitment to the institution's quality initiatives.
- The institution needs to upgrade its performance assessment tools for the benefit of all in the institution.
- UB should invest much effort in developing a quality culture in its staff members.

#### **7.6.3 Conclusion 3**

Recognition and appreciation of the different stakeholders in higher education in the country can go a long way in ensuring the achievement of the institution's vision. The different quality assurance models discussed in the literature do not seem to support what is happening at UB. For instance, Malcolm Baldrige model focuses on establishing a good relationship with stakeholders. In addition, one of the perspectives on higher education quality assurance emphasises accountability to external stakeholders, however, an important stakeholder in higher education such as TEC does not seem to feature a lot at UB.

### ***Recommendations***

- Efforts should be made in terms of forging closer links with TEC and the Tertiary Education Unit in the ministry of education.
- Academic staff in the institution needs to be made aware of the important role they play in contributing to the socio-economic needs of the country.

#### **7.6.4 Conclusion 4**

The shift in focus that the institution is embarking on is a positive move that will support its quest to be a research intensive institution. According to literature, academic staff members are assessed in teaching, research and community service. These aspects form the core activities of an academic staff member. Much as the academic staff members at UB are assessed in the three areas, there seems to be a problem in relation to coordinating the research activities of the institution as well as proper mentoring of new staff members into the research strategy of the institution.



## **Recommendations**

- Staff members should be sensitized to the institution's need to improve its research output and their important role in the engagement.
- Proper coordination of the institution's research activities needs to be implemented
- Proper mentoring and support for young researchers should be given priority.

## **7.7 Conclusion**

This study has created awareness of the perceptions of various stakeholders with regard to quality assurance in higher education in Botswana, in particular in UB. It has shed light on the importance of quality assurance policy in a higher education institution such as UB and how its effective implementation can be beneficial to the institution and the country.

The findings have highlighted areas in the institution's quality assurance policy that are positive and worth maintaining and those that need improvement as indicated in the discussion in the study. The conclusions and recommendations put forward in this chapter are a result of the analysis of findings as reflected in this study. The most important recommendation is the need to have in place a well-coordinated implementation plan that will ensure the effectiveness of the quality assurance policy.

It should also be noted that more interactions with the various stakeholders could provide further direction that the institution can take with regard to the recommendations made in this study. In addition, research is necessary to establish what needs to be improved in the institution's quality assurance policy in view of its importance in achieving quality academic programmes.

I trust that this study will provide a platform for further debate on the benefits of quality and its assurance in higher education and ways of continuously improving it.

Quality higher education is central in both developed and developing countries and Botswana is not an exception. Higher education institutions are expected to deliver the needed skills and training required in their countries. In Botswana the future of higher education as well as the prosperity of the nation and educational opportunities for future generations is of great concern.

## **CHAPTER 8 SCHOLARLY REFLECTION ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

This section of the study presents the scholarly reflection (a construct explained by Fringe 2013) on the research process that I engaged in from the proposal stage, ethical clearance, drafting of the chapters, the final product and opportunities for further research are also discussed. The various areas are explored in terms of experiences and timelines and address the following areas:

- Plan
- Implementation
- Feedback
- Scholarly reflection
- Evaluation

The main aim of this section is to provide quality assurance of my work on quality assurance with a view to informing colleagues of my experiences in undertaking the research, the benefits of some of the experiences and the pitfalls involved. Such quality assurance can be considered “meta-quality assurance”. It involves my reflections on the research process from the initiating stage by discussing each step briefly.

### **8.2 The proposal**

This section presents the process that I went through in preparing the research proposal, from the planning stage to the defense, feedback stage, the positive and negative experiences and my evaluation of the process.

#### **8.2.1 Plan/Design**

The planning or design of the research proposal took a period of 19 months, from February 2009 to September 2010. During this time I went from draft 1 to draft 7 and it was only in draft 7 that my supervisor felt that we could submit it for defense. Much as I had wanted to apply for admission to a PhD programme I realised that the proposal I had submitted was far from acceptable. It contained many voids that I had to work on before I could consider it

good enough for the next stage. The voids that I needed to work on included providing enough detail regarding what I intended to do and how I was going to do it.

The process was too demanding both emotionally and physically. I sometimes experienced situations in which I felt that I had completely lost focus and did not know which kind of product I was supposed to produce.

The time I took to work from draft 1 to draft 7 was very exhausting and at times discouraging. There was also the problem of too much information or what some people call information overkill. I sometimes did not know what to use and what to exclude; this was a true test of my organisational ability.

At that stage a great deal was required in terms of understanding my promoter's thinking preferences and mine, and finding a balance between the two in order to make progress.

### **8.2.2 Implementation/Defense**

The proposal defense involved submitting the proposal to a panel, making a PowerPoint presentation to a panel of experienced researchers and getting feedback from them.

Once my promoter was satisfied with the proposal we made arrangements for the defense. This stage involved setting up a panel to read the proposal before the actual defense. The presentation had to focus on the main areas of the argument and once my promoter had approved it, the defense date was set and it took place around September 2010.

Before the presentation I was not too sure of my feelings but I was fearful that I was not going to be successful. The defense went well; I was asked many questions, mostly regarding the research methodology. In the end the proposal was approved with the provision of corrections and those mainly had to do with the research methodology aspect of my proposal. The main issues that were raised by the panel related to data collection methods, sample size and the analysis of data. These in my view are crucial issues that determine the success of a research project. Any weakness in this area can cause major hurdles for the research.

### 8.2.3 Feedback

The team offered very valuable advice that helped me greatly at a time when I was preparing for data collection and assisted me in my future research endeavours. The feedback made me realise the importance of planning properly and knowing exactly how to go about the research process. It is also important to note that the feedback gave me an idea of what to avoid in the research process.

My promoter agreed to what the team had recommended and was ready to guide me in terms of my weak areas. Working on the weak areas that the panel had highlighted was therefore not too taxing.

My view of the process is that these are experiences that you as a researcher have to go through in order to know where you are going and what you need to do. They develop one's skills in research and propagate an understanding that the proposal is a plan that guides the research process; one needs to get it right to succeed in one's research. It is also imperative to know one's thinking preferences and one's intelligences to overcome those that are likely to interfere with one's progress.

At the time that I was working on the plan for the research proposal I did not have clarity concerning the format that I was supposed to use, the referencing style and the time frames that I had to adhere to. All these had not been agreed on between me and my promoter.

However, I regarded the proposal defense as an initiative that was well conducted. The team offered valuable advice that was objective and clear to follow. Moreover, they made me very comfortable and appreciated my efforts.

The time I took to finalise the proposal was too long and demotivating. The support from my supervisor was available but not constant. At times I felt I was not focusing enough and this had a negative effect on my progress.

My suggestions at this point are that there is a need for the researcher and the supervisor to know each other's thinking preferences to have a better understanding of how to go about the whole process. It is also important for the researcher to start off understanding what is exactly expected in terms of time frames and outputs; an agreement could help before any

work commences. As much as post-graduate students are expected to have some research background, it is equally important to know and understand the research preferences of the faculty and to try to fit into this culture. Another aspect that could be beneficial is to belong to a research team or community of practice as proposed by scholars such as Wenger and others (2002) so that one learns from the members as one progresses. Moreover, there should be the establishment of a good working relationship between the researcher and the supervisor at the beginning of the research process. What is expected from the researcher and from the supervisor should be clearly stated and both parties must be aware of their respective expectations. These are essential aspects to bear in mind as numerous scholars of research supervision, such as Kapp and Bitzer (2008), outline.

### **8.3 Ethical clearance**

Ethical clearance is a stage in the research process that is meant to request for permission to conduct research that concerns subjects. It is a stage that comes immediately after the proposal defense. However, I feel that the process needs to coincide with the proposal defense to avoid delays in getting the feedback. This is a process that involves filling in forms, submitting them to the ethics office for approval by the research committee and getting feedback from the committee. The process normally takes up to four weeks, which in my view is unreasonable.

#### **8.3.1 Completion of forms**

The completion of forms is a matter that takes a day. I needed to be clear about my research methodology. I had to fill in the forms and have them signed by my promoter who also checked them, though superficially, before they could be submitted.

In addition to the forms I had to submit the data collection tools, letters requesting permission to conduct research at the research sites and the consent forms to the research committee.

It is important to obtain ethics clearance because any research needs to be regulated to protect the research subjects and to ensure that it is in line with research ethics.

### **8.3.2 Submission**

Thereafter I submitted the ethics clearance forms to the ethics office. After about a week the office allocated me a reference number in order to do a follow-up on my application. Following up on the application was rather problematic in the sense that my application was submitted towards the end of the year and by the time I had followed up there was no one in the office to assist me until the following year. It is also worth noting that I should have checked the feedback much earlier since I did not get it by mail as had been indicated. Sending mails to the ethics office proved to be a fruitless exercise since the response I got was that I could be assisted only at the beginning of the year.

### **8.3.3 Feedback**

I finally got feedback from the ethics office around April 2011. The feedback was that I could proceed with the research but that I had to ensure that the data collection tools were not changed because any such change would mean repeating the process. The feedback provided me with much courage and hope that I was eventually making some progress. It improved my motivational level that was rather low at that time due to the amount of work that I still needed to do and the uncertainties about my success in the process.

The ethics forms are clear and not complicated to fill in. The submission itself is not a difficult process but what I felt was needed was some guidance regarding what to expect in terms of whether I needed to do the follow-up myself or whether the office would provide me with the outcome.

Secondly, there is a need for indicating the time frames on the availability of the ethics office because I thought the office was open throughout the year, only to find that it was not the case.

In addition, I needed to establish the process of getting a research permit from the research sites as this can hinder progress if it is not attended to in good time.

In my opinion, it is important to get clear details about the process and procedure involved in order to get ethics clearance. This could take the form of a presentation during induction

or giving out a written document that outlines the process and procedure. This is a very important step in the research process and it needs to be clarified at its very beginning.

#### **8.4 Drafting of the chapters**

My initial plan was to have up to eight chapters, but as we progressed with the research process I realised that it was better to have only seven. The reason is that I thought I could have a chapter for each research question but that did not seem to be a good idea. In the end I settled for the following seven chapters:

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to and the background of my research. It was actually a refinement of the research proposal.

Chapters 2 to 4 provide a discussion of relevant literature on the research topic.

Chapter 5 outlines the research methods that were used in the study.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings of the study.

Chapter 7 presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 8 outlines the scholarly reflection on the research process.

The arrangement that I had with my promoter was that I should complete one chapter and revise it until we were both satisfied with the corrections before embarking on the next chapter. The arrangement worked well for me because it allowed me to build on my research and to establish relationships and links between the chapters.

##### **8.4.1 Plan**

Working through Chapter 1 was not so difficult after all, mainly because it was a refinement of the research proposal. It provides an introduction to the research and the various areas of the research process. Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of all the chapters in the research. The following areas are highlighted in the chapter:

- Introduction
- Literature review
- Empirical data

- Findings, conclusions and recommendations
- Scholarly reflection

The process took about four months to complete. It involved working on the draft, submitting it to my promoter for comments, refining the document and submitting it again to my promoter for his comments until it was acceptable.

I did not anticipate that completing the first chapter could take as long as four months. It is a chapter that I could have completed within a shorter period of time but I came to realise that there was much I needed to do in terms of which tense to use and to provide clarity on the areas that I included in the chapter.

I was still trying to establish my focus as well as trying to understand how my supervisor wanted us to progress. This in itself hindered my progress in a way.

As I worked through the chapter my emotions were fluctuating. At that time, I had much confidence and felt that I could just sail through it. However, this changed once I realised that there was more that my promoter expected me to clarify and this realisation really demotivated me.

Chapter 2 started off very well; I had a clear understanding of what I wanted in the various sections of the chapter. In general the chapter explores the issue of quality and quality assurance in higher education. As in Chapter 1 the process involved completing the first draft of the chapter, submitting it to my promoter for comments and reworking the document. The process took more than six months and by the time my supervisor was satisfied with it, it was the fourth draft.

I must hasten to say that there were too many drafts and these seemed to be due to the fact that I had my view of what I wanted in the chapter and my supervisor seemed to have his own as well. This is in spite of the fact that we met about twice to discuss the chapter. As I worked through the chapter I experienced that there was much information about quality assurance that I at times got stuck and did not know what to include and what to discard.

Although the chapter took too long to complete and the information overload was confusing it did not cause as many emotional fluctuations as the previous chapter. The



reason is probably that I am a fact-based person and I enjoyed reading and writing what I had read in the chapter.

Once I had completed Chapter 2 I was ready to start on Chapter 3. The chapter explores education reforms in developing countries with examples from Botswana, Lesotho and Zimbabwe. Initially I did not have this chapter in mind and did not see its relevance to my research. It was only after about two meetings with my promoter that I came to realise that I needed to include it.

Once I had started working on the chapter I realised that there was little information about education reforms in the countries I had selected. Most of what was available was from more than ten years before and did not seem to be useful in terms of providing an up to date reference list for my study.

Therefore I had to spend much time locating current information; I had to make do with the little that I could get. As for the previous chapters I had to work up to four drafts over a period of five months.

My main concern with this chapter was the little information I had for submission and the fact that my promoter did not seem to be too comfortable either.

Chapter 4 took the longest to complete. I started it immediately after completing Chapter 3; it focuses on the quality assurance policy and practices at UB. I initially thought I had everything that I needed for this chapter in terms of information. It was, however, not the case as I still had to search for the information. This was also the time that my promoter and I had a serious communication breakdown of about five months, as he was hospitalised and on sick leave.

By the time we resumed our communication I had lost all hope and my motivation was at its lowest. I had to refocus and get on with the chapter but I seemed to have lost my interest in my research. However, I had no other choice but to carry on. Fortunately my promoter also realised the need for us to refocus and to continue from where we had stopped.

The chapter was finally completed after five drafts and this was too demanding for me in terms of time and emotions.

Writing Chapter 5 did not start off immediately after completion of Chapter 4. This was because I had exhausted the maximum years of study which is four years. I had to request for an extension of my studies so that I could complete the research. This process took more than six months to complete and as such I could not register for the current year. It necessitated the intervention of other staff members to continue with my studies.

This was the worst time of my research and at times I felt like withdrawing in order to recollect my thoughts and continue at some other time. My motivation was very low and at times I had feelings of despair.

When I finally got approval to register, I experienced another hurdle. I had to translate the research tools to our local language, Setswana, in order to get a research permit to collect data in Botswana. This endeavour took more than two months to complete but I finally managed.

To complete chapter 5 I had to have completed collecting data.

Data collection was a nightmare; some questionnaires were not returned, people missed appointments for the interviews even though I had made appointments and confirmed them, other institutions did not even feel comfortable answering some of the questions and some staff members withdrew from the study at the last minute. All these drawbacks put me in a very difficult and discouraging position so that I could not even tell whether I was making any progress or not.

However, the support I got from my promoter and the consultants from the Department of Statistics at the University of Pretoria was overwhelming and it motivated me greatly to continue. The team was always prompt and ready to offer me assistance. That in itself was a huge motivational boost so that even though I was now working under much pressure I still felt that I could make it.

It was at this time that I managed to engage a professional language editor to polish the grammar in the chapters I had completed. But before then my completed chapters had to be checked for originality using Turnitin; this was the responsibility of my promoter. It was my first experience with the software and I had to learn to understand what it means very quickly to be able to make the necessary corrections to the chapters. The language editor

was also very helpful and prompt in responding to my queries and this enabled me to continue smoothly with the rest of my work.

At this point I had already submitted Chapter 5 for comment. This is a chapter that explores the research findings, conclusions and possibilities for further research. Thereafter I had to present the findings of the study in Chapter 6. This is a chapter that really called for my ability to design diagrams to make possible a clear understanding of the findings. Fortunately it did not pose a serious challenge.

After I had completed Chapters 1 to 4 my promoter encouraged me to have a chapter offering scholarly reflection on my research experience. The purpose of the chapter is to give the reader, including the external examiners, an idea of the process that lies behind this end product. It also serves as motivation to other researchers to embark on such a scholarly process of reflecting on one's entire research project – keeping in mind what is likely to happen when one engages in a research project, possible solutions and how to try and avoid pitfalls.

I consider the chapter valuable in terms of advice to other colleagues who may be interested in research but who are afraid to go ahead because they do not know what to expect. This is the feeling that I had when I started my research, as I did not know what to expect and at times felt overwhelmed by the challenges I faced.

It was at the point of developing Chapter 7 that I had a long discussion with my promoter and that we got to understand each other's thinking preferences and their importance in shaping and contributing to the research process. It was really enlightening for me in terms of the mistakes I had made from the start of the research process up to the end and why there were so many delays in my progress.

#### **8.4.2 Implementing**

Implementing the first four chapters of my research was not a difficult or long process. It involved having the chapters checked for originality and finalising their editing with the language editor. At this stage there was much support from my promoter, the editor and the statistician and this made the work flow very smoothly.

The last four chapters of my research were quite easy to complete as well. They were finalised within a short space of time and did not hinder my progress in any way. The major problem I experienced at this point was the short time frame that we now had to observe.

#### **8.4.3 Submission**

Each chapter was submitted after the previous one had been completed. The process was lengthy only during submission of Chapters 1 to 4; thereafter the remaining three chapters took a shorter period of time to complete. I tried to have a meeting with my promoter at the end of each submission so that we could discuss the previous chapter and plan for the next one. This in a way helped though at times it was not easy to meet due to our workloads.

Once I had submitted a chapter, I started working on the draft of the next chapter and that helped to avoid long delays in completing them. However, at times I would have to suspend the next chapter especially if many issues were raised by my promoter in the previous chapter.

#### **8.4.4 Feedback**

The feedback I received from my promoter in all the chapters was always very helpful in guiding me regarding the areas that I needed to address. Often we would meet and discuss the issues he had raised so that I could work on them with a good understanding of what I was supposed to do. The meetings provided me with valuable feedback that enabled me to complete the chapters and feel confident about the work I had done.

I also had the opportunity to get feedback from some of my colleagues at UB and this also helped me in understanding the areas I needed to improve.

The only problem I had with the feedback is that there were times when it would be provided after a long period of time, especially when I was still working on the first four chapters of my studies. This was very demotivating and discouraging and it made me lose focus, especially since I was working full time and studying part time. Then there were times when my e-mail reader was not working as I had moved office; this added to the existing frustrations of my studies.

The research process provided a number of positive and negative experiences. For instance, I realised that Chapter 1 is a guide to the research project and it needed to be well written. It should provide a clear indication of what is going to materialise in the research process. Once that is done, finalising the chapter should not be so difficult.

Secondly, the literature review needs to be well defined to avoid reading too much discourse that eventually delays progress in the study. This is the part that should define what you need to include and what you need to discard and there should be a close working relationship with the promoter at this point.

Thirdly, the chapter on methodology is an important aspect of the research process. The researcher needs to be clear about the process to follow and the procedures and what is likely to happen to the data. The researcher should know his or her role and those of the various team members, such as the consultants and others. All the steps, from data collection to the coding of the questions, analysis and the final product envisaged are clarified.

The chapter on scholarly reflection is very valuable and important to have in a research study because it provides an idea of what goes on during the research process, possible pitfalls that may arise and how best to avoid them. It ultimately is evidence of a quality self-regulated/meta-learning process as is evident in a real-life task (Slabbert et al. 2009) such as writing a thesis.

Moreover, there are negative experiences that other researchers need to be made aware of. Some of the information that a researcher can obtain tends to be too much, confusing and outdated and care must be taken when handling such information.

There can be instances of communication breakdown and these should be avoided at all costs. A clear arrangement of meetings with the supervisor needs to be maintained.

In addition the terminology used in statistics can be confusing for a researcher who is not well versed in statistical analysis and there is a need for having an understanding of this process right at the beginning of the research. Where possible the researcher should attend refresher courses on selected research aspects. Of course support is offered for post-graduate students in the faculty through weeklong sessions; unfortunately these proved to

be too costly for me in terms of travelling and lodging. I acknowledge the role of self-regulated learning here. I am the one who should have enquired about these or should have identified such opportunities.

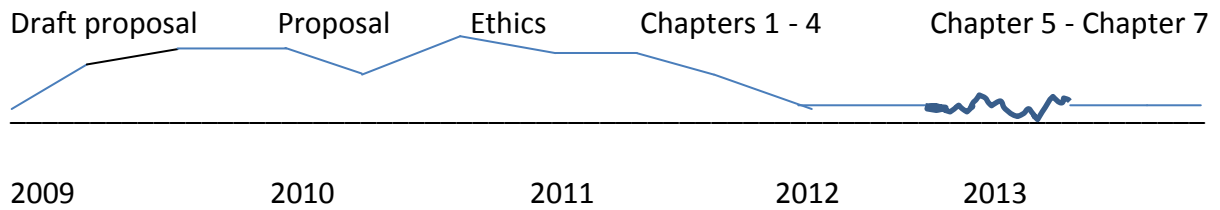
#### **8.4.5 Evaluation**

In my opinion, the following should prevail for any research process to succeed:

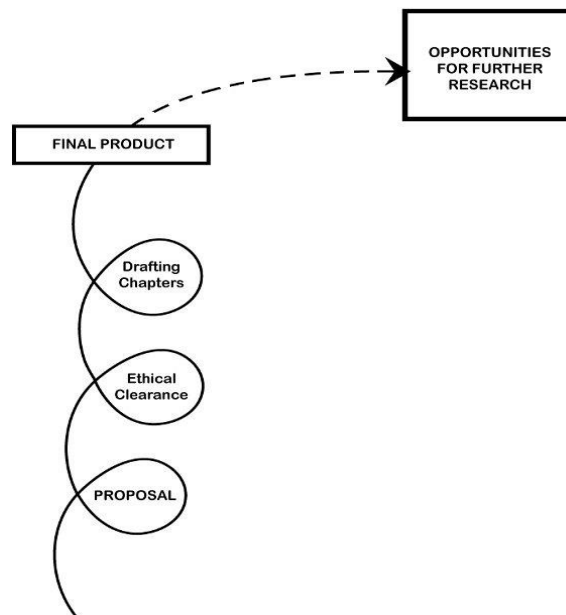
- At the onset of the research the researcher and supervisor should meet at an intra-personal level. This includes an array of aspects. However, for the purpose of this chapter with a specific focus on whole brain reflection and whole brain supervision, identifying the thinking profile of both would be of great help.
- Next, the supervisor and the researcher should agree on time frames and try to adhere to them.
- As part of the intra-personal intelligence that is crucial in a research supervision context, there should be open lines of communication between the supervisor and the researcher at all times to avoid a communication breakdown during the process.
- The researcher needs to know the research process and all the procedures and expectations involved – be they academic or administrative.
- The researcher needs to select one referencing style to use and maintain it throughout the research process.
- Other processes such as ethics clearance and developing data collection tools should be attended to as the research progresses.
- Ensure that the information documents and literature you use are relevant and current.
- Give yourself sufficient time for data collection and analysis.

The figures (Figure 8.1 and 8.2) below present the research process that I explained in this chapter in terms of timelines and experiences.

**Figure 8.1` Reflective timeline**



**Figure 8.2 Research experience**



The steps in Figure 8.3 follow the format outlined below. They represent an action research approach (Du Toit 2012) to planning and executing research. The entire process consists of a spiral. The spiral is made up of different cycles. Where necessary a cycle is repeated:

- Step 1: Plan or sequence of scholarly engagements, responsibilities, structure of thesis; constantly obtaining feedback and reacting to the feedback, etc.
- Step 2: Implement: draft, defend and amend the proposal; application for, amending and obtaining ethical clearance; drafting, revising chapters based on consistent feedback.

- Step 3: Final product: Complete self-edit product; professional editing and revising the final draft based on consistent feedback; submit the final product adhering to all requirements of the university.

Step 4: Scholarly reflection, looking back on the process and experiences from a whole brain perspective.

- Step 5: Evaluation, acknowledging strengths and weaknesses, evaluating the end product and taking a leadership role in proposing to other researchers to follow the same steps.

## **8.5 The final product**

Finally the research process was completed with a 237 page thesis, comprising eight chapters that aim to explore the perceptions of stakeholders regarding quality assurance in higher education in Botswana. The thesis is the result of hard work by a number of individuals who strongly believed in me and trusted that what I had in my mind could be worthwhile. It is through their trust that I managed to overcome many hurdles in order to reach the goal set.

The thesis is an indication of my determination to reach my goal and I hope that it will be an inspiration to my children and colleagues to trust themselves and aim high in order to reach their dreams.

## **8.6 Opportunities for further research**

The research process that I experienced in the past four years has been both frightening and enlightening. As a result I feel that I have improved my research skills and I am now more confident to the point where I am able to explore further research opportunities in future.

The support I received from my promoter, the statistics consultants, the language editor and other colleagues at UP, UB, Limkokwing, BIUST and the Ministry of Education and Skills Development has afforded me an opportunity to develop relationships that can assist me in my future research engagements.



Through collecting data in these institutions, I have become aware of interesting areas that I can engage in in future. Examples are the following:

- Induction of academic staff members
- Student evaluation of staff members
- Curriculum development

In addition, the experience afforded me the opportunity to reflect critically on the research process as a whole so that I feel there is a need for revisiting the process and conducting research on students' expectations and whether these are realised.

Furthermore, reading other people's research also benefited me much in terms of understanding how they managed and the areas that they felt could be explored further. The experience made me realise that it is possible to start off with one idea and end up with many interesting and varying ideas that can enlighten and improve one's skills and understanding.

It is also worth noting that the research has enabled me to recognise areas in my own institution and in particular in my work context that need to be explored and improved so that they can be beneficial to my work, the institution and other institutions.

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## APPENDICES



20<sup>th</sup> February 2013

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I \_\_\_\_\_ an academic/student/stakeholder ....., of UB

hereby consent to be part of this research project entitled:

*Perceptions of stakeholders regarding quality assurance in higher education in Botswana.*

The purpose of the study has been explained to me by the researcher, Ms Gomotsegang Sedisa, who is a PhD student from the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria.

I understand that this research will require me to:

- Complete a questionnaire on my perceptions regarding quality assurance in higher education in Botswana.
- Be interviewed by the researcher with the purpose of providing her with feedback so as to help enhance and contribute to her and my professional development.

I also understand that I have the following rights:

- To remain anonymous in all the research feedback.
- I may withdraw from this research at any stage without any consequence to myself whatsoever.

I am also aware that the results of the research will not be published for any purpose other than the research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr Pieter H du Toit

Research Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ms Gomotsegang Sedisa  
Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

---

Research Participant

---

Date

---

Witness

---

Date

## Appendix II- Academic staff cover letter and questionnaire



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA  
Faculty of Education

20<sup>th</sup> February 2013

### Invitation to participate in a research project

**Title of the study:** Towards an academic quality assurance model for the empowerment of academic staff of the University of Botswana.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

My name is Gomotsegang Sedisa and I am a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in Assessment and Quality Assurance, and I would like to request for your participation.

My study aims to develop a quality assurance model that will empower academic staff at the University of Botswana to take responsibility for the quality of academic programmes in the institution. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire and meet with me for an interview about your perceptions/views regarding quality assurance in higher education and in particular, in UB. The data collected will be used purely for the study.

The meeting will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last about 30 minutes.

You may not answer questions that you feel uncomfortable with. The study is meant to benefit the institution and the nation and your participation will enable you to participate in influencing policy change in the institution.

Taking part in the study is voluntary. Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept safe in the University of Pretoria. The results of the study will be available through the University of Pretoria library but your identity will not be revealed. You do not need to

indicate your identity in the study material. Please note that you are also free to send any other relevant information or ideas you may have on quality assurance issues in higher education.

We will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at +267 355 4487/+267 73848484/ [gomotsegang.pule@mopipi.ub.bw](mailto:gomotsegang.pule@mopipi.ub.bw) if you have any study related questions.

Thank you for participating in the study.

Gomotsegang Sedisa

University of Botswana Private Bag UB 00710, Gaborone. Botswana



**QUESTIONNAIRE TO ACADEMIC STAFF**

**For Office Use**

Date (dd/mm/yy):

V1 

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V2 


 6

**Please answer all the questions by circling the appropriate number in a shaded box or by writing your answer in the shaded space provided**

**SECTION A                      BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**1.**      At which Institution are you **currently** employed?

UB	<b>1</b>
BIUST	<b>2</b>
Limkokwin	<b>3</b>

V3  13

**2.**      What **Faculty** are you in?

Business	<b>1</b>
Education	<b>2</b>
Engineering & Technology	<b>3</b>
Health Sciences	<b>4</b>
Humanities	<b>5</b>
Science	<b>6</b>
Social Science	<b>7</b>

V4  15

**3.**      What is your Employment **status**?

Permanent	<b>1</b>
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V5  17

**For Office Use**

Temporary	<b>2</b>
Full time	<b>3</b>
Part time	<b>4</b>

**4.** What is your **Gender**?

Male	<b>1</b>
Female	<b>2</b>

 V6  19

**5.** What is your **Age**?

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 V7   21

**6.** What is your **Qualification**?

Bachelor's degree	<b>1</b>
Honours degree	<b>2</b>
Master's degree	<b>3</b>
Doctoral degree	<b>4</b>

 V8  24

**Question 7** follows on the next page ...

7. What is your area of **Specialisation**?

Teaching	1
Research	2
Student support	3
Course design	4

 V9  26

 8. What **previous** work experience have you had in the last five years?

Lecturing	1
Research	2
Management	3
Quality assurance	4

 V10  28

 9. What current **position** do you hold?

Assistant Lecturer	1
Lecturer	2
Senior Lecturer	3
Head of Department	4
Deputy Dean	5
Dean	6
Associate Professor	7
Professor	8
DVC-AA	9

 V11  30

 10. For how many **years** have you been employed at your current Institution?

Less than a year	1
One year to five years	2
More than five years	3

 V12  32

**11. What are your **core** duties?**

Teaching	<b>1</b>	V13	<input type="text"/>	34
Research	<b>2</b>	V14	<input type="text"/>	36
Community Service	<b>3</b>	V15	<input type="text"/>	38
Materials Development	<b>4</b>	V16	<input type="text"/>	40
Administration	<b>5</b>	V17	<input type="text"/>	42
Course Co-ordination	<b>6</b>	V18	<input type="text"/>	44

**12. How would you describe your **association** with QA?**

Not at all	<b>1</b>	V19	<input type="text"/>	46
A little	<b>2</b>			
A lot	<b>3</b>			

**SECTION B**      *follows on the next page ...*

**SECTION B**                      **EXPERIENCES AND OPINIONS OF QUALITY**  
**ASSURANCE**

**13.** Please read the following statements and **score** each on the scale provided.

	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Greatly		
I have experience in the development of quality assurance policy from my previous work.	1	2	3	4	V20	<input type="text"/> 48
I have experience in the implementation of quality assurance policy from my previous work.	1	2	3	4	V21	<input type="text"/> 50
I am involved in the development of quality assurance policy in my current position.	1	2	3	4	V22	<input type="text"/> 52
I am involved in the implementation of quality assurance policy in my current position.	1	2	3	4	V23	<input type="text"/> 54
The institution's policy in enhancing quality in teaching is effective.	1	2	3	4	V24	<input type="text"/> 56
The institution's policy in enhancing quality in student assessment is effective.	1	2	3	4	V25	<input type="text"/> 58
The institution's policy in enhancing quality in research is effective.	1	2	3	4	V26	<input type="text"/> 60
My QA experience has improved my effectiveness as an academic staff member.	1	2	3	4	V27	<input type="text"/> 62
My QA experience has empowered me as an academic staff member.	1	2	3	4	V28	<input type="text"/> 64

**14.** To what extent do you have **knowledge** about the Institution's mechanisms for assuring quality in each of the following areas?

	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Greatly		
Teaching	1	2	3	4	V29	<input type="text"/> 66
Research and Publications	1	2	3	4	V30	<input type="text"/> 68
Student Assessment	1	2	3	4	V31	<input type="text"/> 70

					<b>For Office Use</b>	
Community Service	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	V32	72
Programme Development	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	V33	74
Course Co-ordination	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	V34	76

15. Consider each area listed below and rank the **TOP THREE** which benefitted you from your QA experience (Rank **1** as the **most important** and **3** as the **least important** and **PLEASE DO NOT REPEAT** a rank value).

Teaching		V35	78
Research and Publications		V36	80
Student Assessment		V37	82
Community Service		V38	84
Programme Development		V39	86
Course Co-ordination		V40	88

**Question 16 follows on the next page ...**

16. What is your opinion regarding the Institution's quality assurance **policy**?


V41 

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 90

V42 

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 93

V43 

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 96

17. In your opinion, who should **monitor** quality assurance in the Institution?


V44 

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 99

V45 

--	--

 102

V46 

--	--

 105

18. Suggest what **changes/improvements** you would like to see implemented in the Institution's QA Policy.


V47 

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 108

V48 

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 111

**For Office Use**  
V49 

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 114

**Thank you for your time and co-operation**



## Appendix III-Ministry cover letter and questionnaire



20<sup>th</sup> February 2013

### Invitation to participate in a research project

**Title of the study:** Towards an academic quality assurance model for the empowerment of academic staff of the University of Botswana.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

My name is Gomotsegang Sedisa and I am a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in Assessment and Quality Assurance, and I would like to request for your participation.

My study aims to develop a quality assurance model that will empower academic staff at the University of Botswana to take responsibility for the quality of academic programmes in the institution. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire and meet with me for an interview about your perceptions/views regarding quality assurance in higher education and in particular, in UB. The data collected will be used purely for the study.

The meeting will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last about 30 minutes.

You may not answer questions that you feel uncomfortable with. The study is meant to benefit the institution and the nation and your participation will enable you to participate in influencing policy change in the institution.

Taking part in the study is voluntary. Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept safe in the University of Pretoria. The results of the study will be available through the University of Pretoria library but your identity will not be revealed. You do not need to

indicate your identity in the study material. Please note that you are also free to send any other relevant information or ideas you may have on quality assurance issues in higher education.

We will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at +267 355 4487/+267 73848484/ [gomotsegang.pule@mopipi.ub.bw](mailto:gomotsegang.pule@mopipi.ub.bw) if you have any study related questions.

Thank you for participating in the study.

Gomotsegang Sedisa

University of Botswana Private Bag UB 00710, Gaborone. Botswana

**QUESTIONNAIRE TO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION OFFICERS**

**For Office Use**

Date (bb/mm/yy):

V1 

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 1

V2 


 5

**Please answer all the questions by circling the appropriate number in a shaded box or by writing your answer in the shaded space provided**

**SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**1. In which Department are you?**

Business	1
Education	2
Engineering & Technology	
Health Sciences	
Humanities	
Sciences	
Social Science	

V3 

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 12

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2. What is your Employment status?**

Permanent	1
Temporary	2
Full time	3
Part time	4

V4 

--

 14

**3. What is your Gender?**

**For Office Use**

Male	<b>1</b>
Female	<b>2</b>

V5  16

**4. What is your Age?**

V6   18

**5. What is your Qualification?**

Bachelor's degree	<b>1</b>
Honours degree	<b>2</b>
Master's degree	<b>3</b>
Doctoral degree	<b>4</b>

V7  21

**6. What is your area of Specialisation?**

Policy development	<b>1</b>
Policy monitoring	<b>2</b>
Policy evaluation	<b>3</b>

V8  23

**Question 7**

*follows on the next page ...*

**For Office Use**

**7. What **previous** work experience have you had in the last **five years**?**


V9   25

V10   28

V11   31

**8. What current **position** do you hold?**

Director	<b>1</b>
Chief Education Officer	<b>2</b>
Principal Education Officer	<b>3</b>
Senior Education Officer	<b>4</b>
Education Officer	<b>5</b>

V12  34

**9. For how many **years** have you been employed in your current position?**

Less than a year	<b>1</b>
One year to five years	<b>2</b>
More than five years	<b>3</b>

V13  36

**10. What are your **core** duties?**

Policy development	<b>1</b>
Policy monitoring	<b>2</b>
Policy evaluation	<b>3</b>

V14  38

V15  40

V16  42

11. How would you describe your **association** with QA?

Not at all	<b>1</b>
A little	<b>2</b>
A lot	<b>3</b>

V17  44

**SECTION B**      *follows on the next page ...*

**SECTION B**                      **EXPERIENCES AND OPINIONS OF QUALITY**  
**ASSURANCE**

12. Please read the following statements and **score** each on the scale provided.

	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Greatly		
I have experience in the development of quality assurance policy from my previous work.	1	2	3	4	V18	<input type="text"/> 46
I have experience in the implementation of quality assurance policy from my previous work.	1	2	3	4	V19	<input type="text"/> 48
I am involved in the development of quality assurance policy in my current position.	1	2	3	4	V20	<input type="text"/> 50
I am involved in the implementation of quality assurance policy in my current position.	1	2	3	4	V21	<input type="text"/> 52
I am involved in the monitoring of quality assurance policy in my current position.	1	2	3	4	V22	<input type="text"/> 54

13. To what extent do you have **knowledge** about the Institution's mechanisms for assuring quality in each of the following areas?

	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Greatly		
Teaching	1	2	3	4	V23	<input type="text"/> 56
Research and Publications	1	2	3	4	V24	<input type="text"/> 58
Student Assessment	1	2	3	4	V25	<input type="text"/> 60
Community Service	1	2	3	4	V26	<input type="text"/> 62
Programme Development	1	2	3	4	V27	<input type="text"/> 64
Course Co-ordination	1	2	3	4	V28	<input type="text"/> 66

14. Consider each area listed below and rank the **TOP THREE** which benefitted you from your QA experience (Rank **1** as the **most important** and **3** as the **least important** and **PLEASE DO NOT REPEAT** a rank value).

		<b>For Office Use</b>	
Development of QA policy		V29	68
Implementation of QA policy		V30	70
Monitoring of QA policy		V31	72
Evaluation of QA policy		V32	74
Programme development		V33	76
Course co-ordination		V34	78

**Question 15** follows on the next page ...



15. What is your **opinion** regarding quality assurance in higher education?


V35   80

V36   83

V37   86

16. In your opinion, who should **monitor** quality assurance in higher education?


V38   89

V39   92

V40   95

17. Suggest what **changes/improvements** you would like to see implemented in the country's QA Policy on higher education.


V41   98

V42   101

**For Office Use**  
V43 

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 104


**Thank you for your time and co-operation**

**Appendix IV - Interview schedule for Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs / Deans / Deputy Deans / HODs / Academic staff**

Interview schedule number

 V1   1

Date (dd/mm/yy):

 V2    4  
  

**1. Name of Institution where interview is being conducted**

UB	<b>1</b>
BIUST	<b>2</b>
Limkokwin	<b>3</b>

 V3  11

**2. Status of person being interviewed**

Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs	<b>1</b>
Dean	<b>2</b>
Deputy Dean	<b>3</b>
Head of Department	<b>4</b>
Academic staff	<b>5</b>

 V4  13

**3. What policy does the institution have on assuring quality in ...**

<b>Academic programme development:</b>

 V5   15

 V6   18

 V7   21

**For Office Use**

<b>Teaching:</b>	V8	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	24
	V9	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	27
	V10	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	30
<b>Student support:</b>	V11	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	33
	V12	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	36
	V13	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	39
<b>Student learning:</b>	V14	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	42
	V15	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	45
	V16	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	48

**Question 3** continues on the next page ..

**For Office Use**

**3. (cont.)** What **policy** does the institution have on assuring quality in:

**Assessment:**

V17   51

V18   54

V19   57

**Research by Faculty:**

V20   60

V21   63

V22   66

**4.** Who **develops** institutional policy on quality assurance?

V23   69

V24   72

V25   75

**5.** What is the official position of **government** on quality assurance by the university?

V26   78

V27   81

**For Office Use**


V28 

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 84

6. To what extent does the academic staff **know** the position?


V29 

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 87

V30 

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 90

V31 

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 93

**Question 7 follows on the next page ...**

**For Office Use**

7. Is the university **expected** to do any sort of **reporting** to the government, professional bodies or national/regional/international quality assurance agency?


V32   96

V33   99

V34   102

8. How is **staff involved** in developing quality assurance policies and practices in the university?


V35   105

V36   108

V37   111

9. What **mechanisms** are **in place** to ensure that academic staff meets institutional requirements in terms of performance?


V38   114

V39   117

V40   120

10. Is there any kind of **support offered** to academic staff in order to ensure their systematic development with regards to QA?

Yes	1	V41	<input type="text"/>	123
No	2			

11. Is there any kind of support/training for academic staff as to how to **implement** policy?

Yes	1	V42	<input type="text"/>	125
No	2			

**Question 12 follows on the next page ...**



**12.** In your opinion, which quality assurance **model** for higher education would be suitable for your Institution?

	V43	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	127
	V44	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	130
	V45	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	133

**Thank you for your time and co-operation**

## Appendix V- Permission letters-UB, LIMKOKWING, BIUST, Ministry of education



20<sup>th</sup> February 2013

Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic Affairs

University of Botswana

Dear Sir

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am currently enrolled at the University of Pretoria for a PhD with a focus on higher education. The title of the study is: *Perceptions of stakeholders regarding quality assurance in higher education in Botswana.*

As a follow up to our discussion regarding my research, I would like to request for formal written permission to conduct the research with the academic staff members at the University of Botswana. This will involve the use of interviews and questionnaires to collect the data about their perceptions regarding quality assurance in higher education in Botswana.

Your assistance will be appreciated.

Thank you.

---

Dr Pieter H du Toit  
Research Supervisor

---

Date

---

Ms Gomotsegang Sedisa  
Researcher

---

Date



20<sup>th</sup> February 2013

Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic Affairs

Limkokwing University of Technology

Botswana

Dear Sir

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am currently enrolled at the University of Pretoria for a PhD with a focus on higher education. The title of the study is: *Perceptions of stakeholders regarding quality assurance in higher education in Botswana.*

As a follow up to our discussion regarding my research, I would like to request for formal written permission to conduct the research with the academic staff members at Limkokwin. This will involve the use of interviews and questionnaires to collect the data about their perceptions regarding quality assurance in higher education institutions in Botswana.

Your assistance will be appreciated.

Thank you.

---

Dr Pieter H du Toit

Research Supervisor

---

Date

---

Ms Gomotsegang Sedisa

Researcher

---

Date



20<sup>TH</sup> February 2013

Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic Affairs

BIUST

Botswana

Dear Sir

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am currently enrolled at the University of Pretoria for a PhD with a focus on higher education. The title of the study is: ***Perceptions of stakeholders regarding quality assurance in higher education in Botswana.***

As a follow up to our discussion regarding my research, I would like to request for formal written permission to conduct the research with the academic staff members at BIUST. This will involve the use of interviews and questionnaires to collect the data about their perceptions regarding quality assurance in higher education in Botswana.

Your assistance will be appreciated.

Thank you.

---

Dr Pieter H du Toit  
Research Supervisor

---

Date

---

Ms Gomotsegang Sedisa  
Researcher

---

Date



20<sup>TH</sup> February 2013

The Chief Education Officer- Tertiary Education  
Ministry of Education  
Gaborone  
Botswana

Dear Sir

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am currently enrolled at the University of Pretoria for a PhD with a focus on higher education. The title of the study is: ***Perceptions of stakeholders regarding quality assurance in higher education in Botswana.***

As a follow up to our discussion regarding my research, I would like to request for formal written permission to conduct the research with the academic staff members at BIUST. This will involve the use of interviews and questionnaires to collect the data about their perceptions regarding quality assurance in higher education in Botswana.

Your assistance will be appreciated.

Thank you.

---

Dr Pieter H du Toit  
Research Supervisor

---

Date

---

Ms Gomotsegang Sedisa  
Researcher

---

Date

## Appendix VI- Codes for qualitative data

### Interviews

Question number	Responses
Question 3	01-I do not know  02-It is there is but I do not know the name  03- Name of policy-
Question 4	01- I do not know  02- Departments  03- management  04-CAD
Question 5	01- I do not know  02- There is need for a qa policy  03-Improvements needed
Question 6	01- I do not know  02-very little  03- nothing at all
Question 7	01- I do not know  02- TEC  03- INQAHEE  04-others
Question 8	01- Not at all

	02- consultation 03-departments
Question 9	01- I do not know 02- PMS/SECAT 03-Nothing
Question 12	01- I do not know 02- Any that is effective 03- One that can involve staff 04-SADC/TQM/MALCOM BALDBRIDGE/ISO

### Questionnaire for academic staff

Question number	Responses
Question 16	01- not effective 02- It needs to be improved 03- I do not know 04- GOOD
Question 17	01- Management 02- Academic staff 03-CAD/EXTERNAL BODIES

	04- An officer/person employed
Question18	01-More staff involvement 02- More staff training 03- I do not know 04- Clear and well communicated

### Questionnaire for ministry officials

Question number	Responses
Question 15	01- not effective 02- It needs to be improved 03- I do not know 04- GOOD
Question 16	01- Management 02- Academic staff 03-CAD/EXTERNAL BODIES 04- An officer/person employed
Question 17	01-More staff involvement 02- More staff training 03- I do not know 04- Clear and well communicated