State of Play of Internal Quality Assurance in the SADC

The approach, ethos and methodology of the project

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Principal Research Questions

What is the state of play of IQA in the view of SARUA/SADC stakeholders?

What are the opportunities and challenges in implementing IQA systems in Southern Africa?

How can these challenges be addressed?

What support/development is required?
Internal quality assurance refers to the policies and mechanisms implemented in an institution or programme to ensure that it is fulfilling its own purposes and meeting the standards that apply to higher education in general, or to the profession or discipline in particular.

Martin and Stella, 2007
The approach

- Project launch
- Develop protocols
- Identify FG participants
- Carry out focus group interviews
- Analysis of focus group findings
- Develop online questionnaire
- Distribute questionnaire
- Analyse questionnaire findings and identify needs
The best people to talk about the state of play of their IQA systems are those involved in developing and implementing them.

This project will enable us to understand the ‘lived experience’ from those working in the higher education sector and how they can be supported.

Ultimately, we need to have an understanding of the most effective ways of developing and implementing IQA systems to support student success.
The methodology

The research project will adopt a mixed method approach: the use of qualitative and quantitative methods for the purposes of complementarity and triangulation.

Qualitative: focus group discussions with peers (via Zoom)
Quantitative: online self-completion questionnaire

The less structured approach to data collection used in the focus groups mean that participants’ meanings are the focus of attention; the self-completion questionnaire supports a more structured investigation of specific themes (Bryman, 2004).
Focus groups

- Peer groups will be formed for discussions through implementation of a purposeful sampling strategy (around 8-10 people per focus group)
- Participants will be given a clear outline of the reason for the meeting and the topics for discussion as well as an opportunity to reflect on the experience post-meeting
- While the focus group discussions will be recorded (solely for the purposes of capturing the data), these meetings will be non-attributable, and individuals will not be identified.
- Focus groups allow participants’ perspectives to be shared in ways that are different from individual interviews; participants will be encouraged to respond to each others’ contributions
The following themes will be explored in the focus groups:

- Purpose/focus of IQA
- Key documentation
- Communication
- Locus of responsibility
- Institutional support and capacity building
- Tools for monitoring quality
- Metrics
- External drivers of IQA
- Facilitators of/barriers to success
- *the list is not exhaustive!*
Holding focus groups will also help to identify **champions** to support breadth of engagement with the online questionnaire.
• Focus group data will be used to identify or confirm key themes (through thematic content analysis) before quantitative data is collected.
• The questionnaire will enable us to see whether the themes explored in the focus groups are representative of the wider population and validate (or not) the findings of the focus group discussions.
• While the questionnaire will be developed using the Likert scale for responses, there will be the opportunity for respondents to provide open-ended answers.
• Questionnaires will be distributed online.
Post Questionnaire

- Data crunching!
- Analysis of open-ended responses
- Identification of themes and trends
- Reporting back to the HE community
- Identification of training and support needs
- Setting up of peer thematic groups to support a community of practice
Limitations

• Use of Zoom may create a virtual distance between participants and inhibit interaction
• Identification of peer groups may not be wholly representative
• Identified participants may not be available to join discussions
• Possible limited engagement with online questionnaire
• Can we reach the people we need to reach?
References


Thank You.

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