

Perceptions of the Appropriateness of the Procedures to Develop Quality Assurance Mechanisms to Foster Tanzanian Universities' Compliance

Daudi Mrema, Irénée Ndayambaje, Philothère Ntawiha and Eugene Ndabaga

Abstract

Contemporary external and internal quality assurance structures employ participatory procedures to design quality assurance mechanisms that promote universities' compliance. Tanzania is among the countries that have adopted such measures to promote key stakeholders' acceptance and implementation. This study explored Tanzanian stakeholders' perceptions of the appropriateness of the procedures that guide the development of national and institutional quality assurance mechanisms to foster universities' compliance. Data were gathered from 46 participants across four universities by means of interviews, focus group discussions and documentary review. The data were analysed using content analysis. The analysis revealed that some key stakeholders did not make sufficient input into existing quality assurance mechanisms, resulting in non-compliance among universities, academics and students. Recommendations are offered to increase key stakeholders' involvement and thus enhance compliance.

Key words: participatory procedures, quality assurance mechanisms, university compliance, Tanzania

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: DAUDI MREMA, email: daudimrema665@yahoo.com, IRÉNÉE NDAYAMBAJE; irenee.ndayambaje@gmail.com, PHILOTHÈRE NTAWIHA, ntaphilos@gmail.com, AND EUGENE NDABAGA, ndabagav@yahoo.ie, University of Rwanda Mrema, D., Ndayambaje, I., Ntawiha, P., & Ndabaga, E. (2024). Perceptions of the Appropriateness of the Procedures to Develop Quality Assurance Mechanisms to Foster Tanzanian Universities' Compliance. *International Journal of African Higher Education*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.6017/ijah.e.viii.17101>

Résumé

Les structures contemporaines d'assurance qualité externe et interne utilisent des procédures participatives pour concevoir des mécanismes d'assurance qualité visant à promouvoir la conformité des universités. La Tanzanie fait partie des pays qui ont adopté de telles mesures pour promouvoir l'acceptation et la mise en œuvre par les principales parties prenantes. Cette étude a exploré les perceptions des parties prenantes tanzaniennes quant à l'adéquation des procédures qui guident le développement des mécanismes nationaux et institutionnels d'assurance qualité afin de favoriser la conformité des universités. Les données ont été recueillies auprès de 46 participants de quatre universités au moyen d'entretiens, de discussions de groupe et d'une analyse documentaire. Elles ont été analysées à l'aide d'une analyse de contenu, laquelle a révélé que certains acteurs clés n'ont pas suffisamment contribué aux procédures existantes, ce qui a entraîné la non-conformité des universités, des universitaires et des étudiants. Des recommandations sont formulées pour accroître l'implication des principales parties prenantes et améliorer ainsi la conformité.

Mots clés : procédures participatives, mécanismes d'assurance qualité, conformité des universités, Tanzanie

Introduction

Globally, external (national and international) and internal (individual universities) quality assurance (QA) structures for universities have made concerted efforts to achieve compliance with external and internal QA mechanisms and thus improve the quality of university education and graduates' capabilities (Mgaiwa, 2018; Shabani et al., 2014). In developing and revising QA mechanisms, the primary focus has been promotion of key stakeholders' views, ownership and acceptance of the mechanisms (Inter-University Council for East Africa [IUCEA], 2016) as this promotes compliance (see Alzafari and Ursin, 2019; Ansah, 2015; Mrema et al., 2024).

While the terms QA mechanisms or standards for universities have been used interchangeably in some contexts, the former can be likened to a parent and the latter to a child. University QA mechanisms are the

set of standards, procedures, policies, guidelines, measures, strategies, processes and methods to maintain and improve the excellence of higher education (HE) and its graduates, while a QA standard is a subcategory of QA mechanisms that sets the QA requirements for HE (Asiyai, 2022; IUCEA, 2015; Mrema et al., 2023a, 2023b). Thus, QA standards which guide input (e.g., entry criteria for academics and students or the academic-students ratio), process and output are enforced by several QA methods or processes (e.g., monitoring and evaluation, self-assessment and a quality audit) to promote standardisation of HE practices (Forde et al., 2016).

University QA mechanisms are designed by QA agencies and are expected to be complied with by all stakeholders (i.e., top university administrators, academics, students and graduates). However, empirical studies show that some universities, particularly in Africa, have paid little heed to existing QA mechanisms, contributing to the ongoing deterioration of HE quality (Alzafari and Kratzer, 2019; Asiyai, 2022; Machumu and Kisanga, 2014; Pham and Nguyen, 2020). Only 11 and 33 African universities are among the top 1 000 world universities listed in the 2023 Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) and the Times Higher Education (THE) rankings, respectively (THE, 2023; Top Universities, 2023). This implies that the majority of African universities are not adhering to QA standards (along with input, process and output, which are among the THE and QS ranking criteria) that are recognised internationally.

Research has shown that many universities in East Africa (Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya and South Sudan) do not comply with QA mechanisms. For instance, Kuyok (2017), Neema-Abooki (2016), Odhiambo (2014) and Sikubwabo et al. (2020) cite high academic-students and physical resources-students (i.e., books, computers and study facilities) ratios, traditional pedagogies, academics moonlighting, academic dishonesty among students, admission of unqualified students and unaccredited universities and academic programmes, as well as unmarketable academic programmes in these countries. Similar cases have been observed by QA agencies conducting quality audits at universities.

In response, national QA agencies have taken punitive measures such as suspending, closing and deregistering universities or academic

programmes found to be non-compliant (Mrema et al., 2023b; National Council for Higher Education [NCHE], 2023). Furthermore, many of their graduates have limited labour market capabilities. A survey by the IUCEA (2014) found that more than 50% of graduates from East African universities lack critical job skills, with Uganda leading at 63%, Tanzania at 61%, Burundi at 55%, Rwanda at 52% and Kenya at 51%.

Globally, universities' non-compliance with QA mechanisms is associated with inadequate financial resources, weak enforcement mechanisms, non-participatory procedures for developing QA mechanisms, impracticable mechanisms and external interference by funders of QA agencies in executing their duties (see Akalu, 2017; Alzafari and Ursin, 2019; Keykha et al., 2021; Ramírez and Haque, 2016; Wissam and Amina, 2022). While several empirical studies (see Imaniriho, 2020; Mgaiwa, 2018; Mgaiwa and Ishengoma, 2017; Mrema et al., 2023a, 2023b, 2023c, 2024; Neema-Abooki, 2016; Odhiambo, 2014) concluded that some factors, including financial austerity, weak enforcement of QA standards and impracticable QA mechanisms resulted in non-compliance among East African universities, our study assessed whether existing procedures to develop QA mechanisms are contributing to non-compliance in Tanzania. To the best of our knowledge, no study of this nature has been undertaken in East Africa and probably the entire African continent.

Empirical studies across the world have shown that non-participatory procedures to develop QA mechanisms can result in impracticable QA mechanisms that cause university stakeholders to resist implementation (Alzafari and Ursin, 2019; Ramírez and Haque, 2016; Ryan, 2015). The IUCEA (2016) states that compliance with QA standards depends highly on the involvement and participation of key players (such as government, academics, students, employers, parents and the public) in QA activities, including establishment and implementation. This is important because HE quality is multidimensional and stakeholders hold different views on its nature (Alzafari and Kratzer, 2019). Negotiating QA standards would promote stakeholder inclusivity, understanding, ownership and acceptance, and thus implementation (IUCEA, 2016). Our study thus examined the extent to which existing procedures to develop QA mechanisms in Tanzania are participatory.

The development, revision and enforcement of national QA mechanisms for Tanzanian universities fall under the mandate of the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) (TCU, 2019a), while institutional QA units are responsible for institutional QA mechanisms. However, non-compliance levels are high in some universities, and from 2015 to 2022, the TCU suspended, closed and/or deregistered universities or academic programmes found to be extremely non-compliant. During this period, around 12 private university institutions were deregistered, 28 private university institutions were closed and 34 private and public university institutions were banned from admitting students (Mgaiwa, 2018; Mrema et al., 2023a, 2023b). Furthermore, around 832 students were expelled due to their failure to obtain the required two passes in their secondary school examinations (Mgaiwa and Poncian, 2016; Mrema et al., 2023a, 2023b). A hundred and seven students were expelled between 2012 and 2018 for examination irregularities (TCU, 2019b). However, such measures can be regarded as reactive and do not address the root causes of non-compliance.

Against this background, the study explored stakeholders' perceptions of the appropriateness of the procedures which guide the development of national and institutional QA mechanisms to promote public and private universities' (PPUs) compliance in Tanzania. The ultimate goal was to understand whether the existing procedures facilitate key stakeholders' acceptance, ownership and implementation of QA mechanisms.

Procedures to Develop QA Mechanisms and Their Impact on Universities' Compliance

Empirical studies (see Alzafari and Kratzer, 2019; Isaeva et al., 2020; Ryan, 2015) concur that the appropriateness of the procedures to develop universities' QA standards should be measured by key stakeholders' level of participation as this determines their acceptance and ownership of QA standards and thus successful implementation. Such involvement is necessary because different stakeholders represent different interests.

The IUCEA (2016) asserts that QA in HE is more complex than in manufacturing industries since so many different actors are involved in this sector, including the government, academics, students, employers,

parents and the public (see Figure 1 below). As a result, stakeholders hold a variety of viewpoints (Alzafari and Kratzer, 2019). Furthermore, the multifaceted nature of educational quality renders negotiation vital to set practicable QA mechanisms that will be accepted, owned and put into practice to ensure the production of quality graduates (IUCEA, 2016).

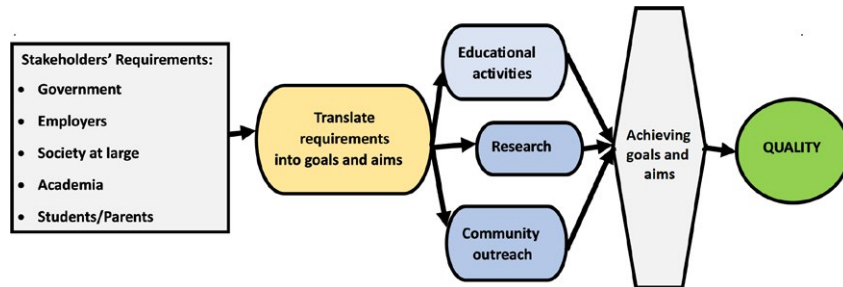


Figure 1: A Model for Setting QA Standards and its Impact on Promoting HE Compliance and Quality

Source: Adopted from IUCEA (2016)

While it is generally accepted that all key players should be involved in setting QA standards, empirical studies reveal that some groups are marginalised. For instance, Alzafari and Ursin (2019) found that internal stakeholders (academics, administrators and students) were more involved in developing institutional QA policies than external ones (graduates, government, employers and accreditation agencies) in European universities. Furthermore, students participated less than other internal stakeholders while employers and graduates were less involved than accreditation agencies. Alzafari and Kratzer (2019) found that such stakeholders' marginalisation is linked to a lack of leadership abilities to foster transparency and trust, persuade all key stakeholders and strike a balance between their interests. Consequently, stakeholders resist implementing QA standards. However, Ryan (2015) and Uludağ et al. (2021) concluded that stakeholders' marginalisation can be associated with their reluctance to participate.

Effective QA leadership is a key instrument to involve stakeholders in developing QA mechanisms (Alzafari and Kratzer, 2019; Mgaiwa and Ishengoma, 2017). Ryan (2015) found that students can be involved in QA meetings and processes as well as complete questionnaires and

take part in focus groups. However, students have been found to be less cooperative in developing QA standards (Ryan, 2015; Uludağ et al., 2021). Isaeva et al.'s (2020) research in Estonia found that it is important to inform students of their QA tasks and what the university expects from them. They also found that using students' native language in QA dialogues promotes participation.

Uludağ et al. (2021) observed that Turkish students can play a variety of QA roles, including as team members (in setting and implementing QA standards), bridges (conveyors of information), consumers and contributors. However, they were challenged by a lack of institutional support, insufficient knowledge of QA and limited time to devote to QA tasks (Ryan, 2015; Uludağ et al., 2021). Uludağ et al. (2021) concluded that addressing students' academic concerns would promote their participation. Mgaiwa and Ishengoma (2017) observed that stakeholders in Tanzanian Private Universities (PRUs) had limited understanding of QA, which undermined their inclusion in developing QA policies.

There is a paucity of research on various key players' involvement in developing national and institutional QA mechanisms in Tanzanian PUs as well as the appropriateness of such involvement to promote compliance. This study contributed to filling this knowledge gap by investigating stakeholders' perceptions of the existing procedures that guide the development of QA mechanisms to enhance Tanzanian universities' compliance. It was assumed that if all key players were involved in developing QA standards, they would be understood, owned, accepted and more easily complied with (IUCEA, 2016; Mrema et al., 2024), ultimately improving the quality of HE.

The study makes practical and theoretical contributions to the body of knowledge on the appropriateness of the procedures employed to develop national and institutional QA mechanisms in order to promote Tanzanian universities' compliance. Its findings will assist the national regulatory agency, universities, HE planners and policymakers in developing QA mechanisms that improve universities' compliance.

Contextualising University Education and Existing QA Standards in Tanzania

The Universities Act No. 7 of 2005 mandated the establishment of the TCU, which serves as the country's regulatory, supportive and advisory body to promote PPU's education quality (TCU, 2019a). In December 2019 the commission published the current (3rd edition) manual for QA standards (TCU, 2019a). It took into account the QA harmonisation requirements set by the East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC) and other international bodies that were not part of the previous manual (TCU, 2019a). Input, process and output-related QA standards were included and individual universities were mandated to draft institutional QA documents that should not, however, violate national minimum requirements. In February 2024 the commission published a list of 54 PPUs, as well as university colleges, institutes, campuses and centres that were registered to operate in the country (TCU, 2024).

The literature shows that Tanzanian university stakeholders do not strictly adhere to the established QA mechanisms (Mrema et al., 2023a, 2023b). It has also been observed that this problem is more prevalent in PRUs than public universities (PUs) (Mgaiwa, 2021b; Mgaiwa and Poncian, 2016). The TCU reports from 2015 to 2022 show that it took punitive action against non-complying universities (Mrema et al., 2023a, 2023b); however, cases of non-compliance persist. This promoted this study on the appropriateness of the procedures which guide the development of QA mechanisms in promoting PPUs' compliance.

Methodology

Research Approach and Design

The study was guided by a qualitative approach in exploring, analysing and interpreting the key HE stakeholders' ideas, experiences and views to gain an in-depth understanding of their perceptions of the appropriateness of the procedures which guide the development of QA mechanisms in promoting universities' compliance in Tanzania (Ary et al., 2018). A multiple embedded case study design was employed to guide the exploration through more than one unit of analysis (four

university cases) and subunits of analysis (four sub-cases [categories of participants]) within each unit (Yin, 2014). The cases included two PUs (numbered 1 and 4) and two PRUs (numbered 2 and 3) located in Dar es Salaam, Dodoma and Mwanza regions. The study participants included QA Directors (QADs), Senior QA Officers (SQAOs), academics and Students Cabinet Members (SCMs) from the four universities.

Target Population, Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The target population was the members of QA directorates, academics and students from the 54 accredited PPUs in Tanzania. Selection of both the universities (four) and participants (46) was guided by purposive sampling which focuses on the key characteristics (the most relevant, knowledgeable and information-rich) of the sample (Leavy, 2017). The four selected universities are those which were the most (Universities 1 and 3) and least (Universities 2 and 4) frequently reported and sanctioned by the TCU for extreme non-compliance from 2015 to 2022. Thus, each category had PPUs to control biased data. The QADs (one from each university) were selected because they are in charge of all QA activities. The SQAOs (two [SQA0-i and ii] from each university) were selected based on their seniority (i.e., longer experience [at least four years] than others in the QA unit). The academics (two to three from each university) included one (academic-i) chairperson of the academic staff assembly (existing in only PUs 1 and 4) and two (academic-ii and iii) of the most senior (in terms of rank [at least lecturer]) academics specialising in HE quality. The SCMs (six from each university) were current and retired student presidents, ministers and deputy ministers of academic affairs. As summarised in Table 1 below, this made for a total sample of 46 participants.

Table 1: Sample Composition

Categories of Research Participants	Universities				Total
	1	2	3	4	
QADs	01	01	01	01	04
SQAOS	02	02	02	02	08
Academics	03	02	02	03	10
SCMs	06	06	06	06	24
Total	12	11	11	12	46

Source: Field Data, 2023

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through individual interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and documentary review. Individual interviews that lasted 45-60 minutes were conducted with QADs, SQAOS and academics. The FGDs comprised of SCMs at each university and lasted an hour. The interviews and FGDs used semi-structured guides which were administered face-to-face and telephonically. Documentary review was conducted on the national QA guidebook of 2019 as well as individual universities' QA policies and examination regulations obtained from the TCU and four universities, respectively. The aim of the documentary review was to establish how the QA documents were designed. The data from all three methods were analysed using content analysis and the five steps recommended by Leavy (2017), namely, initial immersion in the datasets, identifying units of analysis, coding, analysing the codes' frequencies and interpreting the results.

Trustworthiness, Ethical Considerations and Transferability

Various strategies were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings (i.e., credibility and dependability), including ensuring the representativeness of the sample categories by including all key stakeholders in university QA, expert review of the research instruments (by three experts in HE quality), piloting the instruments at a university before actual data collection, triangulation of data, participants and methods, participants' validation, inter-coding (two coders) and intra-

coding (two coders) (Cohen et al., 2018). Ethical requirements were adhered to by observing protocol in obtaining permission from the national level to the participants, with written informed consent obtained from each participant. Furthermore, the anonymity of the institutions and participants as well as the confidentiality of data was ensured (Ary et al., 2018). In terms of transferability, the study used a qualitative approach and a small sample size (i.e., 46 participants from four universities). This means that the findings cannot be generalised to the wider population. Case-by-case transferability is proposed considering the context under which the study was conducted.

Findings

The purpose of the study was to explore stakeholders' perceptions of the appropriateness of the existing procedures for the development of the national and institutional QA mechanisms in promoting universities' compliance in Tanzania. To this end, it explored the existing procedures that guide the development of QA mechanisms and stakeholders' satisfaction with such procedures; and the relationship between the existing procedures and cases of non-compliance.

Procedures for Developing University QA Mechanisms and Stakeholders' Satisfaction

This subsection examines the procedures to develop national and institutional QA mechanisms for universities as well as stakeholders' satisfaction with them.

National QA Guidebook

The current national QA guidebook was developed over two years (2017-2019) (TCU, 2019a, pp. viii-x). The process started with the TCU appointing a six-member Technical Committee (TC) which included the former Executive Secretary of the IUCEA and TCU as chairperson, the former QA director of the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academics (DVCA) of the Open University of Tanzania (OUT), Deputy Principal Academics (DPA) of Marian University College (MARUCO) and two senior TCU officers from the QA and legal units. The TC visited 18 accredited universities in the country; three in Morogoro, five in Dar es Salaam and two each in Zanzibar, Dodoma,

Arusha, Mwanza and Kilimanjaro regions in the eastern, northern and central zones. The other four universities submitted written inputs while further inputs were sourced from heads of universities' meetings. Apart from universities, the TC involved stakeholders from the government as well as professional bodies and agencies. It consulted national education policy, economic plans and visions, and international HE quality guidebooks from the African Union (AU), EAC and SADC (see the extract below).

The revision also considered national socio-economic developmental aspirations spelt out in the Tanzania Development Vision 2025, National Five Year Development Plan 2016/2017–2020/2021 and National Education and Training Policy 2014. Furthermore, stakeholders' inputs raised before, during and after the meeting of Heads of Universities, University Colleges and other Higher Education Institutions in the country held on 15th May 2018 and especially written inputs from the Committee of Vice Chancellors, Principals and Provosts in Tanzania (CVCPT). (TCU, 2019a, pp. ix-x)

During our individual interviews with the QADs, SQAOs and academics and the FGDs with the SCMs in the four selected universities, participants were asked whether they were involved in formulating the national QA guidebook and if they were satisfied with the procedures employed and to justify their responses. All the QADs and SQAOs in universities 1 and 4 (PUs) agreed that their institutions were among the 18 universities visited by the TCU-TC and that they were satisfied with the procedures used to develop the national QA guidebook. A QAD commented:

Yes, we were visited by the TCU technical committee when the current national QA guidebook was under development. We used that opportunity to provide our opinions. We felt valued as part of the process and our inputs were taken into consideration in the document. (QAD, University 4)

The QAD and two SQAOs from University 3 (PRU) stated that they were able to provide written inputs and then shared their written views with the TCU-TC through the QA directorate. An SQAQO said:

Yes, we were involved. We sat as the directorate and drafted our comments and then we sent them to the TCU. (SQAQO-ii, University 3)

However, the same participants from University 3 indicated that they were not satisfied with the process because none of their inputs were taken into consideration. They also felt that the QA guidebook was

formulated with the capacity of the UDSM, the oldest and biggest PU in the country, in mind. The QAD stated:

.... but we (from PRUs) are not listened to at an adequate level because our inputs are not taken into consideration. For instance, we are complaining most of the quality standards are taken from the UDSM, which are high levels for us to implement. (QAD, University 3)

Moreover, the QAD and two SQAOs from University 2 (PRU) responded that they were not involved and felt that they were deprived of the opportunity to air their views. They also felt that the guidebook set standards that place too many demands on PRUs. One of the SQAOs said:

We are really sad to implement the guidebook that we didn't participate in designing while we were the key stakeholders. For instance, before our new programme is accredited by TCU, we should have employed the required academics to run that programme. How can PRUs pay academics without being assigned teaching duties? (SQAQO-i, University 2)

Eight of the ten academics from the four universities said that they were not directly involved and were dissatisfied with their exclusion. One commented:

No, but we have QA representatives at the college level who are involved on our behalf. However, one thing I wonder is, they do not consult us to know what we need. (Academic-ii, University 3)

Another academic stated:

For the national QA guidebook, no, although currently I am a chairperson of [University 1 Academic Staff Assembly], by that time I was a secretary general, so if my academics were required to be involved my office could have the official notification. (Academic-i, University 1)

The other two academics said they were not quite sure because they were on study leave at the time. Similarly, all the SCMs at the four universities said they were not sure because in 2019 they were either in first year or had not yet entered university. One replied:

...in 2019 for some of us here was when we started our university education and others were in form VI. So we may not be in a good position to respond to that since the national guidebook was launched in the same year. At least we could have been told by our previous leaders that they were involved. (SCM, University 3)

The findings on university stakeholders' involvement in formulating the national QA guidebook and their level of satisfaction with the procedures employed are summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: University Stakeholders' Involvement in Developing the National QA Guidebook and their satisfaction with the Procedures Employed

Categories of Research Participants	Universities				Total
	1	2	3	4	
QADs	Yes (1)	No (1)	Yes (1-for involvement) and No (1-for satisfaction)	Yes (1)	04
SQAOs	Yes (2)	No (2)	Yes (2-for involvement) and No (2-for satisfaction)	Yes (2)	08
Academics	Not Sure (2) and No (1)	No (2)	No (2)	No (3)	10
SCMs	Not sure (6)	Not sure (6)	Not sure (6)	Not sure (6)	24
Total	12	11	11	12	46

Source: Field Data, 2023

Institutional QA Mechanisms

The four selected universities' institutional QA documents such as QA policies and examination regulations revealed different approaches to developing such documents. For instance, at University 3, the current QA policy was developed by the QA unit, discussed by university management and then tabled at Senate for approval. An SQA0 explained:

We developed our QA policy last year. We sat as the QA unit and prepared the draft document by consulting the TCU and other universities' QA documents. The draft was tabled to the university management for discussion and suggestions. Then we improved the final draft before being tabled to the Senate for approval and Council for noting. (SQA0-ii, University 3)

In contrast, at Universities 1, 2 and 4 the DVCA convened a special committee with representatives from the QA unit and academics and the QAD as chairperson. The committee consulted the TCU and other

universities' QA documents to develop the first draft. Unlike Universities 1 and 2, University 4 also referred to international universities' QA documents. The first draft was shared with the QA representatives at the academic units to solicit opinions from academics. Lastly the draft was referred to management, Senate and Council for approval. One of the QADs commented:

The DVC-Academic set the committee with representatives from the QA directorate, admission and academics. Then we consult other international universities and the TCU guidebook to get the first draft. The draft is shared with the academic units' representatives to provide their input for improvement. After the incorporation of academics' inputs, the final draft is tabled to the university management, Senate and Council for approval. (QAD, University 4)

The researchers reviewed QA policies and examination regulations from all four universities to establish whether there was a written statement about how they were developed. While the development process was not disclosed in the preliminary pages, the committee members (in Universities 1, 2 and 4) who developed the policies and the approval dates were listed. For confidentiality purposes, such extracts are not included in this article.

Academics and SCMs were also asked whether they were directly involved in developing institutional QA mechanisms and if they were satisfied with the procedures, and to justify their responses. All seven academics from Universities 1, 2 and 3 as well as all 24 SCMs from Universities 1, 2, 3 and 4 responded that they were not involved, nor were they satisfied with the process. Academics noted that they were represented by QA representatives from their academic units. One responded:

No, but we have college and department QA representatives who have been involved. However, they have the responsibility of consulting us instead of drafting their views as they used to do. (Academic-ii, University 1)

The SCMs stated that, as a member of Senate and Council, their president is involved at the approval stage. An SCM reported:

...for the setting of institutional QA guidelines No, although I remember when I was a president I was invited to attend the Senate meeting and one of the agenda items was to approve the QA policy. But because we were not involved from the start and you find the document has been tabled during

the Senate meeting. It was hard for me as the president to give my opinions, especially on that technical document at that stage. (SCM, University 2)

Unlike Universities 1, 2 and 3, all three academics from University 4 said that they were involved and were satisfied with the process. One remarked:

Yes...other academics have been involved once [they] get a chance to be appointed as the members of the committee for designing QA documents and once the draft is shared for improvement. (Academic-i, University 4)

The findings on university stakeholders' involvement in developing institutional QA mechanisms and whether they were satisfied with the procedures are summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3: University Stakeholders' Involvement in Developing Institutional QA Documents and their Satisfaction with the Procedures Employed

Categories of Research Participants	Universities				Total
	1	2	3	4	
QADs	Yes (1)	Yes (1)	Yes (1)	Yes (1)	04
SQAOS	Yes (2)	Yes (2)	Yes (2)	Yes (2)	08
Academics	No (3)	No (2)	No (2)	Yes (3)	10
SCMs	No (6)	No (6)	No (6)	No (6)	24
Total	12	11	11	12	46

Source: Field Data, 2023

Existing procedures to develop QA mechanisms and cases of non-compliance

The participants were also asked whether the existing procedures to develop national and institutional QA mechanisms contributed to non-compliance by universities and the reasons for their answer.

National QA Guidebook

Eight of the ten (80%) QADs, SQAOS and academics from Universities 2 and 3 (PRUs) agreed that the procedures employed to develop the

national QA guidebook resulted in non-compliance, while two disagreed with this statement.

At University 2, participants justified their agreement with the statement by observing that, it was difficult to accept the document when they were not involved in its formulation and that they felt that it was flawed in some respects. For example, an academic remarked:

Yes, there is a connection because technically in developing such a guidebook stakeholders feel ownership and understanding once involved in the setting process. (Academic-ii, University 2)

At University 3, participants were of the view that failure to involve them in drafting the document meant that their inputs were not considered. The QAD replied:

I can say yes because the document left behind all our inputs. So we are even trying to implement what is possible. ...That is why we have been punished by TCU several times. (QAD, University 3)

At Universities 1 and 4 (PUs), all six interviewed QADs and SQAOS disagreed with the statement, as they felt that other factors contribute to non-compliance. However, all six academics agreed with the statement. A QAD responded:

No, I think there are other reasons which lead to non-compliance cases such as negligence of PRUs to respect the quality of education over the commercialisation of HE as well as inadequate financial resources which affect even our PUs. (QAD, University 4)

Two participants at University 3 concurred with these sentiments, while those at Universities 1 and 4 who agreed with the statement justified their answer in a similar manner to those who responded in the affirmative at Universities 2 and 3.

The findings on university stakeholders' views on whether existing procedures to develop a national QA guidebook contribute to non-compliance on the part of universities are summarised in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Existing Procedures to Develop the National QA Guidebook's contribution to Universities' Non-compliance

Categories of Research Participants	Universities				Total
	1	2	3	4	
QADs	No (1)	Yes (1)	Yes (1)	No (1)	04
SQAOs	No (2)	Yes (2)	Yes (1) and No (1)	No (2)	08
Academics	Yes (3)	Yes (2)	Yes (1) and No (1)	Yes (3)	10
SCMs	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	6	5	5	6	22

Source: Field Data, 2023
 Key: N/A= Not Applicable

Institutional QA Mechanisms

All the QADs and SQAOs who were interviewed at the four selected universities stated that existing procedures to develop institutional QA documents do not contribute to cases of non-compliance at universities, while all the academics and SCMs agreed with this statement. An SQA0 commented:

No, because we have been trying to involve them without reciprocating and yet [they] have been the ones who are complaining once we enforce implementation. (SQA0-ii, University 2)

The SCMs justified their response by arguing that students' examination irregularities are caused by the fact that students are not adequately aware of QA procedures. The SCM replied:

I think this is true because we have several students' examination cases that have been caused by their inadequate awareness of examination regulations and QA policies. Also, that has been caused by the fact that we are not involved in the setting and even after setting we receive very limited seminars to understand our dos and don'ts. (SCM, University, 1)

The findings on university stakeholders' perceptions of whether existing procedures to develop institutional QA documents contribute to cases of non-compliance at universities are summarised in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Existing Procedures to Develop Institutional QA Documents' Contribution to Universities' Non-compliance

Categories of Research Participants	Universities				Total
	1	2	3	4	
QADs	No (1)	No (1)	No (1)	No (1)	04
SQAOs	No (2)	No (2)	No (2)	No (2)	08
Academics	Yes (3)	Yes (2)	Yes (2)	Yes (3)	10
SCMs	Yes (6)	Yes (6)	Yes (6)	Yes (6)	24
Total	12	11	11	12	46

Source: Field Data, 2023

Discussion

This study explored stakeholders' perceptions of the appropriateness of the procedures which guide the development of QA mechanisms in promoting universities' compliance in Tanzania. Overall, the findings revealed that the majority of the participants perceived that these procedures are not effective in promoting universities' compliance. As such, key stakeholders' limited participation in developing the national and institutional QA mechanisms was one of the reasons for cases of non-compliance. This finding concurs with Ramírez and Haque (2016) who observed that the reason for PRUs' non-compliance in Bangladesh is their marginalisation in developing the national QA guidebook as well as the existence of some impracticable QA standards.

More specifically, the findings on the national QA guidebook revealed that the TCU-TC comprises senior academics (with adequate administrative experience in QA) from the PPU, conventional and open universities, and small to large universities, as well as TCU staff (TCU, 2019a). This means that its composition is based on size, the nature of academic activities and ownership of the universities, with the TCU serving as host. Furthermore, it was found that the two selected PUs were among the 18 universities visited by the TCU-TC, while one PRU shared written input

and the other missed both opportunities. The PUs expressed satisfaction with the procedure employed to develop the national QA guidebook while the PRUs were dissatisfied. Although generalisations cannot be made from the four purposively selected cases, this is cause for concern. The international literature (see Ramírez and Haque, 2016; Rwirahira, 2017) also shows that PRUs have complained of marginalisation and mistreatment by national regulatory agencies.

Furthermore, the description of the methodology employed to craft the TCU guidebook as well as the responses from the academics and students in the four selected universities reveal that academics and students were not given an adequate opportunity to make inputs into the 2019 guidebook. The TCU-TC and QA directorates (as the hosts) of the three involved universities appear to have expended less effort on inviting the general community of academics and students to contribute their views. This implies that at university level, inputs were drawn from administrators and QA officials. Moreover, the TCU does not seem to have involved graduates and employers (as external stakeholders) in formulating the national 2019 QA guidebook (TCU, 2019a). Alzafari and Ursin (2019) observed that students (as internal stakeholders) as well as employers and graduates (external stakeholders) of European universities were less involved in setting institutional QA policies. Consequently, they find it more difficult to comply with QA mechanisms. This violates the IUCEA's (2016) model which calls for academics, students, graduates, employers, society and government's effective involvement in setting university QA mechanisms to promote compliance.

Since HE quality is a multidimensional concept and stakeholders have different viewpoints, their effective involvement in setting QA mechanisms is key to ensuring their ownership and acceptance during implementation (Alzafari and Kratzer, 2019; IUCEA, 2016). For instance, academics are the key players in implementing the national QA guidebook at all QA levels (input, process and output) while students are key university clients who are prepared to be academically capable graduates through well-drafted and implemented quality standards (Alzafari and Ursin, 2019; Uludağ et al., 2021). Based on their experience

of graduates whom they currently employ, employers can advise on best practices that will shape the quality of future graduates (Alzafari and Ursin, 2019). Thus, a combination of viewpoints from these different groups can facilitate the formulation of high quality standards that are accepted by all interest groups (Ryan, 2015).

Stakeholders also reported being marginalised in the development of institutional QA mechanisms. For instance, the findings revealed that unlike University 4, where academics were reported to be involved, but students were marginalised, in the other three selected universities, academics and students were marginalised. The emphasis seems to have been on representatives (student presidents as well as college and department QA officers). Furthermore, these representatives' involvement was not well-coordinated and could be described as shadow involvement. For example, student presidents will find it difficult to approve QA policy drafts if they were not involved from the beginning and have limited awareness of QA. All these factors can result in non-compliance on the part of universities.

Although the majority of the participants acknowledged the relationship between existing national procedures and non-compliance, researchers have noted patterned responses among PUs. This could be due to the fact that QADs and SQAOs from PUs negated that relationship because they met with the TCU-TC without inviting academics to provide their views. Similarly, academics were aggrieved at not being involved. It was established that 80% of the QADs, SQAOs and academics at PRUs held similar views (i.e., insufficient involvement) to academics from PUs. Again, this could be due to the fact that one of the PRUs was not involved at all and the other felt that its input was not taken into consideration. Another pattern of responses exists with regard to institutional QA policies, where all the interviewed QADs and SQAOs at the four universities stated that the existing procedures to develop institutional QA documents do not contribute to cases of non-compliance at universities, while all the academics and SCMs agreed with this statement. The QADs and SQAOs argued that academics and students were given a chance to participate, but did not respond, while the academics and SCMs felt marginalised and cited a lack of awareness

of QA. This implies that these universities' QA directorates failed to use persuasive approaches to motivate stakeholders' participation, resulting in non-compliance with QA standards that jeopardises the quality of HE.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored stakeholders' perceptions of the appropriateness of the existing procedures which guide the development of QA mechanisms in promoting universities' compliance in Tanzania. The data from the four purposively selected universities revealed that the procedures to develop the national QA guidebook of 2019 did not offer an adequate and open opportunity to the general community of academics, students, graduates and employers to provide their inputs. Turning to the institutional QA mechanisms, unlike University 4, the procedures at the other three universities were observed to not reach the general community of academics and students; instead, they ended with their QA representatives. The participants were thus of the view that the national and institutional procedures have contributed to non-compliance among university administrators, academics and students. Based on these findings, it is concluded that, first, the existing procedures to develop QA mechanisms provide for insufficient stakeholder involvement, particularly with respect to PRUs. Second, inadequate involvement was identified as one of the reasons for non-compliance.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that a broad spectrum of stakeholders should be involved in developing the national QA guidebook, including academics, students, graduates and employers. These groups can best be reached by sharing the questionnaires or drafts of the guidebooks with their leaders who would then solicit their inputs. For instance, academics can be accessed through their university administrators or the Academic Staff Associations of Public Universities and Colleges of Tanzania (ASAPUCT). Students can be reached through their university administrators or the Tanzania Higher Learning Institutions Students Organisation (TAHLISO) and Zanzibar High Learners Federation (ZAH LIFE). Alumni convocations could be asked to assist in obtaining graduates' inputs. Employers can be accessed through the Association of Tanzania Employers (ATE). All these groups are in a position to contribute constructive inputs on improving the national QA

guidebook in order to enhance compliance and HE quality. In the case of institutional QA mechanisms, QA representatives should solicit views from their constituency rather than relying on their personal opinions. Of interest, however, is whether all stakeholders' views can be expected to carry the same weight in negotiating quality standards. Given that the state is mandated to ensure the quality of public services, it could be argued that its specialised agencies and experienced QA professionals have strong legitimacy to set quality standards and QA procedures. The market imperative under which private universities operate could also lead to a leveling down of quality standards. Ultimately, whatever weight is assigned to their contributions, it is imperative to ensure that all voices are heard, thereby facilitating implementation.

References

- Akalu, G. A. (2017). Higher education 'massification' and challenges to the professoriate: Do academics' conceptions of quality matter? *Quality in Higher Education* 22(3), 260-276. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2016.1266230>
- Alzafari, K., and Kratzer, J. (2019). Challenges of implementing quality in European higher education: An expert perspective. *Quality in Higher Education* 25(3), 261-288. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2019.1676963>
- Alzafari, K., and Ursin, J. (2019). Implementation of quality assurance standards in European higher education: Does context matter? *Quality in Higher Education* 25(1), 58-75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2019.1578069>
- Ansah, F. (2015). A strategic quality assurance framework in an African higher education context. *Quality in Higher Education* 21(2), 132-150. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2015.1084720>
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Sorensen, C. K., and Walker, D. (2018). *Introduction to research in education*. Cengage Learning.
- Asiyai, R. I. (2022). Best practices for quality assurance in higher education: Implications for educational administration. *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 25(5), 843-854. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2019.1710569>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in*

- education. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315456539>
- Forde, C., McMahon, M. A., Hamilton, G., and Murray, R. (2016). Rethinking professional standards to promote professional learning. *Professional Development in Education* 42(1), 19-35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2014.999288>
- Imaniriho, D. (2020). Collaboration in quality assurance in Rwandan higher education: Realities, issues, approaches and challenges. *African Multidisciplinary Journal of Research*, 1-6. <https://bit.ly/3uTa4mB>
- Inter-University Council for East Africa. (2014). Quality of graduates in Africa. Retrieved on March 10, 2022, from <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/world-view/quality-graduates-africa>
- Inter-University Council for East Africa. (2015). A road map to quality: Handbook for quality assurance in higher education. Revised and combined volume 1 and 2: Guidelines for internal and external programme assessment.
- Inter-University Council for East Africa. (2016). A road map to quality: Handbook for quality assurance in higher education. Volume 5: Principles, practices and management of external quality assurance in East Africa.
- Isaeva, R., Eisenschmidt, E., Vanari, K., and Kumpas-Lenk, K. (2020). Students' views on dialogue: Improving student engagement in the quality assurance process. *Quality in Higher Education* 26(1), 80-97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2020.1729307>
- Keykha, A., Ezati, M., and Khodayari, Z. (2021). Identification of the barriers and factors affecting the quality of higher education in Allameh Tabataba'i university from the viewpoints of faculty members. *Quality in Higher Education* 28(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2021.1968107>
- Kuyok, K. A. (2017). Higher education in South Sudan: Living with challenges. *International Higher Education* (89), 16-18.
- Leavy, P. (2017). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based and community-based participatory research approaches*. The Guilford Press.
- Machumu, H. J., and Kisanga, S. H. (2014). Quality assurance practices in higher education institutions: Lesson from Africa. *Journal of Education and Practice* 5(16), 144-156. <https://bit.ly/47WNlok>
- Mgaiwa, S. J. (2018). Operationalising quality assurance processes in Tanzanian higher education: Academics' perceptions from selected private universities. *Creative Education* 9(6), 901-918. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2018.96066>
- Mgaiwa, S. J. (2021b). Leadership initiatives in response to institutional quality assurance challenges in Tanzania's private universities. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 45(9), 1206-1223. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2020.1860203>
- Mgaiwa, S. J., and Ishengoma, J. M. (2017). Institutional constraints affecting quality assurance processes in Tanzania's private universities. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa* 15(1), 57-67. <https://doi.org/10.57054/jhea.v15i1.1491>
- Mgaiwa, S. J., and Poncian, J. (2016). Public-private partnership in higher education provision in Tanzania: Implications for access to and quality of education. *Bandung: Journal of the Global South* 3(6), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40728-016-0036-z>
- Mrema, D., Ndayambaje, I., Ntawiha, P., and Ndabaga, E. (2023a). Non-compliance with quality assurance mechanisms in Tanzanian universities in the context of input, process and output perspective. *Rwandan Journal of Education* 7(1), 54-71. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/rje/article/view/262137>
- Mrema, D., Ndayambaje, I., Ntawiha, P., and Ndabaga, E. (2023b). Punitive measures against non-compliance with quality mechanisms in East African higher education institutions. *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences* 4(2), 32-44. <https://doi.org/10.46606/eajess2023v04i02.0273>
- Mrema, D., Ndayambaje, I., Ntawiha, P., and Ndabaga, E. (2023c). The initiatives for enforcing the quality assurance standards in fostering universities' compliance in Tanzania. *African Journal of Empirical Research* 4(2), 1298-1313. <https://doi.org/10.51867/ajernet.4.2.131>
- Mrema, D., Ndayambaje, I., Ntawiha, P., and Ndabaga, E. (2024). The practicability of quality assurance mechanisms in promoting Tanzanian universities' compliance. *European Journal of Educational Research* 13(3), 1139-1154. <https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-er.13.3.1139>
- National Council for Higher Education. (2023). Public Notice. <https://unche.or.ug/public-notice/>

- Neema-Abooki, P. (2016). Academic staff competence development as a gap in quality assurance in universities in Uganda. *Makerere Journal of Higher Education* 8(2), 139-151. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/majohe.v8i2.5>
- Odhiambo, G. O. (2014). Quality assurance for public higher education: Context, strategies, and challenges in Kenya. *Higher Education Research and Development* 33(5), 978-991. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2014.890578>
- Pham, H. T., and Nguyen, C. H. (2020). Academic staff quality and the role of quality assurance mechanisms: The Vietnamese case. *Quality in Higher Education* 26(3), 262-283. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2020.1761603>
- Ramírez, G. B., and Haque, H. M. J. (2016). Addressing quality challenges in the private university sector in Bangladesh: From policy formulation to institutional implementation. *Quality in Higher Education* 22(2), 139-151. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2016.1198177>
- Rwirahira, R. (2017, October 27). Private universities petition president over closures. *University World News*. Retrieved on April 30, 2022, from <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20171027071144525>
- Ryan, T. (2015). Quality assurance in higher education: A review of literature. *Higher Learning Research Communications* 5(4). <https://doi.org/10.18870/hlrc.v5i4.257>
- Shabani, J., Okebukola, P., and Oyewole, O. (2014). Quality assurance in Africa: Towards a continental higher education and research space. *International Journal of African Higher Education* 1(1), 139-171. <https://doi.org/10.6017/IJAHE.V1I1.5646>
- Sikubwabo, C., Muhirwa, A., and Ntawiha, P. (2020). An investigation of institutional factors influencing the decrease of student enrollments in selected private higher learning institutions in Rwanda. *European Journal of Education Studies* 7(9), 56-77. <http://dx.doi.org/10.46827/ejes.v7i9.3228>
- Tanzania Commission for Universities. (2019a). Handbook for standards and guidelines for university education in Tanzania (3rd ed.). <https://bit.ly/3IMF4IJ>
- Tanzania Commission for Universities. (2019b). State of university education in Tanzania 2018. <https://bit.ly/3Ppftcz>
- Tanzania Commission for Universities. (2024). University institutions approved to operate in Tanzania as of February 22, 2024. <https://bit.ly/3vm6HoT>
- Times Higher Education. (2023). World university rankings 2023. Retrieved on August 07, 2023, from <https://bit.ly/46WmYgT>
- Top Universities. (2023). QS world university rankings 2023. Retrieved on May 02, 2023, from <https://bit.ly/48ewb5d>
- Uludağ, G., Bardakçı, S., Avşaroğlu, M. D., Çankaya, F., Çatal, S., Ayvat, F., Koçer, A.,
- Yıldırım, S. A., and Elmas, M. (2021). Investigation of the higher education students' participation in quality assurance processes based on the theory of planned behaviour: A case of Turkey. *Quality in Higher Education* 27(3), 338-356. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2021.1946273>
- Wissam, B., and Amina, C. (2022). Academics' perceptions of constraints to quality assurance implementation in higher education in Algeria. *Economics and Culture* 19(1), 17-29. <https://doi.org/10.2478/jec-2022-0002>
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.