Case study: Quality Assurance developments in the SADC

1   Introduction

The purpose of this case study is to give *participants an overview of the current status and development of QA in the region and in selected countries.*

The case study has been structured to provide a general overview of quality assurance in the SADC region and is followed by a brief description of QA arrangements in selected countries. Detailed information may be obtained by accessing the references at the end of the case study.

Note: The authors acknowledge the report on the *State of Play: Regional Quality Assurance in Southern Africa (SADC)* by Neil Butcher & Associates (2017) whose work has been key to writing this case study (Hereafter "*NBA Report*"). The NBA Report was commissioned by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) during 2017, as part of a process of preparation for possible engagement in a regional QA capacity development programme in the SADC. It is important to note that the Report (p. 15) recommends:

> *Increasing the sample of HEIs to obtain a more representative sample of IQA practices in SADC. Extended research would enable construction of a bigger and more representative sample, while covering a full spectrum of diversity of institutional types. Widening the base of the IQA research would provide valuable guidance to SAQAN and all EQAs in the region, as well as to universities themselves.*

This is an important caveat, given that the NBA report only sampled 17 higher education institutions, which is not an adequate base for developing a coherent understanding of the state play in terms of IQA systems.

2   Section A: Overview of QA in the SADC

2.1   Approaches to external quality assurance (EQA) in the SADC

All fifteen SADC countries have a body/ unit responsible for quality assurance (QA) in Higher Education (HE) that may be in the form of dedicated QA bodies or sub-divisions within HE ministries focussed on QA. In most instances these bodies constitute national QA agencies which are government structures. Some countries have several QA agencies, for example professional accreditation agencies, requiring better national coordination.

The EQA approaches are aligned with the legal mandate of the respective agency and the national context to address specific national higher education needs. In most instances, there is a combination of cyclical accreditation and audits which may be focussed at institutional and/or programme level. There are various permutations of these processes in terms of their purpose, outcomes, and level. For example, an agency may undertake accreditation or evaluation of academic programmes and may focus on new and/or existing programmes. Similarly, it may conduct institutional evaluations, accreditations, or institutional audits. Institutional accreditations have direct consequences for the retention of an institution's status as a higher education institution, while evaluations and audits do not. In addition, the legal mandate informs the remit of the agency regarding the application of its processes to public and / or private HEIs. The focus of EQA processes varies. Butcher (2017) notes that "most QAAs appear to be focused on ensuring compliance, although there is evidence of some countries adopting a more 'developmental' approach".

There are synergies between countries regarding their QA approaches, as they all focus mainly on registration, accreditation, and audits. There is a strong tradition of peer review as a key aspect of external quality assurance systems, and they have developed good mechanisms to ensure the independence of the process. Thirteen of the fifteen countries have developed national standards and guidelines for QA.

2.2   Institutional quality assurance (IQA) in the SADC

Because of the limited sample on which the Butcher Report draws, it is more difficult to draw conclusions on the presence of institutional level QA. This does not mean that such information is not available, but simply that the approach followed by the report entails that it had limited information pertaining to QA at universities in the region at its disposal. The comments in the case study are thus necessarily provisional and cannot be seen as representative of the state of play with respect to IQA in the SADC region. There is evidence that some HEIs may have a dedicated office or unit with QA responsibilities, however, higher education institutions (HEIs) are at different phases in developing their QA policies and practices. Whilst most HEIs are compliant with the respective EQA requirements, there have been some shifts from compliance to quality promotion and enhancement.

2.3   Stakeholders

Key stakeholders in EQA include the state/government, Quality assurance agencies, students, parents, HEIs, HEI leadership, staff, international bodies, international institutions, Professional Bodies/Councils, employers and industry.

3   Section B: The role of regional organisations:

3.1   Southern African Quality Assurance Network (SAQAN)

SAQAN was launched in Botswana in 2015. It is a non-profit, voluntary member-based organisation of National Higher Education Quality Assurance Bodies and higher education institutions from Southern Africa. The main aims of SAQAN are to promote quality in higher education, foster harmonisation of quality assurance systems in the region and beyond; and facilitate international recognition of higher education qualifications from Southern Africa to enhance mobility of staff and students.

According to information on its website, the key priorities of SAQAN are to:
- *promote the creation of effective and efficient quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms in higher education within Southern Africa;*
- *support the development of quality assurance through capacity building, seminars, workshops and conferences;*
- *disseminate information through newsletters, journals, books and other documents, in print and electronic forms;*
- *participate and collaborate in continental and international training and research programmes within Southern Africa;*
- *mobilise resources to sustain the Network's projects and programmes; and develop and maintain a database of quality assurance bodies and experts.*

SAQAN is a voluntary-membership organization open to all Southern African countries. Membership is open to national quality assurance agencies/bodies, ministries responsible for higher and tertiary education, higher education institutions, academic associations, universities student associations, employers' associations, and other interested stakeholders. The secretariat of SAQAN is currently the Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA), with Zimbabwe Higher Education Council being the chairperson. The BQA has encouraged local

educational and training providers and other stakeholders to affiliate with SAQAN. The third SAQAN regional conference held in South Africa in 2018 highlighted the need for '*collaboration, networking, and alignment to ensure regionally and internationally competitive qualifications/ graduates.*' The conference also encouraged quality assurance and qualifications authorities to collaborate with each other, including making available and sharing databases of good practices. SAQAN therefore has a key role to play in regional harmonization initiatives.

3.2   Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA)

The Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) identifies Institutional Quality Management as one of its four strategic focus areas. SARUA recognises that quality in all its dimensions is a recognised priority for higher education across Africa. There are multiple continental and regional initiatives underway that aim to address inter alia:

- The harmonisation of accreditation systems,
- The development of external quality assurance frameworks,
- Capacity development for internal quality assurance,
- The development of continental and regional qualification frameworks, linked to systems (frameworks and guidelines) for credit transfer and recognition and the recognition of prior learning to enable student and lecturer mobility, and
- The verification of qualifications.

These continental and regional initiatives provide the broad framework within which SARUA plans and implements its activities around institutional quality management. However, SARUA also contributes actively to the development of this broader framework through: i) its role as an implementation partner for Phase 2 of the Harmonisation of African Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) Initiative, and ii) its participation in the SADC Technical Committee for Certification and Accreditation.

SARUA recognises the importance of regional collaboration in quality assurance development In 2018, SARUA entered into an MoU with SAQAN for the purpose of defining the respective roles of both networks in regional quality development, and also to record their intent to pursue collaborative projects and to submit joint applications for funding. In terms of the MoU, SAQAN's primary focus is on EQA development, while SARUA focuses on IQA development. The interrelationship between these two dimensions necessitates that the two networks pursue optimal collaboration in joint projects. Specifically, Section 4.4 of the MoU recognises that:

- *Joint efforts between SAQAN and SARUA, in liaison with the SADC Secretariat, are likely to expedite the formalisation of QA standards and frameworks for higher education, and the development of effective and appropriate systems of external and internal QA in the region that will help to increase the mobility of staff, students and graduates across the sub-region and internationally.*

- *Both SAQAN and SARUA recognise the importance of linking national and regional QA efforts to those of continental and international agencies and initiatives such as the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN), the Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation Initiative (HAQAA), the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF) and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).*

- *Considering the rich experience of the leadership of each organisation, and the mutual enrichment of the visions of the two organisations, it is reasonable to argue that projects undertaken jointly by the two organisations are likely to have a greater*

impact, with funds being optimally used, than would be the case when the two are operating in isolation from each other.

To date, the two networks have not yet developed joint projects.

Within its mandate for institutional quality management development, SARUA focuses on the quality management of continuing education (non-formal programmes), and of formal qualifications. With respect to continuing education, SARUA has received a small grant from the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) for a project on the development of good practice guidelines for continuing education in South Africa. As part of this process, SARUA will form a working group of universities from South Africa to review and adopt the guidelines. The working group will be open to universities from SADC countries. SARUA will also organize a series of policy consultations and meetings relating to the good practice guidelines with national regulators and qualification authorities in South Africa. While this project focuses only on South Africa, SARUA will approach the project as the basis for a wider project on the development of good practice guidelines for the quality management of continuing education in the SADC.

With respect to formal academic programmes, SARUA is working with DAAD on an IQA capacity development initiative (DAAD IQA) for higher education institutions, which will be offered during 2020 and 2021. This project will use the DAAD manuals for capacity development in internal quality management, that have been developed through extensive involvement in East Africa and other parts of the world. SARUA anticipates that the cohort of twenty colleagues that participates in the DAAD IQA programme will form a reference group for the development of a broader capacity development programme in the SADC. In conjunction with the DAAD IQA programme, SARUA intends to conduct a trend analysis of internal quality management during 2021, so that this analysis can present a basis for capacity development in institutional quality management. SARUA will seek support from the UNESCO Regional Office in Harare and SAQAN in this trend analysis. In this way, SARUA intends to address the need for a deeper assessment of the current state of internal quality management in the SADC, as recognised by the Butcher Report.

3.3   UNESCO Regional Office

The UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa (UNESCO ROSA) organized a Regional Consultation Meeting for Anglophone and Lusophone Africa entitled: "The role of Qualify Assurance in Higher Education: challenges, developments and trends" in November 2018.The objectives of this conference were:

- Take stock of higher education reforms and QA initiatives in the Anglophone and Lusophone countries of the Continent and document best practices to promote quality culture.
- Identify major obstacles and challenges to accelerating the development of QA in higher education at national (and regional) level(s) aimed at sustainable socio-economic development.
- Discuss issues around internationalization in relation to quality assurance in higher education.
- Review issues relating to the status of the Addis Convention and actions taken by Member States to put in place relevant instruments (e.g. laws, policies, establishment of quality assurance and recognition agencies and the recognition manual) to make it work.

It is not known whether the regional conference led to specific proposals on the way forward, but it is clear that UNESCO ROSA has an interest in regional quality development, and could be an important partner in a regional project for institutional quality development.

4 Section C: external quality assurance in SADC countries

The purpose of this section is to provide a brief (meta-level) description of the external QA (EQA) system in a sample of SADC countries and, where possible, to provide examples of internal QA (IQA). In the main, the information in this section derives from the NBA report. For detailed information please access the references or the respective websites of the QAAs.

4.1 Mozambique

In Mozambique the government had to deal urgently with a multiplicity of challenges affecting higher education while simultaneously dealing with entrenched centralised governance traditions. This manifested itself in at least two ways in terms of QA processes: (i) overlapping coordination and regulatory bodies; and (ii) central legislation for a QA system, which left limited space for the newly established National Council on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CNAQ) to take action. In 2007, Mozambique introduced the National System of Accreditation Evaluation and Quality Assurance of Higher Education (SINAQES) as a system of standards, procedures and mechanisms to regulate higher education quality and ensure the delivery of quality services from all actors and stakeholders. SINAQES covers three main domains referred as 'sub-systems', namely the sub-system of self-evaluation to be undertaken by individual institutions, the sub-system of external evaluation and the sub-system of institutional and programme accreditation. CNAQ has overall responsibility for the SINAQES.

SINAQES goals are: (i) to develop and promote the principles and culture of consistent quality of services provided by institutions of higher education; (ii) to identify, develop and implement standards and quality indicators; (iii) to inform society about the quality of teaching in HEIs; (iv) to assist in identifying problems in higher education and to outline mechanisms and policy proposals for their resolution; and (v) to contribute to the integration of Mozambican higher education within the region and the world. It offers standards, mechanisms and procedures to be used by tertiary institutions for self-evaluation, and for external review, with a view to accreditation or re-accreditation. It also provides general guidelines for the execution of these tasks, including key evaluation indicators as well as principles for self-assessment, namely participation of stakeholders, transparency, regularity, dissemination, commitment from the institutional management, reliable and valid information and effective utilization of the results. It makes programme evaluation a legal requirement.

According to the report by external reviewers (HAQAA Reviews 2018), CNAQ has been commended for the role it played as a driver of QA processes in the country that has been recognized by different stakeholders and academic community. CNAQ has contributed to the development of a QA culture, slowing down the disorganized expansion of HEIs and programmes, and raising awareness of the need for compliance with quality standards and accreditation.

Some of the recommendation by the reviewers were to:
- Increase the number of HEIs with quality assurance units and QA mechanisms;
- Revise current protocols for self-assessments and external assessments, aiming to make them simpler, and focused on the critical QA issues;
- Revise the organizational structure to strengthen supporting mechanisms to leadership and activities by considering the possibility of an advisory council (in whatever format is considered more adequate) to help CNAQ reflect in a more detached manner from daily management.

4.2 Namibia

Currently two QA bodies, mandated through legislation, oversee quality in Higher Education (HE) in Namibia. These are: the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) established through the Namibia Qualifications Authority Act of 1996 and the National Council on Higher Education (NCHE) established under the Higher Education Act of 2003. There are overlaps in the

powers, roles and responsibilities of the two bodies resulting from their respective legal mandates. The NQA is the custodian of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and maintains a register of all NQF qualifications and part-qualifications. The NCHE and the NQA both have a legal mandate regarding programme accreditation and institutional audits. It is compulsory for all higher education institutions in Namibia to comply with the requirements of the national QA system.

The quality assurance system of the NCHE consists of two sub-systems, viz. programme accreditation (and re-accreditation) and institutional audits. Both systems are evidence-based: hence reports, statements, etc. need to be substantiated by documentary proof. Accreditation of providers and programmes by the NQA is verification that:
- specific programmes offered by an education and training provider in Namibia meet acceptable standards;
- the education and training provider has the ability to teach or deliver those specified courses or programmes; and
- the education and training provider has the ability to assess the performance of learners taking the specified courses or programmes.

The key strengths of QA in the country are the legal mandates of the QAAs and related regulations as well as political will and support. The challenges facing QA are: lack/ limited skills, overlapping of mandates between the QA Agencies in the country, a lack of funding and the measurement of impact.

Through the institutional audit standards, the external quality assurance system makes provision for criteria pertaining to the internal quality assurance processes of institutions. With respect to the development of IQA systems:
- The University of Namibia (UNAM) has a Quality Assurance Framework and a Quality Assurance and Management Policy. It also has established Guidelines and Procedures for Quality Reviews. The university stakeholders include government, employers, students, professional bodies, NGOs, QAAs and peer experts from outside the country.

- Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) has a Quality Management Framework (QMF) and a Quality Management Policy (QMP), which are the guiding documents with regards to the application of institutional quality. The QA approach is an institution-wide one based on self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and student evaluation. The key stakeholders in QA include the VC, Council, Senate, Institutional staff and students.

4.3   Seychelles
The Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA) was established through the SQA of 2005 which mandates the development and implementation of a NQF. The SQA is responsible for external QA and the QA system operates as a voluntary system. The main purpose of the quality assurance system is to assure stakeholders that the registered institution is providing good quality education, offers 'value for money' in terms of quality input and output, and the interests of students are protected. The QA approach recognises the need for a developmental model of quality assurance, which balances the dual purposes of accountability and quality improvement.

The SQA is in the process of seeking a review of the Act so that participation by institutions becomes compulsory. It is however, compulsory for all government HEIs who want their qualifications to be recognized nationally, to go through the process of quality assurance for their programmes to be validated and institution to be accredited.

Regarding IQA, the University of Seychelles (UniSey) became operational in 2009 and initial QA processes focused on student evaluation of learning. The QA system developed

incrementally and in 2015 the university achieved 'Centre Recognition Status' from the University of London (one of three universities in Africa to have achieved this so far); and full Accreditation Centre Status from SQA.

Their approach to QA focuses on accreditation, by meeting standards set by the University of London, and the SQA. At an institutional level the QA system focusses on programme monitoring and review, and the evaluation of the student experience. At the programme level, the university has an external examiner system for benchmarking assessment processes and the qualification. The university also conducts staff peer reviews. A Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy has been agreed and, currently, work is being undertaken to develop a comprehensive quality management framework to embrace all aspects of UniSey's work

4.4   South Africa

The South African higher education sector has structured, operationalised quality assurance processes at the national level which are compulsory and cater for both public and private institutions.

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) is the legislated and functioning national quality assurance agency for higher education in South Africa. The Higher Education Act of 1997 made provision for the CHE to establish a permanent sub-committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). The CHE has executive responsibility for quality assurance and promotion and gives effect to this responsibility through the HEQC as mandated by the HE Act and its amendments.

The CHE responsibility for quality assurance in higher education includes programme accreditation, institutional audits, quality promotion and capacity development, standards development, national reviews, and the development and implementation of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF), which deals with the higher education and training band on the National Qualifications Framework. Currently the various QA processes are conducted discretely which results in a fragmented approach. The CHE has approved a new Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) that "aims to simplify processes and provide for greater self-regulation, responsibility and accountability of higher education institutions for the quality management of their provisioning for HE through their internal quality assurance (IQA) systems". In the QAF, the CHE emphasises a developmental approach to building and supporting internal quality assurance in institutions, balanced by the need for accountability and ensuring that higher education standards are met.

In terms of IQA, the University of Cape Town (UCT), a public institution, is in the process of developing a QA framework. The QA approach at UCT is underpinned by continuous improvement and the university is involved in both accreditation and audits. QA is the responsibility of both academic and administrative staff, with Senate, the QA committee and students being the key stakeholders. In the report by Butcher it is stated that "there has been a positive shift in willingness to engage with quality from academics, but the resistance, as is always the case, is on accountability; with quality assurance sometimes being viewed as managerialism and an infringement on academic freedom".

Milpark Education is a private institution with a QA approach that is, in the main, compliance driven i.e. responsive to the requirements of the CHE and other national legislated bodies. The institution has a QA Policy and associated QA procedures. The policy provides a clear governance structure for driving quality assurance which is focussed at institutional and programme level. The institution has not yet been subjected to an audit by the CHE and to date has been involved only in CHE programme accreditation processes. Key stakeholders include academic staff, the CEO and the management team, and the academic leadership.

4.5　Swaziland

The Swaziland Higher Education Council (SHEC) has statutory responsibility for QA in HE and was established in 2016 as required by the Higher Education Act of 2013. The Act also compels all higher education institutions to register with the SHEC to operate. A QA framework was established in 2016 and the purpose of the QA approach is to ensure that HEIs offer quality education through QA processes that focus on the establishment, registration, and accreditation of HEIs. The key QA assurance priorities of the SHEC are: to provide quality education, infrastructure and facilities, adequately and relevantly qualified personnel, relevant academic programmes. The SHEC is authorised to close institutions that fail to comply with quality standards. SHEC is in the process of aligning the Swaziland Qualifications Framework with the SADCQF which will facilitate the mobility of the holders of quality qualifications within the region.

With respect to IQA, the University of Swaziland (UNISWA) has a Quality Assurance Policy and Framework. At the institutional level, QA focuses on administration and academic programmes and the institution is required to comply with the SHEC Quality Standards for accreditation purposes. The university adopts an audit approach for some administrative functions and it also implements a Total Quality Management (TQM) approach to quality particularly emphasising continuous improvement (Quality Enhancements). The TQM approach has been informed by best practices derived mainly from the Bologna Process, UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, and the Australian Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency. The key stakeholders include the government / SHEC, employers, parents and students, Council/Senate, academic and staff.

4.6　Tanzania

Responsibility for QA and accreditation of higher education in Tanzania is vested in the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) which was established on 1 July 2005 under the Universities Act Cap.346 of the Laws of Tanzania. The TCU is a semi-autonomous body with statutory responsibilities and has a: (1) regulatory role for conducting periodic evaluation of universities, their systems and programmes; (2) supportive role in overseeing QA systems at the universities; (3) advisory role that entails advising government and the general public on matters related to the higher education system in Tanzania.

The TCU conducts audits of universities and is also responsible for Institutional accreditation of universities, accreditation of new programmes and validation of reviewed programmes after one complete cycle of the programme. Additionally, Tanzania follows the Inter University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) regional QA guidelines, and thus regional audits are also conducted. The TCU has put in place a comprehensive set of guidelines on norms and standards for monitoring quality in higher education. Minimum standards have also been set for key qualifications and TCU has developed national QA policies, standards, instruments and guidelines. Key stakeholders are government, parents, students, and business and industries. Tanzania does not have a National Qualifications Framework.

Regarding IQA, St Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) has a QA policy and the key objective of its QA approach is to ensure that SAUT delivers quality education in teaching, research and public service. The university foregrounds 'fitness for purpose' in interpreting quality and its focus is to assure quality education in teaching, research, and public service. The university also conducts programme validation which involves reviews and alignment with TCU requirements. Whilst accreditation is conducted by the TCU, internal re-accreditation is also conducted annually using the TCU's guidelines. In addition, the university conducts graduate tracer studies which focus on determining the employability of graduates, the relevance of the programmes and satisfaction levels of graduates. Key stakeholders are government, the Quality Assurance Directorate, university Quality Assurance Committee, staff, students, alumni, employers, and parents

4.7   Zambia

Zambia's external quality assurance system is mainly underpinned by the Higher Education Act (2013) and the Zambia Qualifications Authority Act (2011) which provide the legal framework for QA in higher Education. The two Acts of parliament respectively, made provision for the establishment of the Higher Education Authority (HEA) with responsibility for QA in higher education, and the Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA) with responsibility for the establishment and management of the Zambia Qualifications Framework (ZQF). Professional Councils also have a role in QA.

The responsibilities of the HEA include programme accreditation, institutional audit, setting standards, registration and accreditation of institutions, and advisory and regulatory services. The HEA is also involved in the registration of private higher education institutions and the accreditation of learning programmes of both public and private higher education institutions. Registration and auditing of higher education institutions occurs at the institutional level while accreditation is undertaken at the programme level. Audit is limited to private higher education institutions and is undertaken to ensure that quality standards are maintained. In 2015 the HEA developed the *Quality Assurance System for Higher Education in Zambia* which sets out the procedures and criteria for the registration of private higher education institutions, the grading of higher education institutions, and the accreditation of higher education learning programmes. The QA system is intended to be compulsory.

Elements of QA in Zambian universities include, *inter alia*: the use of internal and external examiners; curriculum reviews, staff performance assessment systems; internal moderation of examinations; and monitoring of lectures and class attendance.

4.8   Zimbabwe

The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) was established in Zimbabwe in 1990 with key responsibility to 'receive and consider applications from would-be higher education private providers and make recommendations to the Minister for possible approval of private university charters.' An increase in the number of universities established between 1999 and 2005 and the associated need for a national quality assurance system contributed to the promulgation of an Act of Parliament in 2006 culminating in the establishment of the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE). ZIMCHE is the national quality assurance body in Zimbabwe with responsibility for registration, accreditation, academic and institutional audits and qualification assessment for foreign qualifications. It has a Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee. ZIMCHE describes its functions as serving three roles: 1) it acts as a regulatory body in respect of the accreditation, registration, auditing and, where necessary, de-registration or closure of institutions; 2) it acts as an advisory body (advising the Minister and higher education institutions, similar to the CHE in South Africa) and 3) it coordinates the development of higher education in the country.

The Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) is one known case where the establishment of a quality assurance unit has led to improvements in quality. A qualitative study was undertaken at ZOU among a sample of full-time and part-time staff, students and key stakeholders such as the manager of quality assurance and regional quality assurance coordinators. The study found that the Quality Assurance Unit in ZOU has '*positively impacted on teaching and learning, research and managerial practice resulting in the institution receiving three international awards between 2012 and 2015. Customer satisfaction improved over the period from 30.4% in 2011 to 77.3% in 2013. University ranking improved from 11 in 2011 to 5 in 2014. Academics research output increased from 242 in 2013 to 282 in 2014.*'

The Catholic University of Zimbabwe does not yet have a QA Framework. Their QA approach seeks to ensure quality teaching, research and service and is guided by the institution's 10-

year strategic plan. At the programme level QA is guided by the institution's annual strategic operational plans. Specific IQA approaches include seminars on university teaching, learning and research; student evaluations at the end of the course; peer evaluation of teaching; external examiners; and alumni and stakeholders' feedback. The key stakeholders in QA were identified as students, academic and administrative staff, and governance bodies.

Lupane State University (LSU) has a QA Policy which sets out its quality assurance philosophies, management structure, roles and responsibilities in QA, quality assurance mechanisms and implementation strategy. Through its Strategic Plan, LSU has defined the direction that it should follow to serve and meet the changing needs of its target market and the society at large by providing quality higher education in Zimbabwe and beyond. Through the Quality Assurance Policy and other supportive University Policies, a Quality Assurance system is being instituted for the effective and efficient administration of University-wide quality assurance interventions. QA occurs at both the institutional and programme level. At institutional level the QA Directorate, which reports to the Vice-Chancellor's office, coordinates the implementation of all quality assurance initiatives across the University. The university has a Quality Assurance Committee that works collaboratively with the Directorate in implementing the Quality Assurance Policy and it is a sub-committee of Senate. At programme level each Department and Faculty has a Quality Assurance Committee. The key stakeholders in the QA system were ZIMCHE, all staff and students, industry and external examiners.

Quality assurance at LSU is characterised by a range of internal and external methods. These include: peer review of teaching, student evaluation of teaching and learning, moderation of examination papers by peers, external examiners to review examination papers and carry out some postmarking moderation, and the engagement of senior academics from other universities for vetting publications of academic staff who apply for promotion. The procedures put emphasis on controlling inputs and little attention is given to the processes and outputs. These measures have largely been limited in their scope of effectiveness in coping with the rapid expansion of the University.

5   Conclusions

5.1   Strengths and positive impacts of QA
The presence of a national QA body / unit in all countries is a strength in the region coupled with increased political support and legislation to support national QA processes. There is increasing visibility and awareness of QAAs and their work and most countries have a national QA framework. Notwithstanding the challenges in many countries, there is increased capacity, competency, and transparency in QA processes.

At institutional level there is increased knowledge and improved awareness of QA as well as increased institutional compliance with EQA processes for accreditation and/or audits. One positive impact of QA is the enhanced collaboration and networking efforts in the region, and participation in international workshops.

5.2   Weaknesses in existing QA systems
In some countries, there is a lack of legislative and political support for QA, and there is a need for more autonomy of the QAA. Furthermore, there is an absence of qualifications frameworks in some countries and weaknesses in applying frameworks/putting regulations into practice. There are multiple regulatory bodies with overlapping QA requirements in some countries which may lead to over-regulation. The QAAs are faced with many challenges that hinder QA implementation, for example: staff shortages and budget constraints; lack of Information and Communication Technology tools; management and logistical challenges.

At institutional level weaknesses pertain to, for example: insufficient information on QA; ineffective IQA processes, aggravated by budgetary constraints; under-funding of HEIs; lack of understanding of IQA; lack of accountability; the high teaching load of academic staff.

Examples of weaknesses common to QAAs and HEIs include: resistance to change; a lack of QA capacity with attendant difficulty in executing QA tasks; inadequate stakeholder engagement; lack of adequate technology infrastructure.

5.3 QA Priorities in the next decade

The needs and priorities of countries in SADC are as diverse as the contexts for QA. The following are examples of priorities and needs of QAAs and HEIs in the SADC region:

- Develop the capacity of national QA bodies/units and policies for countries in early stages of developing QA frameworks.
- Develop a culture of quality (through the design and implementation of external and internal quality assurance systems)
- Manage QA processes in contexts where there are multiple agencies responsible for QA in a country
- Enhance existing EQA processes
- Develop IQA processes and systems
- Foster information exchange and collaboration
- Create a HE repository and information system that supports monitoring and evaluation within national quality assurance agencies.
- Source and mobilize funding to achieve QA goals
- Strengthen QA knowledge and skills through capacity building in both QAAs as well as HEIs
- Conduct longitudinal studies on the effectiveness of QA activities and interventions
- Extend the research on the state of play on IQA which is inclusive of a more representative sample of HEIs covering a full spectrum of diversity of institutional types.

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