

**Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Comparative Analysis
of Provisions and Practices in Ghana and New Zealand**

by

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ABSTRACT

This research involves a comparative analysis of Ghanaian and New Zealand contexts and provisions of quality assurance in tertiary education. The study examined policies and practices of quality assurance in higher education in Ghana and New Zealand in order to identify those practices in New Zealand which are potentially applicable to the Ghanaian Higher Education context or which, at least, may suggest a direction for the Ghanaian government to consider for development. This study argues that although the management and practices of quality assurance in higher education in New Zealand are not without flaws, Ghana stands a better chance of tapping from the formers' experiences in shaping its future policy direction.

The quality of higher education and its improvement have always been issues of high priority on the political and educational agendas of the government and higher institutions in Ghana. Like other developing nations, Ghana has adopted various methodologies to address the question of quality in higher education similar to those in Western countries. The government of Ghana established a national quality assurance agency, the National Accreditation Board (NAB) to be responsible for quality assurance in higher education. Higher educational institutions have also adopted various processes and practices for the assurance of quality of the education provided. However, despite the fact that the literature on quality assurance framework in higher education is growing, little is available in the literature on what Ghana is doing to regulate and improve higher education quality and what has been the impact of NAB since its inception in 1993. In addition, a formal study of the commonality or diversity of approaches between Ghana and any developed nation has been lacking.

A qualitative methodology was used to gain the perceptions of key practitioners in quality management systems in the two countries. Interview and documentary analysis were the main research instruments employed for data collection. The study analysed the views of a

range of respondents from Ghana and New Zealand and documents from selected tertiary institutions and external quality assurance agencies in the two countries. A comparative analysis of data revealed some gaps and challenges in the Ghanaian system.

This study found that though NAB has made significant impacts on the quality regime of the higher education sector in Ghana since its inception, the processes of quality management demands remains a challenge to both the institutions and NAB and much remains to be done for improvement. Quality of provision at the institutional level (internal structures, documented policies, external involvement, conduct of self assessment), and at the national level (regular monitoring, change in compliance approach, adequate qualified staff etc) are key areas requiring urgent policy attention if Ghana is to achieve the objectives of its tertiary educational reforms.

On the basis of empirical evidence and life experiences from the respondents, a contribution would be made to the design of higher education policy-making with regard to the improvement of the internal and external quality assurance practices in higher education in Ghana. This study has further contributed to quality assurance literature by critically examining and comparing life responses of respondents from two countries viv-a-vis the international trend before making its recommendations. This study has further deepened the understanding of quality management practices in higher education in the two countries involved in this study.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my son:

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For many years, I had left you alone in Ghana while I was undertaking this study in the faraway land of Aotearoa, New Zealand.

As a father, I am mindful of not being intimately available to you, during this period when you are of a tender age. You have endured the pain of not having both parents with you, and I am ever so grateful for the sacrifices you had made; allowing me to complete my studies.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APNZ	Association of Polytechnics of New Zealand
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CUAP	Committee on University Academic Programmes
EER	External Evaluation and Review
EQA	External Quality Assurance
EQAA	External Quality Assurance Agencies
GIMPA	Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance of Higher Education
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ITP	Institute of Technology and Polytechnic
ITPNZ	Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics of New Zealand
ITPQ	Institutes of Technology and Polytechnic Quality
L.I	Legislative Instrument
NAB	National Accreditation Board
NABPTEX	National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations
NCTE	National Council for Tertiary Education
NPM	New Public Management
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NZPPC	New Zealand Polytechnic Programmes Committee
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
NZUAAU	New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit
NZUSA	New Zealand Union of Student Associations
NZVCC	New Zealand Vice Chancellors' Committee
PNDCL	Provisional National Defense Council Law
PMIS	Planning and Management Information Services
TEC	Tertiary Education Commission
TQM	Total Quality Management

CHAPTER 1

Background to the research

1.1 Introduction

Quality in higher education is a multidimensional concept, which should embrace all its functions, and activities: teaching and academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, faculties, equipment, services to the community and the academic environment. ... [It] also requires that higher education should be characterized by its international dimension: exchange of knowledge, interactive networking, mobility of teachers and students, and international research projects, while taking into account the national cultural values and circumstances. (UNESCO, Article 11 of the World Declaration on Higher Education, 1998, p.10)

Access to higher education increased considerably after World War Two culminating in the expansion of higher education globally in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Governments all over the world came under pressure in their efforts to cope with various problems associated with this expansion, and most particularly with its structures. As noted by the World Bank (2002):

The roles that higher education institutions should play for a nation's social and economic development in today's world, where the shift from an industry-based to a knowledge-based society advances along with globalization, are more significant than ever. This is because higher education institutions are expected to play a key role in the creation, dissemination and application of knowledge, all of which are key determining factors for a country or region to survive in this knowledge-based society (p. xvii–xix).

According to Brunner (1995) the generation, dissemination and use of knowledge has become a key factor in the development of national competitiveness, even more important than natural resources, high levels of employment, or financial capital. Gorostiaga (1996) supported the view that human capital is currently a structural component of production, politics, and democracy; it has a major influence on current economic and social development because today's society emphasises knowledge creation within which human

capital has a bigger influence than even financial capital. The creation and dissemination of knowledge, advances in science, and the development of human capital contribute substantially to higher education's natural and dynamic environment.

Craft (1994) noted that the provision of credible academic and professional qualifications and awards, and the cost of this, has prompted governments and tertiary institutions to establish a range of procedures to evaluate and improve the quality of their educational activities. Added to this, 'globalization' and international migration mean that academic and professional qualifications need to be 'portable' across national borders. Consequently, governments and institutions are keen to learn from each other so that they establish effective quality assurance systems in education.

This thesis focuses on the development of higher education in Ghana and, in particular, the development of quality assurance provisions and systems. The wider international trends, as will be noted in more detail later in this thesis, have been part of Ghanaian development. Ghana's living standards are dependent on the skills, ideas and abilities of its people. As we move into the 21st century, the tertiary sector faces the challenges of becoming much more international in orientation and of making best use of the opportunities opened up by the information technology innovation. The pace of change, nationally and internationally, requires higher education in Ghana to educate its people so that they will be able to contribute effectively to the nation's goals and to adapt to change.

1.2 The notion of quality and quality assurance in higher education

Various ways of defining quality have evolved in the literature. It has been difficult for researchers to agree on a definition of quality in higher education. Though quality is one of the most important aspects of all higher education worldwide, its definition according to Jonathan (2000, p. 46) remains "elusive". Quality is a concept long associated with the manufacturing sector. The word quality in normal parlance implies a subjective judgement.

It is a familiar word to us all; however, it has a variety of uses and meanings. Quality as a concept is quite difficult for many people to grasp and understand, and there is much confusion. Watty (2006) noted that attempts to define quality in higher education have resulted in a “variety of labels being attached to the concept, yet similar explanations of the concept are evident. That is, quality in higher education is about efficiency, high standards, excellence, value for money, fitness for purpose and/or customer focused” (p. 293).

Beckford (2002) pointed out that the Japanese were the first people to apply the concepts of quality in their production sector despite the fact that the theories emanated from American thinkers. They adopted into the ideas from the gurus and other contributors in the field such as Edward Deming, Joseph Juran, Philip Crosby, Oakland and others to their production sector and that has been a contributing factor to their technological advancement.

Below are two of the definitions of quality identified in the literature:

- Vroeijenstijn, as cited in Watty (2006), concludes that:

Quality is in the eye of the beholder and any definition of quality must take into account the views of various stakeholders. For example, governments may consider quality as represented by attrition rates, throughput and pass/fail percentages; the profession may view quality as the skills and attributes developed during the period of study; students may consider the concept with reference to their individual development and preparation for a position in society; and academics may define quality as knowledge transfer, good academic training and a good learning environment (p. 292).

- According to the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA, 2005, p. 5) quality is

Fitness for purpose, where the word purpose is to be interpreted broadly, to include mission, goals, objectives, specifications, etc ...
Fitness for purpose means both that an organization has procedures in place that are appropriate for the specified purposes, and that there is evidence to show that these procedures are in fact achieving the specified purposes

As will be seen in the following chapter, Harvey and Green (1993) observed from a study of the way the term “quality” was used in the literature that different interest groups attach different meanings to the term. The authors contend that “this is not a different perspective on the same thing but different perspectives on different things with the same label” (p. 10). For example, they noted that common usages included the following:

Table 1.1: Harvey and Green’s classification of quality

Classification	Brief explanation
Quality as exceptional	A focus on meeting high standards, such as excellence
Quality as perfection or consistency	As embodied in the idea that something is done correctly or to a consistent standard every time
Quality as fitness for purpose	Where quality is defined in terms of the achievement of a desired educational or quality assurance goal
Quality as value for money	A focus on ensuring that stakeholders receive high value for their investment
Quality as transformation	A focus on ensuring that students are genuinely empowered as a result of their learning

It should be noted that all five definitions/classifications are applicable to higher education depending on what the focus is.

The quest for quality is attributed to a number of changing phenomena (Avdjieva & Wilson, 2002; Birnbaum, 2001; Mehralizadeh, 2005; Temple, 2005). Higher education institutions are driven to undertake major reforms in their structures and activities by a range of forces, which mostly come from globalization, accountability, supply and demand issues, competition, and technology. The maintenance and improvement and the assurance of quality by higher institutions have become issues of major concern and attention to governments, higher institutions and other stakeholders. According to the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FHEEC, 2008, p. 9) “quality assurance means the procedures, processes and systems used by the higher education institution to manage and improve the quality of its education and other activities”. Thus quality assurance implies a

system by which a higher institution confirms that it has adequate conditions or provisions in place to enable students to achieve the set standards.

Girdwood and Bramley (1997) advised that quality assurance should never be something which is done once and then put aside, rather it requires a continuous process of checking. It should be noted that quality assurance may relate to a programme, an institution or a whole higher institution system. Quality assurance has been described as:

All of those attitudes, objects, actions, and procedures which, through their existence and use, and together with the quality control activities, ensure that appropriate academic standards are being maintained and enhanced in and by the programme, institution or system, and make this known to the educational community and the public at large (Woodhouse, 1999, p. 30)

There are various approaches to quality assurance such as accreditation, assessment, academic audit and external examination. Common to each practice is the development or setting up of criteria and the application of those criteria or set standards to a programme or institution by the accrediting body. The purpose may be assessment or enhancement with the aim of further improvement of the programme or the educational system at large (Lenn, 1992).

1.3 Quality assurance in tertiary education over the past 20 years

Since the 1980s, 'quality' in higher education has been given increasing prominence by governments throughout the world. Quality assurance has become the focus of attention and a central element of higher education. It is clear that the content and delivery of higher education has been directly influenced by a number of global and domestic forces. These forces include globalization, increasing use of new technologies (ICT), accountability and improvement, massification of access, competition among institutions, and the entrance of market forces in higher education delivery (Hallak & Poisson, 2007). These factors have led to the emergence of the quality assurance business internationally in higher education and

have consequently resulted in the development of various forms of internal and external monitoring of the education provided by tertiary institutions. The major forms of quality assurance processes that have emerged in response are discussed in chapter two.

In commenting on developments in the 1980s, Neave and Van Vught (1991) and van Vught and Westerheijden (1993) noted that quality had become central to national and international discussions on higher education. Following the economic and social upheavals of the 1980s, the quality of higher education had become the main concern to all nations. In the United States and Canada, for instance, debates about different approaches and mechanisms for assessing quality had deepened. In the United Kingdom, quality became a priority for higher education with the introduction of academic audits, assessments of teaching quality, and assessments of research performance. In France, the *Comite National d' Evaluation* was established. In Denmark, Finland, Spain and several other European countries, various attempts were made to devise quality assessment systems. These developments were followed in the 1990s by similar initiatives in a range of western countries, extending beyond Europe to countries such as New Zealand and Australia.

In commenting on developments during the early 1990s, the Australian Higher Education Council (HEC, 1992) noted that the 1990s had become a decade with a strong focus on quality and its assurance; this was also a feature of the education agenda of many countries. Similarly, Frazer (1992) argued that the quality of higher education had become increasingly important because of the growing belief that human capital was central to a nation's engagement in the competitive world environment. The products of the system, whether they are graduates or research, impact directly on the performance and success of both commercial and public organizations. Consequently, as observed by Frazer (1992), the enhancement of quality and the attempt to define and measure it had become a major issue for higher education in many countries.

It is interesting that more than a decade later, Koslowski (2006, p. 277) argued much the same position; that “in the age of increasing competitive, finite individual and institutional resources, and increased demand for universal access, assessing the quality of higher education has become a major public concern”. He further argued that in such an environment, the major external stakeholders would always subject higher institutions to further scrutiny demanding proof for improved quality. Similarly, Ng (2008) observed that “widespread concern exists in many countries over funding, accountability, quality, and managerial efficiency to education. The continued development of quality assurance mechanisms is therefore a key thrust in many education systems” (p. 112).

Many scholars have emphasised the dual notions of accountability and enhancement. Every institution is accountable to its stakeholders in terms of the funds they use. Concern for quality helps ensure accountability about the funds utilised and informs the stakeholders about taking appropriate decisions. Thus quality can be considered a monitoring mechanism. The increase in accountability has also forced educational practitioners and academics to devise and search for different strategies to assure quality, with particular attention to the three major stakeholders in education as identified by Altbach (1999), namely, the academic community, the state, and the market. Educational institutions are always concerned about setting their own standards and constantly maintaining it year after year. In order to maintain the standards, institutions should consciously make efforts to improve the quality of their educational transactions as well as their educational provisions and facilities. Thus quality assurance is important to help improve higher institutions and their programmes

In looking to the future, the United Nations (UN) has placed the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the top of the global development agenda (UN, 2006). The goal of the MDGs is to halve world poverty by 2015. Jonathan (2000) pointed out that the quality of higher education institutions and their academic programmes have always been regarded, and will continue to be regarded, as an indispensable tool in the growth and development of all countries in the new millennium. The global community has called for urgent action at quickening the pace of progress in Africa so that no region is left behind in the march towards 2015. UNESCO, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), and other partners and organizations, have continued to stress the role of higher education in Africa, including its quality assurance, for the realization of the MDGs. Thus quality higher education is considered important for the attainment of the MDGs. Of relevance to this current study is that Ghana should think about developing an action plan to speed up the attainment of the MDGs. As noted by Bloom, Canning and Chan (2006), higher education is now recognized as a major driving force of social and economic development; it plays a key role in supporting poverty reduction and being responsive to a changing labour market. This would include a focus on raising the quality of higher education.

In relation to massification of access, Hallak and Poisson (2007) noted that the late 20th century experienced:

An explosion in the number of higher education students mainly because of an increase in social demand for higher education and an increase in the economic need for more highly educated human resources; in 1970, the number of students in higher education was 28.2 million. By 1990 it had grown to 70.8 million and by 2004 to 132 million.” (p. 109).

Nations which previously restricted higher education to a small section of the population, have refocused their programmes and teaching on a much wider population base in response to the changing world environment. Such changes have extended educational opportunities in order to support the knowledge and skills required by society. This has resulted in a considerable increase in the cost of providing higher education.

But these changes have certainly led to concern about how the quality of education as well as the quality of graduates can be assured. In many countries, higher education systems and institutions have undergone major review, leading to much greater emphasis on educational quality and quality assurance. As noted by Peterson (1999) the expansion of higher education worldwide has resulted in a growing focus on quality assurance and external review. Quality assurance and accreditation have, therefore, become key issues for higher education internationally since the late 1980s (see, for example, Craft, 1992, 1994; Kells, 1992; and Mok, 2000). The result has influenced both structural provisions and appointments. New structures have been created nationally and many institutions have responded with the establishment of managerial positions focusing on educational quality.

Harman (2000) observed that a major concern for governments has been balancing the cost of offering reliable academic and professional awards, and maintaining quality standards, against fast increases in student enrolments and associated falling financial support per student. He was of the view that stakeholders were concerned about the quality of higher education because of their investment and therefore requested that national governments institute measures to exercise effective control over institutions. Clearly this is a contentious position because of its potential threat to the traditional academic freedom of universities, but it serves to highlight the call for greater quality assurance of tertiary/higher education.

Becket and Brookes (2005) argued that due to an increase in social demand for higher education, stakeholders have identified the need for greater accountability. They also note that students' have greater expectations because of the increase in tuition fees. Governments have responded in various ways, for example, many countries now have established agencies specifically concerned with quality assurance in higher education, some of which have the power to accredit institutions or programmes as well as assess for recognition the qualifications provided by other countries (e.g., NZQA in New Zealand).

The development of quality assurance systems is commonly presented by governments, and echoed in the quality assurance literature, as a response to allay public fears that institutions are not providing an education that is up to expectations. Vik (2006), for example, suggests that assurance to the public is an important factor in the decisions of many governments to introduce quality systems or requirements that help institutions adapt to their role in contributing to the nation's economic and other goals. It is a matter of debate whether public concern has genuinely been a driving force for such changes; politically it is convenient to suggest such a motive so as to encourage public support for a government decision.

However, setting aside discussion of the motives for government decisions, what is clear is that higher education institutions are expected to have in place sufficient mechanisms and procedures to provide assurance that they are achieving their educational goals and that their awards are nationally and internationally credible. An emerging trend is to locate the responsibility for quality assurance of an institution's programmes to the institution itself and to the external regulatory body that approves and monitors what is offered.

We are in an era where competition among higher institutions for students and funds is highly significant. In view of intense international competition for students, institutions have to assure their clients and stakeholders of high quality education in order to survive in the

competitive world. Some institutions may enjoy goodwill by relying on an established reputation, but usually, only few institutions can operate in this way. As argued by Blackmur (2004, p. 107) “strategies aimed at building and/or maintaining a reputation, and providing student and labour markets with credible indicators of quality, will typically be required of most universities”.

In summary then, over the last two decades quality has been the major focus of national governments and higher institutions. A number of factors have challenged the ways quality is managed in higher education. These factors have been elaborated by many commentators – individuals and organizations such as UNESCO and the World Bank – and have led to the making of quality assurance in higher education as, noted by Van Damme (2002, p. 7), “a central objective of governmental policies and an important steering mechanism in higher education systems worldwide”.

1.4 The response/developments in Ghana

There has been a long history of higher education in Ghana where the first university college was founded in 1948. From the very start, Ghanaian higher education was run by the state. Higher education is one of the nation’s hopes for national development. According to UNESCO (1998, p. 1)

There is an unprecedented demand for and a great diversification in higher education, as well as an increased awareness of its vital importance for sociocultural and economic development, and for building the future, for which the younger generations will need to be equipped with new skills, knowledge and ideas.

During the 1980s higher education in Ghana encountered a number of changes in its environment. One of which was `quality. According to Jonathan (2000) the quality of higher education throughout Africa declined at an alarming rate due to financial stringency and massification. For example, in Ghana during the last three decades, there has been a rapid upsurge in the number of institutions and students enrolled in higher education (as will be

seen in Chapter 4). One other factor which has contributed to the decline in the quality of higher education in Ghana in the 1980s was a change in relationship between the government and higher education institutions. During this period, the relationship deteriorated seriously, as evidenced by considerable student and staff unrest; this resulted in frequent closures of institutions. This period witnessed the longest academic staff unrest in the history of Ghana and included the closure of the country's universities for one academic year.

Sawadogo (1995) observed that African universities in the 1990s were seriously affected by the world economic crisis that began in the 1980s. He noted further that the most obvious noticeable impact of this crisis was the drastic reduction in university budgets resulting in a lack of quality and relevance of the education and training provided. A UNESCO (1998) report observed that since the 1980s, the financial resources allocated to higher education in Africa no longer met the requirements created by the rapid increase in enrolments. Statistical data on public spending on higher education in Africa indicates that spending fell by 28% between 1980 and 1995 (UNESCO, 1998). The report concluded that the financial crisis in higher education found expression in the declining quality of education and research.

Despite the bleak situation described above the quality of higher education and its improvement has always been an issue of high priority for both the government and higher institutions in Ghana. The government of Ghana responded to the unfavourable situation by establishing a national quality assurance agency to be responsible for quality assurance in higher education. Although institutions have always had a range of quality assurance procedures in place, these became the focus of attention to ensure that the system was going forward. Like other nations in the world, Ghana began to adopt concepts and methodologies of quality assurance similar to those in Western countries. Further details are provided in chapter 4.

1.5 Why my interest in this study

Qualitative research requires that the researcher should declare his interest in the research. Prior to undertaking this study, I worked with the National Accreditation Board (NAB) in Ghana for four years. NAB is the national external quality assurance agency responsible for accreditation of higher institutions and assuring the quality of the tertiary sector in Ghana. My work schedule at the NAB has enriched my knowledge of the many faces of Ghana's tertiary educational system, including its characteristics, problems, successes, and prospects. Because of this knowledge and experience I felt challenged to do a formal study/research of the system where results could assist the NAB and higher education in Ghana and offer a necessary and more complete insight into the mechanics and general dynamics of quality assurance. Some of the external arrangements for assuring quality in higher education in New Zealand have been in place for a long time and it is possible that Ghana would benefit from the experience and the lessons that have been learnt from New Zealand.

1.6 Aim/purpose of the study

This research involves a comparative analysis of quality assurance provisions and processes in higher education in Ghana and New Zealand. The study aims to examine policies and practices relating to quality assurance of tertiary institutions from the perspective of identifying possible future directions that quality assurance in higher education in Ghana could take. Compared to more advanced higher educational systems in the world, quality assurance in Ghana is still in its infancy and thus confronted by many challenges. Little research has been conducted on the Ghanaian higher education system or on the performance of the NAB since its establishment two decades ago. This thesis attempts to fill this gap. Accreditation and other external quality assurance processes are new concepts in the Ghanaian context. It is likely that knowledge about quality assurance agencies and practices from other countries would be useful as Ghana considers the directions it takes in its future developments in the tertiary sector. This research therefore, involves a

comparative analysis of Ghanaian and New Zealand provisions and contexts. The purpose is to scrutinise the processes and practices of the two countries in order to identify those practices in New Zealand which are potentially applicable to the Ghanaian higher education context or which, at least, may suggest a direction for the Ghanaian government to consider for development.

1.7 Research questions

The above purpose translates to the following major research question for this study:

How might higher education and external quality assurance agencies in Ghana benefit from the provisions and processes of quality assurance in higher education in New Zealand?

The major question will be addressed through the following sub-questions:

- What are the major provisions for quality assurance in higher/tertiary education in Ghana?
- What are the practices, processes and experiences of assuring quality in higher/tertiary education in Ghana?
- What are the major provisions for quality assurance of higher/tertiary education in New Zealand?
- What are the main practices, processes, and mechanisms employed by external quality assurance agencies and education institutions for assuring the quality of higher/tertiary education in New Zealand?
- What are the similarities and significant differences between the New Zealand and Ghanaian tertiary education contexts in respect of approaches to quality assurance?
- What lessons might be learnt from an analysis of the international literature on quality assurance in higher/tertiary education that would further inform

the future directions Ghana might take? And what guidance is provided by the international literature on comparative education relating to the transfer of practices from one country to another?

1.8 Why New Zealand?

Quality assurance in higher education has experienced major developments internationally. Developed nations have had a longer history of experience with the practices while developing nations are now achieving different degrees of successes in its application. Many developing countries are trying to adapt/adopt different models that have been imported from the advanced nations. Various studies have reported on the efforts and varied successes made by developing nations in their efforts at adapting and/or adopting these practices (Lim, 2001; Lenn, 2004; Jonathan, 2000). It is with this experience from international studies that I wish to focus on systems or practices that have potential for adoption by Ghana.

New Zealand is chosen as a comparative partner to Ghana in this study because it is one of the developed nations with well established quality assurance systems which may provide guidance for Ghana's future development. New Zealand has been one of the leaders in quality assurance reforms in the world and therefore has experience which Ghana can tap. Choosing New Zealand does not imply that New Zealand's system is free of criticism or challenges. However, compared with practices in Ghana, New Zealand is more advanced and has a well established system and Ghana can tap into this experience. It should also be noted that this study does not aim to transfer New Zealand practices wholesale into Ghana, rather only features that will provide guidance and direction to Ghana. Necessarily, this involves a consideration of contextual factors that may facilitate or limit application from New Zealand to Ghana. As indicated by sub-question 6, the research includes analysis of the international literature on quality assurance in higher education to identify the issues that need to be considered before specific recommendations are made. Similarly, this study pays

heed to the guidance provided by the literature on comparative education regarding the transfer of systems and practices from one country to another. The researcher is aware of the major differences between the two countries involved in this study which mean that caution is needed in relation to direct portability of quality assurance systems among countries. The contextual factors and cultural differences of the two countries would therefore guide any recommendations that would be made from this study.

1.9 Significance of the study

As indicated earlier, little research has been undertaken on the state of quality assurance in the Ghanaian tertiary sector and on the performance of NAB. With higher education expanding in Ghana, this study would be timely for Ghana in examining for possible implementation measures that have proved effective in the New Zealand context. As already noted, the aim is not to transfer systems without an appropriate consideration of contextual features. A critical analysis of the international literature has also informed this study. The results of this research should also be of interest to officials and practitioners in New Zealand institutions and agencies.

This study should help other countries better understand the management practices of quality assurance in Ghana and the dynamics of the forces shaping quality assurance activities in the country and through such an understanding better position them to establish strategies and reciprocal relationships with Ghana. The study can also provide useful information for other African countries that are trying to review and to improve the management of quality assurance of their higher education sector.

1.10 Limitations of the research

There are a number of limitations to this work. These include:

- This research focuses on quality assurance in relation to programmes, teaching and learning. It does not include quality assurance in relation to research. The scope of the thesis does not allow the extension of the work to include institutional research.
- While the study examined the work of the major external quality assurance agencies in both countries, the study involved only a very limited sample of tertiary institutions in each country. This would prevent any generalization of the findings from this study in relation to institutional practices but should nevertheless provide “transferable” (as distinct from “generalizable”) information on institutional responses to external quality assurance practices.
- Similarly, while the use of purposive sampling to identify interviewees within external agencies and tertiary institutions is likely to yield reliable information about practices (these people are in a position to know such information), views or opinions expressed about the suitability and effectiveness of quality assurance processes cannot be generalized to other staff in these institutions (see Chapter 3 for further comments).
- There is difficulty in obtaining reliable statistics on the processes and practices of quality assurance in higher education in Ghana. As noted by Davis (1990) there is often a problem in obtaining accurate statistics in developing countries.

1.11 Delimitations

The following are the delimitations of the study. Firstly, the study only pertains to the practices of quality assurance in the universities and polytechnics in Ghana and New Zealand. Secondly, the study is delimited to the participation of the seven participants in Ghana and the seven participants in New Zealand who were interviewed. Finally, the study is delimited by the approach and methodology adopted. In this case, the study employed document analysis and interviews to examine the practices of quality assurance in higher education in the two countries involved in the study.

1.12 Research approach

The research is interpretive-descriptive in nature and thus relies quite heavily on information in documents, reports and publications from external quality assurance agencies and tertiary education providers in New Zealand and Ghana. The study is based on one external quality assurance agency (NAB) and three tertiary institutions in Ghana. They comprised: one state funded (public) university, one private university college and one polytechnic. In the New Zealand context, four external quality assurance agencies took part in the study. These were: the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP), the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (NZUAAU), and the Institute of Technology and Polytechnic – Quality (ITP-Q). (It should be noted that the latter agency was disestablished in 2010, shortly after the completion of the data collection for this research). Three tertiary institutions also took part in the study. These comprised one university and two polytechnics. The sample size was considered appropriate and manageable by my doctoral supervisors to generate the needed data for the study. The institutions in Ghana in particular needed to be readily accessible because of transport difficulties in rural areas, travel time and cost to the researcher. Institutions also needed to teach a wide range of programmes to ensure that their nominated participants in this research can draw upon a breadth of experience in responding to interview questions.

The methods used are described in detail in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3).

1.13 Overview or the structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised into four broad parts consisting of 10 chapters. Each chapter discusses a major issue related to quality assurance in higher education and is sub-divided into sections, which further explains/explore particular issues related to the major topic. Part one comprises chapters one, two and three. As seen, Chapter one has reviewed the background to the study and discussed some developments in quality assurance in tertiary

education over the past 20 years. Chapter two reviews the related literature for the study and develops the conceptual framework for the study. Chapter three explores the methodology employed for data collection and the analysis of data.

Part two comprises chapters four, five and six. Chapter four traces the historical development of higher education in Ghana. The chapter further discusses the problems encountered by the tertiary sector in the 1980s leading to the tertiary education reforms in the 1990s. Chapter five is devoted to an analysis of documents relating to Ghana's higher education system. The final chapter in this section analyses the interviews conducted in Ghana.

Part three covers developments in New Zealand. It consists of chapters seven, eight and nine. Chapter seven discusses the developments in tertiary education in New Zealand and the major provisions for external quality assurance at the tertiary level in New Zealand. Chapter eight analyses the documents from the external quality assurance agencies in New Zealand while chapter nine provides the analysis of interviews conducted in New Zealand.

The final part, chapter 10, provides an integration of the literature and findings from parts 1, 2 and 3, and includes recommendations for the future. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first summarizes or responds to the research questions that guide this study. The second section discusses the weaknesses, challenges, and gaps associated with the current practices of quality in higher education in Ghana. The third part makes suggestions by which quality assurance practices in Ghana could be further enhanced in line with the objectives of this study. The final section examines some implications for future research or policy implications for Ghana.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature in relation to practices of quality assurance in tertiary education. The chapter is divided into three broad discussions. The first sections 2.2–2.4 addresses the notion of quality and quality assurance in relation to higher education and analyzes ways of thinking about quality. It further provides an analysis of the quality assurance methodologies or approaches employed by the tertiary education sector. The second area of discussions is addressed in sections 2.5–2.8 and deals with issues related to comparative education vis-à-vis policy transfer or borrowing. The chapter concludes (sections 2.9–2.10) with the presentation of a conceptual framework based on the purpose of the study. Though there is extensive literature on quality assurance in higher education internationally, this review will only discuss the themes that are relevant to the focus of this thesis.

2.2 The concept of quality and quality assurance in higher education

2.2.1 The notion of quality

The concepts of *quality* and *quality assurance* as used in the higher education literature are complex and open to wide interpretation. Quality is a concept that is not easy to define (see, for example, Freeland, 1991; Hall, 2006; Harvey & Green, 1993; and Lim, 2008). The notion of quality is difficult to define especially in the context of tertiary education where institutions have broad autonomy to decide on their own visions and mission (Materu, 2007). As noted by Lim (2008, p. 1) “quality and quality assurance are terms that are highly contested, considerably vague and highly contextual”. As Cartwright (2007) notes, there has

been a significant interest in the area of quality assurance over the last 15 years and this has led to a range of conceptions or emphases being given to the notion of quality.

As noted by Akin (1994, p. 2)

quality is a most elusive notion. Virtually everybody recognizes it when it is seen but scarcely anyone can specify its components or features with any degree of precision or confidence. But intuitively, and at times empirically, scholars seem to know what they are talking about.

This view was supported by Giertz (2000) when he stated that:

The traditional value system is that, as academics, we work within the same framework and share the same value and even though we might not be able to explain to outsiders what quality in higher education is, that constitutes no problem, since we still know – we know it when we see it. (p. 7).

However, Harvey and Green (1993) in their attempt to define quality after studying the way the term “quality” was used in the literature identified five categories about the way the term was used. The following provides a summary of the major elements of their classification:

The first category according to them sees quality as exceptional. This notion relates to the traditional concept of quality which focuses on meeting high standards. They claimed that “the exceptional notion of quality takes as axiomatic that quality is something special” (p. 10). Traditionally, the concept of quality has been associated with the notion of distinctiveness, or something special. According to Pfeffer and Coote (1991) this notion of quality implies exclusivity. However, this view has been strongly criticized. For instance, Pfeffer et al. (1991) maintain that this concept cannot be considered effective when assessing quality because it does not provide any criteria against which to judge quality.

The second notion considers quality as consistency or perfection. This is embodied in the idea that something is done correctly or to a consistent standard every time. With this notion, a quality product or service is one which conforms exactly to a predefined specification. To Crosby (1979), the main emphasis is on ensuring that things operate correctly each time. When they do not, then the process that has led to an unsatisfactory output is analysed so that corrections can be made in the process to ensure that the problem does not arise again. Watty (2003), however, advocated that this view of quality as perfection can be removed, since higher education does not aim to produce defect-free graduates and also the notion where emphasis is placed on the process rather than inputs and outputs does not fit higher education.

The third classification perceives quality as value for money which focuses on ensuring that stakeholders receive high value for their investment. The value for money approach is closely related to the notion of accountability (European Commission, 1991) because the public service as argued by Pollitt (1990) are expected to be accountable to both the funders and the customers.

The fourth notion of quality perceives it as transformation. This focuses on ensuring that students are genuinely empowered as a result of their learning. This view of quality is rooted in the notion of a fundamental change of form. Education is seen as a process of transforming the students and thereby enhancing and empowering them. The focus is on the extent to which educational experiences enhance the knowledge, abilities and skills of students (HM Government, 1991).

The final approach to quality views it as fitness for purpose, where quality is defined in terms of the achievement of a desired educational or quality assurance goal. In other words, “quality is judged in terms of the extent to which the product or service fits its purpose”

(p. 13). This is a functional definition of quality rather than an exceptional one. This approach suggests that quality only has meaning in relation to the purpose of the product or service (Ball, 1985). By this notion, quality is thus judged in terms of the extent to which the product or service fits its purpose. It implies that if something does the job it is designed for then, it is a quality product or service. Ball (1985) maintained that a course of study in a higher education institution is of satisfactory quality when it conforms to the particular standards or levels of achievement for the purpose it was designed. In the absence of any overall agreed standards in a higher education system, it is necessary for institutions to specify their mission, goals and objectives and then be evaluated against these.

According to Moodie (1986) although straightforward in conception, fitness for purpose is deceptive for it raises the issue of whose purpose and how is fitness assessed? It offers two alternative priorities for specifying purpose. The first puts the onus on the customer; the second locates it on the provider. Explaining further, he noted that the customer specification identifies quality in terms of the extent to which a product or service meets the specifications of the customer. In sum, a product or service is of quality if it conforms to customer determined specifications. Thus quality in higher education may vary at any given point in time depending on the purpose at the time. For instance, if the purpose of higher education is to provide the needed manpower to help develop a nation after attaining independence, then quality would be judged by looking at the extent to which this purpose is being met.

A major problem in applying the notion of fitness for purpose is that it is not always clear who is the “customer” in relation to the services or activities under focus. The question to be posed is the customer the students, or those who pay for the services (the government, employers, parents), or other stakeholders (such as academic staff) (Harvey & Green, 1993). Secondly, there is the argument posed by Elton (1992) that the customer, the student for

example, is not always able nor necessarily in a position to specify what is required. Students in most cases opt for what is available to them from the institution.

Harvey and Green (1993) suggested that the tricky issue of determining who the customers of higher education are and what their requirements are can be circumscribed by returning the emphasis to the institution. He pointed out that rather than worry, in the first instance, about meeting customer requirements, quality can be defined in terms of the institution fulfilling its own stated objectives, or mission. It implies being able to meet consistently the standard which the producer has set for itself.

In commenting on Green and Harvey's research, Hall (2006) noted that the notions of "meeting minimum standards" and "continuous improvement" are frequently goals for assuring educational quality, the former focusing on competency judgments related to workplace assessment or the meeting of professional standards, and the latter drawing upon the Total Quality Management literature and philosophy. Hall further draws attention to the doctoral research by Balcombe (2000) in New Zealand where she used the notion of "quality as equity" to refer to the empowerment provided by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to enable the educational needs of minority or disadvantaged groups to be met through the activities of standards bodies and private training providers.

Quality is often referred to as a relative concept because it is relative to the user of the term and the circumstances in which it is invoked. Higher education comprises a variety of stakeholders, which include students, parents, employers, teaching and non-teaching staff, government, accreditors, validators, auditors, assessors (including professional bodies), and policy makers. Each may have a different focus and perspective on quality. It implies that quality means different things to the different stakeholders. For instance Vroeijenstijn (1995) explained that while a government may be interested in graduating as many students as

possible with internationally recognised credentials at a reduced cost, employers may be looking for employment skills and knowledge for the job market. Concerning academic staff, Vroeijenstijn noted that they will be interested in “good academic training based on good knowledge transfer and a good learning environment and a good relationship between teaching and research” (p.13)

In many situations, the various definitions described above can be used to complement each other in developing and using quality management processes. Hall (2006) is of the view that, of all the definitions given earlier, the notion of “fitness for purpose” is perhaps the most encompassing; virtually all other definitions, or category of definitions, can be interpreted within the broader framework of “fitness for purpose”. He concluded that such an interpretation, however, always requires clarification of the context and intentions of the process or product under scrutiny; this may lead to a more specific definition for a particular purpose. This perhaps reinforces the conclusion reached by Van Damme (2002) that:

twenty years of expertise and operational experience in quality assurance in higher education have not lead to a growing consensus on how the concept of quality should be defined, on the contrary. There is much more diversity in the definition of the concept than ever before, while we need to converge on what we actually mean by academic quality (p. 43).

In spite of the difficulty in finding a universally accepted definition for quality, we may in the last resort point out that quality is a philosophical concept and as Green (1994) argues “there is no single definition of quality that is right to the exclusion of all others” (p. 17). To sum up, the number of diverse definitions of quality is an indication that quality has been a contested concept particularly in the field of higher education,

For the purposes of this research, the notion of “fitness for purpose” will be used as a *general* description for “quality”; that is, an educational system that achieves its goals can be said to be “fit for purpose”. As noted by Hall, of all the definitions given earlier, the notion of

“fitness for purpose” is perhaps the most encompassing; virtually all other definitions can be interpreted within the broader framework of “fitness for purpose”. Within the context of quality assurance, an “educational system” refers to any provision or activity that has, as its focus, the objective of ensuring, maintaining or enhancing the quality of the education received by students. If a particular system is evaluated for its effectiveness, then a more specific notion of quality, such as “quality as meeting customer needs” or “quality as transformation” may be incorporated to provide clarification to the notion of “fitness for purpose”.

2.2.2 The notion of Quality Assurance

Quality assurance, like quality, is a complex concept that has been defined in different ways according to purpose and context. Stensaker, Brandt and Solum (2008b) noted that over the past two decades, the issue of quality assurance has been one of the major concerns in the area of higher education resulting in the establishment of external quality assurance mechanisms for the assessment of teaching and learning. Goetsch and Davis (2005, p. 174) indicate that a quality management system consists of all the “organization’s policies, procedures, plans, resources, processes, and delineation of responsibility and authority, all deliberately aimed at achieving product or service quality levels consistent with customer satisfaction and the organization’s objectives”.

According to the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (2008, p. 9) quality assurance “refers to the procedures, processes or systems used by a higher education institution to safeguard and improve the quality of its education and other activities”. Other writers, such as Vroeijsen (1995) also emphasise the dual notions of maintenance and enhancement, Vroeijsen further notes that quality assurance requires formalised structures and continuous attention. Lomas (2002) adds the view that attention to the maintenance and improvement of standards is important because of the need for higher education to have

relevance for students, employers and financiers. Hall (2006), in talking about the management of quality, distinguishes between accountability and enhancement: “Whereas accountability focuses on “proving” the existence of quality, enhancement focuses on “improving” the quality of processes and products (or outcomes)” (p. 5). He further notes that the notions of accountability and enhancement require harmonisation; if too much emphasis is placed on accountability or compliance, discouragement exists for “the exercise of creativity and flexibility, the very processes which foster quality enhancement” (p. 5).

As noted by Harman and Meek (2000, p. 4) quality assurance has been defined as the “systematic management and assessment procedures adopted by higher education institutions and systems to monitor performance against objectives and to ensure achievements of quality outputs and quality improvements”. They further noted that with quality assurance, the stakeholders become confident about the management of quality and the outcomes achieved. This implies that quality assurance is not about establishing set criteria against which to judge quality or find out the extent to which the product or service met those specifications, rather quality assurance is about ensuring that there are systems in place to guarantee that the desired quality, however defined and measured, is delivered. Hodson and Thomas (2003) further add that quality assurance procedures emphasize compliance and accountability. Commenting further, Siakas, Prigkou and Draganids (2005) note that the main objective of a quality assurance system in higher education is to “create a ground for visibility into the processes that support the study programme and into measurements of learning outcome, capabilities and competences” (p. 2).

A review of the literature reveals that terms like quality assurance, quality assessment, quality development, and quality improvement have been used synonymously (Brennan & Shah, 2000; Hopkin & Lee, 2001). But according to Belawati (2005) the essence of all these

definitions is ensuring that the institutions provide quality education to students and also to provide qualifications that will be recognized internationally.

2.3 Classifications of quality assurance in higher education

2.3.1 Internal (institutional) quality assurance

One distinction that needs to be considered is that between “internal” and “external” quality assurance. According to Brink (2003) studies on quality assurance in higher education have focused on two separate but related issues, namely internal and external evaluation. As noted by Jackson (1997a), quality assurance systems may be classified as self-regulating (regulated by the institution or provider of the educational programme), externally regulated (regulated by an external agency), or a combination of the two.

Internal quality assurance focuses on the provisions and processes designed by an institution to ensure the quality of the education it provides. Such systems may be a response to external pressures or legislation, but the processes are essentially designed and operated by the institution itself. Internal quality assurance aims at institutional development and assessment of internal accountability. It incorporates every institutional activity that focuses on quality assurance and development in all the fields of activity of the institution. El-Khawas (1998) noted that internal quality assurance concentrates mainly on academic issues and lies in collecting evidence and information about mission fulfillment, efficiency of activity and ways of insuring quality within the institution. In talking about internal quality assurance, Hall (2006) describes quality assurance as a general term that “covers all aspects of an institution’s provisions and activities that focus on assuring educational (or research) quality” (p. 5). Hall further notes:

More specifically, when something is said to be “quality assured”, the presumption is that it has satisfied a relevant standard or test that is specified in the quality assurance framework of an institution. Note that the standard or test may relate to external requirements – such requirements may be determined by a professional body, an external quality assurance agency, or through legislation (p. 5).

Common’s (2003) study revealed that self-assessment makes a major contribution to improving the quality of college provision for students and also promotes a range of management practices, especially evaluation.

2.3.2 *External quality assurance (EQA)*

EQA assurance refers to the systems that are designed and operated by an external agency, often mandated by legislation, to monitor the quality of the education provided by tertiary providers. The major aim for these external requirements is to achieve accountability. EQA in higher education has witnessed major developments in the last two decades internationally (Billing, 2004; Woodhouse, 2004). Western and developed countries have practiced external monitoring for a longer time and thus tend to have considerable experience with EQA systems. With regards to developing nations, recent studies have reported varying degrees of success and experience in their attempts to implement external quality assurance practices that they have adopted from the advanced nations (Bordia, 2001; Gnanam, 2002; Lenn, 2004; Lim, 2001).

External quality assurance agencies vary in status, scope of operations and focus of attention. Although accountability is one of the main characteristics associated with quality assurance the nature of external agencies that take responsibility for assuring the quality in higher education differ from country to country. Despite these differences, there are a number of common features. According to Green (1994, p. 169) “whatever the focus of attention, the methodology appears to incorporate the same three ingredients, involving a

judicious mix of subjective and objective data through self assessment, statistical or performance indicators, and peer evaluation, normally in the shape of an institutional visit”.

Advantages of EQA System: It can be argued that external validation has several advantages. First, it provides an assurance of quality and it helps the institutions to achieve their own objectives. Mostly, the institutions are required to respond to the standard procedures of the external bodies as well as to some queries that are raised. This results in the self-study prepared by the institution which is helpful in enhancing the quality of the institution. Assessment of educational programmes of an institution undertaken by independent experts strengthens the international reputation and standing of the country’s tertiary educational system. Secondly, it ensures that students’, employers’ and taxpayers’ resources are directed to providers and programmes that meet minimum quality standards.

As noted by the Commonwealth of Learning (1997, p. 2)

systematic and constituent quality assurance helps to establish an institution’s reputation and enhances its image. It includes defined standards of achievements, documented procedures, and established ways of clear accountability for outcomes. The result is likely to be greater public confidence, more satisfied students, efficient processes and confident staff. The students are more likely to experience better quality instructional, learning materials and interaction with the institution and its staff, leading to enhanced learning outcomes.

A further advantage is the discipline engendered in institutions for evaluating their standards. The external requirements imposed on institutions require attention to detail and a vigour that might not otherwise be emphasised from internal mechanisms on their own. In addition, an external agency is able to provide guidance and encouragement that help institutions develop their own internal systems. An external agency can be seen as a resource, providing a forum for discussion and the exchange of ideas on matters of academic development.

Disadvantages of EQA: Quality assurance is not universally welcomed by academics.

Research conducted at the departmental level on the impact of quality assurance mechanisms indicates that academics adopt various behaviours to cope with what they perceive as accountability-led change, driven by the quality agenda. Newton, as cited in Watty (2003, p. 218) in his research to find out the attitude of academics towards the introduction of quality assurance in the UK reported that academics conceive quality as “intrusion, inspection and as conformist behaviour”. Watty further noted that several authors suggest there is evidence of academic distrust of administration; such administration is viewed as having a growing desire to conceive higher education as a corporate service industry, acting as a government-funded provider of services to students.

Current external evaluation systems have been criticized by many scholars. Harvey (2003) said accreditation is mainly about shifting of power from the academics to the managers of an institution while Worthington and Hodgson [as cited in Kemenade, 2008] argued that ostensibly the aim of quality assurance was to “improve service provision but in reality it is a subtle form of “panoptic” power, control and surveillance over the academic labour process” (p.181). Supporting this assertion, Jeliaskova and Westerheijden (2002) noted that the main outcome of external evaluation systems, which are characterized by bureaucratic procedures, is the control they exert over academics. This control is evident in the prevailing top down approaches to management now characteristic of higher education. In principle, quality assurance is intended to improve the quality of programmes through active involvement of all staff within the organisational structure. In practice however, the top down approach has consolidated managerial control with a disempowerment of academic staff. The implementation of this approach has seen less participation from the academics in the improvement process.

Many commentators have indicated that quality audits undertaken periodically have promoted a culture of compliance and conformity to external requirements of EQAAs; there has been limited impact on improvement and enhancement at the teaching and learning level. Goffman, as cited in Barrow (1999), commented that “although most institutions are able to provide evidence of the implementation of their approved quality systems, it is likely that the compliance to the system is in the nature of dramaturgical compliance” (p. 32). With such an approach, institutions are not likely to become responsible for the quality of their education that they provide and staff do not perceive quality audits as a development issue.

The process of EQA in most cases is very expensive for both the external agencies and the institutions and has resulted in additional costs to tertiary institutions in order to satisfy EQA requirements. This has resulted in the displacement of costs where significant proportions of resources are allocated to quality assurance processes; this has happened at a time when institutional funding has been reduced. Campbell and Rozsnyai (2002) note that the cost element does not relate only to the establishment of the external quality assurance agency and the operation of the external process but also includes the time spent by the institution in gathering documentation for the entire process. As noted by Daft (2006), the implementation of quality assurance principles and activities in any organization is a burdensome job. Preparing and writing down activities and principles of quality may be easy but practicing them is tough.

It could, however, be argued that the benefits of external quality assurance outweigh such costs. For example, a higher institution which accesses public funds may perform below standards as evidenced through an external quality assurance monitoring process. If such a finding subsequently leads to the revocation of accreditation for the institution, the interest of the nation and students are being protected. Similarly, the cost of EQA needs to be

balanced against the costs to the students of a poor quality education and the cost to taxpayers who effectively fund the provider.

The final word in this section is left to Article 11 (a) of the World Declaration on Higher Education (UNESCO, 1998b) “internal self-evaluation and external review, conducted openly by independent specialists, if possible with international experts, are vital for enhancing quality”.

Within this thesis, the notion of quality assurance in higher education will refer to all the internal and external activities that focus on or are aimed at assuring the quality of education provided by a higher institution. The implication of this definition is that higher institutions must institute appropriate systems and procedures to ensure continuous improvements in performance and the adoption of good practices.

2.4 A review of approaches to quality assurance in higher education

According to Wiklund, Klefsjo, Wiklund and Dvardsson (2003), different approaches have been adopted for the introduction of quality management in higher institutions. Van Vught and Westerheijden (1994) suggest that there is a general model showing the commonality of approaches employed by individual national systems. Similarly, Harman et al. (2000) states that there has been wide experimentation relating to the management of quality assurance in higher education internationally over the past decade.

The literature reporting these developments points to tremendous variety in approaches and methods and also to a significant degree of borrowing by national systems of higher education from one another. Most quality assurance mechanisms depend on one or a combination of a limited number of methodologies, the most important of which are self-studies or self-evaluation; peer review by panels of experts; use of relevant statistical information and performance indicators; and surveys of key groups, such as students, graduates, and employers. (p. 16)

Billing (2004) from a wide ranging survey of literature on quality assurance, explored the extent to which national external quality assurance frameworks have converged or differed in their methodologies for higher education. He concluded that, while there is not a universal model of quality assurance, many elements are in common. Variations are attributable to factors such as “the size of the higher education system, its level of complexity, the legal tradition of the state, the historical degree of autonomy enjoyed by institutions, and local social and academic culture” (p. 113). He proposes the view that “quality assurance frameworks are internationally transferable at the level of aims, principles, concepts, style and approach” (p. 133).

Higher education has fashioned several approaches to quality assurance that include a range of strategies. These are described in the following subsections drawing out the distinction between broad based approaches to quality assurance such as (quality audit, quality assessment, quality control, accreditation, TQM, ISO and Benchmarking, and specific techniques or strategies such as site visits, self review, peer review, external examination, and student evaluation of teaching.

2.4.1 Examples of broad approaches to quality assurance commonly found in higher education

(a) Quality Audit

Quality audit as defined by (AUQA, 2005, p. 1) is a “systematic and independent examination to determine whether activities and related results comply with planned arrangements and whether these arrangements are implemented effectively and are suitable to achieve the objectives”. The process involves a systematic review of the quality assurance mechanisms of an institution to ensure that they are comprehensive enough to achieve their purposes. In brief, it is a check to see whether the institution is fit for its stated purpose. Quality audit is an attempt to verify the extent to which the institution is fulfilling its own objectives (Woodhouse, 1999). It checks the extent to which the institution is achieving its

own explicit or implicit objectives. The process of academic auditing in higher education started in the United Kingdom; other countries such as New Zealand have also adopted this process.

Academic audits are undertaken at the institution level. Dill (2000, p. 188) notes that:

unlike accreditation or subject assessments, however, academic audits make no attempt to comprehensively review an institution's or programme's resources and activities, nor to directly assess the quality of teaching or learning. Rather audits focus on those processes implemented by higher education providers in order to assure and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

This process tends to make quality audit a very flexible system because it operates mainly in terms of an institution's own purposes. Hall (2007) notes that most quality audit processes attempt to prod institutions into self-evaluation and enhancement, the belief being that the hallmark of a quality organisation is its ability to self-assess its own strengths and weaknesses and to take corrective action. It should be noted that if quality audit is well applied in an institution, it will assist in quality improvement. This is because audit does not set any external standards against which to judge the institution. Its outcome does not involve a pass or fail decision, but rather assessing an institution on its own terms and against its own objectives.

The time frame for a successful audit usually involves a panel visit of three or more days. However, in some cases visits have been too short for a comprehensive evaluation to be conducted on all key activities of a large institution. For example, initial audits undertaken by New Zealand Qualifications Authority of New Zealand polytechnics were based on a day visit – far too short to obtain a valid picture of institutional quality provisions.

(b) Accreditation

As noted by Harman et al. (2000, p. vi) accreditation refers to a “process of assessment and review which enables a higher education course or institution to be recognised or certified as meeting appropriate standards”. In general, accreditation is undertaken to verify whether an institution or a programme qualifies or has satisfied the criteria set up by the accrediting body. The evaluation usually results in a yes or no outcome although provisional accreditation subject to further requirements is sometimes awarded. Accreditation has two major purposes. Firstly, it is to assure the quality of an institution and its programmes and secondly, to assist in their continuous improvement. The term accreditation in higher education originated from the United States but has been adopted internationally over the years. In the USA, the accreditation process is similar to peer review and undertaken voluntarily. It is a non-governmental activity which employs a self-regulatory approach. In other countries, for example in Ghana, accreditation systems are formed by the national government which specifies minimum standards and overseen by the NAB. The term accreditation has developed different specialist meanings.

It should be noted that accreditation may be either of programmes or institutions.

Institutional accreditation focuses on the entire institution. It provides a licence for the institution to operate. For an institution to be granted accreditation, according to Lenn (2004), much attention is given to such areas as the mission, governance, effective management, physical facilities, and financial facilities of the institution. It is usually an assessment that is conducted to find out if the institution meets the established minimum standards. The process allows for the evaluation of the total context in which teaching and learning takes place.

Accreditation is used by several constituencies in a variety of ways. Both programme and institutional accreditation are vital to the institution because as stated by Lenn (2004)

accreditation enables the institution to ascertain where it is in order that it can move to where it intends to go. It is used by institutions primarily as a stimulus for self-evaluation and self-directed improvement. The reputation of an institution or programme is enhanced because of public regard for accreditation. In Ghana, for instance, accreditation of an institution and its programmes provides an assurance to the public that minimum standards have been satisfied and that the programmes are of high standards. Closely related to this is the fact that business and industries in Ghana look to accreditation for quality assurance when financing educational programmes for employees or contributing to scholarship programmes.

Accreditation is used by governments too. In some countries, it is one means by which an institution can establish eligibility for sourcing state funds and for student financial aid.

In spite of the numerous purposes of accreditation it is often criticised by scholars. A major disadvantage is that it places considerable demands on an institution to make its case, involving a significant amount of preparation of documents and paperwork. Accreditation often involves too much bureaucracy and is time-consuming, therefore it becomes very costly for an institution. Some institutions have expressed concern about the cost involve in preparing for external quality assurance, both staff time and the collation of documentation

(c) *Benchmarking*

Kempner (1993, p. 22) describes benchmarking as an “ongoing, systematic process for measuring and comparing the work processes of one organization to those of another, by bringing an external focus to internal activities, functions, or operations”. Benchmarking, according to Kempner, attempts to answer the following questions: “How well are we doing compared to others? How good do we want to be? Who is doing it the best? How do they do it? How can we adapt what they do to our institution? How can we be better than the

best?” (p. 22). It is commonly thought of as the comparison of data, usually of competitors for such purposes as measurement and reporting. For Meade (1998), benchmarking refers to “the formal and structured process of searching for those practices which lead to excellent performance, the observation and exchange of information about those practices to meet the needs of one’s own organization, and their implementation” (p. 2). An amendment to this definition was suggested by Hall (2006) that the last phrase could be modified to read “... and their implementation and monitoring.” This modification by Hall, captures the additional idea that any changes should also undergo monitoring and, if necessary, further modification to ensure their success.

Higher education, like industry has much to gain by introducing benchmarking practices in its operations. Benchmarking can provide a higher institution with specific performance targets to measure its performance against rather than a mere guess of what needs to be done. The benchmarking process assists an institution to identify and understand the drivers of processes as well as its outputs and quality. Benchmarking is a positive process that provides a higher institution with objective measurements for goal-setting to enable them to track or find the extent of meeting the set targets (Shafer & Coate, 1992). This will provide managers of an institution with an external point of reference or standard for evaluating the quality and cost of their organization’s internal activities, practices, and processes.

Benchmarking can be an effective diagnostic instrument because it suggests alternative solutions for a higher education provider. This is because benchmarking in some instances will help the institution to uncover performance gaps that will result in initiating major change to address them.

Though benchmarking has numerous positive recommendations, it is by no means without flaws. There are critics of its application in higher education. One major issue that has made it difficult in developing a comparative database for higher institutions for the purpose of

benchmarking is the variation among higher institutions. Virtually each institution has its own vision with its own set of administrative policies. It therefore tends to require a time-intensive task with its concomitant technical difficulties for an institution to acquire comparable data in most cases.

Closely related to the reason noted above is the fact that most institutions consider themselves to be unique. They are therefore not willing to divulge the necessary information to other institutions especially when an institution considers the other as a potential competitor. There could also be administrative problems in the implementation of whatever data is collected. Where an institution secures the appropriate and relevant data for benchmarking, the commitment of the staff and the financial capabilities of the institution may hinder its efficient implementation. The approaches to be used may also differ. Any higher educational establishment considering introducing benchmarking needs to consider the type of benchmarking that will be appropriate and also the procedure that it wishes to adopt.

Finally, benchmarking is a cost to an institution both in terms of funds and human resources, so it should be well designed and executed with much care to enable the institution to achieve the desired outcome.

2.4.2 Examples of specific strategies used in higher education for ensuring quality

There are a large number of specific strategies that have been described in the literature. This section illustrates four such strategies that have been commonly used and have particular relevance to the focus of this research.

(a) *Self-assessment and self-reviews*

Mehralizadeh, Pakseresht, Baradaran and Shahi (2007, p. 353) referred to self-assessment as a “form of action research and is an organizational intervention focused on practical concerns shaped by political and organizational constraints. Consequently, the results of the internal evaluation may be organization specific and not generalizable”. Harman et al. (2000) notes that processes related to self-assessment or self-review have come from the work of American accreditation agencies and refer to the institutions’ internal evaluation of its activities to generate a self-reviewed report for the commencement of the external review. The report is typically prepared against the backdrop of the criteria set by the accrediting agency. This report is usually submitted to an external review panel for the external assessment of the institution. The link between internal and external quality assessment is achieved through a self-evaluation exercise within the faculty where the programme is assessed followed by the visit from the external specialists. The self-study report according to Mehralizadeh et al. (2007, p. 353) is intended to “stimulate internal quality management, to prepare internally for the site visit, and to provide basic information for the visiting panel”.

Self-assessment is the on-going process through which tertiary education organisations evaluate their own performance, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and make the necessary improvements overtime. It should be clearly focussed, with priority given to areas the institution considers crucial to achieving better education outcomes. Harman and Meek (2000, p. xii) argues that “good management practice requires that all institutions should have in place appropriate internal quality assurance and improvement plans, and submission of these to some outside body provides useful discipline for institutions to keep plans up to date”.

Self-studies have many positive features: They are usually not too costly because the assessment is undertaken internally; they are likely to achieve some degree of ownership because key staff are actively involved in the process and such participation increases the chances of improvements being achieved. Consequently the process of external review or assessment is made less threatening. Self-evaluation provides ownership of the evaluation process to the staff who must deal with issues of quality and enhances their commitment to quality improvement where deficiencies are identified. Bazargan's (2000) study confirmed this view that when faculty members are actively engaged in evaluation, they are likely to become motivated to assist in the development of the department. Developing and preparing a comprehensive self-study report is in itself a learning experience for the institution. The report will help reveal the deficiencies and also expose the areas that will require immediate attention for improvement. Internal institutional self-evaluation places members of higher education institutions in more direct contact with both clientele and the community.

However, the studies of Saedy (2004) and Mehdipour (2005) show management and cultural opposition to internal evaluation. Brennan et al. (as cited in Mehralizadeh 2007, p. 355), indicated that various studies have pointed out that the limitations of self-evaluation and peer review include the "inherent subjectivity and lack of clarity in the criteria being used to make decisions, lack of sufficient time, the fact that self-evaluation takes place at a busy point in the academic year, and the absence of hard data".

Frazer (as cited by) Billing (2004) observes that self-evaluation is often seen as a forum for presenting the best or positive side of the institution/programme to external agencies rather than as self-reflection or emphasising on its weaknesses. Kis (2005) argued that where these assessments are directly or indirectly linked to funding, institutions can conceal weaknesses, and in doing so defeat the purpose of self-evaluation.

(b) Peer review

Peer review by external experts or colleagues in higher education is not a new phenomenon. It is an academic process that has long been established, particularly in the research area. A very important issue to be considered before undertaking a peer reviews to establish the validity of the process relates to the selection of the panel members for the review.

According to Kis (2005, p. 17) on the one hand, peers are “colleagues” which raises questions of legitimacy about the review process to those outside of higher education. On the other hand, peers are “competitors” which reduces the legitimacy of the review inside higher education. Harman and Meek (2000) argues that peer review in combination with self- study will be a very effective quality management process as long as the external reviewers recognise and show respect for the values and processes of the institution being reviewed. Furthermore, the panel members should be informed that their major task in the review process is to contribute or assist the institution being evaluated in their quest to further improve on their internal processes.

In its traditional format, peer review generally involves the constitution of a peer panel mostly comprising experienced academics in the field to be reviewed who would visit the institution to undertake the evaluation, but recent practice, especially for reviews of professional programmes, has witnessed the inclusion of other experts, such as persons from industry or business, practising professionals on the panel of assessors. In Ghana for instance, experts are chosen from the professional bodies to serve on the visiting panels for assessment. The reason is for experts to offer professional advice to the providers as regards the standards and requirements of the professional bodies. Also, graduates will have to be registered by the professional bodies before they are able to practice in Ghana.

The peer team, during discussions with the faculty and other constituents of the institution will bring their expertise to bear by pointing out apparent strengths and deficiencies and

thereby making constructive suggestions for improvement. Thus peer review can easily introduce outside values and constructs to the programme being assessed. On the basis of this, Vroeijenstijn (1995b) argues that academics are more likely to pay attention to their peers' views than to control by administrators, hence peer-reviews can contribute effectively to quality improvement since the academics are likely to accept the contributions and recommendations of the panel members and work toward achieving better outcome.

(c) *The Site-Visit*

External evaluation and review is the periodic process undertaken by a quality assurance body that leads to judgement about the quality and value of an institution's activities and processes. According to Harman and Meek (2000), a site-visit team normally comprises people of diverse professions and interest groups who are carefully selected according to the environment and nature of the institution and programme to be reviewed. The task of the visiting team is to evaluate the institution or programme in the light of its objectives and provide judgements based on its own expertise and its external perspective on the degree to which standards are met. At the end of the visit, the team submits its assessment report which is reviewed by the institution for factual accuracy. Subsequently, the original self-study, the team report, and the institution's response are forwarded to the accrediting body's governing board as the basis for a decision about the accreditation status of the institution or programme.

Generally, institutions are reviewed on a cycle such as every five years, but accrediting agencies could undertake a review of its member institutions and their programmes at any time particularly where the agency suspects that an institution is operating below minimum set standards. In Ghana, for instance, the NAB 2007 law stipulates that an institution should be visited at least once in five years. NAB also reserves the right to review any substantive change such as an expansion from undergraduate to graduate programmes or an expansion

of off-campus offerings. In this way, accrediting bodies hold their member institutions and programmes continually responsible to their stakeholders and to the public.

(d) External Examiners

The use of external examiners in moderating the examinations of an institution is yet another form of quality assurance process in higher education. The external examination system is not a new approach to quality assurance in higher education. It is well established in higher education for a long time (Lewis, 2005). Eva (2005b) and Brandt and Stensaker (2005) maintain that external examination systems are still in vogue and seem to be recognized as an effective means of ensuring the quality of education provided in those higher education systems in which it is found.

Giving reason for its continuous application, Stensaker et al., (2008, p. 213) argue that this can be related to the two basic purposes of external examiners systems, i.e., to: “ensure that degrees awarded by different institutions are comparable with respect to (national) academic standards; and treat students fairly ensuring a certain distance between teachers and those who assess their achievements”. They argue further that these may not be the only reasons for introducing external examination systems.

In situations where countries are expanding their higher education system with accompanying skepticism about whether academic standards are being maintained, or in systems being de-regulated and opened up for private and/or for profit providers, external examiner systems could be deemed by the regulators to be an appropriate measure to provide some important checks and balances. (p. 213)

Lewis (2005) noted that one major benefit of the external examiner system has been its contribution to the spread of what is considered good practice among institutions and thereby facilitate shared practices between institutions. Academics gain considerably from this exercise by relating and sharing information with their colleagues in the same discipline.

On the part of the institution, Hannan and Silver (2006) emphasize that the reputation of one's own (external examiner) institution is enhanced.

However, although the contributions of external examiners are much valued, the increased size and diversity of the higher education sector has put the system under considerable pressure. This has been the experience in Ghana. Another criticism, as argued by Jacobsen and Lauvas (cited in Stensaker et al., 2008) is the "risk of "back-scratching" in countries where the external examining system is organized by the higher education institutions themselves; there is a risk that institutions may just swap examiners creating a "softer" examination system as a consequence" (p. 213).

2.4.3 Broad approaches used in industry that are occasionally found in higher education

There is sufficient evidence in the literature to show that many higher education institutions especially in the US have attempted to adopt some aspects of the industry-based quality framework for quality improvement with varying degrees of success. Chan and Lai (2002) notes that though these movements were originally conceived for the manufacturing sector, they have spread to other sectors including higher education. Two of the main business approaches to quality assurance that have been trialled in higher education involve the: International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9000 Standards and Total Quality Management (TQM). However, neither approach has been widely applied in higher education and considered valuable in evaluation the quality of teaching and learning process. In view of this, little attention will be paid to them in this research.

(a) International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

ISO 9000 is a set of international quality management standards and guidelines. It refers to a set of quality management standards which aims at specifying standards that organizations have to meet or follow to ensure that their services or products meet the need of customers.

Sun, Li, Ho, Hansen and Frick (2004) maintain that ISO 9001: 2000 provides guidelines to assist organizations in setting up their quality management mechanisms. The focus is to help the organizations streamline their operations to enable them provide quality services or product. The ISO 9000 is well noted for its structure that provides a consistent set of requirements and procedures that can be adopted globally. The standards establish basic requirements for the registration of an organizational quality system for the purpose of quality.

The ISO 9000 standards have been applied into the educational system. Stimson (2003) and Ayudhya (2001) argue that the increased focus on quality assurance can be attributed to attempts by people who are business minded to introduce the concept of ISO 9000 quality management system into schools. This system is aimed at improving conformity with specific criteria, covering course design, delivery, and meeting customers' needs.

Arguably, there are some advantages derived from the implementation of ISO 9000 to the educational sector. Ayudhya (2001) noted that one such benefit is the cultural changes in an organization and an attitudinal change in staff members towards business-related principles which increases their sensitivity to quality-related issues. This is likely to flow on to a greater focus on customer needs. Another benefit identified by Bae (2007) is that the ISO standards would ensure that educational organisations undertake a more systematic approach to their administrative processes.

A major criticism of establishing ISO in a higher institution as explained by Lewis and Smith (1994) is the fact that it is very expensive and it involves a lot of paperwork. Several factors that tend to generate costs in achieving certification include time, training, consultants and the registration itself. Administrators are required to commit a lot of time and effort in preparation of documentation to meet ISO requirements. Van der Wiele, Iwaarden, Williams

and Dale (2005) argue further that ISO 9000 registration does not guarantee improved performance because of the high cost involved in its implementation. The time and energy spent on preparing this documentation could be better utilized on activities that are related to the improvement of teaching and learning. Though the standards are considered to be universal, some critics are of the view that not all the elements are applicable to the educational sector (Lewis & Smith, 1994).

(b) Total Quality Management (TQM)

TQM has evolved from years of practice. Oakland (1992, p. 15) contended that “TQM is an approach to improving the effectiveness and flexibility of business as a whole. It is essentially a way of organizing and involving the whole organization: every department, every activity, and every single person at every level”. TQM therefore, is a holistic approach that seeks to integrate all sections of the organization with the aim of meeting the customers’ needs and the organizational goals. It calls for the active participation of all employees of an institution with the aim of meeting the needs of customers.

Although TQM developed within the business environment, its benefits are applicable to higher education institutions. Oakland (1992) noted that due to its much gained success in the industrial sector, TQM has been attempted by a number of higher institutions in the US in the 1990s. TQM focuses on service to others therefore applying its major principles to higher education implies the creation of an integrated system that leads to the provision of education and training and an institutional climate with customer service at the center.

Teamwork is very important in a higher education setting because long-term and major changes can only occur when all staff actively participate in the planning and development of desired changes.

Lewis and Smith (1994) see TQM as a “philosophy by which management systems can direct the efficient achievement of the objectives of the organizations to ensure customer satisfaction and maximize stakeholder value” (p. 29). For these scholars, TQM is a management-led system that aims at improving effectiveness as well as promoting the quality of the training and education provided. This philosophy thus requires deans and departmental heads to initiate the change/improvement process and be committed to its implementation. Yudof and Busch-Vishniac (1996) point out that one major principle of TQM requires institutions to pay attention to their customers and continue to monitor their activities to verify the extent to which they are meeting or satisfying their needs. This principle thus challenges the managers of a higher education institution to remember that students want to achieve; in order to accomplish this and challenge students’ abilities, institutions should regularly review their activities to reflect the needs of their customers.

Although higher education is able to apply some of the principles of TQM, there are some difficulties encountered in their implementation. Experiences have shown significant difficulties in transferring the principles of TQM into higher education. Tribus (1994) made it clear that the philosophy and vision are as important as skills and resources and that the management of an educational institution in which the result is learning, is not the same as running a factory.

In practice, the total commitment to quality by all members in higher education has frequently fallen short of what is required. This is because academics in the past have seen their responsibility as pertaining largely to themselves and to their professional associations rather than to their clients and to the organization in which they worked. Further, it is a common belief that TQM is very bureaucratic in its application. From the results of a survey, Sallis and Hingles (1991) concluded that TQM may be too complex for institutions that want to use quality assurance as a means of improving aspects of the delivery of the

curriculum. They further maintain that it is very expensive and a top-down management-led development.

Studies have shown that those who applied TQM in America higher education in the early days used this approach to improve administrative, service and support functions (Melan, 1998, Montano & Utter, 1999). The literature is silent on the use of the model for academic functions. Vazzana, Elfrink and Bachman (2000) found that less than 25% of institutions employ this tool in relation to teaching and learning; they concluded that “it is possible that academic processes do not lend themselves readily to the same techniques used in industry” (p. 73). Scholars have argued that TQM cannot be superimposed on higher education which is so vastly different in objectives, values and complexities, therefore its fitness for higher education continues to be challenged.

2.5 Regional and international quality assurance agencies

Many countries have now set up quality assurance agencies and this has prompted the formation of international networks of agencies. Naoki (2008) notes that:

While countries all over the world have been trying to create quality assurance systems for their higher education institutions, quality assurance has recently become an issue beyond one individual institution or one country; there is collaboration among quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions for quality assurance across borders, at the international as well as at regional levels.

Several regional networks of quality assurance agencies have been set up over the past decade purposely to foster cooperation and to share good practice among member agencies. Some networks have further established criteria and produced guidelines for quality assurance (Teichler, 2005). Various factors have accounted for the increasing interest in establishing international networks but according to UNESCO (2005), the major factor

relates to the acceleration of the globalization of higher education which has resulted in many higher institutions now providing education beyond their national borders.

The International Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (INQAAHE) is the most representative international network formed by agencies responsible for assuring quality.

Agencies from many different countries have grouped together for mutual cooperation and information sharing. Established in 1991, INQAAHE is an expanding global network.

Blackmur (2008) describes it as a voluntary association with the primary purpose of collecting and dissemination information on practices and management of quality. Although quality assurance of higher education has a national or domestic character in each country, there are cross-national communalities. As stated in the INQAAHE strategic plan 2008-2012:

many aspects arise independently in many different countries, and therefore many governments are facing similar issues with respect to higher education. In this sense, quality assurance in higher education becomes a global issue in which a global organization and international interchange of information can play a vitally useful role. In addition, there are other aspects that occur at the global or international level, such as the increasing flow of higher education across national borders. In this case too, global and regional systems and structures are needed to address these aspects satisfactorily (p.1).

INQAAHE provides the opportunity and forum for all quality assurance agencies to share international expertise and experience. It also promulgates practices that check or regulate the international mobility of qualifications, an important component of the globalization of higher education.

The Guidelines of Good Practice: In 2003, INQAAHE outlined ten key principles for promoting good practice and assisting EQAAs in improving their quality by building on international experience. In 2006, these guidelines were reviewed and one more guideline, which deals with the quality assurance of international trade in higher education, was added

(Harvey, 2006). These guidelines are designed for use by EQAAs in all stages of developments. The table below presents a summary of the guidelines.

From INQAAHE’s view the implementation of these guidelines has the potential to improve the lives of people young and old, in all countries and regions. The main external quality assurance agencies in New Zealand and NAB in Ghana are members of INQAAHE and thus are voluntarily guided by these guidelines in their deliberations. The Network now lists on its website whether members have been found by an independent review to be in alignment with the Guidelines for Good Practice. This is both to encourage agencies to be in alignment with the Guidelines and to recognise those that conform. The Network supports individual agencies, helping them to improve their evaluation work, and signalling this improvement publicly. It also encourages interaction between agencies, for mutual learning, and increases effectiveness and continuing improvement, leading to the mutual trust that is necessary for recognition.

Table 2.1: INQAAHE Guidelines of good practice (from Woodhouse, 2007)

The objectives of the agency	The agency has a written statement that takes into account the cultural and historical context of the agency and that external quality assurance is a major activity of the agency
The relationship between the agency and institutions	Recognises that quality and quality assurance are primarily the responsibility of the higher education institutions themselves
The agency’s decision-making	The agency carries out its evaluations in relation both to the higher education institution’s own self-assessment and to external reference points
The external committees	Where the agency uses external panels to carry out the evaluations, the composition of the committees should be in accordance with the guidelines applied by the agency
The public face of the agency	The agency should report openly on its review decisions on institutions and their programmes and making the outcomes of the evaluation public

The documentation used in the evaluation processes	The agency has documentation concerning the self-evaluation and the external evaluation. The documentation concerning the self-evaluation should indicate to the institutions the purposes, procedures and expectations of content in connection with the self-evaluation process
The resources of the agency	The agency should have adequate and accessible resources, both human and financial
The agency's system of appeal	The agency should have appropriate methods and policies for appeals
The agency's internal quality assurance system	The agency conducts internal self-review of its own activities, including consideration of its own effects and values. The agency is subject to external reviews at regular intervals
Collaboration with other agencies	The agency collaborates with other agencies, if possible in areas such as exchange of good practices
Transnational higher education	The agency should have policies relating to both imported and exported higher education

For the purpose of comparing the effectiveness of the approaches and practices of external quality assurance agencies in Ghana and New Zealand, some of these guidelines will be used as a basis for evaluation.

2.6 Principles for guiding quality assurance at the institutional level

In addition, a further set of guidelines/principles relating to the practice of quality assurance in institutions has been proposed and will be drawn upon, where appropriate, in this research. Six principles in particular have been identified for looking at the data collected in chapters 4-9. These principles were jointly developed and separately published by Hall (1995) and the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (Woodhouse, 1995) based on a joint analysis of relevant literature in the higher education context. The six principles are listed in Table 2.2. While the principles are directed mainly at the systems and provisions operated by institutions, some aspects also apply to the work of EQAAs.

Table 2.2: Principles for guiding quality assurance in institutions (Hall, 1995; Woodhouse, 1995)

Academic quality is best guaranteed when responsibility for it is located as close as possible to the processes of teaching, learning and research. Those responsible for implementing policy should feel ownership of the policy;

Quality should be seen as a continuous, active and responsive process. Critical evaluation of a performance and the actions that flow from this should be a regular and progressive feature of academic work. Quality should become automatic; it is as easy to do something well as it is to do it badly;

Active sharing and dissemination of good practice is central to the operation of quality assurance systems;

Effective quality assurance requires the use of external academic and professional points of reference. An institution's academic work and its processes for guaranteeing the quality of that work must be responsive to the local, national and international contexts. This requires the involvement of the institution's staff in outside professional activities, and the use of external participants in the internal quality assurance processes;

Policies and procedures for fostering quality must be supported by an appropriate level of resourcing;

An institution must be committed to the recognition and reward of quality in all aspects of its staff's role, including teaching research, administration and contributions to the wider interests of the institution.

2.7 Comparative education

Comparative education has developed as a field devoted broadly to the study of education across countries. Altbach et al. (1982) were of the view that comparative education involves comparing national systems of education for a number of purposes – international understanding, educational improvement or reform, either in one's own country or abroad, and/or for explanation of national variances. Traditionally, the field has been oriented toward the study of foreign educational systems to inform domestic reforms.

Comparative study does not only exist to compare educational practices/issues in different countries. According to Phillips (1989) research is conducted in comparative education for two reasons. First, to find positive ideas, methods and techniques that could be beneficial

for one's country or transferred from one country to another. This intention is to identify high-quality educational practice and to aid its transfer to other systems. The second reason is to criticise shortcomings in systems whether these are associated with theory or practice. Nikandrov (1989) added a third reason by stating that education is part of the culture of any country therefore, learning the educational system of other countries is a legitimate interest irrespective of any intention of adopting the practices or knowledge gained to address problems at home or using it as a measure to judge other systems.

This research involves a comparative analysis of Ghanaian and New Zealand contexts and provisions of quality assurance in tertiary education in order to inform possible future directions that quality assurance in higher education in Ghana might take. However, as indicated in Chapter one, this study does not aim to transfer New Zealand practices wholesale into Ghana. Rather, only features that are deemed useful to provide guidance and direction to Ghana are considered. Necessarily, this involves a consideration of contextual factors that may facilitate or limit application from New Zealand to Ghana. As indicated by sub-question 6, the research includes an analysis of the international literature on quality assurance in higher education to identify the issues that needed to be considered before specific recommendations can be provided. Similarly, this study heeds the guidance provided by the literature on comparative education regarding the transfer of systems and practices from one country to another.

2.7.1 Policy transfer

The notion that nations can learn from each other, and therefore, influence each other's policies and practices is not new. There are many instances of policy borrowing in the history of higher education. Rose (1991, p. 3–4) argues that policy transfer or lesson drawing is common:

Every country has problems, and each think that its problems are unique to its place and time. Up to a point this is true since differences in history and institutions differ... however, problems that are unique to one country are abnormal. The concerns for which ordinary people turn to government are common on many continents... confronted with a common problem, policy makers in cities, regional governments and nations can learn from how their counterparts elsewhere respond.

In the past, the UK educational policy makers for instance studied the educational structures of Europe where they adopted some experiences and retained some good ideas. Today, higher institutions are confronted with new challenges on regular basis which require the ability to look outside the institution for ideas and practices to mitigate these challenges. There is a growing literature, particularly within political science and comparative social policy which, according to Dolowitz and Marsh (2000), describes and analyses the processes involved when policies, programmes, institutional and administrative arrangements developed in one political system are used to influence the development of policy ideas and programmes in another political system.

Policy borrowing is the means by which it becomes possible for countries to adopt some of the ideas and practices of other countries. Smith, Baston, Boccock and Scott (2002) contend that though variously described as “lesson drawing or policy learning, emulation, borrowing or transfer, the literature share a common focus essentially on the decision-making processes by which policies and practices move between political jurisdictions” (p. 449). The objective of lesson drawing is to look for useful knowledge from other times and places to help improve current policies. In other words, it makes it possible for policy makers to draw lessons that will assist them in dealing better with problems at home. The outcome is that a positive lesson is transferred home with suitable adaptations. However, if it turns out to be negative, observers learn what to avoid by analyzing the mistakes of others.

Numerous instances can be found in public policy of a country borrowing ideas from other countries. Interest in learning about foreign cultures and gathering ideas from them has taken place over a long period of time. As Kandel (1933) puts it:

The study of foreign systems of education is not new, since the days when Athens was the school of Greece and “captive Greece took captive her rude conqueror”, history is rich in examples of international exchange of ideas, principles, and practices in education. Without discussing the world-wide influence of the great educational philosophers, the interest in the educational systems of foreign countries developed apace from the time when Victor Cousin published his account of education in Prussia, when Horace Mann and Henry Barnard issued their reports, when the English educational commissions sent their investigators, including Matthew Arnold, abroad, and when Sir Michael Sadler at the close of the nineteenth century began the publication of the monumental series of special Reports on Educational Subjects, issued by the English Board of Education (p. xvii)

Policy transfer could be voluntary or coercive. Most literature suggests that the primary factor that accounts for voluntary policy transfer relates to dissatisfaction or problems associated with the current practice. It suggests that dissatisfaction with the current policy and a view of policy failure (either by the government or the public) is the impetus for lesson drawing. Dolowitz et al. (1996) contend that if there is “uncertainty surrounding the cause of problems, the effect of previous policy activity, or the future, then the result is likely to be a search for other policy experiences and solutions” (p. 347). Countries that are dependent on other nations may borrow their policies and so the transfer of such educational systems is, to a greater or lesser extent, imposed rather than voluntary. Coercive transfer on the other hand could be direct or indirect. The former refers to a situation where one government forces another to adopt a policy. The supra-national institutions usually engage in this policy approach. The IMF for instance provides loans at cheaper interest rates to developing countries but with policy and practice strings attached to them for the loans to be granted.

Despite the aim of comparative studies in education, there are problems associated with the processes involved. Critics have raised concerns about the benefits associated with comparative studies and gains from borrowing educational policies and practices from other countries (Kandel, 1933; McLean, 1992). Kandel, for instance, emphasised the unique nature of each nation and thus warned about the wholesale transfer of overseas practices to another country. The same or similar educational policies may exist in different countries but each country has unique features that impact on the approaches taken to implement policies and tackle problems that exist or arise. In a similar vein, McLean (1992) after reviewing the shortcomings of some studies conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate during the 1990s, emphasised the importance of studying the institutions from which borrowers obtain their ideas. He noted that:

The practical purpose of educational comparison is to help educational borrowing by providing a fuller analysis of the institution upon which the borrowers have designs. It may be also to warn that such borrowing is unlikely to be effective. Foreign practice needs to be examined in the context of the overall educational culture in which it has developed. (McLean, 1992, p. 24)

There are challenges faced in comparing policies from two countries because these policies have been developed within different historical, political, and social contexts. Furthermore from a policy perspective, there are issues involved in examining policy transfer/borrowing from one country to another, some of which include: whether the policy should be transferred wholesale; whether both the structures/processes and the ideas should be transferred; how the policies should be modified to fit into the system of the recipient country; and how local adjustments should be made to what is practice in each country.

Many authors (e.g., Brown, Green, & Lauder, 2001; Halpin & Troyna, 1995) have outlined the technical hitches that occur when policies are borrowed or transferred from one country to another. Policy importation is more likely to be successful when certain conditions exist.

Educational policy borrowing is more effective when there is some similarity between the different educational systems as well as between the political ideologies guiding reforms within them (Halpin & Troyna, 1995). Similarly, Wolman (1992) argues that ideas for policy transfer could depend on patterns of information flow, or cultural similarities, and other countries in a similar situation can be identified as an ultimate source:

Policy transfer does not occur in a vacuum, but as part of the broader policy development process. It thus takes place in the context of discussion of existing problems, general ideas about dealing with them, and a specific proposed solution. ...demands arise for new policy products and for people to generate them. One of the responses is to look to other countries which are perceived to share similar problems... (p. 34).

These concerns and warnings notwithstanding, policy transfer or borrowing has served a very vital purpose. Skilbeck, Connell, Lowe and Tait (1994) contend that “while literal transfer is seldom feasible, we have much to learn from the contemporary experiences of others as well as from our own history” (p. viii). Needless to say, comparative research in education should take into account the historical, political, social and cultural settings of particular systems to facilitate effective transfer of appropriate policies. When such studies are undertaken by or on behalf of governments, the use to which they are put must be subjected to very close scrutiny.

2.7.2 International transfer of quality assurance systems

Various studies have reported on attempts by countries to transfer policies or draw successes. Billing (2004) observed that many countries especially in Central and Eastern Europe have been pressed into developing national external quality assurance systems for their higher institutions. This is often through an internationally funded project by organizations such as The World Bank and the European Union. Billing and Thomas (2000) summarised literature on whether quality assurance frameworks can effectively be

transferred from one country to another. They reviewed the Turkish experience of a project that transferred quality assurance systems from the UK to Turkish universities. From the review, they observed that the cultural, structural, political and technical issues impacted greatly on the transfer of the UK system.

Culturally, they identified that there was little emphasis on quality management at either the institutional or national level in Turkey making it difficult to embed systems that had proved effective in the UK. For example, there was no external assessment of programmes, nor the use of an external examiner system, nor the inclusion of professional comments on the curriculum in the Turkish context. However, these are features which are very prominent and constitute an integral part of academic life in the UK. To introduce such external forms of evaluation to the university sector in Turkey were seen as a major challenge to the views and experiences of the academic staff.

As far as political and structural issues are concerned, there were certain factors that were applicable to the UK environment but were not present in the Turkish context. For example, the universities in Turkey did not have the same level of freedom to manage their affairs as in the UK because the Turkish Council of Higher Education controlled the curriculum of the institutions. One effect of this centralised control of the curriculum in Turkey was to limit the freedom of universities to design internal quality systems that are not focused on meeting centralised requirements. Technically, the rationale for introducing quality assurance procedures into the Turkish university sector was not clearly stated.

Consequently, the universities were not certain as to the particular need or importance of the various procedures, thus organizational arrangements within universities were not effectively developed. In addition, staff responsible for implementation were not always identified, nor were they trained adequately.

Ryan (1993) after looking at the applications of TQM, self-evaluation and formal accreditation in Central and Eastern Europe concluded that countries must contextualise the evaluation and accreditation systems they adopt so that they become compatible with specific cultural and national factors, while upholding international norms of quality. Similarly, Turner, Baba and Shimada (1999) examined the similarities and differences of quality assurance systems between the UK and Japan. The latter had adopted a quality assurance system from the former for the non-university sector. These scholars observed that, even though the purpose for the introduction of the systems in both countries was to confer academic degrees within the non-university sector, significant structural differences existed between the two countries as well as differences in the implementation of policies and programmes. For instance, university assessment in Japan had not developed in the same way as in the UK. The external evaluation system which was a recognized practice for universities in the UK had not been practiced by universities in Japan. The authors concluded that despite adopting systems from the UK, the Japanese quality assurance system remained bureaucratic and rigid.

Similarly, Frazer (1997) conducted a survey on the processes and policy issues of academic quality assessment and accreditation of 24 countries and concluded that some countries “borrow” external evaluation systems from other countries which are not compatible with the nature and degree of autonomy of their own higher education institutions. This, according to Frazer, has resulted in confusion due to attempts to impose an inappropriate system on quite different educational systems.

2.7.3 Conceptual framework for policy transfer

It should be noted that policy makers have a range of options available to them as to how to incorporate lessons into their national systems when engaged in policy transfer. The objective of lesson-drawing is to identify programmes that are effective elsewhere, as based

on empirical evidence, and to create a new and effective programme for adoption at home. Rose (1991) identifies five options for policy transfer which he described as: copying; emulation; hybridization; synthesis; and inspiration. Table 2.3 below summarizes each of these options.

Table 2.3: Alternative ways of drawing a lesson (from Rose, 1991, p. 22)

Copying	Adoption more or less intact of a programme already in effect in another jurisdiction
Emulation	Adoption, with adjustment for different circumstances, of a programme already in effect in another jurisdiction
Hybridization	Combine elements of programmes from two different places
Synthesis	Combine similar elements from programmes in effect in three or more different places
Inspiration	Programmes elsewhere used as intellectual stimulus for developing a novel programme without an analogue elsewhere

Copying a policy from another country is seen as the simplest type of lesson drawing and it refers to a wholesale adoption of a programme without any form of alteration. Copying, as noted by Rose, assumes that a great many different institutions and contextual variables remain constant. Since the aim of this study is not to encourage or to recommend a wholesale transfer of the policies and practices of quality assurance in New Zealand to Ghana, this option is therefore unlikely to be appropriate. The historical and cultural differences between the two countries involved in this study do not support the intact portability and transferability of systems.

Emulation according to Dolowitz et al. (2000) occurs when a country rejects(s) copying all details of a particular programme while drawing upon the programme for setting standards to guide the design of policies at home. “Emulation produces innovation” (Westney, 1987, p. 224); it can also be undertaken with the intention of improving the original model (Rose, 1991).

A hybrid proposal involves a combination of recognizable elements from programmes from two different places. The formulation of a new programme is best considered as a creative act, rather than as a process of copying (Rose, 1991). Closely related to this is the synthesis process which is “created by combining elements similar in several different programmes into a whole that is distinctive” (Rose, 1991, p. 22). Insofar as the major objective of lesson-drawing is to design or formulate a new and effective policy, this process is justifiable. However, such a process should draw upon empirical evidence that the selected programmes are operating successfully in their own contexts.

Because the model of a successful programme is a construct, the elements can readily be adapted, or elements mixed from programmes in two or more countries – as long as whatever is added enhances effectiveness or acceptability, and whatever is subtracted is replaced by something that is functionally equivalent. (Rose, 1991, p. 21)

Programmes in operation elsewhere can also be studied or used for inspiration. As noted by Rose, viewing a familiar problem in an unfamiliar setting expands ideas of what to do at home.

For policies that would be recommended from this study to be effectively implemented and sustained in Ghana, the following principles derived by the researcher from the preceding literature on policy transfer will be considered where appropriate. These principles will be revisited in chapter 10.

Table 2.4: Principles for guiding policy transfer from New Zealand to Ghana

Any New Zealand policies or systems considered potentially relevant to Ghana should be analysed to ensure that they are able to be tailored or modified to fit the economic, social and cultural context of Ghana.

The selection of policies or systems for potential application to Ghana should be prioritized so that the focus is on those practices that are most likely to have a strong positive impact.

The policies and systems selected should be followed by the development of a consultation and communication process within Ghana that fosters both genuine dialogue with the various stakeholders and a high level of “buy-in” to the agreed developments.

The introduction of the policies and systems should be accompanied by a well developed and targeted professional development strategy throughout the sector. This strategy will require a thorough needs analysis of all participating organizations (NAB and the tertiary institutions).

Analysis should be made of the human, financial and material resources that will be needed to support NAB and institutions implement the policies and systems.

An evaluation strategy should be developed to monitor the bedding down of the policies and systems so that significant problems are quickly identified and appropriate action taken

While the present research will consider these principles, and provide recommendations where it can on how Ghana might proceed, clearly each of the principles engages with analysis and decision-making that is ultimately for the government and stakeholders to make. In addition, the resources needed to fully engage with these principles (e.g., to undertake the various costings, conduct a needs analysis, and devise and implement a communication strategy) are well beyond the scope of this research to develop in detail.

2.8 Summary: A framework of key considerations arising from the literature for guiding the present research

The literature highlights the fact that there is no universally accepted definition of quality and quality assurance in higher education. Several definitions are identified; the conceptualization of quality in higher education depends on the definition adopted.

Although, there is an extensive literature on quality, most of this literature tends to focus on companies and institutions in advanced countries. There is a dearth of literature on case study applications to Ghanaian higher institutions. Quality assurance in higher education has become a topical issue because there has been a major shift internationally towards a mass participation system of higher education.

Although the literature shows that there is no uniform system or criterion that can be used in the accreditation and assessment of higher education worldwide, almost universally it would appear mechanisms have been introduced for the systematic and formalized assessment and review of quality in higher education to ensure continuous improvement. There is evidence of individual national systems cooperating, at least at a regional level in order to promote the harmonization of quality assurance systems and the portability of qualifications across national borders.

The comparative education literature identifies a range of difficulties when the policies and practices from one country are transferred to another. The literature revealed specific studies of policy transfer or borrowing in the area of quality assurance in higher education. The five classifications of policy transfer identified by Rose (see Table 2.3) give a way of viewing different forms of transfer. In addition, the principles identified in Table 2.4 provide a guide for the analysis of the applicability of New Zealand policy to Ghana. As already emphasised, although there is a significant degree of policy borrowing by national systems of higher education from one another, any procedures and approaches to be recommended from this thesis must fit well within the culture of the Ghanaian system. As Craft (1994, p. ix) has warned, “procedures need to be adopted and adapted with care and sensitivity if the quality assurance/accreditation movement is not to be a new form of cultural imperialism”.

In conclusion, this section provides a summary of the key considerations (definitions, principles, processes and guidelines) that have emerged from the literature reviewed in this chapter. These considerations are presented in Table 2.5. The first column provides a heading for each item, and the second column describes or identifies what each heading refers to. The purpose is to create a framework for examining the data that are gathered in response to the research questions and sub-questions. Clearly, some parts of the framework are more relevant for looking at particular aspects of the data, while other parts are more relevant for other aspects. The framework will be revisited more systematically in the final chapter when the results from the Ghana and New Zealand analyses are drawn together.

Table 2.5: A framework of key considerations for guiding the analysis of data from Ghana and New Zealand

Definition of “quality”	“Fitness for purpose” is the overarching definition but requires clarification in association with other definitions as appropriate to the particular purpose(s) of a quality assurance provision or process
Definition of “quality assurance”	Several definitions have been supplied (e.g., Goetsch & Davis, 2005; Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, 2008; Hall, 2006; Harman & Meek, 2000). These are largely overlapping in their focus. The definition of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council has been adapted for this research because it emphasises both the accountability and enhancement aspects of quality assurance: “refers to the provisions, processes or systems used by a higher education institution to safeguard and improve the quality of its education and other activities.” (p. 9)
Classifications of quality assurance processes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 External/Internal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> External quality assurance procedures Internal quality assurance procedures 2 Broad approaches/specific strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad approaches to quality assurance (e.g., accreditation, quality audit, etc) Specific strategies (e.g., self-review, external examiners, etc.) 3 Van Vught’s model of commonality in quality approaches
Guidelines/principles for promoting good practice by external agencies and higher education institutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. External agencies: INQAAHE’s guidelines of good practice for external agencies. (These are listed in Table 2.1.) 2. Higher education institutions: Six principles jointly identified by Hall (1995) and Woodhouse (1995). (These are listed in Table 2.2.)

<p>Models/approaches to policy transfer across countries</p>	<p>The five approaches identified by Rose (1991): Copying; emulation; hybridization; synthesis; and inspiration (see Table 2.3)</p> <p>The six principles identified from the literature reviewed in section 2.7 (these are listed in Table 2.4.) for guiding policy transfer from New Zealand to Ghana</p>

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

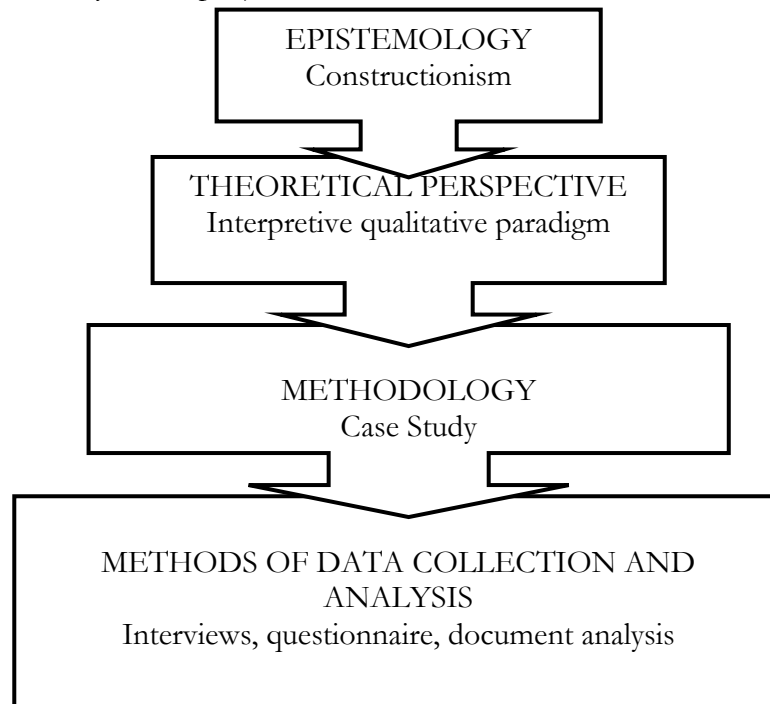
3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the methodology for the research; it deals with methods and the gathering of empirical data in tertiary education institutions and external quality assurance agencies in Ghana and New Zealand. The research is interpretive-descriptive in nature and relies in part on information in documents, reports and publications from external quality assurance agencies and tertiary education providers in Ghana and New Zealand. The research also involves interviews with key staff in the external quality assurance agencies of both countries, as well as interviews with a small number of staff in tertiary institutions. The analysis considers insights arising from both the international literature on quality assurance in higher education and the literature on comparative education, the latter with reference to guidance or principles relating to the transfer of educational systems and practices from one country to another. The chapter also outlines the specifics of the research design, that is, how respondents were selected and how the instruments were administered and the data analyzed. The sources for data collection, the selection of respondents and participating institutions in the study, and the research instruments employed for data gathering, are discussed further.

3.2 Theoretical framework

The researcher drew on Crotty's (1998) methodological framework in the design of this study. In this model, Crotty suggests that four major questions have to be considered in order to guide a research design. The elements of the methodological framework are presented below:

Figure 3.1: Methodological Framework
(from Crotty, 1998, p. 4)



The four major questions that have to be focused on are:

- what epistemology – theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective – informs the research?
- what theoretical perspective – philosophical stance – lies behind the methodology in question?
- what methodology – strategy or plan of action that links methods to outcomes – governs the choice and use of methods?
- what methods – techniques and procedures – do we propose to use? (Crotty, 1998, p. 2)

Creswell (2003) suggests that these four questions show the interrelated levels of decisions that go into the process of designing research.

There are many paradigms that researchers employ to guide their actions. All of these paradigms according to Guba (1990) can be characterized by the way their proponents respond to three basic questions – ontological, epistemological and methodological. Ontological questions focus on addressing issues related to the nature of reality. Diverse views and assumptions about the nature of reality exist. While some researchers view reality as objective and consider it to be single, others claim the only reality is that which is constructed by the individuals involved in the research situation. In other words, there are multiple realities that exist in any given situation (Creswell, 1994). Some researchers contend that there is a reality out there driven by immutable natural laws to be studied, captured, and understood. To these researchers, the goal is to “discover the true nature or reality and how it truly works” (Guba, 1990, p. 19). Such researchers generally collect quantitative data to represent reality through their design. Another group of researchers (Guba, 1990) argue that reality can never be fully apprehended but only approximated. Realities are multiple and exist only in the minds of people. This group of researchers tend to rely on a range of methods and the collection of qualitative data as a way of capturing as much of reality as possible.

Epistemological issues focus on the relationship of the researcher to that being researched. According to Lichtman (2006) epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge or how we know what we know. Whilst some authors hold the view that the researcher is independent from that being researched others contend that the researcher should interact with that which is being researched. The first group believe that if there is a real world operating according to natural laws, “then the enquirer must behave in ways that put questions directly to nature and allow nature to answer back directly” (Guba, 1990, p. 18). In their view, it is possible for the researcher to adopt a distant and noninteractive stance. The second group assume a subjective position and contend that the researcher should interact with what is being studied. Findings from such research are viewed as the creation

of the process of interaction between the two (Guba, 1990). The position taken is that reality exists only in the minds of the participants, thus interaction with participants seems to be the most meaningful process to adopt.

In line with the above discussion, the present research adopts an interpretivist view of the nature of reality and a subjectivist stance as a researcher. In other words, this research adopts a social constructivist worldview. This position holds the assumption that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Cohen and Manion (2000, p. 20) contend that:

Individuals' behaviour can only be understood by the researcher sharing their frame of reference: understanding of individuals' understanding of the world around them has to come from the inside, not the outside.

According to Creswell (2009, p. 8), "individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences... these meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas".

Creswell further explained that these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically: "They are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives" (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). This implies that the researcher operating within an interpretative paradigm conducts the study mostly by interacting with the respondents and thereby making subjective interpretations of respondents' experiences.

Opponents of this theoretical position have argued that since this approach involves subjective interpretations of respondents' views, there is the tendency for the researcher's bias and interpretation to lead to misunderstanding or influence the findings. In other words, the argument proposed is that this approach lacks objectivity (Argyle, 1978).

Notwithstanding this issue, the point should be made that a "positivistic" position itself is

not as objective – or free of subjective decision-making and interpretation – as is implied by the philosophy. The critical point, however, is that it is important that those adopting a social constructivist philosophy provide the kind of descriptions of their research processes that enable readers to judge the extent to which subjectivity has coloured the data collection and analysis.

In this research, the researcher uses open-ended questions in interviews to encourage participants to share their own views about the practices of quality assurance in their institutions. Several participants were involved in the interview process. This method offers the opportunity to the researcher to rely as much as possible on the views expressed by the respondents about the processes used by the institutions and the external quality assurance agencies in assuring the quality of education provided in the two countries. This research has focused specifically on the practices of quality assurance in higher institutions within the two countries, therefore in line with Crotty's ideas, the researcher has sought to understand the settings of the respondents by visiting the institutions and the external agencies in the two countries personally to gather data.

3.3 Qualitative and quantitative paradigms

Creswell (1994, p. 1) defines qualitative research as an “inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting”. It is a field of inquiry in its own right which cuts across disciplines. Creswell (2009) further states that qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008) a qualitative approach to research is situated in a context and locates the observer in the world; it consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible: “The practices transform the world” (p. 4). Qualitative research studies people's experiences in

their natural settings in an attempt to interpret phenomena in relation to the meaning participants ascribe to them. Denzin et al. (2008) note that qualitative researchers use a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand.

In contrast, quantitative research provides a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables (Creswell, 2009). These variables, in turn, are operationalised so that they can be measured and analyzed using statistical procedures.

Becker (1986) notes that both qualitative and quantitative researchers “think they have something about society worth telling to others, and they use a variety of forms, media and means to communicate their ideas and findings” (p. 122). Various writers (e.g., Guba & Lincoln, 1989) have contrasted the assumptions of the two approaches. Each approach is governed by a different set of genres and, as noted by Becker (1986), each of the two has its own preferred forms of representation, interpretation and external evaluation. Similarly, Creswell (2009) contends that “each approach to research involves philosophical assumptions as well as distinct methods or procedures” (p. 5). Patton (as cited in Creswell, 1994) however argued that “although these contrasts are a heuristic device [seldom do actual studies exemplify all of the ideal characteristics of either paradigm], they bring into stark contrast the nature of alternative strategies” (p. 4). Newman and Benz (1998) therefore advised that the two approaches should not be viewed as polar opposites or dichotomies, instead they represent different ends on a continuum.

Recently, interest and literature on mixed methods of research has increased. These methods reside in the middle of this continuum because it incorporates elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. According to Creswell (2009) this method is more than “simply collecting and analyzing both kinds of data; it also involves the use of both approaches in

tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research” (p. 4). It should be noted that both paradigms have their strengths and weaknesses and the choice of which to adopt for a study will be determined by the area of research and how one intends to approach the topic. Moreover, the beliefs a researcher holds (worldviews) will also influence the choice of the paradigm for the study. Choices regarding which practice to use for research is not made in a vacuum. The choice of research practices largely depends upon the questions that are asked, and these questions would depend on their context.

3.4 The research paradigm

Several assumptions and distinctions have been made about research paradigms. In the same vein, several terminologies have been adopted by authors to describe a set of beliefs that guide action.

The overall design of this study draws principally on “qualitative” data and fits with the notion of the “interpretative” paradigm as outlined by a number of writers (e.g., Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Creswell, 1998; Holme & Solvang, 1997). Proponents of the interpretive paradigm do not accept the view that reality can exist in isolation from the researcher (the person undertaking the study). The researcher in this paradigm assumes a relativist ontology and adopts a subjective epistemology. Key elements of the “interpretive” paradigm (based on Figure 1 in Hall, 2007, p. 1) include:

- a subjectivist view of the world is taken – people interpret phenomenon differently;
- knowledge is seen as open-ended, and social reality is recognised for its complexity;

- research focuses on how people interpret events and how they perceive the phenomenon under study;
- research focuses on description and interpretation without experimental interventions;
- research uses qualitative analysis of language and meaning based on both written and oral texts (as well as visual representations if included);
- data are interpreted in context, requiring rich or thick description of the setting and research process;
- the researcher is visible, declaring his/her own background;
- data are allowed to “speak for themselves”, that is, the researcher suspends interpretations until the data clearly provide meaning.

The present research fits with the above description in that it focuses on a comparative study of the main quality assurance provisions in higher education that have been established in Ghana and New Zealand; the data for the research is drawn from the analysis of literature, reports, legislations and other documents, as well as interviews with participants involved in the field in both countries. Data requires analysis through qualitative techniques that focus on obtaining meaning and contextual significance.

3.5 The research sequence

The study involves three main analytical stages:

- Ghanaian policy and practices: collection and analysis of data
- New Zealand policy and practices: collection and analysis of data

- Comparative analysis: (i) identification of elements in the New Zealand approach to quality assurance that might transfer or provide direction to Ghana; (ii) evaluation of similarities and significant differences between the New Zealand and Ghanaian educational contexts that might impact on transfer between the two countries.

Key points during the research are analyses of the international literature on quality assurance in higher education and the international literature on comparative education.

3.6 The research data

The study aims specifically at understanding the processes and practices of quality assurance in higher education in the two countries under review. The main sources of data for this research are:

- documents and literature relating to each country's quality assurance systems
- interviews in each country with key personnel in (i) external quality assurance agencies and (ii) up to three tertiary education institutions
- the international literature on quality assurance in tertiary/higher education.

In relation to the first of these, the aim is to identify material that will give an accurate description of the major systems, the rationale for these, evidence of impact (positive and negative), and future developments. According to Creswell (2005) documents are considered to be a valuable source of information in qualitative research. Both primary and secondary documents such as policies, descriptions of procedures, reports on the application of procedures, internal archives, board meetings etc. from the external quality assurance agencies and the selected institutions are used as sources. Academic and other literature relating specifically to these policies and practices are also incorporated into the analysis.

In relation to the second bullet point, interviews with people in key positions in the institutions and the external quality assurance agencies seek to provide clarification of documentation or fill in information that is not documented; interviews also identified each participant's view of the strengths and limitations of the systems that they manage or engage with, and include their suggestions for improving quality assurance practices. Contextual information that might be important to consider is also the focus of some questions.

Analysis of data from Ghana was undertaken before interview schedules were finalised for New Zealand participants. This was to allow for the inclusion of questions that arose from the Ghanaian data (which included perceived gaps in the Ghanaian system) to identify in a more targeted way any practices or beliefs from the New Zealand context that might be helpful to Ghana.

In relation to the interviews, a semi-structured format was used comprising mostly open-ended questions that enable the participants to express their views and experiences on the subject matter. Schedules were tailored to the particular external agency or tertiary institution in question although some questions were in common across contexts. (See next section for further information relating to the interviews.)

In relation to the international literature on quality assurance in tertiary/higher education, the main aim is to identify themes that provide critical insight both generally on the "quality" movement in tertiary education and more specifically on particular practices that are of relevance to this research. These themes are considered for their implications in relation to the elements of the New Zealand system that might be transferred to Ghana. Similarly, guidance from the comparative education literature on successful transfer of educational systems and practices from one country to another are incorporated into the recommendations that arise from this study.

The main sources of data for this study, excluding the literature review, were drawn from investigating research questions 1–4. These sources of data and their corresponding analytical techniques are summarised respectively in Tables 3.1–3.4 below. Because questions 5–6 did not involve further data collection – they focus on drawing together the results of the data analysis from questions 1 to 4 and 6 – no tables have been presented for these questions. As noted above, question 6 provided an analysis of the international literature on quality assurance in higher education and is represented by a coding of major themes; the implications of these themes are considered in the context of the data analysis from each stage of this research. Similarly, the results of the literature review on comparative education are integrated with the recommendations arising from this study.

The qualitative approach used in this research is multi-method in focus. The use of multiple methods, involving triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being researched. Thus the reliance on multiple sources of information and using a variety of instruments is consistent with the research paradigm adopted for this study. Flick (2002) argues that the:

Combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives, and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry (p. 229).

Similarly Patton (1990) explains that the use of multiple sources of data for a study offers the researcher the opportunity of validating and crosschecking the findings.

Tables 3.1 and 3.2

As shown in Table 3.1 below, the analysis of Ghanaian policy and practice involves the examination of policy documents, legislation and relevant literature relating to the provision of quality assurance in higher education. This includes the Provisional National Defense

Council Law (PNDCL) 317, 1993 which established the NAB, and the government white paper on reform to the tertiary education system in Ghana. Table 3.2 identifies that documents were also obtained from the NAB relating to their policies, systems and accreditation instruments. Information contained in a sample of reports on applications for accreditation and approvals were also consulted. Documents from the three participating institutions identified mission statements, goals/objectives, strategic or similar plans, quality assurance provisions and practices, and reports of both externally and internally conducted reviews relating to each institution’s quality assurance systems. Finally, Table 3.2 identifies that interviews were conducted with two key staff from each of the selected tertiary institutions as well as two officials from the National Accreditation Board. (See later subsection for more information on the selection of tertiary institutions and interviewees.)

Table 3.1: Sources of data for question 1

Research question 1	Sources of data	Analytical techniques
Q 1. What are the major provisions for quality assurance in higher education in Ghana?	PNDCL 317, 1993 Government White Paper, Reforms to the Tertiary Education system (1991) Literature relating to the above	Document analysis Document analysis Document analysis: including identification of themes and critical commentary (see also literature review).

Table 3.2: Sources of data for question 2

Research question 2	Sources of data	Analytical techniques
<p>What are the practices, processes and experiences of assuring quality in higher education in Ghana?</p>	<p>NAB Documents setting out purpose, functions and organization Minutes of Board meetings Reports of institutional accreditation and programme approval Instruments developed for accreditation and approval (to gather data)</p> <p>Interviews with: Executive Secretary (equivalent to the Chief Executive) 2. One Senior Assistant Secretary</p> <p>NAB Website</p>	<p>Document analysis</p> <p>Document analysis Document analysis</p> <p>Document analysis</p> <p>Qualitative data analysis of interview themes</p> <p>Analysis of information and available online documents</p>
	<p>INSTITUTIONS (Sample: 1 state university; 1 private university college; 1 polytechnic) For each institution: Documents setting out mission, objectives, and organization</p> <p>Documents setting out quality assurance provisions, processes and responsibilities Documents setting out reports of activities and decisions (internal & external)</p> <p>Interviews with: Person with responsibility for institutional quality assurance Head of department or equivalent with in depth experience of institutional quality assurance Each institution's website</p>	<p>Document analysis</p> <p>Document analysis</p> <p>Document analysis</p> <p>Qualitative data analysis of interview themes</p> <p>Analysis of institution online documents</p>

Tables 3.3 and 3.4

The data identified in Tables 3.3 and 3.4 relate to the New Zealand phase of the research. Table 3.3 covers the major provisions for external quality assurance in New Zealand. The main sources of data cover relevant legislations, documents developed by external quality assurance agencies and their associated (delegated) bodies, and academic or research literature relating to question 3.

Table 3.3: Sources of data for question 3

Research question 3	Sources of data	Analytical techniques
Q 3. What are the major provisions for quality assurance in higher education in New Zealand?	Relevant legislation (e.g. The 1990 Education Act)	Document analysis
	Documents developed by external quality assurance agencies and their associated bodies	Document analysis
	Literature relating to the above	Document analysis; Including identification of themes and critical commentary.

Table 3.4 covers a range of data relating to the work of NZQA, ITPQ, NZVCC (including CUAP and NZUAAU).

As noted in Table 3.4, the documentation being sought covers the purposes, functions, and procedures of the various external quality assurance agencies, along with samples of reports relating to their quality assurance activities. The websites for each of the agencies are also examined for relevant information and documents.

Table 3.4: Sources of data for question 4

Research question 4	Sources of data	Analytical techniques
<p>What are the main practices, processes and mechanisms employed by external quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions for assuring quality in higher education in New Zealand?</p>	NZQA	
	Documents setting out purpose, functions and procedures of NZQA, in particular those related to quality assurance in the tertiary sector	Document analysis
	Sample of reports of institutional accreditation and programme approvals	Document analysis
	Sample of reports of quality audits of institutions	Document analysis
	Documents relating to the development (yet to be implemented) of the new “evaluation” procedure.	Document analysis
	Interviews with: one senior NZQA official with detailed knowledge of NZQA quality assurance processes and future developments.	Interviews to focus on clarification of documents (for example, processes and effectiveness of current procedures); also on views relating to future QA needs and processes
	Documents setting out purpose, functions and procedures of ITPQ, in particular those related to quality assurance in the tertiary sector	Document analysis
	Sample of reports of and programme approvals	Document analysis
	Sample of reports of quality audits of institutions	Document analysis
	Interviews with: one senior ITPQ official with detailed knowledge of the Institute’s quality assurance processes and future developments	Interviews to focus on clarification of documents (for example, processes and effectiveness of current procedures); also on views relating to future QA needs and processes
NZVCC Documents relating to provisions and procedures of the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) in relation to	Document analysis	

programme and course approvals, and reviews.	
Documents that provide reports of programme and course approvals, and reviews	Document analysis
Interview with: Convener of CUAP	Interviews to focus on clarification of documents (for example, processes and effectiveness of current procedures); also on views relating to future QA needs and processes
NZUAAU Documents relating to functions and audit procedures	Document analysis
Sample of university audits conducted by NZUAAU	Document analysis
Interview with: Director of NZUAAU	Clarification of information in documents (as above); views relating to future QA needs and processes
Agencies' websites	Analysis of online documents

3.7 *The use of interviews*

The use of interviewing to acquire information is so extensive today that it has been said that we live in an “interview society” (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997, p. 25).

Interviews are active interactions between two or more people leading to negotiated, contextually based results. Thus the focus of interview is moving to encompass the hows of people’s lives (the constructive work involved in producing order in everyday life. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 119)

The decision to use interviews to clarify information in documents about quality assurance provisions and processes (e.g., their rationale, the way they operate, their strengths and limitations, and contextual information and issues that need to be considered) and future

developments in quality assurance that might be recommended and why, was that such information is well suited to an open-ended question format. This allows for probing of answers to check meaning and to go deeper on a theme being investigated. As noted by Cohen et al. (2000), interviews allow for two-way communication between interviewer and interviewee, and allow for supplementary questioning to follow up on interesting statements made by interviewees. In addition, the information sought in this research is generally best obtained from people in key positions or with informed knowledge of systems and practices. A written survey administered widely would not necessarily achieve the information sought and would be unlikely to provide the same depth of responses.

According to Verma and Mallick (1999) there are three key elements to an interview: the interviewer, the interviewee and the context of the interview, including issues and questions that arise as part of the interview. While an interview may take many forms, these three key elements must be kept in harmony for an interview to achieve its purpose. Questions must be well chosen and deal with meaningful material in the eyes of the interviewee. The interviewer must achieve and maintain rapport with the interviewee to ensure that the interview is taken seriously. In some situations, the interview process provides the opportunity for reciprocity, that is, a mutual exchange of knowledge and helps build a sense of mutual identification and a feeling of academic community (Glazer, 1982). Positive outcomes from a successful interview include not only data that are rich in content and trustworthy but also a relationship of trust between researcher and interviewee that carries over to any follow-up situation, such as “member checking” or seeking further information on something that was overlooked or emerged through the research process.

A key benefit often cited for interviews is that of a high response rate (e.g., Oppenheim, 1992), that is, the people approached to take part are more likely to agree to participate than people approached through a standard survey questionnaire. People are considered to be

more willing to talk and react verbally than to write responses to questions. Oppenheim suggests that interviews have a higher response rate than questionnaires because respondents become more involved and, hence, motivated; interviews enable more to be said about the research than is usually mentioned in a covering letter to a questionnaire; and they are better than questionnaires for handling more difficult and open-ended questions.

While interviews are a good source of qualitative data, there are several difficulties associated with their use. In the face-to-face interview situation there is usually more pressure on the respondent to give socially acceptable responses, particularly those which the respondent thinks will please the interviewer, than in the case with an anonymous response to a questionnaire. To reduce or eliminate this potential problem the researcher has employed a number of strategies. One such strategy was that questions were framed in a way that does not allow the respondent to identify or infer a possible stance being taken by the interviewer. Another strategy was for the interviewer to resist any temptation to express a view during the interview discussion. A further strategy used was to avoid non-verbal communications that identify pleasure or displeasure in relation to the respondent's answers.

Another disadvantage anticipated about interviewing is that it is prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer. It is important for the researcher to recognise his/her own biases and to provide information to respondents that is accurate in terms of the purpose of the research and to give relevant background information about the researcher him/herself. Another important strategy employed by the researcher to avoid personal intrusions was to suspend his own interpretations until the data were sufficient in scope and depth to allow the results to speak for themselves.

Another problem is that interviews are usually time consuming in their preparation and intensive of researcher time in their transcription, coding and analysis. Close attention to

detail is needed at all stages of an interview: the nature and focus of questions must be well considered; consideration should be given to the inclusion of a critical friend in the research process to comment on questions and to challenge interpretations of the data being made by the researcher; and the provision of rich information about all facets of the research design and process should be underpinned by detailed and systematic recording and reporting of all procedures and relevant contextual information. Because interview research is more suitable for in-depth probing of a participant's view than wide-scale sampling of opinions, the sample of participants must necessarily be small and be well considered in terms of how participants should be selected.

Attention should also be given to the way interview data are recorded to ensure that the information obtained, and the interpretations of that information, provide accurate representations of what was said and what was meant. The taping and transcription of interviews verbatim deal with the accurate recording of data, but the transcription should generally be given to the interviewee to confirm that it represents what he/she intended to say. Although less often done, the comments of interviewees can be obtained on interpretations drawn from the research to ensure that meanings are consistent with the data.

For this research, the following steps were taken:

- all interview schedules followed a semi-structured format based mainly on open-ended questions which allow for probing
- where there was the need to obtain comparative data from different sites, the same questions were asked in different interview schedules subject to any variation in wording that was necessary to deal with significant contextual details (e.g., a particular approach to quality assurance might be given a different name in one institution compared to another)

- all interview schedules were critically scrutinised by fellow PhD students and the researcher's supervisors. All schedules were trialled with a knowledgeable colleague and relevant person in order to test the meanings of questions, the procedures for recording data, and the time needed to complete the interview
- all interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim; they were returned to the respondent for member checking
- data from interviews were coded using well established qualitative techniques; the coding of data was subject to an independent sample check for testing the validity of codes and the reliability of coding
- the researcher pre-tested the interview guides on two senior lecturers in order to sharpen his interviewing skills.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Prior to undertaking the study, ethical clearance was obtained from the Victoria University of Wellington Faculty of Education Human Ethics Committee. In the first instance, ethical approval relating to the data collection in Ghana was sought; then further approval for New Zealand data gathering was obtained at a later stage.

Interviews of the kind being conducted in this research have ethical considerations. Three main areas for ethical consideration were identified— informed consent, confidentiality, and the consequences of the interview. These issues were addressed by first writing formally to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of each participating institution asking for permission to conduct the research in the institution and also to interview selected participants in a place convenient to them. Further, the informed consent of the interviewees involved in the study was sought in writing. Participants were informed that involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the research without question at any stage before the data were analysed.

Before they were interviewed, participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the research, their rights, what they stand to gain from the study and feedback procedures (Appendix A). The CEOs and participants from the tertiary institutions were assured that the institutions and names of participants would remain confidential to the researcher and his supervisors. However, it was not possible, or indeed sensible, to withhold the names of the external quality assurance agencies in both countries in this research. The names of staff interviewed from these agencies were treated in confidence but this was difficult in the case of NAB, NZUAAU, and CUAP because the persons heading these organisations participated in the interview. However, the people had the opportunity to read their transcripts and amend or delete any passages that they were concerned about. They were also informed in the invitation letters (Appendix D, E, F respectively) that any quotes from their interviews would be taken from their approved transcript and such quotes would be brief and acknowledge their positions.

It should be noted that the researcher was formerly employed by NAB; care was taken to ensure that the interview schedule asked meaningful questions that were pertinent to the study and sensitively worded (NB: difficult questions were not avoided if they needed to be asked). Interviews were also conducted by the researcher in a respectful way. Further guidance on these matters was sought from the Ethics Committee.

All interview participants had an opportunity to read their transcripts and made alterations before data were analysed. Participants and their institutions/agencies are to be provided with a brief 1–2 page summary of the research findings upon completion of the study.

All data collected has been stored in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed two years after the end of the research.

3.9 The selection of tertiary institutions and interviewees in Ghana

Within Ghana there are three categories of tertiary institutions that are relevant to this study: state funded universities, polytechnics, and private university colleges. Purposive sampling was used to select institutions and participants. This was to gain information from academics and administrators who were able to provide informed data and opinions. Purposeful sampling was therefore the strategy employed to achieve “information-rich cases” (Patton, 1989, p. 52). The institutions selected needed to be readily accessible because of transport difficulties in rural areas, travel time and cost to the researcher. Institutions also needed to teach a wide range of programmes to ensure that their nominated participants in this research (see below) could draw upon a breadth of experience in responding to interview questions. Larger institutions with wider teaching programmes were much more likely to have experienced NAB processes.

In this study because of accessibility, time and cost constraints, the initial selection of institutions was based on those located in Accra, the capital city of Ghana and, therefore, only one example of each of the three types of higher education was included. However, it should be noted that there is only one public university and one polytechnic in Accra. While this limits choice, no problems arise because both of these institutions are older and larger and teach a wide range of programmes; a back-up institution of a similar type was found for each should the institution choose not to participate. The back-up institute was located in a town or city that was reasonably close to Accra but was not required.

With regard to the private university colleges, one of the oldest private university colleges in Accra was selected because of its greater experience in NAB's processes. A back-up institution was selected should the “first choice” private university college decide not to participate.

For each of the three selected institutions, a letter was sent to the CEO giving clear information about the research and asking for permission and approval to conduct the research in their institution. The letter made clear the aims of the research and, the approach used, and the CEO was asked to nominate two people, who were knowledgeable about the NAB's procedures to be interviewed (Appendix B).

In relation to the interviews conducted with two staff of NAB, the researcher chose the Executive Secretary (equivalent to the Chief Executive) and one Senior Assistant Secretary. Both had major responsibilities for implementing and overseeing the quality assurance work of NAB. The initial request to participate in this research was directed to the Executive Secretary of NAB, seeking permission and approval to conduct the research in the organization and also requesting him to nominate one Senior Assistant Secretary to participate in the research (Appendix F).

Once the above permissions were obtained, the researcher contacted all the participants and sent a letter informing them of the aims of the research, the processes/approach being used, and sought their informed consent to participate in the research. A copy of the letter is attached as (Appendix C). All the nominated participants accepted the invitation to be part of the study and they subsequently took part in the interview.

3.10 The selection of tertiary institutions, the external quality assurance agencies and interviewees in New Zealand

Where relevant parallel processes from Ghana were employed for the New Zealand stage of the research. Approaches were made to the Chief Executive Officer of NZQA and the Executive Director of ITP Quality asking for permission to conduct the research in their organizations. For NZQA, the researcher wrote to the Chief Executive Officer (Appendix G) asking if he may interview one Senior Officer who has responsibility for some of the Authority's quality assurance functions. Similarly, the researcher invited the Executive

Director of the ITP-Q or his/her nominee (Appendix H) to participate in the research. The convener of CUAP was invited to be interviewed from within NZVCC (Appendix E); and the Director of NZUAAU was also invited to participate in the research (Appendix E).

The researcher employed a purposive sampling to select three tertiary institutions in New Zealand. Specifically, these institutions were either located in Wellington or very close to Wellington. The choice of these institutions was based on: (i) location – to reduce costs; (ii) to include one university and two polytechnics with significant enrolments and a wide range of programmes.

For each of the institutions, the researcher wrote to the CEO (a Vice-Chancellor or a Principal) asking for permission to interview one key person with experience and knowledge of both the institutions' own quality assurance processes and the processes of the External Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAAs) (Appendix I). In both situations, the authorities then contacted and gained the support of the participants and thereby forwarded their names and contact details to the researcher. All the participants were then sent a letter (Appendix J) informing them of the aims of the research, the processes/approach being used, and asking them for their consent to participate in the research. All the nominated participants accepted the invitation to be part of the study and they subsequently took part in the interview.

3.11 Access to tertiary institutions

The researcher was aware that gaining access to the selected institutions could be problematic and that this could have an adverse effect on data collection. As noted by Wellington (2000), the issue of access can seriously affect the design, planning, sampling and even implementation of the research. Aware of this potential problem, the researcher negotiated entry with the authorities of the participating institutions by seeking their permission to conduct the research in their institutions (this was contained in the letters sent

to the CEOs). In the case of Ghana, gaining access to the institutions and NAB was not considered too much of an issue. This was because, as indicated earlier, the researcher was a staff member of NAB prior to this study and still had good working relationship with other staff of the organization. In relation to the tertiary institutions, my role at NAB involved visiting and working with the authorities of the institutions and this had established a good ground for having access to the institutions.

However, the same cannot be said about the institutions in New Zealand which was a different territory. The first step taken to overcome this was that the supervisors were involved in the selection process of the participating tertiary institutions. One of the supervisors then provided an introduction to the authorities of the institutions and informed them about the intended research to be conducted in their institutions. The second supervisor who had worked with some of the external quality assurance agencies in New Zealand also contacted one of the CEOs of the agencies for the same reason. The second step was to confirm this initial process by following up with formal letters to the CEOs of the tertiary institutions and the external agencies (similar to the Ghanaian situation). The response was very positive from all the CEOs.

3.12 Interview process in Ghana

In all, five staff of the internal quality assurance units from the three participating higher institutions in Ghana – public university, private university college and polytechnic were interviewed. In addition, the Executive Secretary and one Senior Assistant Secretary of NAB were interviewed. While the researcher expected eight participants from Ghana – two from NAB and six from the institutions (two per institution), the researcher found out that one of the participating institutions was yet to establish an internal quality assurance unit. In view of this, the CEO nominated only his deputy who was currently in charge of all quality

assurance duties and also serving as a liaison officer between the institution and NAB to participate in the study.

3.13 Data collection in New Zealand

Details for the selection of the organizations and tertiary institutions in New Zealand to participate in this research were finalized after the data collected in Ghana were analysed. This approach was adopted because the results of Ghana were considered and the gaps identified to provide directions about how to best target the research in New Zealand. As a result, the researcher used similar but not identical interview questions for New Zealand. Modifications were made to the questions in order to get a comprehensive picture of quality assurance practices in New Zealand and to identify information that was particularly relevant to the needs of Ghana.

In all, three senior officers from the three participating higher institutions in New Zealand – one university and two polytechnics were interviewed. In addition, four staff from the external quality assurance agencies in New Zealand took part in the research.

Table 3.5: Summary of interview respondents for both countries

Categories of interviewees	Ghana	New Zealand
Institutional staff	5	3
External agencies staff	2	4
Total	7	7

As stated earlier, the researcher used an interview guide to regulate the interview process and also to assure a commonality in the topics covered. Different interview guides were used for the institutions and the external quality assurance agencies in both countries. The guides are attached as Appendix K, L, M, and N. The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.

Almost all the interviews were conducted within the premises of the institutions – either in the offices of the interviewees or meeting rooms in the institutions. Interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim to ensure that an accurate record of the interview was established.

In addition, notes were taken during the interview. Following the interview, respondents were sent transcripts of their own interviews for them to approve or modify before the data were analysed for the coding of themes.

It is important to point out that the researcher encountered some difficulties in collecting data in Ghana. Firstly, there were problems in obtaining reliable statistics and documents on the processes and practices of quality assurance in higher institutions. Davis (1990) and Gibson (1993) rightly observed that there is often a problem in obtaining accurate statistics in developing countries. In one of the institutions for instance, there were no documents available as they were in the process of developing a manual for a unit yet to be set up. In relation to the other two institutions, the documents were scanty in details, not well developed, and not available on their institutions' website. Secondly, a few interviews were re-scheduled more than twice and this disrupted the researchers' timetable.

3.14 The transcription and coding of interview data

As described above, the data collection for this study was done in two phases. The first phase involved data collection in Ghana and the final phase was devoted for data gathering in New Zealand. Taped interviews were transcribed verbatim. The data from Ghana was analysed manually. Before collecting data in New Zealand, the researcher attended a two-day workshop on the use of NVivo software for analyzing qualitative data. The researcher engaged the services of a transcriber to transcribe the New Zealand interviews. This involved finding someone who not only was skilled but who also understood the accent of the respondents and would be able to provide accurate data. The New Zealand data were also analyzed manually but the NVivo software was employed at a later stage. Both data were analyzed in line with the major response themes that emerged from the interviews. These are described in the relevant results chapters later in this thesis.

3.15 The validity and reliability of data and interpretations

As noted by Hall (2007), the validity of research, both quantitative and qualitative, involves the notion of “fitness for purpose”; that is, the research design and its implementation is well suited to providing answers to the research questions, and the actual results of the research can be attributed to the quality of the research design and process. More specifically in relation to qualitative research, the concept of *trustworthiness* is commonly used to evaluate research validity. As pointed out by Hall, trustworthiness relates to a range of qualities that should be evident in the research: the suitability of the design in relation to the research questions (fitness for purpose again); the appropriateness of research strategies and data analysis techniques; the quality (richness) of the descriptions of the various research procedures and the context of the study; evidence that interpretations are reasonable or able to be justified; and clarity of the reporting. Also associated with the notion of trustworthiness is the concept of “credibility” or “plausibility” in relation to the research results. For results to be credible or plausible, again the notion of thick or rich description is important because such information about the research provides the support that is needed for the interpretations that are made. Evidence that further supports the trustworthiness of research is the attention to detail shown by the researcher throughout the study, the suspension of interpretations until the data are in a state that enables most interpretations to be “self-evident”, the effective use of triangulation to enrich the data and support conclusions, and the use of techniques such as peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checking (see Hall, 2007).

Reliability in research is evidenced in the notion of “accuracy” (Hall, 2007). Again the importance of attention to detail is central in relation to ensuring that observations, measurements, coding of data, interpretations and reporting are all accurately undertaken and recorded. In quantitative research and measurement contexts, the notion of “accuracy” is operationalised as *consistency*, *stability* or *repeatability*; if the same result occurs again, this

stability or consistency is taken to be evidence of reliability. Within qualitative research contexts, the nature of the research design and process, or the phenomenon under study, do not usually lend themselves to evidence of repeatability (a common exception is the check usually undertaken on the initial coding of data by a second researcher). Under these conditions, the notion of reliability as *dependability* takes over from other operational approaches to establishing research reliability. In the sense used here, dependability refers to the use of thick descriptions and evidence of attention to detail to show that “good research practices” have been followed; that is, the results can be “depended” on for their accuracy because sound practices have been used. Unlike in quantitative contexts, where *measurement* is often used to give statistical estimates of reliability, qualitative research uses the process of “audit” to confirm dependability; if thick description is provided, a successful audit of the research processes can be undertaken and interpretations and conclusions supported.

In the present research, validity (trustworthiness) and reliability (dependability) were addressed through the following processes:

- accurate recording of information, including referencing, about each country’s quality assurance systems from official documents and reports held by external quality assurance agencies and tertiary institutions;
- the justification of any interpretation drawn from the above documents that is not self-evident or requires supporting arguments or evidence;
- close attention to detail in relation to the development of interview schedules, the conduct of interviews, the recording and transcription of discussions, use of member checks, and the coding of data with reliability checks;
- the use of peer debriefing and negative case analysis in relation to the classification of issues identified in the international literature on quality assurance and their application to the present study;

- the use of peer debriefing and negative case analysis in relation to the identification of transfer principles from the comparative education literature and their application to the present study;
- the provision of thick description in relation to the research processes and contextual information associated with this study;
- the use of triangulation through:
 - Considering data from different sources;
 - Using multiple methods of enquiry (techniques) such as interviewing and reviewing of documents;
 - Subjecting transcripts of the interviews to independent checks by one of my supervisors to verify if the themes identified were similar;
- Using open ended questions in the interview. This enables the participants to express their own ideas about practices of quality assurance in higher education in their respective countries in their own words.

CHAPTER 4

Higher education landscape and major developments after the 1991 higher education reforms in Ghana

4.1 *Introduction*

The management of quality of higher education sector is still at an infant stage in Ghana when compared to the more advanced higher education systems. Stakeholders in Ghana are still grappling with many challenges relating to the management of quality of the sector. The government of Ghana, in an effort to provide higher education that will be able to compete with other institutions worldwide, introduced mechanisms aimed at improving the quality and relevance of her tertiary education. This chapter traces or presents a brief review of the historical development of higher education in Ghana. Specifically, it discusses the challenges that the sector faced in the seventies and mid-eighties which culminated in the tertiary educational reforms. The issues and effects of the reforms are discussed paying attention to the private sector involvement. This is important because in doing the comparative analysis the understanding of the Ghanaian system is important. There is the need to understand the structure and environment in which higher education institutions are operating in Ghana. There is also the need to understand the policy environment; the context in which the quality assurance system developed, and the cultural and historical factors that influences NAB operations.

Higher education in Ghana is comprised of the universities, which can be public or private, polytechnics, teacher training colleges, nurses training colleges, theological colleges, professional/specialist institutions and tutorial colleges. Discussions in this thesis will be limited to the universities and polytechnics because the scope of the research does not include wider coverage.

4.2 Background

At independence, a number of countries set about to restructure their educational systems especially higher education to speed up economic and social development. During the last decade, many Africa countries recognized the importance of reforming their higher education systems. The most significant reform has been in reaction or response to increased social demand for higher education and the decline in quality (Materu, 2006).

Ghana has been no exception because the newly independent government of 1957 recognized education, particularly higher education as holding the keys to the nations' social and economic development. The government realized that educating Ghanaians was the key to national development because a country's human resource is its key to a prosperous future. The government depended heavily on foreign expatriates for some crucial areas of national development due to lack of qualified local personnel shortly after independence. In view of this, the government paid much attention to the development of higher education immediately after independence with the aim of training the needed local expertise to take over from the foreign expert.

Dr Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first President in addressing Ghana's Legislative Assembly two days prior to the declaration of Ghana's independence expressed the view that:

We must seek an African view to the problems of Africa. This does not mean that western techniques and methods are not applicable to Africa. It does mean, however, that in Ghana we must look at every problem from the African point of view ... Our whole educational system must be geared to producing a scientifically-technically minded people. Because of the limitations placed on us, we have to produce, of necessity, a higher standard of technical education than is necessary in many of the most advanced countries of the Western World ... I believe that one of the most important services which Ghana can perform for Africa is to devise a system of education based at its university level on concrete studies of the problems of the tropical world. The University will be the co-ordinating body for education research, and we hope that it will eventually be associated with Research Institutes dealing with agriculture, biology. And the physical and chemical sciences which we hope to establish ... today in a

country of five million inhabitants nearly half a million children enjoy primary education. We must, however, provide further outlets for these children and them an opportunity to learn something of engineering, tropical agriculture and of the problems of tropical medicine and hygiene. Only with a population so educated can we hope to face the tremendous problems which confront any country attempting to raise the standard of life in a tropical Zone. (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975, p. 94)

Successive governments have continued to recognize the contribution of higher education to national development. The connection between Ghana's economic development and human resource development appears to have been emphasized in every major national planning and development programme. It was therefore not surprising that more than a quarter of a century after Nkrumah, the then government of Ghana explained in its 1991 white paper on tertiary education that in the wake of Ghana's economic hardship during the first two and half decades following independence, the government has reorientated the development policy of the nation, having introduced major policy reforms and measures to restructure the public administration system aimed at restoring economic, health and social balance as well as achieving sustainable growth and development. The Paper specifically emphasized that:

The overall long-term development goals of the Government are to reduce poverty, improve the living standards and quality of life of the people of Ghana by a substantial and sustained increase in national wealth. Education is conceived by the government as an essential component of development strategy to achieve these national goals, with the particular contribution of tertiary education being the training or retraining of upper, middle-level and high-level manpower to steer and manage economic and social development. (White paper, 1991, p. 2)

Education has become the human resource value-adding process. Contributing to the debate on education in Ghana, Akyeampong, Djangmah, Oduro, Seidu, and Hunt (2007), identify three essential goals for educational development in Ghana: To produce a scientifically literate population; to tackle the causes of low productivity; and to produce knowledge to

foster Ghana's economic potential. However, the government recognizes that the social and economic benefits that can be gained from higher education will only be realized when the education is relevant and of a high quality and, graduates from the system have achieved internationally recognized standards. In other words, higher education can only play its role if it produces the graduates with the knowledge and skills needed to support social and economic transformation.

The origin of higher education in Ghana could be traced to the establishment of Achimota College in the mid-1920s which was to offer education from nursery through to first-year university courses in engineering. The college also provided courses preparing students for the University of London intermediate examinations. Because of these university courses, the College could be described as the first higher education institution in the Gold Coast.

However, Effah (2003) argued that the beginning of formal higher education is traceable to the recommendations of two high-powered commissions – the Asquith and Eliot Commissions – appointed by the government of the United Kingdom in 1943 with the mandate of making proposals for the establishment of a university in the West Africa sub-region. Consequently, the University College of the Gold Coast (now University of Ghana) was established in 1948 marking the beginning of university education in Ghana. The College was affiliated to the University of London but following the passage of an Act of Parliament in 1961 (Act 79), the University College attained sovereign university status with powers to award its own degrees and certificates. Years later a second university was established to train engineers. At independence, Ghana had two universities.

These institutions provided the needed manpower for national economic development. However, the sector has been subjected to many pressures and challenges over recent decades. The sector has suffered seriously as it struggled with massive expansion in a

context of political, social and economic change and severe financial crisis. Shabani, as cited in Craft (1994), observed that:

during the past decade the environment in which Africa universities have operated has undergone many profound political, social and economic changes, compelling the universities to revise radically not only their objectives but also their mission, strategies, structures and even their modes of operation. Of the crises confronting the higher education system, those caused by finance and growth have been the greatest cause of deteriorating quality. (p. 54)

For years, higher education institutions in Ghana experienced chronic financial difficulties due to reduction both in state subsidies and in financial support from the international community. Budget allocations by government to the universities, which accounts for about 90 per cent of their funds, have been reduced. The reduction in funds has made it difficult for the institutions to provide the basic equipment, books and scientific journals necessary for teaching and research.

From the early 1970s to the mid 1980s, Ghana experienced a severe general economic decline which adversely affected every social sector. Along with other sectors, the educational system faced the challenges of meeting its required human and material resources. Thus, by the mid 1980s, Ghana's educational system had major setbacks following a period of prolonged poor economic performance. Providing figures to explain the sad situation, Akyeampong et al. (2007) indicated that in 1982, per capita income was 30 percent below the 1970 level, and the index of real monthly earnings had fallen from 315 to 62. This period also witnessed acute shortage in teachers, textbooks, and instructional materials throughout the country's schools.

Thus nearly two decades after the overthrow of Ghana's first president (Nkrumah), financial allocations to higher education reduced significantly. This adversely hindered the capacity of higher institutions to undertake any productive research. Giving figures to explain funding

that was available to the sector during the reporting period, Effah (2003) [the Executive Secretary of the National Council for Tertiary Education in Ghana] noted that in the 1970s, universities' expenditure on research and development was about 0.7% of GDP and fell further to 0.1%–0.2% of GDP during the economic crisis of the 1980s. One other major factor which contributed considerably to the already bad financial situation in Ghana was the shift of attention or focus of the international development assistance from higher education to basic education during this period. The World Bank's former position argued that the rates of return to education favoured investment in primary education and that more resources should be allocated to it than to higher education (Manuh et al., 2007). This meant that higher education received even less attention, and lost out in terms of funding to primary education.

Through the 1970s and the early 1980s the tertiary educational sector experienced major deterioration in conditions in terms of financial provision and physical infrastructure. In addition the relationship between the institutions and the military governments also worsened. For instance, the funds given to the institutions was no longer adequate for the purchase of teaching and learning materials that are essential for the maintenance of the quality of education provided. In a press release to explain the impacts of these conditions on higher education and also to explain governments efforts at addressing the problems, Sawyerr, the then Minister of the sector, emphasized that the deteriorating conditions had led rapidly to low staff recruitment and retention, poor morale, an alleged decline in academic standards, and regular interruptions in the academic year caused by disputes with both staff and students.

By the mid-1980s, most lecturers had left the classroom to either join politics or other sectors of the economy or travel overseas to seek greener pastures. Lecturers either left the country to work in universities offering better working conditions, or left the university to

work in private enterprises within the country. Some lecturers remained on campus but spent most of their time trading or in other income-generating activities. Such lecturers made no effort to improve the quality of their teaching or to update their knowledge while others devoted most of their time to political activities. These phenomena deprived the sector of a good number of their highly qualified staff capable of improving the quality of teaching. The poor financial situation had a negative effect on the quality and standards of the education provided by these institutions. Thus the tertiary educational sector in Ghana faced a lot of difficulties during the 1970s and 1980s, one of which was that of quality. During this period the quality of education that was offered by the higher institutions suffered serious deterioration.

The experiences of the practices in the United Kingdom, USA and a number of advanced nations imply that approaches to quality assurance in higher education can only work effectively provided some basic factors are put in place and are functioning properly. Similarly, in a review of the practices of quality assurance in the developed and developing nations, Lim (2001) contends that quality assurance can operate effectively only if some conditions exist, namely:

- 1 the presence of academically qualified staff
- 2 the need for academics to be employed in one full-time job in one institution
- 3 the presence of adequate physical, electronic and administrative support services
- 4 the appointment and promotion of staff to be based on academic merit and not on political or social conditions
- 5 the presence of a fair degree of academic freedom. (p. 105-108)

Unfortunately, most of these conditions were not present in Ghana during the 1970s and the 1980s. For instance academic freedom was limited; positive criticism of the university or the government was not tolerated or encouraged and most universities did not have adequate numbers of qualified academic and administrative staff. Politicians especially

during military regimes presented a serious challenge to academic freedom. Yankah, the Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana, observed in a public lecture on January 29, 2010 that political informants infiltrated university campuses to undermine academic freedom in the country. During the period concerned, many academics experienced the termination of their employment and a spell in detention. The World Bank (2000) observed that congested and deteriorating physical facilities, inadequate and outdated library resources, inadequate equipment and instructional resources, outdated curricula, and unqualified teaching staff were existing conditions in developing countries. In sum, there was a significant difference between the necessary and sufficient conditions for proper systems of quality assurance to work.

As noted in the government's white paper on the reforms to the tertiary education system of 1991, the tertiary system, being totally dependent on Government, was adversely affected by the national economic crisis leading to falling standards and the quality of education provided. It should be noted that, the state continues to be the provider and major funder of higher education.

4.3 Reforms to the tertiary education system

To make a significant contribution to the economic, political, and social conditions, higher education worldwide has witnessed a comprehensive and fundamental transformation in its design, delivery and in how it is organized, managed, administered and funded. The conditions discussed above prompted the government of Ghana to embark on a series of International Monetary Fund's (IMF) structural adjustment programmes under which the government carried out reforms in all social sectors including higher education in the late 1980s. The government introduced educational policies to improve access and quality in the provision of higher education.

Taken together and as part of the reforms, this necessitates a transformation in higher education – one that could produce the knowledge and skills necessary to fight the economic and social problems confronting the country. A major goal was to produce graduates who would provide a competent workforce that would be well adapted to the challenges of an economy based on knowledge and technology. The government and other stakeholders expressed concern about the need to ensure the quality of higher education in the face of increasing student numbers, and how to ensure that educational programmes produced the right calibre of graduates. There was considerable concern that the higher education system should be responsive to the needs of the country. Behind this concern was the need to meet international standards and the need to ensure that public money was spent in the most efficient way. At the same time, the World Bank also suggested that governments should provide an enabling policy and regulating framework to support the development of quality higher education.

In view of these concerns, the Government of Ghana constituted a University Rationalization Committee (URC) in 1986 to develop proposals for reforming the management, academic structure and funding of tertiary education in Ghana. The Committee carried out its task over the period 1986-88, and following the submission of its report in 1988, the government issued a White Paper in 1991 on the reforms to the tertiary education system. This paper urged that a re-appraisal of course content and orientation be undertaken as well as a revision of the models used for institutional organization. The White Paper expressed concern about a growing disjunction between university education and the national development process.

After further review of the challenges facing the higher education sub-sector and its potential development within the context of national development, the government

implemented the tertiary component of its education reform programme. The reforms were organized under four major policy objectives:

- unification of the existing institutions into a co-ordinated tertiary education system, and the establishment of new bodies and mechanisms to provide system management and control;
- introduction of measures to ensure the system's overall financial sustainability (including cost-recovery, cost-sharing with both students and the private sector, a norm-based approach to institutional management, and a new block grant funding mechanism);
- introduction of measures to improve the quality and relevance of Ghanaian tertiary education; and
- significant expansion of the tertiary education system as a whole, to meet the demands of school leavers and the needs of employers, and to provide greater opportunity of access to those previously denied it (White Paper 1991).

Each of these is discussed briefly in turn.

4.3.1 Unification into a single tertiary education sector

One of the major aims of the 1991 reforms was to bring all the higher educational institutions into a single, integrated and coordinated management system for efficiency. Before then, the higher institutions were spread under various ministries making co-ordination very difficult. In the Ghanaian context, higher education comprises all studies and training offered at the universities and non-university post-secondary institutions that admit candidates normally after completion of senior high secondary education. In both cases, the training provided is to adequately prepare the student for gainful employment and for his/her proper functioning in the wider community. As observed by the White Paper 1991, lack of co-ordination and integrated planning and development also occurred within the tertiary sub-sector:

Currently, tertiary education is not managed as a unified system, with a central administration, but as a diversified system with different management arrangements. Responsibility for the universities now resides with the Higher Education Division of the Ministry of Education. A number of post-secondary institutions such as the polytechnics and teacher training colleges which qualify as tertiary institutions operate under the Ghana Education Service of the Ministry of Education (M.O.E) rather than under the Higher Education Division of the same Ministry. Furthermore, there are a large number of other tertiary level institutions which are not even under the aegis of the M.O.E but are operated by such ministries as Agriculture, Health and Information (p. 2).

The White Paper argued that this resulted in inefficiency in the development of the country's' human resources. Specific recommendations included the reorganizing, rationalization and upgrading of existing institutions; the setting up of new institutions; the reassigning of supervision of the polytechnics to the tertiary education sector (this responsibility was then under the purview of the Ghana Education Service); and the establishment of various regulatory bodies to co-ordinate and provide policy oversight.

4.3.2 Increase the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the institutions

This recommendation aimed at changing the governance, management and planning structures of the higher institutions in order to enhance their efficiency. Further, the reform proposed the introduction of cost-sharing and cost-recovery in tertiary education between the government, the student population, and the private sector to be achieved in the following ways:

Government contribution: Provision of recurrent subventions, equipment and capital grants; provision of specific grants for students and teaching staff; assistance to students to obtain loans to defray maintenance and other expenses; ... retention of free tuition.

Student population: Gradual assumption of the responsibility for the payment of full cost of lodging and incidental expenses.

Private sector: communities, commerce and industry will be encouraged to provide for students sponsorship, work study arrangements, endowments of tertiary institutions ... libraries, workshops and laboratories (p. 8).

Some of the above was to be achieved by privatization of catering services while halls of residence would be changed to hostels where students would have to pay for their accommodation. Policy on non-residence would be pursued. Students were to access a student loan scheme to mitigate the anticipated cost of education. This became important because government alone could no longer finance the tertiary education system.

4.3.3 Improve and control the quality and relevance of tertiary education

The Committee recommended that regulatory bodies should be established with the mandate to ensure the quality of tertiary education and the maintenance of academic standards. Specifically, the White Paper officially recommended that the following bodies should be established to help improve the management and quality of the sub-sector in general:

- A Board of Accreditation (NAB)
- A National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations (NABPTEx)
- A joint Admission and Matriculation Board

These bodies were to regulate and monitor the performance of the institutions to ensure quality of their programmes.

4.3.4 Equity and Expansion of tertiary education

Finally, the Committee was committed to addressing the inequality in access to higher education linked to gender and poverty. Before the reforms, it was alleged men had more access to higher education than their female counterparts. In a similar vein, those from

higher income category tend to be in a more advantageous position when it comes to enrolment to higher education. This phenomenon thus tends to limit access to higher education to few Ghanaians. Meanwhile, the basic assumption underlying the entire reforms in Ghana was to project Ghana to a middle income status within the planning period. The government recognized that this vision could only be achieved if education was widened and made available to all Ghanaians to acquire the needed skills. The Committee's recommendations in this regard were therefore informed in part by the manpower requirement norms projected for middle-income countries (Girdwood, 1999). There was also strong awareness of the likely increase in student demand following expansion and restructuring of the school system.

4.4 Effects of the educational reforms

Following the implementation of the higher educational reforms in the mid-1980s, the sector witnessed major significant changes in its structure, governance and its relationship with the government. After the implementation of the reforms, however, Ghana's higher education system was faced with numerous changes and challenges in its environment. These have included a shift to mass education where students' enrolment in higher education increased considerably in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The student population of the University of Ghana for instance grew from 10,000 in the year 2000, to over 28,000 in 2006 (see The University of Ghana's data base). There has been an increase in student enrolment not only at the undergraduate level but also at the postgraduate level. Enrolment in higher education increased by 80% between 1993 and 1998 (Girdwood, 1999). Between 2004 and 2005 Ghana's tertiary Gross Enrolment Ratio rose from 3% to 5% (UNESCO, 2006; 2007). Recent figures from Ghana's National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) suggest university enrolment alone is over 97,000 (NCTE, 2006b; 2007).

With this expansion it is quite obvious that authorities should have taken into account adequate extension of facilities and equipment to cater for the numbers. Unfortunately, expansion in enrolments has not been accompanied by a commensurate development in infrastructure and human and material resources. Thus it is not unusual, for instance, to see students crowded into a very small lecture hall. In some instances, students are seen standing outside the lecture hall taking notes due to a lack of space. In such a situation, students are always seen in a rush to secure seats in the lecture theatres hours in advance to enable them hear their lecturers. Thus access to knowledge by students is mostly determined by their ability to manage their time to ensure early arrival at the lecture room.

Conditions at the University of Ghana (Ghana's premier university), for example, has deteriorated significantly over the years due to a number of internal and external factors. The number of candidates admitted increased dramatically without a corresponding expansion of infrastructure, improvement in faculty strength or change in administrative systems. A year long strike action embarked on by the University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG) in the mid 1990s to press home their demand for better conditions of service from the government further worsened the situation. The closure of the institutions created a backlog of fresh students who could not be admitted within the year. When, under public pressure, the University took some measures to rectify this problem by doubling its student intake. Subsequently, this further increased the student population which led to a further decline in academic standards and quality.

The University eventually invited an external panel of prominent international academics to conduct a review of its programmes and structure and to make recommendations to reverse the perceived decline in quality. The most significant recommendation of the visitation panel was to freeze or drastically slow down growth of enrolment while addressing those issues that affect quality.

The number of higher education institutions of all kinds expanded rapidly in the last decade as a response to an increase in student enrolment. As noted earlier, at the time of independence in 1957, there were only two universities in Ghana which were sponsored by the state. The last decade has seen a phenomenal growth in higher institutions. The late 1980s witnessed reforms in the tertiary education sector that culminated in the upgrading of polytechnics to tertiary status and the beginning of the private university proliferation in Ghana. Currently, Ghana has seven public universities, one private university (that is an institution granted a Presidential Charter to award its own certificates), over 31 private university colleges (institutions affiliated to full universities for the award of certificates), 10 public polytechnics, four theological colleges, forty one teacher training colleges and several other professional/specialized tertiary institutions (NAB data base). The expansion was mainly experienced in the private sector and particularly in the university colleges as the present high number of university colleges makes evident.

The table below provides a breakdown of the type and number of tertiary education institutions in Ghana as of September 2009.

Table 4.1: Higher Education Institutions in Ghana as of September, 2009 (from NAB database, 2011)

Type of institutions	Universities and university colleges	Polytechnics	Teacher Training Colleges	Nurses Training Colleges	Others
Public	7	10	41	15	
Private	31	-	1	53	25

The reform has also altered the relationship between government and higher education. The 1991 White Paper on tertiary sector reforms observed that the running costs of tertiary education in Ghana, especially those of the universities are unacceptably high. In view of this, the state sponsored higher institutions were privatized with the introduction of cost

sharing arrangements among stakeholders. Other income generating ventures were also introduced into the sector. A process of cost recovery and cost sharing has been initiated and students are now required to pay what is known in Ghanaian parlance as “academic and residential facility user fees”. Many public utility and support services and student support systems were contracted out to private agencies on a full pricing basis. Students have been supported in relation to their increased costs through the introduction of the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) loan scheme.

One other prominent change or effect of the 1991 reform is the private sector involvement in higher education sector in Ghana. As noted earlier, government was the sole funder of tertiary education in Ghana after independence. The private sector has been invited to assist with the growth crisis by establishing private institutions. Developments and reforms in the 1980s such as the “market-friendly” (e.g., tax incentives for private investors) reforms initiated under the structural adjustment programmes and the deregulation policies, has created an environment for encouraging the emergence of the private higher education sector in Ghana. The first private university college was established in 1993 and the numbers has increased to 30 in 2009. The rapid emergence of the private institutions raised concern for quality leading to the decision to establish a quality assurance agency to regulate and monitor providers and to protect consumers.

Various reasons have explained the rapid expansion of the private sector within higher education in Ghana, such as the move to mass education. Unfortunately, the public sector is unable to satisfy this demand. Bollag (1999) explains that the rapid increase of private higher institutions in Ghana has been stimulated by the increase in social demand for higher education that the government owned institutions cannot meet. In general, public institutions have a limited number of places for students which are far below public demand. On average, approximately 49 percent of qualified applicants gain admission to the public

universities creating a demand-supply gap of 51 percent (Oduro & Senadza, 2004). Private-sector university enterprises have emerged to provide for a demand in the market, and their responsibility could best be explained as supplementing the state system rather than replacing it.

Unfortunately, concerns have been raised about various aspects of the quality of education provided by private institutions. Some of the features which have given rise to this concern are briefly discussed below.

Size and courses of private university colleges: The private sector is the fastest growing section in the higher education sector in Ghana today. The number of private university colleges outnumbers the public universities (see numbers in the table on page 122), however, as indicated in NAB's official website, their student intake accounts for a relatively low percent of total student enrolment. This is because most of the institutions do not have enough facilities to admit more students. For example, the Evangelical Presbyterian University College's first intake was about 57 students (NAB records). It is a common practice for private institutions to operate in rented buildings which were not originally designed for teaching and have required alterations to be made to make the premises suitable for learning.

Courses offered by private institutions: Public universities have many faculties offering courses in a variety of disciplines. Many of the colleges are self-financing with a profit making motive, therefore, they resort to offering courses that are market friendly. The institutions offer courses that require less investment in terms of infrastructure and equipment such as business administration and information and communication technology. Thaver (2003) notes that these institutions offer selected courses that are better understood as "boutique" institutions as against the "super market" model of public universities.

Student body: Because the demand for positions in public universities cannot be satisfied, the students who are turned away often seek entry to the private universities. It is believed that the academic profile of participants is therefore lower in private higher institutions than public universities.

Teaching capacity in the private institutions: Many of the private institutions depend on part-time faculty/staff for their existence. One major difficulty is that private institutions do not have adequate and qualified teaching and administrative staff. In a recent study (Varghese, 2004) found that reliance on part-time teachers is a common feature among private universities irrespective of their location and orientation. In view of this, teaching is the main function carried out by private institutions. They do not have resources and facilities to carry out research.

As a consequence of the above features, the issue of how to assess the quality of the activities of higher education institutions particularly the private colleges has become very important. This has resulted in the need for the government to guard the quality of the higher education sector, whether public or private by putting in place safeguards to assure the public of the value of the educational programmes provided. The government was particularly concerned both to regulate the private institutions and to set up systems externally for monitoring the quality and standards of public provisions. In this way, the government has become responsible for protecting the public from poor provision and holds public sector institutions accountable for the public funds invested in them.

4.5 Regulatory bodies established after the implementation of the 1991 reforms

Some regulatory bodies were established in accordance with the recommendations of the 1991 report. Notable among them are the following:

The National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) which was established by an Act of Parliament, Act 454 of 1993. All the higher institutions were brought under the management of The Ministry of Education, and NCTE was established as the coordinating body for tertiary education with the mandate to advise the Ministry on matters relating to the development of tertiary education in Ghana.

The National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations (NABPTEX) was also established as a product of the 1991 educational reforms. NABPTEX was established by the NABPTEX Act, 1994 (Act 492) to formulate and administer schemes of examinations, evaluation, assessment, certification and standards for skills and syllabus competencies for non-university tertiary institutions with accreditation by the National Accreditation Board. This gives NAB a very fundamental responsibility in ensuring the quality of polytechnic education in Ghana.

The National Accreditation Board was established in 1993 with the enactment of PNDCL 317, 1993. The aim was for the government and parliament to guarantee that a quality management system for higher institutions was institutionalized through a basic legal framework to provide the best possible positioning for Ghana's higher institutions in an international competitive environment. The major function assigned to the Board by the government of Ghana is the accreditation of both public and private higher institutions, as its name implies. (NAB is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.)

4.6 Summary

This chapter had discussed the challenges that confronted the higher education sector in the 1980 that resulted in the higher education reforms. It was observed that while the role of higher institutions is critical to national development, poor economic performance, inappropriate governing structures, political interference and weak internal management

have seriously limited higher institutions in Ghana in fulfilling this role. Though the government has put in place structures to manage and enhance the quality of higher education, these regulatory bodies have been confronted with a myriad of problems in the discharge of their duties. The ability to put into practice very effective quality assurance mechanisms is limited. Girdwood (1999) in reviewing the 1991 educational reforms in Ghana observed that none of these bodies has been adequately resourced – both human and financial – to fulfill their roles properly. Materu (2006) further commented that some of these external quality assurance agencies in Africa have often been reduced to bodies responsible for the certification of private higher institutions due to lack of requisite capacity and financial resources.

Further, it appears that they do not possess the authority necessary to carry out their mandates. This according to Girdwood implies that the ability of the agencies to make any positive impact on the quality of the higher education sector has fallen short of public expectations. A case in point is the fact that NAB has been under-resourced and has no authority to enforce its decision of revoking accreditation of an institution which is not meeting requirements. The Board can only recommend to the sector Minister for action.

CHAPTER 5

External Quality Assurance Provisions in Ghana: Analysis of Documents

5.1 Introduction

As already seen, the higher education sector in Ghana faced extensive challenges in the 1980s, including attention to quality. At the same time, quality issues also dominated discussions on higher education across the globe. For instance, strategies for the delivery of high quality education featured prominently at the World Conference on Higher Education in 1998 (UNESCO, 1998).

This chapter explores the major policies and provisions which established the National Accreditation Board (NAB) and thereby introduced formal quality assurance mechanisms in Ghana. The structures, composition, functions, and mandates of the NAB are described below.

5.2 The collection of documents

As part of the major reforms to the tertiary education sector in Ghana in the 1980s and 1990s as already seen in the previous chapter, the government of Ghana established NAB to manage and monitor the quality of educational programmes and qualifications offered within the higher education sector. NAB is the major external quality assurance agency responsible for the management of quality in higher education in Ghana.

The researcher gathered information from the websites of NAB and the participating institutions as part of the documentary analysis conducted for this research. From NAB, the following were obtained:

- PNDCL 319
- NAB Act 744, 2007
- Tertiary Institutions (Establishment and Accreditation) Regulations, 2002 (L.I. 1700)
- The Roadmap to accreditation
- NAB instruments and a questionnaire designed for use in institutional and programme accreditation
- Government White Paper reforms to the tertiary education system (1991), and
- NAB Strategic Plan for 2005–2009.

Documents were also collected from institutions but these did not provide much in the way of useful information or data on the internal quality assurance mechanisms operated by institutions. This can be attributed to two main factors: some were still developing their internal processes and had not yet documented their systems, while others were further behind in their developments and lacked even an internal policy addressing the quality assurance of programmes, teaching, assessment, etc.

5.3 The establishment of the National Accreditation Board

As noted earlier, the government white paper on the reforms to the tertiary education system identified that all tertiary institutions in Ghana should be brought under the direction of the Ministry of Education to ensure government policies for higher education are implemented. However, it provided that:

In order to ensure smooth operations and management within the tertiary sub-sector, a clear distinction will be drawn between, on the one hand, functions that will be vested in the Ministry of Education, viz, policy formulation and monitoring, and on the other, responsibilities that will be handled by the tertiary institutions themselves, namely, policy implementation (p. 4)

In furtherance of better management within the tertiary sector, the White Paper recommended that student admissions, accreditation of programmes and examinations should be upgraded. The Ministry of Education was assigned the responsibility of overseeing the establishment of NAB.

The establishment of a national accreditation system in Ghana arose from a mandate of PNDCL 317, 1993 which culminated in the establishment of NAB in 1993. This Law established NAB as the national external quality assurance body with the mandate of accrediting higher institutions and their programmes and in charge of quality management of the tertiary sector in Ghana. However, this law has since been amended into an Act of Parliament, the NAB Act 744, 2007 that was passed by the Parliament of the fourth Republic. The purpose was for the government and parliament to ensure that a quality management system for the higher education sector was established through a basic legal framework to provide the best possible positioning for Ghana's higher institutions in an internationally competitive environment. There was also the need to modernize and improve the performance of higher institutions in the country to confront the new challenges imposed by the scientific and technological revolution, the globalization of the world economy and the internationalization of higher education.

The NAB Law outlines the functions of the NAB in relation to the operations of tertiary institutions in Ghana. There is also a Legislative Instrument (L. I. 1700) based on the earlier law but this is being revised (as at the time of data collection) in accordance with the new law. This instrument explicitly establishes the relationship between the board and the institutions. It spells out the operational procedures and responsibilities of institutions. The impact of L.I. 1700 was to give effect to PNDCL 317. In particular, the L.I specified regulations governing:

- The establishment of tertiary institutions
- The process of accreditation
- The rights and obligations of accredited institutions
- Miscellaneous provisions

Subsequently, the Board has developed a roadmap to accreditation simplifying the steps an applicant institution should take towards accreditation and charter.

5.4 Membership of the NAB

Section 1 of the NAB Act 744, 2007 provided for 15 members representing various constituencies. Members are appointed by the President. With the exception of the Executive Secretary, members cannot be in permanent employment with the Board. Membership is for a three year period but may include re-appointment. The president has the power to revoke membership and accept resignations. The Board meets at least once every three months. Decisions of the Board are arrived at by a simple majority of members present but the casting vote in the case of a tie resides with the person chairing the Board (section 4 (5) of Act 744).

5.5 Functions of NAB

The international recognition of university programmes requires more than the assurance provided by a university's own internal evaluation processes. External accreditation by a recognised authority is also needed. Consequently, the government of Ghana allocated the role of accreditation of higher educational institutions and their programmes to NAB.

The major functions of NAB as spelt out in section 2 of the NAB Act 744, 2007 are to:

- accredit both public and private (tertiary) institutions as regards the contents and standards of their programmes;

- determine, in consultation with the appropriate institution or body, the programme and requirements for the proper operation of that institution and the maintenance of acceptable levels of academic or professional standards;
- publish as it considers appropriate the list of accredited public and private institutions and programmes at the beginning of each year;
- advise the President on the grant of a Charter to a private tertiary institution;
- determine the equivalences of diplomas, certificates and other qualifications awarded by institutions in Ghana or elsewhere;
- perform any other functions determined by the Minister.

Thus the main quality assurance function of the Board is the certification of both public and private tertiary institutions with regard to the contents and standards of their programmes.

The quality assurance system of the Board covers the three core functions of higher education – teaching, research and community engagement. The Board has both regulatory and quality assurance functions.

Accreditation as interpreted in subsection 18 of the PNDCL 319, 1993 means “the status accorded a tertiary institution or programme as satisfying acceptable defined standards set by the Board” (p. 4). The accreditation process acknowledges the right of institutions to develop new programmes and to maintain the credibility of existing qualifications but requires that these programmes satisfy various criteria related to educational quality.

Through this process, an institution also has the opportunity to improve its programmes whenever it does not satisfy the set criteria. Another objective of the accreditation process is to protect students from undertaking programmes that are judged to be of poor quality. In this sense, it is intended to increase the confidence of the public in the higher education programmes and qualifications offered by Ghanaian institutions. This is also to assure the

public that the institution has adequate infrastructure, both physical and financial resources, to sustain and provide a quality education.

A further goal is to foster the notion of continuous quality improvement across the entire tertiary sector. Accreditation is intended to assure the international community that education provided by Ghanaian institutions is of a high standard and that graduates are adequately qualified for further studies and for employment. Further, accreditation is to give surety to employers and other members of the community that Ghanaian graduates of all academic programmes from accredited institutions have achieved satisfactory levels of skills in their areas of specialty. The duration for each accreditation, particularly programme accreditation, varies according to its level, facilities available and the deficiencies associated with the institution and/or its programmes.

5.6 Goals and objectives of NAB

NAB developed a Strategic plan, the NAB Strategic Plan, 2005–2009, mainly to elaborate its vision and the mission. The Plan was mostly needed to give directions to the Board in discharging its duties. The Plan spells out the goals and objectives of NAB. These goals as stated on page 3 of the Plan include the following:

- to protect the academic interest of the students in public and private tertiary educational institutions;
- to guide public and private tertiary educational institutions to deliver quality education;
- to ensure the maintenance of an acceptable standard/quality programmes in tertiary educational institutions;
- to guide public and private tertiary educational institutions in the provision of facilities that are appropriate to their academic and professional programme;

- to maintain and publish information on accredited tertiary educational institutions;
- to ascertain the standards and equivalencies of educational degrees, diplomas, certificates and other educational qualifications awarded by institutions in Ghana or elsewhere.

Apart from the Board’s accountability to the Parliament through the Minister of Education, it is an independent national agency with the aim of promoting, auditing, and reporting on quality assurance for Ghanaian higher education providers. It provides quality standards and guidelines for courses offered by higher education providers with the aim of ensuring that they are of high quality, with educational standards comparable internationally.

Despite these important roles of NAB, its work or outcomes have not been evaluated by any external body to ascertain whether NAB is achieving its purpose and also employing the best mechanisms. Though NAB is a member of INQAAHE, it has not yet submitted its operations to the network for assessment to find out the extent to which it is meeting INQAAHE guidelines for good practice.

5.7 Powers of NAB

The Board has powers derived from the NAB Law Act 744, 2007. The powers of the Board, the Board’s obligations to the accredited institutions and the institutions’ obligations to the Board are specified in the law. For example, it is “mandatory that every higher institution in Ghana both public and private seek accreditation for the institution itself and for the programme that it runs”. This requirement is captured in section 1 (1) of the L.I.1700 which requires that “A person who intends to establish a tertiary institution shall make an application to the National Accreditation Board.”

In addition, Section 2 spells out the documentation to be accompanied with an application.

This includes:

- The prescribed fees;
- The proposed name, location, address, aims and obligations of the institution
- The form of governance of the academic and administrative affairs of the institution
- An outline of the nature of the academic programmes intended to be conducted at the institution
- The resources available or to be procured including finances, staff, library services and equipment appropriate to and adequate for the proposed academic programmes to be conducted at the institution
- A proposed nature of the maintenance of the resources of the institution on a long term basis
- A timetable indicating a programme of action for the next three years, directed at the realisation of the aims and objectives of the institution to be established, and
- Steps that the institution intends to take to comply with standards formulated by the Board.

With regard to transnational (cross-border) education, section B of the NAB Law 2007 stipulates that: “Foreign institutions seeking to operate in Ghana should be registered with the Board” and should also have their programmes assessed.

It should be noted that these regulations apply to both public and private tertiary institutions in Ghana. In addition, sub-regulation (2) of the L.I.1700 makes it clear that it is illegal to operate an unaccredited institution and programme in Ghana. There are various sanctions available to the Board depending on the circumstances. For instance, one could be sentenced to imprisonment or receive a fine for running an unaccredited institution or

programme. Where an institution has accreditation for a programme but the period has expired, sanctions could include withdrawal of funds, the students not obtaining a loan through the tertiary loan scheme, and the issuance of a compliance notice. In an extreme case there could also be revocation of accreditation. In such a circumstance, Section 21 (1) of the NAB law requires that the Board be satisfied that there is physical or moral harm to students or the work of the institution is below standards, or that the continued operation of the institution is not in the public interest. In such circumstances the Board notifies the institution that it has six months to rectify its deficiencies.

Where the operations of an institution are judged to be far below acceptable standards, the Minister of Education is advised to use his powers under the Education Act of 1961 and the Education (Amendment) Act 1965 to close down the institution. Further to these directions, Subsection 3 mandates the Board to close down the institution where the proprietor fails to comply.

The Board has the power to ask for any information it considers important from any institution for the appropriate and efficient performance of its functions and the institution is required to comply. In effect, this means that any person authorized by the Board to carry out an investigation or review should have access to all important records, books or facilities of the institution. If an institution refuses to comply, it contravenes the relevant law and becomes liable for its failure to cooperate. The Law, however, provides for an appeal against any decision taken by NAB. Section (20) of the L.I.1700 allows that such an appeal is made within 30 days to the Minister, who may give instructions relating to the decision that he feels appropriate.

The vision of NAB as noted in the Strategic Plan 2005-2009 is to provide the best basis for establishing, measuring and improving standards in tertiary education in Ghana. To achieve

this, NAB has directed all accredited institutions to set up internal quality assurance units to facilitate the work of the Board. The units are expected to carry out the internal audits of the institutions to ensure compliance to the standards. Section (13) of the L.I.1700 also directs that each accredited institution shall ensure:

(a) standards determined under these regulations in respect of it are maintained at all times; (b) lawful instructions issued by the Board or any other authority empowered to do so under the Law or any other enactment are complied with; and (c) no new programmes or instruction are undertaken under these regulations without the prior consent of the Board.

5.8 Scope of work and organization of NAB

Section 6 (1) of the NAB Act 744, 2007 provides that the Board may establish committees to carry out its operations and thereby make recommendations to the Board for consideration. Such committees may comprise members of the Board, non-members, or a combination of the two. However, a committee that comprises only non-members may only give advice to the Board. The committees of the Board include:

- Accreditation Committee
- Institutional Visits and Monitoring Sub Committee
- Finance and Administration Committee
- Assessment Criteria Sub Committee
- Budget Sub Committee

The NAB Law also mandates the Board to appoint panels for the purposes of carrying out accreditation of either a programme or an institution. Section 9 (1) states that “the Board for the purposes of considering an application for accreditation shall within thirty days of receipt of an application appoint an accreditation panel”. Any panel appointed for this purpose shall have a chairman and such other persons not exceeding eight from appropriate

professional, academic, industrial or commercial fields. The panel may consist of Board members or non-members or both.

In terms of the organizational and administrative structure, NAB reports to the Minister of Education. The Secretariat of the Board is its administrative wing, coordinating all the accreditation processes and documentation as well as providing the Board with adequate information for its deliberations and decisions. At the time of this research, the Secretariat has staff strength of 25 officers (including both professionals and support staff) who operate under the office of the Executive Secretary. The Board formulates policies, and the Executive Secretary ensures their implementation, that is, he is in charge of the day-to-day administrative functioning of the Board, subject to the policy directives of the Board.

5.9 NAB Accreditation processes

NAB spells out its requirements and processes of accreditation. The Roadmap specifies the procedures an organization has to follow to facilitate the process of accreditation and includes details of the operational information that institutions must provide. The stages and processes outlined by the Roadmap comprise of: Interim Authorization; Institutional Accreditation; and Programme Accreditation.

Further information on the role of NAB in accreditation appears later in this chapter and in chapter 6.

NAB has developed and published a series of documents describing the frameworks and criteria for institutional and programme accreditation. To assist institutions to prepare for evaluation, NAB has prepared a questionnaire which outlines the material that the institution is expected to provide for the panel of assessors prior to the visit. These documents describe briefly the methodology and requirements that guide these processes. In supplying their documentation, institutions are required to provide information on:

- the vision and mission of the institution;
- the governance structure of the institution;
- funding available to the institution and how the financial resources will be managed to ensure transparency and accountability;
- the state and adequacy of both the physical and library facilities available for the staff and students involved with the programme;
- health, safety and the environmental sanitation of the institution;
- the adequacy and qualifications of both academic and administrative staff, the qualifications, administrative experience and academic leadership capability of the proposed head of department responsible for the programme;
- content of the programme;
- mode of assessment, and the student course assessment.

Interim Authorization: This is the first phase of the accreditation exercise. As the name connotes, this is the process whereby an applicant seeks official or legal backing from NAB for the establishment of an institution. Where an institution is just beginning and trying to assemble its resources, it can apply to the Board for an Interim Authorization to enable it access some resources beyond its capability to help it set up. For example, an institution may need a bank loan or wants to obtain some equipment. In this case NAB will grant the institution an interim authorization which allows the institution to continue the process of mobilizing resources for the purpose of becoming established. The interim authorization as explained in the L.I. 1700, permits the applicant to take the following steps in respect of the institution:

to set up a governing body for the institution; commence or continue with the mobilization of financial resources needed; commence or continue the development of physical facilities; and commence or continue assembling academic facilities (p. 5).

The only prohibition at this stage is that the institution cannot admit students nor advertise for students. On the other hand, the Board has the power to refuse granting interim authorization to an applicant on the basis that the applicant is not likely to meet the requirements for the establishment of a higher institution.

Institutional accreditation: At the institutional accreditation stage, the applicant institution submits a completed questionnaire together with the necessary information and the appropriate fees paid to NAB. Upon receiving the application NAB reviews it within a specified period. In assessing an application, NAB in particular considers: the propriety of the name proposed for the institution; the suitability of its location particularly in respect of health, congenial location and safety standards; the programmes proposed; the ability of the applicant to provide the requisite teaching and learning facilities for the programmes; the financial resources available to the institution; and the criteria proposed for the management of the institution.

The Board also assesses the suitability of the premises to be used for the establishment of the proposed institution. In doing this, the Board then constitutes an institutional and monitoring team comprising the Board members to visit the institution, to meet with the principal officers of the institution to evaluate the vision and operations of the institution. Institutions that possess adequate physical facilities and meet the minimum standards are granted Institutional Accreditation to commence operation. However each academic programme to be mounted by the institution has to be assessed on its own merits against the set standards.

Programme accreditation: Accreditation is programme specific in Ghana. This implies that an institution is required to apply for accreditation for every programme it intends to offer. In applying for programme accreditation, institutions have to complete the NAB

questionnaire as a checklist to guide them in the preparation and collation of the required documentation and resources. The checklist is a list of factual data needed and not a list of performance indicators. A team of experts in a particular field is constituted by NAB to assess the programme. In some cases, the composition of a review team is broadened beyond academic membership to include specialist/professionals for programmes which must meet requirements from relevant the professional bodies. In addition, foreign experts are also included in the programme assessment panels for the first and second phases of special programme accreditations undertaken for the public universities.

The team visits the institution to examine and assess the programme to ascertain whether the applicant has met all the requirements. During this visit, the panel members evaluate the course content against the self-evaluation report, and anything else that comes up of interest during the visit. Specifically, the team finds out if the proposed staffing, facilities (financial and physical) are adequate. They also find out if the Head of Department is appropriately qualified to provide both academic and administrative leadership for the programme. The panel presents its written report to NAB. Where deficiencies have been identified, remedies are suggested for the institution to consider. On submission of the report by the accreditation panel and the comments from the institution, if any, the Board takes its decision.

The period for accreditation ranges from one to five years depending on the deficiencies identified in the assessment report. Programmes assessed are grouped into three categories. The first category involves those programmes that are denied accreditation on the grounds of not meeting the set standards. The Board may withhold approval for a programme to be offered if it is not convinced it can be taught to an adequate standard. These programmes are not run and the institution has to address all the deficiencies identified by the panel of experts. The second category relates to programmes that are granted accreditation for the

first time and are granted two or three years' interim accreditation depending on the experts' report. The institution is given the opportunity to rectify the deficiencies within the interim period. This will also enable NAB to conduct another accreditation before the first cohort of students complete the programme. If after the re-assessment the deficiencies still persist, the programme accreditation will be revoked. However, if after the second assessment NAB is satisfied with the performance of the students, rectification of the deficiencies and the provision of facilities for the programme, then the programme is granted a full accreditation for five years after which they are re-examined to determine their current standing.

The accreditation process may be initiated by NAB, the governing body of an institution or the institution itself. However, Section 8 (2) of the NAB Law mandates the Board to undertake an accreditation exercise in respect of every institution at least once in every five years. This is intended to ensure the conformity of an institution to set standards and improvement.

Further information on the processes and the role of NAB and institutions on accreditation appears later in chapter 6.

5.10 The balance of functions in Ghanaian quality assurance

The Ghanaian quality assurance system attempts to offer a balance between the institutional internal enhancement and the external accountability functions of quality assurance. The internal improvement orientation manifests itself in involving the programme's stakeholders – faculty, administrators and students – in the evaluation process. The faculty, in taking part in the preparation of the self-evaluation and having discussion with the panel members, are expected to identify the deficiencies and be willing to help rectify them. This is important because academic staff are the people who need to implement changes. There is also an

expectation that the accreditation panel will offer some professional advice to the staff that could help them improve the programme.

The external part of the quality assurance mechanism provides legitimacy through reliance on expert peer judgement. Institutions are assessed on the quality provided to their customers, with the implication that a programme provides value for money.

5.11 Regulatory techniques employed by NAB

In exercising its regulatory powers, the Board closed down The West African Computer Studies Institute in Accra in 2006 for not meeting minimum standards. The accreditation of Golden State University College in Akim Oda was also revoked in 2005 on the basis of its failure to meet prescribed regulations (NAB webpage).

Another instrument which the Board employs to regulate higher education, as noted earlier, is to restrict entry of either an institution or a programme to the system. If the report of the panel of experts that assesses either an institution or a programme is not favourable the Board would not grant accreditation for the programme and request the institution to rectify such deficiencies before accreditation is granted.

The Board also uses a “risk communication” strategy in its approach. In the event where an institution is operating illegally or advertises a non-accredited programme, the Board warns the public against the risk in attending such an institution or undertaking the particular programme. This approach is to provide prospective applicants and the general community with the needed information to enable them make an informed decision so that they do not fall victims to poor educational providers. This approach appears to have been informed by Viscusi (1989) who notes that a key contributing factor to market failure is the lack of adequate information in situations where people make decision without full knowledge. Official communications that alert the public to a risk helps eliminate the information gap.

The Board on September 2008 issued a public notice through the Ghanaian Daily Graphic, warning the public against enrolling in the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration's (GIMPA) MBA modular evening/weekend programme at its Kumasi Campus. The statement warned that:

... the Board wishes to bring to the attention of the general public that Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) has neither applied for nor been accredited to run degree programmes as advertised under the above headings. For the avoidance of doubt, the general public is forewarned not to be deceived to apply for nor send their wards to patronize any degree programme as advertised under the above headings by the said institution until further notice ...

Closely related to the above is NAB's role in enlightening the public. The Board periodically publishes in the news media, a list of tertiary institutions in Ghana that operate with or without accreditation. The advertisement also advises prospective students and parents to seek information from the Board on the status of institutions and their programmes before applying for admission to such institutions.

5.12 Summary

This chapter discussed the major policies and provisions which established NAB and thereby introduced to Ghana the external component of quality assurance in higher education. The chapter further explained the accreditation process as conducted by NAB. The next chapter presents analysis of interviews on the practices that have been adopted by NAB and higher institutions in Ghana for assuring the quality of education provided.

CHAPTER 6

Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Ghana: Analysis of Interviews

6.1 *Introduction*

As noted in chapter three, the researcher collected data from NAB and three selected institutions in Ghana to address or discuss the second research question of this thesis, i.e., what are the practices, processes and experiences of assuring quality in higher education in Ghana? Two participants were interviewed from NAB while five staff from the three selected institutions took part in the study. Additional information was obtained from the documents and websites of the selected institutions and NAB.

The interview data collection in Ghana focused mainly on the identification of the strengths and challenges in respect of assuring the quality of higher education within a centrally regulated national system. Participants were asked to respond to open-ended questions that were designed to elicit their views on the practices and processes of quality assurance for the education provided in the tertiary sector in Ghana. They were also asked to discuss if it is appropriate for Ghana to adopt/adapt quality assurance practices from other countries. The interviews were arranged around the first and second research questions relating to the provisions and practices of quality assurance in higher education in Ghana. In response to these questions, six major response themes emerged along with a number of minor response themes. The major themes centred on issues relating to:

- Internal quality assurance structures
- Processes of quality assurance
- Systems of external monitoring
- Impact of NAB's work

- Institutions' perceptions of external quality requirements
- Compatibility of internal quality assurance with NAB's requirements

A seventh theme also emerged but was in response to a question (interview schedule, question 16) which was not directly related to the practices of quality assurance in higher education in Ghana. However, it was considered important in line with the purpose of this study. This was: Adopting quality assurance systems from other countries to Ghana's context

The chapter is organised based on the themes that emerged from the interviews as identified above. The chapter integrates the findings with the major themes of the related literature in order to provide a coherent understanding of the provisions and practices of quality assurance in higher education in Ghana. According to Glense and Peshkin (1992) data analysis is about making sense of the information collected by working with it to create explanations of what has been observed. For the purpose of this section, the respondents were code named as Uni (the two respondents from the public university were interviewed together); Puc1 and Puc2 and Poly (there was only one interviewee from the polytechnic) representing university, private university college and polytechnic respectively.

6.2 Theme 1: Internal quality assurance structures

Stensaker, et al., (2008) stated that establishing effective internal quality assurance structures is an efficient way by which an institution manages the quality of the education it provides. An institutional quality management plan should be the core quality-planning tool for the institution. These structures should be guided by an institutional quality assurance policy that would reflect the institution's mission and values. The data gathered indicates that the institutions are at different stages in developing their internal quality management systems with some of the institutions yet to formulate policies for that purpose. At the time of data

collection for this study, two out of the three participating institutions have established internal quality assurance units in charge of the entire institution while the third institution is in the process of establishing a unit. Puc2 noted that:

The institution has a quality assurance unit which reports directly to the President... the institution has established systems of regulating or assuring quality...we have standing committees which enact rules and regulations to govern the conduct of the academic affairs. The unit is to monitor the implementation of the colleges' rules; policies and programmes which are intended to produce higher quality graduates or products

Describing the functions of the unit at the private university college, Puc1 explained that:

The unit monitors the processing of examinations results and the entire environment of the institution; addresses policy issues of the university eg. admission policy; Approval and allocation of resources for programmes that have been accredited; programmes reviews; accesses the resources and facilities for programmes to find out if they are adequate; review and renewal of appointments; assessment of lecturers by students; all other quality assurance issues concerning the university are addressed by the unit and responds to all quality assurance issues that arise.

Research has shown that in addition to the external quality assurance systems, many countries are also calling on their higher educational institutions to develop internal systems for quality assurance (Stensaker, et al., 2008). The establishment of a quality assurance unit responsible for the institutional wide quality management is considered an effective system for the improvement and assuring of quality. Harman (2000) contends that good management practice requires that all institutions should put in place adequate internal quality management and improvement plans, and submission of these to some outside body provides useful discipline for institutions to keep plans up-to-date.

To facilitate its work, NAB directed all higher institutions in Ghana to establish internal quality assurance units or structures for internal quality management with the expectation that the structures and requirements of the internal plan would be supported by all members

of staff and endorsed by the institution's governing body. NAB had noticed that most of the institutions did not have the robust internal mechanisms that are needed for effective self-regulation. Most of the institutions devolved their internal systems for quality assurance of teaching and learning to the departmental level as opposed to making provisions and arrangements applicable to the wider institution. It was in view of this that NAB issued this directive to all higher institutions in Ghana to set up internal quality assurance structures to strengthen their internal management mechanisms. The implication of this directive to the institutions, as explained by the Senior Assistant Secretary of NAB:

Is to ensure that the institutions become responsible for their own quality assurance systems. The internal quality assurance units will help facilitate the internal quality assurance systems of the institutions...to ensure the commitment of the institutions to continuously monitor and improve their quality assurance processes and also to ensure that minimum standards are maintained. This was to provide that once authorization for the establishment of the institution has been granted, quality assurance basically becomes the responsibility of the institutions and NAB will monitor their operations.

While NAB respondents claimed that the institutions are establishing their internal structures in response to their directives and thereby saw it as one impact of the NAB on the institutions quality management systems, the respondents from the state owned university had a different view. They argued that the institutions' decision to set up its internal quality assurance unit/structures was not a result of NAB directives. According to Uni, the University's initial decision to establish its internal quality assurance systems/unit was "not directly influenced by NAB" (although NAB has had an impact later on what has been provided). He explained that:

The idea of setting up a quality assurance body in the university to monitor academic performance and other duties was driven internally by its own commitment to deliver quality programmes to enable it compete with other institutions on the international scene. The idea was first conceived and suggested in May 2005 but became a reality in March 2007.

He explained further that the importance of such a unit has since been emphasized in a Visitation Panel Report which stated that “appropriate provisions for quality and acceptable standards, driven internally by a well-defined system of quality assurance, are critical to the maintenance of quality in all educational institutions”. According to him a workshop on the development of a policy on academic quality assurance for the University organized in November 2008 also observed that:

the overall aim of the Policy is to demonstrate that the University’s responsibility for teaching, learning, research and knowledge dissemination, among others is being satisfactorily discharged. In view of the importance the University attaches to quality assurance, and following various discussions that it should be treated as an overarching, cross-cutting issue, it is proposed that a Statute formally establishing a Quality Assurance Centre be enacted. It shall be the main body with direct responsibility for overseeing academic performance in all academic units, programmes, and all institutions which award the University’s degrees.

Explaining the rationale for establishing the unit at the private university college, the Director pointed out that:

Quality assurance is very important in a highly competitive world. Although quality assurance systems have developed in the western world long ago, it is a recent development in Ghana. This is because we now recognize that universities have to run on business lines; you have to set your target, your mission and vision and make sure that measurable parameters for achieving your mission are employed.

This reinforces or supports findings from the literature that establishing internal quality management structures may be either as a response to external pressures or internal legislation, but the important idea is that such processes are essentially designed and operated by the institutions themselves.

The available data revealed that the internal quality management systems (unit) is better instituted and organized in the private university college than the two public institutions. The College has a unit with adequate staff and office facilities. The unit is headed by a

Director (though part time), one co-coordinator for accreditation purposes, one senior staff member and two administrative staff. One other senior member has been offered appointment to augment the staffing situation at the time of data collection while the unit of the premier university on the other hand is housed in a temporary office manned by a Director (also part time) and one administrative assistant. Ironically, this private college was established several decades after the two state owned institutions.

6.3 Theme 2: Internal and external quality assurance processes

In Ghana, since with the reform of higher education policy and governance in the mid-1990s, assessment and evaluation has become an important method of steering and guiding higher institutions. The quality assurance processes for higher education institutions in Ghana comprise the internal processes undertaken by the institutions and the external assessment conducted by NAB. Higher institutions in Ghana are autonomous, self-regulating institutions and are in principle responsible for the quality of the education provided. In relation to self-regulating, the institutions are required to develop and manage the conditions that will facilitate the provision of appropriate quality and standards. The institutions have their internal programme approval and moderation processes and criteria which are adhered to. The quality enhancing process includes programme identification or development at the departmental level, discussions at the various faculty boards and considerations at the Council. Each stage presents issues and expectations which a programme must satisfy.

Beside institutional and programme accreditation processes (already explained under 5.9), there are other internal and external practices that are undertaken by Ghanaian institutions and NAB for the improvement of educational standards. The institutions have put in place a number of quality assurance measures for the improvement of the quality of their educational programmes. All the institutional respondents indicated that their respective

institutions had developed course and staff appraisal policies as part of their internal quality assurance mechanisms. The institutions appeared to have placed emphasis on the appraisal system as a means of assuring the quality of teaching. The institutions all focused attention on students as their main customers. It was noted by all institutional respondents that students evaluate the quality of teaching of their lecturers each semester and at the end of the academic year. The Heads of Departments also assess the quality of teaching and research of staff. Uni pointed out that:

It is the responsibility of the internal quality assurance unit in collaboration with the Planning and Management Information Services (PMIS) Directorate of the University to conduct student evaluation of courses and teaching staff every semester.

Commenting further, Puc2 expressed a similar view that “at the end of each semester, the quality assurance unit submit reports on departmental course outline and assessment practices to the President of the institution for consideration by management”. As observed by this study and reinforced by the literature, student feedback questionnaires are the major instrument used by the institutions to solicit evaluation data from the students. Research on student evaluations of faculty has shown that evaluations typically are based on forms that are filled out anonymously by students in a classroom using formal, well-defined and controlled processes. These surveys are undertaken to ascertain students’ needs and to identify areas for attention that affect students. According to Puc1 “student evaluations usually provide feedback for teachers, who use such information to improve their teaching and to the management for vital decisions”. There is evidence that all the institutions conduct these surveys towards the end of the semester so that areas of students’ dissatisfaction can be addressed but Puc1 commented that “considering the time the questionnaires are administered, lecturers are not likely to make amends to any dissatisfaction from the students”.

Probing further to find out how effective these surveys and student feedbacks have been, and to what extent they have impacted on improving the overall quality of teaching in Ghana, Poly commented that:

Because the lecturers are aware of students' assessments, they are compelled to deliver as expected... These assessments give the management the opportunity to know the quality of teaching being delivered.

On the other hand, Puc2 stated that although institutions are increasingly using the students questionnaire for their feedback, that has not in any way triggered any action for the remedy of any problem. Contributing to this, Uni lamented that students in Ghana are not educated on the purpose of the survey and this has made some students use the survey as a payback time to settle scores with lecturers they do not like. Uni commented:

Students tend to reward lecturers for providing easy courses by giving them favourable teaching evaluations while students in difficult classes are expected to punish their lecturers who give low grades by providing them with negative teaching evaluations.

This comment suggests that even academic staff with responsibility for quality assurance are not familiar with the literature. This is suggestive of a gap at the institutional level in their understanding and use of such data. The data suggest that institutions rely too heavily on questionnaires for student feedback. This will be discussed further in Chapter 10.

The three institutions operate external examiner systems for their examinations as a quality assurance mechanism. Puc1 explained that:

External Examiners comment on the quality of questions set and the student answers and because the lecturers are aware of the remarks of the Examiners, they have to deliver as expected. This assessment also gives the management the opportunity to know the quality of teaching being delivered.

The external examination system has operated in the Ghanaian higher education sector since the establishment of the first University College and still seems to enjoy considerable level of trust among institutions in Ghana. These examiners are normally professors in their field and appointed for a specified period of time. A number of commentators have discussed the benefits of such systems. For instance, Stensaker et al. (2008b) argued that external examiner systems ensure that degrees awarded by different institutions are generally comparable with respect to (national) academic standards and treat students fairly ensuring a certain distance between teachers and those who assess their achievements. External examiner systems also contribute to the sharing of effective practices between institutions, and thus contribute to quality development in higher education. All the respondents from the private university college and the polytechnic agreed that this is happening in their institutions. According to Puc1:

the external examiners are very experienced and good academics. They are able to stimulate our internal system by confronting it with outside views... we consider the external examiners system as a method of introducing some kind of comparison with other institutions for us to know what our competitors are doing.

On the other hand, one of the respondents from the public university expressed skepticism and the other agreed with the importance of external examiners contributing to quality development of the subjects and the total education. Uni commented that:

Before this unit was set up we had the external examiner system as a process of quality assurance but due to the growth in student numbers, most of the external examiners could no longer do a thorough job as required. The system therefore collapsed.

There has been a drastic increase in student numbers in Ghanaian higher institutions leading to an increase in the number of examinations requiring external examiners. However, there has not been a similar growth in the number of academic staff resulting in an increased student-staff ratio.

The respondents were unanimous in their views that tracer studies are necessary for institutions to know how their educational programmes match/satisfy the needs of learners and stakeholders and also to find out how their graduates are performing in the world of work. Tracer studies were considered by respondents to be essential in the maintenance of quality of educational programmes as well as meeting the needs of employers. Through such studies, institutions are able to find out how their students adapt to professional life to enable them identify flaws in their programmes. However, institutions have not been able to carry out such studies. As pointed out by Poly:

institutions are weak in this regard because relatively the institutions are not well resourced and so they do not have established tracer studies systems to follow up on what their products are doing in the world of work.

6.4 Theme 3: Systems of external monitoring

External quality monitoring has been a major focus of research and development in higher education. Academic Audit is one of the approaches adopted by a number of external quality assurance agencies in monitoring the operations and processes of higher institutions. Hall (2006) noted that quality audit involves a systematic review of the quality assurance and quality control mechanisms of an institution to ensure that they are sufficiently comprehensive and are achieving their purposes. He explained further that “most quality audit processes attempt to prod institutions into self-evaluation and enhancement, the belief being that the hallmark of a quality organisation is its ability to self-assess its own strengths and weaknesses and take corrective action” (p. 8). Regarding external monitoring, the Executive Secretary noted that:

the Board carry out monitoring exercises to check on the admission process, the quality of grades that those admitted come in with, the processes of conducting examinations, staff recruitment, training and retention, issues of physical and financial resources to be able to run the programme effectively.

Explaining further, the Senior Assistant Secretary described the process as follows:

This monitoring process involves sending a team to an institution to check on their admission processes especially for the final and first year students, check on the grades that they entered with whether they meet the national requirements. Sometimes students' grades were picked at random to cross check with the issuing authority like the West Africa Examinations Council (WAEC) to find out if the students admitted have really achieved those grades. The Board also carry out these checks with regards to assessing the institutions to find out whether they are operating on the conditions upon which they were granted accreditation. The institutional auditing is conducted randomly especially where the Board suspects or receive a report that procedures have not been followed rigidly.

Although the above monitoring process seems to be useful, NAB does not undertake any effective periodic audit which involves the submission of an internal assessment portfolio by the institution to NAB. The monitoring process is not a formalised system that institutions undergo and institutions, particularly the public institutions, are not aware of the process. According to the Executive Secretary "the monitoring is only done randomly". His view was supported by the Senior Assistant Secretary that the "auditing is conducted randomly especially where the Board suspects or receives a report that procedures have not been followed rigidly". Considering the importance of this exercise, the question arises as to whether or not it should have been made mandatory and regular for all the institutions. Furthermore, NAB seems to be focussing its monitoring activities only on the private institutions as implied by the quote below:

So far NAB's monitoring emphasis has been more on the private institutions because of the money driven motive... Even then, this monitoring visits are not much different from inspections undertaken by the local school inspectors at the basic schools, the visits do not provide us with alternative or recommendations that will help improvement our systems ... There is no record of such institutional visits and monitoring to the public universities (Puc2).

What the Board also requires as a quality assurance process is that every newly established institution in Ghana wanting to call itself a university must first be accredited as a university college. This means that the institution has to be affiliated to, or mentored by, a degree awarding university. This university will then monitor and award its qualifications to the students until the institution is granted a “Presidential Charter” for the granting of its own qualification. The Executive Secretary explained that the Board is of the view that “a new institution, particularly a privately owned institution, is not qualified enough to operate on its own but rather needs to be mentored by a degree awarding university during its formative years”. The existing university will moderate and serve as an external moderator/examiner for the new institution.

With regard to this arrangement, both respondents from the private university college confirmed that apart from NAB, the College is affiliated to the University of Cape Coast as a mentor institution. The mentor institution is involved with the review of the College’s academic programmes and management practices. The mentor institution also serves as the external examiners for the College and has to submit annual reports about the College’s performance to NAB.

The mentor institution has to conduct this assessment to satisfy itself of the quality of the programmes of the mentee institution because it is the former that awards its qualification to the products of the latter. This is necessary because any sub-standard performance by the latter will have an adverse effect on the credibility of the former’s qualifications. Although in practice, this relationship is capable of assisting private university colleges to improve the quality of their academic programmes, the process is not without flaws. According to the Senior Assistant Secretary:

This process though is capable of providing some mentoring and guidelines to the new institutions before they finally graduate to autonomous institutions, it is not without challenges. For instance, some of the mentor institutions do not have adequate capacity to provide effective mentoring. Some of the private university colleges are not willing to submit their examination questions to the mentor institution for moderating before the examinations are conducted.

A major weakness of this arrangement can be attributed to the fact that most of the mentor institutions are overwhelmed by the number of institutions that they relate to, rendering them incapable of providing effective mentorship. For instance, it was observed that almost all the private university colleges (about 30) in Ghana offer programmes in business administration and all want to be mentored but only three public universities have business faculties. The respondents from the private university college criticised this process and complained that it drains the coffers of the institution because the mentor institutions tend to charge high fees. According to Puc1 this relationship stifles any innovation from the newly established institutions since the mentor institutions will always want to impose their ideas on them. Given that both the mentor and the mentee institutions are in competition, the former would not encourage any innovations that will have an edge over their own programmes from the latter.

Although one of the participating institutions had not yet established an internal quality assurance unit (as at the time of data collection), Poly maintained that the institution does not have complete autonomy because apart from NAB, the institution has other external supervisory agencies that it relates to for the quality of its programmes. He explained that:

In the performance of their functions, a number of key institutions have been set up to co-ordinate the activities and moderate the examinations of the polytechnics to ensure the quality of programmes and qualifications awarded to students. These institutions include; NCTE and NABPTEX.

Specifically, NABPTEX was established by the NABPTEX Act, 1994 (Act 492) to inter alia, formulate and administer schemes of examinations, evaluation, assessment, certification and standards for skills and syllabus competencies for non-university tertiary institutions. The respondent described the work and achievements of NABPTEX in the following quote:

NABPTEX has taken steps to co-ordinate the appointment of moderators for revising the curriculum and moderate the examination for the various polytechnics in Ghana. Their comments are all incorporated into the text questions before they are administered. NABPTEX again sample the marked examination scripts and send them back to the external examiners to verify whether they have been marked in accordance with the marking schemes and also to find out if the marks awarded confirm to the scheme.

6.5 Theme 4: Impact of NAB's work

This theme emerged from discussion with the staff of both NAB and the respondents from the institutions but different perspectives were presented. For the state universities, because they have operated for a long time without external influence, it became difficult for them to submit to the processes of accreditation initially. The following quote by the Senior Assistant Secretary explained the initial reaction or relation that characterised the work of NAB and the state-owned universities:

At the initial stages of NAB operations, co-operation from the existing state universities was not forthcoming because, according to them, they predated the Board. They have operated on their own for a long time without any external influence, control or oversight responsibility from anywhere.

However, as the following quote from the Executive Secretary illustrates, the relationship with state owned universities has improved:

Initial reactions from the state owned universities were hostile but over time a degree of honesty emerged in their reaction to NAB's activities. NAB has made in-roads and established a good working relationship with the state owned universities over recent years and has therefore made significant contribution to the internal quality assurance systems of the universities.

He acknowledged that it is “evident from the evaluation reports that things are changing from one review to the other and because the institutions and their programmes are constantly subjected to re-accreditation reviews they are always ready to effect the recommended changes”. The general view was that the Board and its processes have made a significant impact on the quality assurance of higher education in Ghana. According to the Senior Assistant Secretary:

Hitherto the institutions were doing their own thing. The public universities especially thought that when the Board was established its work was going to interfere with their operations, but subsequent events have proved otherwise. In fact the public universities are now welcoming the Board; the staff are constantly asking the Board to come to look at their programmes and operations to offer some directives.

The Board has been able to expose certain institutions that have not been operating properly. Some of the institutions that have been operating below minimum standards have been closed down thereby providing protection to students, parents and the public. Both respondents from NAB cited as an example the revocation of accreditation of the Golden State University College in Akim Oda for not meeting minimum standards.

As indicated earlier, NAB has influenced the development of internal quality assurance units/structures in most higher education institutions although some have yet to develop their units in accordance with NAB directives. This is a “gradual move towards the institutions’ self-regulated system” (Puc2). Supporting this view, the Senior Assistant Secretary noted that serious attention is now being paid to the internal quality assurance mechanisms which did not exist previously. To the public, awareness has been created for

the need to enrol only at the accredited higher institutions for quality education and for student protection.

A lot more people are calling to find out whether institutions are accredited even before they register to enter those institutions. Employers are before they sponsor their employees for further training refer to the Board such applications for us to confirm whether the institutions their workers are applying to for study leave are accredited. The students loan Board before they grant student loans, write to the Board for a list of accredited institutions whose students are eligible to source the loan. (Senior Assistant Secretary)

The accreditation process and the monitoring role of NAB has contributed significantly to the way higher institutions in Ghana manage the quality of their academic programmes, especially private higher institutions. These institutions, more so than state owned institutions, must comply with the requirements of NAB for their continued survival. PUC2 remarked that:

It has sometimes been said that people do things that are being inspected rather than do what is expected of them. If people are not being inspected, they tend to do things on their own. But because, we know that NAB is constantly monitoring and checking our operations, we are cautious in whatever we do. For instance, we have to submit annual report to NAB. In the report, we have to respond to specific issues e.g. Staff-student ratio. When there are adverse findings, NAB will draw our attention to it for rectification.

Supporting this view, Uni further commented that:

NAB is serving as external referee to tell the institutions to put their houses in order otherwise the accreditation will be revoked. The institutions knowing that accreditation is not indefinite will always strive to rectify any deficiency identified before NAB's next visit. Because of NAB, higher institutions now have internal quality assurance units to carry out internal quality audits long before the arrival of NAB panel.

While it was a common view that institutions have benefited significantly from the work of NAB, where emphasis was placed appeared to vary between the respondents from the state-

owned university and the private university college. It is apparent that the private university college valued the recognition of the institution and its programmes by NAB as the first and most important benefit. Emphasising the importance of this recognition to the institutions, PUC2 explained that:

The most important benefit is the recognition of the institution and its programmes. This is because once our programmes have been approved by NAB, students and the general public feel confident to enrol on our programmes. Approval from NAB has confirmed that an external authority has certified that our programmes are meeting acceptable standards.

The respondents from the public university noted that “through NAB’s regular reports to the Minister of Education, government is immediately made aware of problems the institution is facing and thereby take the necessary steps to have them rectified”. The executive summary of NAB’s reports on the first and second phases of the accreditation of public universities were sent to the government who is the main funder of higher education in Ghana, and these reports mostly highlight the deficiencies for rectification. Some of the major quality improvements made by the public higher institutions can be attributed to the work of NAB as confirmed by Uni:

Highlights of NAB reports on our programmes assessments and institutional visits are brought to the notice of the government for redress. These reports comment on the deficiencies; poor infrastructure; poor equipments and areas that need improvement. Most of the infrastructural developments taken place on the campuses and other facilities are evident to this effect.

The contribution of the programme accreditation panel to the quality of educational programmes is acknowledged by the respondents. The panel members contribute significantly to the improvement of programmes because “they are experts who offer professional advice to the providers as regard the stand and requirements of the programmes and professional bodies”(Poly). This to him facilitates the “exchange of

information and the spread of good practice among institutions”. Puc2 stressed further that because of the “collaboration between NAB and the professional bodies in the assessment of the professional programmes, graduates are now better prepared for the labour market and professional practice”.

Despite these benefits, respondents admitted that the current practices need improvement. The Executive Secretary was of the view that there is a need to devote more resources to modernise institutions. People in quality assurance need more training to update their knowledge and to be abreast with current international trends. He remarked that academia must change their attitudes towards the accreditation exercise. This is because:

Not many people will like to be checked and also not many of them know what accreditation is about. Most lecturers who studied did so in their respective fields but did not learn about quality assurance, so they find it difficult when it comes to subjecting their work to assessors for evaluation.

The Senior Assistant Secretary suggested that:

There should be an improvement in the tracking system to: ensure that institutions are operating on the conditions under which they were granted accreditation, ensure that within the institutions themselves the quality assurance is taken very serious/as very prime in the delivery of tertiary education.

He also pointed out that there should be more frequent and in-depth institutional audits, a system of tracking how the graduates of an institution are doing in the world of work, and the need for a more systematic way of keeping statistics on institutions.

Suffice to say that the process of accreditation and quality assurance demands remain a challenge to the institutions and NAB. Concerning NAB, it is handicapped in many respects in terms of the support and guidance it is expected to offer to the institutions under its jurisdiction as far as quality matters are concerned. With regards to staffing, it was observed

NAB has insufficient qualified staff to help the institutions that would require long-term and close guidance and monitoring to sustain quality programmes. In relation to the institutions, particularly private colleges, financial constraints have limited their capability to maintain expected standards. They have also experienced difficulties implementing recommendations and rectifying deficiencies that have been identified by accreditation panels.

6.6 *Theme 5: Institutions' perceptions of external quality requirements*

This theme emerged from interviews with respondents from the institutions. All the respondents from the institutions complained that the processes of accreditation and the requirements of NAB are too stringent, quite expensive, and time consuming. The end result as expressed by Puc2:

Has meant that the institution has had to adjust its budget to finance or meet the requirements of the external agency without any additional funds from the government.

This has been a burden to the institutions since they have to allocate additional resources to meet the external requirements. The most affected institutions are the private higher institutions because in addition to meeting NAB's requirements they have to budget to meet the affiliation fee and other requirements from their mentor institutions. PUC2 further considers the external processes and requirements of NAB to be "bureaucratic and too much paper work that takes too much of staff time". This time, he argued could have been spent on other activities that will have bearing on teaching and learning for the benefit of students. The main purpose of external quality considered by most commentators polarise accountability versus improvement, accreditation versus evaluation. In the case of NAB, the stated purpose is mainly accreditation. It appears that control, rather than quality enhancement is the dominant concern of NAB. The excerpts below alluded to this perception:

The approach adopted by NAB shows that its work undermines institutional autonomy. ...this happens mostly when the officials of the institutions come under intense pressure to pursue the agenda of NAB rather than developing their own strategies. NAB seems to be exercising too much influence over the institutions. It is important that NAB should adopt more flexible notions of quality related to institutional goals. (Poly)

NAB behaves like inspectors and wants to instill some kind of fears into the institutions. Gradually NABs visit is becoming synonymous with fears... staff of the department concern, especially the HODs are usually seen rushing and spending time collating documents...In most occasions, you end up seeing only the HOD answering some few questions from NAB panel and that ends it... Few days later you are told you have been granted accreditation for a stipulated period. (Puc2)

The approach of NAB he concluded did not “contribute anything significant to the quality of our programmes. “The staff are not in any way motivated by this process to initiate activities for the improvement of their programmes. Everything seems to be done just to satisfy NAB. NAB has misconstrued the entire mission for quality assurance”.

However, the Senior Assistant Secretary expressed a different view. He argued that:

The Board hold the view that tertiary education is no small business, it is quite a challenging business therefore if an institution or a country wants to maintain standards comparable to international levels and also wants its students to operate on world market scene, then, they ought to be educated under standards that are internationally comparable.

He therefore insisted that:

Institutions in Ghana and their programmes should be made to undergo stringent assessment processes that are recognised universally to ensure that they provide quality education to their students...there should be an improvement in the tracking system to: ensure that institutions are operating on the conditions under which they were granted accreditation, ensure that within the institutions themselves the quality assurance is taken very serious/as very prime in the delivery of tertiary education.

He dismissed the claim that NAB processes are time consuming and costly. Touching on the cost and time components of the assessment, he emphasised that the benefits of the cost and the time spent on the external assessments and monitoring is worth it because in the long run it protects the nation's educational system and also protects the students and their parents from poor educational providers.

Some of the institutional respondents raised concerns about the composition and attitudes of some programme accreditation panels. For instance, Poly pointed out that some of the panel members visit the institution with preconceived ideas about the institution and its programmes and therefore wish to impose their ideas on the institution. In effect, when taken to its limit, this issue raises the question of academic freedom. Puc2 also expressed the view that "NAB should be externally-audited by stakeholders to update its processes in line with the international trends and also to avoid possible complacency".

6.7 Theme 6: Compatibility of internal quality assurance with NAB's requirements

This theme emerged from interviews with respondents from the institutions. In response to a question seeking information on the compatibility of the internal quality assurance processes of institutions with the external requirements of NAB, all the interviewees confirmed that such compatibility exists. As already seen, NAB has adopted a compliance approach in its operations by establishing criteria and minimum standards which serve as guidelines for institutions to merit accreditation status. The institutions use the NAB approved questionnaire in preparing for both institutional and programme accreditation and thus align their internal quality assurance processes to satisfy NAB's requirements and standards. Puc2 commented:

NAB has its standards which the institutions have to comply with. NAB has established its requirements for both institutional and programme accreditation, so if we want our programmes to be

accredited, then we need to satisfy these conditions and requirements. The best way of going about this is to align our internal processes with those of NAB.

Supporting this view, Puc1 pointed out that NAB concentrates on accreditation, that is it is interested in the minimum requirement expected for an institution to operate. Because of the proliferation of private higher institutions in Ghana with its attendant competition for students, “we have to meet the minimum standards established by NAB to survive in the competitive world; therefore we have to comply with the directives of NAB”.

Poly had the following to say:

NAB will want to assure itself that the institution has the capacity to offer the programme it intends before granting accreditation. Our internal system/process is just the implementation of what NAB has satisfied itself with that we are capable of doing. We only have to fulfil or satisfy the requirements of NAB.

Uni stressed that “generally, our practices are in conformity with those of the Board, and we even try to improve upon that”.

It is the responsibility of the institution to maintain and improve on the standards that were used as the basis for granting accreditation. Any time the institution fails to conform to such standards NAB has various options it can take. To enable NAB to keep track of the performance of the institutions, the institutions are required to prepare and submit to the Board an annual report of their activities for each academic year; after each five year period, a detailed evaluation of steps taken towards the achievement of their aims and objectives is also required.

6.8 Theme 7: Adopting/adapting quality assurance systems from other countries to Ghana's context

As noted earlier, this theme is not directly related to the practices of quality assurance in higher education in Ghana but emerged from a question that sought to find out respondents' views on whether they consider it appropriate for Ghana to adopt quality assurance practices from other countries. The respondents expressed a general view that there is nothing wrong in adopting effective practices from elsewhere if it is in Ghana's interest to do so. The views of Puc1 are captured below:

The world is now a global village and so far as education which is universal is concerned, Ghana cannot be in isolation. If there is a system that is being recognised internationally and has proved useful elsewhere, Ghana has advantage in adopting that practice. What other countries have practiced and has worked successfully for them, Ghana has to look at it critically and see the extent to which it will benefit her system.

Puc2 in support of this view stated that "people have been in this business for quite some time now and let's assume that they have perfected the system, so, as we are trying to develop, let us also be aware of what others are doing". He cited the speech of Alex Akon, a radio presenter in one of his presentations that "the graveyard for new ideas is full; it is time to recycle the buried ideas". He further commented that:

Since we are not going to come out with fantastic ideas, it would be advantageous to see what has been in the system, there may be some merits...We should know the experiences of others and adopt those that suit our situation/circumstance.

Uni noted that education has been valued by society for a long time; there is no need to reinvent the wheel if effective practices already exist. But he advised that the main task associated with policy or practice adaptation from other countries is to assess the extent to which they will work in Ghana's context. He believed that Ghana is not an island on its own and, as far as education which has universal application is concerned, what has worked for others can equally work for Ghana. While Poly supported the view that Ghana stands a

better chance of improving its current practices by adopting good practices from other countries, he warned that this should be done vis-a-vis the availability of resources. He argued that:

We have to adopt in order to compete on the international scene. If there is something that we are not doing but is being recognised internationally and has also worked very well in other countries in assuring the quality of education provided, then it is worth adopting that which will suit our system.

The position taken by the respondents reinforces or supports the literature that quality assurance in higher education is seen as an area where a great deal of transfer and borrowing of policies and practices should take place. The literature reported that many developing countries have modelled their quality assurance practices on those practiced in the developed nations. There have also been a number of studies or reports concerning efforts made by countries to borrow quality assurance practices and policies from other countries. In view of this, it would be appropriate for Ghana to adopt practices that are effective in other countries (e.g., New Zealand) to help improve its current policies and practices.

6.9 Summary

This chapter presented the analysis of interview data from Ghana. The responses of the participants from the institutions and those from NAB identified some common themes. It was generally agreed that NAB and its processes has made a significant impact on the quality assurance of higher education in Ghana. This development has allowed for self introspection within the institutions themselves and is an important element in encouraging institutions to develop greater self-regulation and independence in monitoring their own activities.

However, the respondents from the institutions saw the processes of accreditation and the external requirements for quality assurance to be too stringent, quite expensive, time consuming, bureaucratic and involving too much paper work; all of this drains the coffers of the institutions. But NAB respondents expressed a different view and argued that if an institution or a country wants to maintain standards comparable to international levels, and also wants its students to operate in the world market, it ought to maintain standards that are comparable and go through all the recognized assessment processes. To them, Ghana stands to gain if through NAB's monitoring processes, institutions that are not maintaining standards are exposed and closed down rather than allowing them to exploit students and produce students of low quality.

The respondents were unanimous in their views that although the current system has helped to improve the quality of higher education in Ghana, the system still needs improvement. While they maintained that the world is a global village, hence Ghana should exploit and adopt/adapt effective practices that are internationally recognised, they warned that this should be done in a way that ensures their fit to Ghana's context.

Based on empirical evidence from the documents and the interview data, it is clear that though progress is being made by NAB and higher institutions in Ghana towards the improvement of the quality of education provided, certain gaps still exist in Ghana's quality assurance provisions and management at the tertiary level that needs to be addressed. These may be summarised as:

- a need to establish strong internal quality management systems within institutions
- a need for institutions to undertake effective self assessment of their operations and be responsible for the quality of education they provide

- a need to strengthen the approach of external quality audit in order to monitor and strengthen the operations of institutions
- a need to strengthen the monitoring of distance and transnational programmes
- a need to develop appropriate ways of embedding student evaluation into institutional self-monitoring of teaching
- a need to extend the close monitoring of private institutions to state institutions as well.

CHAPTER 7

Major provisions for external quality assurance at the tertiary level in New Zealand

7.1 Introduction

This chapter briefly discusses the tertiary educational sector and reasons or factors culminating in the 1990 tertiary educational reforms in New Zealand. It explains the major provisions for the quality assurance management in higher education after the reforms. Emphasis is placed on the structures, functions and the relationship among the various external quality assurance agencies responsible for the management of quality of higher education in New Zealand. The chapter further explores the literature for research, commentary and critique relating to the developments in quality assurance in tertiary education in New Zealand.

7.2 Background

Most countries, at least those in the OECD, have launched major reforms of education and training since the late 1980s. Codd (1990) noted that the 1980s saw a greater awareness in society of some wider social problems such as increased unemployment, an increase in crime and racial, as well as gender, inequality. Education was thus seen as a vehicle for raising living standards and directly contributing to the easing of social problems. Skilbeck et al. (1994, p. 12) contends that “among the OECD countries, educational reforms has become a constant theme, not, to be sure, just as a consequence of economic concerns”.

During the 1980s the debate over qualifications reform in New Zealand revolved around a number of issues. There were social and economic issues that confronted education in New Zealand and there were concerns that education was not serving the needs of society. Crocombe, Enright, and Porter (1991) emphasised that there was clear evidence of disparity

between the skills required to upgrade the New Zealand economy and those provided by the education system. According to Philips (1998, p. 165) these issues included:

A focus on economically relevant content; defining standards of performance or competence...; emphasis on quality assurance..., the notion of a comprehensive or integrated framework as a classification device for portable, flexible and transparent qualifications with explicit links among the components; an equity issues...

There was also a growing dissatisfaction with the structures associated with qualifications in the 1970s and 1980s. Walbran (2007) noted that there had been concerns expressed by successive governments that there were too many awarding bodies with different rules and regulations which according to Barker (1995) often created obstacles to people wishing to gain qualifications. Similarly, at the Educational Development Conference (EDC) that was held in 1974 to discuss problems associated with the educational system, participants considered the educational system to be unresponsive and bureaucratic. The government undertook reforms in response to a perceived crisis in the educational system at the time. Commenting on these developments, Philips (1998) explained that these reforms had been in response to perceived inadequacies in the existing systems of education and training. In a speech delivered in 1989, Goff, the then Minister of Education, said of the tertiary system:

The present structure needs changing because it was designed for different times and for different circumstances ... A system that needs a clear sense of direction and the freedom to manage its resources ... becomes more equitable, more responsive to industry and the wider community, and a greater source of excellence in our society ...

At the close of the 1980s, the restructuring of the educational system at all levels in New Zealand was imminent. Tertiary education in New Zealand was subjected to intense debate that culminated in the passage of the 1989 Education Act. The Act provided the legislative authority for the establishment of major external quality assurance agencies in New Zealand, namely, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and the

New Zealand Vice Chancellors Committee (NZVCC), with responsibilities for ensuring the quality of tertiary education.

The government, which is the main funder of tertiary education in New Zealand, was, and still is, concerned with the quality of the education it 'purchases'. Weir (2006) noted that from 1989 the quality of education programmes, including their design and delivery, came under increasing scrutiny from government. Over this period governments brought pressure to bear on tertiary education providers, challenging them to contribute to national economic and social development goals through their programmes. Increasingly, providers were required to meet external requirements related to accreditation, programme approval and review, and quality audit.

In 1989, the government decentralised significant responsibility to tertiary providers for their own governance and quality management. Providers were required to operate within the requirements of the Education Act 1989, the Education Amendment Act 1990, and subsequent legislation such as the Education (Tertiary Reform) Amendment Act 2002, as well as other central government requirements. Providers were required to implement their own internal quality management systems and to meet external quality monitoring requirements. The reforms brought about some major changes in the higher education sector. Phillips (1998, p. 1) noted that:

Among these changes which have occurred are a stronger role by the state in defining what is to be learned, assessed and certified; an increased focus on the skills, tighter control over the funding and management of education providers, including schools and tertiary institutions, and more public scrutiny of the quality of education institutions in terms of meeting specified outcomes.

Royal, the then Chief Executive Officer of Whitireia Community Polytechnic in his address at a lecture series at Whitireia Community Polytechnic in 1995, argued that if there has been any major change in education in New Zealand, none has been more dramatic than the

change experienced in the tertiary sector over the previous 10 years. He said that it appears to have been an international phenomenon, especially in the OECD countries.

7.3 External quality assurance agencies for tertiary education in New Zealand

The tertiary reforms of the 1990s incorporated a stronger emphasis on quality assurance than had previously been the case. The Government's tertiary education reforms required that the planning process, funding, quality assurance and performance monitoring were closely related for improved quality. Jennings (2008, p. 1) observed that it is clear from:

Cabinet papers that the government expects a quality assurance and monitoring system which supports a high trust and high accountability environment; and that quality assurance and monitoring relates to accountability, institutional performance and risk, high quality teaching and learning, and protection of public confidence.

The principal agencies for undertaking the external component of this work were the newly established New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA), and the existing New Zealand Vice Chancellors Committee (NZVCC) [now renamed as Universities New Zealand].

7.4 The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)

NZQA was established after the passage of the Education Amendment Act 1990. The Authority is a Crown entity established under section 248 of the Education Act 1989 with the mandate to develop a consistent framework for all nationally recognized qualifications. The Authority was to oversee the quality assurance of all publicly funded tertiary education. French (2001, p. 11) noted that “the Authority was given wide and encompassing powers in relation to approval of programmes, courses and accreditation of institutions”. The impact of the legislation is that NZQA holds the quality assurance role for all tertiary institutions with the exception of the university sector (see below). Thus, NZQA has the responsibility to ensure that tertiary institutions (other than universities) should continue to comply with policies and criteria related to accreditation, approval and other quality-related requirements.

The establishment of NZQA meant that all private training establishments (PTEs) wishing to access government funding had to seek registration, accreditation and course approval. With regard to other institutions under the purview of NZQA such as the polytechnics and wananga, accreditation and course approval had been, and continued to be, required. The Act mandated the Minister of Education to appoint the Board for the Authority. The major task for the Board was to ensure that NZQA performs its legislative functions, monitors the organization's performance and appoints the Chief Executive. The Board derives its authority from the Education Act 1989 and its functions from the Education Amendment Act 1990.

Under section 253 of the Education Act 1990, NZQA is obliged to:

- oversee the setting of standards for qualifications in secondary schools and in post-school education and training;
- develop a framework for national qualifications in secondary schools and in post-school education and training;
- register providers, to accredit and approve programmes;
- monitor and to audit providers against quality standards;
- ensure there are mechanisms in place to guarantee that different institutions or private training establishments providing approved nationally recognised courses have assessment procedures that are fair, equitable, consistent, and in keeping with the required standard. (New Zealand Government, 1990, Par. 253)

The single most significant development arising from these requirements was the establishment by NZQA of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), now called The New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF), which identifies ten levels (originally eight) for the registration of assessment standards (unit standards and achievement standards) covering education and training from Year 11 of secondary education (level 1)

through to doctoral study at a university (level 10). Commenting on the development of the original NQF, Barker (1994) noted that:

Previously, the New Zealand qualifications system had been confusing and complex. Few qualifications linked with each other and in some learning areas there were no nationally recognised qualifications at all. It was difficult to say the least, for people to obtain the skills necessary for their chosen career and even more difficult for people to change direction or retrain. There was little scope for the recognition of prior learning and skills. In addition, there were discrepancies and inconsistencies in nomenclature and variance in the setting and delivery of standards (p. 82).

He concluded that, the result of a decade of debate was a National Qualification Framework. The aim was to provide:

The base for a coordinated, coherent, flexible, post-compulsory education and training sector. It will incorporate on-job training and recognize prior learning and will provide a continuum of learning opportunities through the adoption of a modular approach. It will also end the traditional binary division created by separate education and training systems, which has led to two different qualifications' systems with rigid distinctions between providers, and an enduring perception that the vocational is second-class (p. 82).

The framework established the parameters for significant change to occur. Three of its fundamental principles as described by Barker are that “learning is a life-long process that all learning is significant, and that higher education does not take place only within universities, and is not reserved to ‘academic’ subjects” (p. 83). The quality assurance systems of NZQA are intended to apply equally across all levels of the Framework from senior secondary level through to doctoral degrees.

NZQA and NZVCC have jointly developed criteria for registering qualifications and all qualifications must meet these criteria to be registered on the NZQF. Only accredited institutions are permitted to teach approved qualifications. Any qualification that is not registered on the NZQF will not be funded by the government. All three types of

institutions – universities, ITPs, PTEs – are linked to the NZQF. Providers register their qualifications on the framework, which comprises two parts. The first part of the framework registers the national qualifications that are determined by standard bodies. In relation to development of assessment standards, NZQA has recognized a range of standard setting bodies which have responsibility for particular industries (or services or recreational activities) for developing the standards and national qualifications relating to those industries. These standards are developed according to formats and procedures laid down by NZQA, and *national qualifications* are approved based on coherent combinations of assessment standards that meet both credit and level requirements as specified by NZQA. The PTEs and ITPs teach programmes that are assured against unit standards (that are the components of the national qualification) to qualify a student for a given national qualification. The second part of the framework registers *provider developed qualifications* submitted by tertiary level institutions (e.g., universities, polytechnics).

In the case of non-university tertiary providers, the institution and the programme (qualification) are subject to various forms of NZQA quality assurance processes that focus on accreditation and approval; in the case of universities, programme approval is under the control of NZVCC through its Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP).

In relation to quality assurance, NZQA not only has responsibility for conducting approval processes (it delegates some of these to an associated body), it also has a monitoring role in ensuring that non-university institutions and programmes are periodically reviewed to satisfy requirements related to educational quality and financial viability. Barker (1994) pointed out that:

NZQA's role is to coordinate all these secondary schools and tertiary-level qualifications, so that they have a purpose and relationship to one another that the public, employers and students can understand. It must also ensure that quality assessment and improvement operates

throughout the system in the development and approval of qualifications, the accreditation of providers, and the verification of assessment standards. Six of the Authorities' twelve legislative functions either directly or indirectly authorize quality assurance mechanisms (p. 83)

The concept of quality management underpins all of the Authority's systems and functions with a clear commitment to quality assurance and improvement in higher institutions. The NZQA's processes for achieving quality are discussed under the following sub-headings.

Registration of Private Training Establishments: All private training establishments are required by law to register with the Authority prior to their establishment. Registration with the Authority is a prerequisite to accreditation and it aims to ensure that basic educational and consumer safeguards are met. Registration is required for private institutions to be eligible to source government funds that are administered by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). The registration process includes an assessment of an institution's organizational and educational management; its legal basis, financial management, purpose and goals; its premises, quality assurance and quality control mechanisms; and its long-term potential. The purpose of the registration is to ensure that the private institution is capable of providing high quality education. It should be noted that once a private establishment is operational, evaluation is ongoing. However, there is no such registration process for existing state providers because the state is responsible for their success through the Ministry of Education and tertiary institution's Councils. The criteria which the state providers must meet are defined in the legislation.

Setting the Standards: Unit standards are the nationally registered outcome statements and assessment criteria. As noted by Barker (1994) unit standards are the "building blocks of the National Qualifications Framework" (p. 84). Qualifications consist of unit standards which are linked and interchangeable across qualifications, and have been determined by standards-setting bodies consisting of representatives from the relevant industry, academic community

or professional groups. Learners may study a combination of unit standards leading to a qualification. Unit standards vary in size and each unit standard will have its own credit rating depending on the value ascribed by the standards-setting body. Each credit equates with 10-12 learner hours for the average student, with a maximum of 120 credits for any one unit standard.

Barker further commented that:

The Qualification Authority has been a catalyst in the planning and coordination of standards-setting groups. The groups that set, maintain and endorse unit standards will represent all major groups connected with an area... all unit standards need to be approved in the appropriate standards-setting group before being registered onto the Framework by the Qualifications Authority. (p. 84)

Degree-course Approval: The quality of degree qualifications offered by ITPs or private training establishments have to be assessed and approved by the Authority. NZQA has different criteria for course approval depending on the level of the course. This approval process is twofold: The first part is carried out through a process of peer appraisal of documentation and the second involves a site visit to the institution by a peer panel. The peer panel usually includes two NZQA nominees from the relevant discipline, other academics, and professional business representatives as considered appropriate.

It should be noted that the power to approve and moderate degrees within the universities is under the domain of the Vice-Chancellors' Academic Programmes Committee. However, the Qualifications Authority and NZVCC employ a common set of criteria for evaluation of degree programmes. These criteria were jointly developed.

Accreditation: The accreditation process involves the evaluation of an institution's capacity to deliver the proposed course. It should be noted that tertiary institutions are required to satisfy the requirements set by NZQA for accreditation to enable them to offer approved

courses or assess unit standards registered on the NQF. Accreditation can only be given to a higher education institution (university, wananga, polytechnic or college of education), a school, a registered private training establishment, or a government training establishment. It is only an accredited institution which has the mandate to offer unit standards and qualifications which are registered on the Framework. With regard to accreditation, NZQA has wide powers under the Education act. For instance, it has the power to issue a compliance notice to an institution or in extreme cases revoke the accreditation of an institution for non compliance.

Moderation: Moderation is the public scrutiny to ensure that assessment is fair, valid and consistent. The primary aim for moderation of assessment is to determine that the standards have been delivered and that they are consistent between providers. In the tertiary arena, the legislation protects the institutions by granting them the freedom to teach and employ their own methods to assess students in the way they consider best to promote learning. Moderation is on-going at various stages of the programme. Although moderation of assessment attempts to ensure that assessment is to the required standards, it does not examine what is taught or how.

Audit: Quality audit (as at the time of writing this thesis) is the last phase of the Qualifications Authority's quality assurance processes. This process involves checking on the quality assurance systems of an institution which are already in place to verify if they comply with the institution's previously stated objectives. If a quality audit does reveal any adverse findings that the institution is not maintaining its standards and there is no evidence of a strategy to improve the situation, the general accreditation will be withdrawn.

7.4.1 Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQ)

The major players in quality assurance for the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITP) in New Zealand have been NZQA and ITPQ (delegated agents of NZQA for the ITP). Under section 260 of the Education Amendment Act, the Association of Polytechnics of New Zealand (APNZ), later renamed as the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics of New Zealand (ITPNZ), was given delegated responsibility from NZQA for the quality assurance of Polytechnics. ITPNZ created the New Zealand Polytechnic Programmes Committee (NZPPC) as its operational arm in the early 1990s for the purpose of quality management of ITPs. NZPPC was renamed as ITPQ in 2004 and was responsible for compliance of the polytechnic sector.

It should be noted that until the later part of 2000, any ITP that wished to gain accreditation from NZPPC had to demonstrate that it had an effective quality management system in place. The system comprised the policies and procedures that would support programme delivery, as well as established evaluation mechanisms. However, provision was made to exempt an ITP which had demonstrated its ability to meet the relevant quality management standard, and to permit an automatic accreditation to offer low level registered unit standards.

In the 1990s, however, any ITP seeking approval to offer a degree programme was required to seek or apply for accreditation directly from NZQA. From mid-2003, ITPNZ had its authority extended from the accreditation, approval and quality audit of sub-degree programmes to include degrees. In 2010 after the six major ITPs broke away from ITPNZ to form a new organisation, ITPQ ceased to exist. Its functions reverted to NZQA.

7.4.2 The Association of Colleges of Education in New Zealand (ACENZ)

The Association of Colleges of Education in New Zealand (ACENZ) held the delegated authority from NZQA for sub-degree programmes accreditation and approval within its member Colleges. Colleges of education were specialist providers of teacher education. They offered a variety of programmes comprising degree programmes, non-degree programmes and unit standard courses linked to the NQF. ACENZ, established in 1991, created the College of Education Accreditation Committee (CEAC) as its operational arm to carry out its programme accreditation and approval functions. This committee is now defunct because all the Colleges of Education have amalgamated with their local universities.

7.5 *New Zealand Vice Chancellor's Committee*

NZVCC was established by the Universities Act 1961 which replaced the federal University of New Zealand with separate institutions. Today the Committee represents the interests of the eight public universities in New Zealand: Auckland; Auckland University of Technology; Waikato; Massey; Victoria; Canterbury; Lincoln; and Otago. Although these eight universities differ in some respects and have different characters, they tend to have much in common. They are autonomous institutions but at the same time they work closely to maintain standards that are established nationally and are internationally respected.

The Education Amendment Act 1990 established NZVCC as a statutory body with explicit responsibility for standards and qualifications in the university sector. With the 1990 Education Amendment Act, NZVCC assumed some of the functions of the former University Grants Committee. The Committee derives its statutory functions and powers from the Education Amendment Act 1990. The Government assigned to NZVCC the responsibility for quality in the university sector (New Zealand Government, 1990, par. 260). NZVCC has statutory responsibility for the quality of the university sector. To define the relationship between this Committee and NZQA, the Government stipulated in the 1990

Act a requirement for NZQA to consult with the Committee before establishing policies which would refer to universities (*ibid*, par. 257, line 5).

Both NZQA and NZVCC have created associated bodies to carry out delegated quality assurance functions. In the case of NZVCC, two main delegations have been established. The first is the assignment of programme approval (covering new qualifications and major revisions to existing qualifications) to a sub-committee of NZVCC, namely, the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP). The second NZVCC delegation relates to the establishment of the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (NZUAAU) which provides periodic monitoring of each university's quality assurance systems using a quality audit approach.

7.5.1 Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP)

Because of the volume of business transacted under these quality assurance roles and its need for academic advice on a wide range of matters, NZVCC as noted earlier has delegated a number of its statutory functions/powers to some standing committees (NZVCC, 2008). NZVCC undertakes its quality assurance functions in two different but complementary ways. One of its standing committee, CUAP is in charge of setting up and applying inter-university course approval procedures.

Section 260 of the 1989 Education Act recognized NZVCC's programme approval. In accordance with this provision, the Committee established CUAP. The Committee is chaired by an appointee of NZVCC and has an academic representative of each university on it. The New Zealand Union of Student Associations (NZUSA) also nominates a student representative and in 2006 a Deputy Chair position was established. The Committee has a sub-committee on university entrance. This sub-committee has important roles around the criteria for entrance to universities.

CUAP was set up with the following terms of reference:

- setting up and applying inter-university course approval, accreditation and moderation procedures;
- granting or refusing approval under the agreed procedure to new qualifications and courses of study, or changes in qualifications and courses of study for which approval is required, and for which due application has been made by a university;
- promoting the coherent and balanced development of courses of study within the New Zealand university system and ensuring that the quality of course development is consonant with high academic standards;
- facilitating cross crediting arrangements for students transferring between programmes and institutions (NZVCC, 2009–2010, p. 14).

Furthermore, CUAP acts in an advisory capacity to NZVCC on academic policies and also works with NZQA on matters relating to universities. On behalf of NZVCC, CUAP acts:

- as the body which NZQA will consult about policies and criteria for the approval of courses of study and their accreditation in the universities;
- through its sub-committee on university entrance, as the body which is consulted by NZQA on the standards to be established for entrance to university, and which makes recommendations to NZQA on such standards
- in establishing, through its sub-committee on university entrance and after consulting with NZQA, criteria for provisional entrance to entrance level.
- In obtaining for NZQA university representatives on bodies, panels and committees (NZVCC, 2009–2010, p.14).

The Committee further provides advice and comment on academic developments across the university system to institutions, professional bodies and agencies and also undertakes specific tasks as requested of it by NZVCC. This Committee provides the final approval of university developed qualifications based on agreed criteria with NZQA. These criteria cover, for example, the clarity of learning outcomes/objectives, assessment procedures, financial viability, staffing, library and IT support, and stakeholder consultation (discussed in detail in the next chapter).

It should be noted that academic programme development and assessment have been and remain the focus of activity at the institutional and inter-institutional levels. Following the disestablishment of the University of New Zealand in 1961 individual institutions continued to collaborate on these matters, and their proposals for major new programmes and qualifications were subject not only to local consultation and internal approval processes but also to inter-institutional approval by the Curriculum Committee of the University Grants Committee. This was the forerunner of CUAP.

7.5.2 *New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (NZUAAU)*

The second NZVCC delegation relates to the establishment of NZUAAU in 1993. This Unit provides periodic monitoring of each university's quality assurance systems using a quality audit approach. The Unit was set up and charged with the responsibility of conducting quality audits of the universities in New Zealand following the Education Amendment Act 1990 which established NZVCC as a statutory body with the mandate of ensuring the quality, standards and qualifications in the university sector. NZUAAU is an independent body in charge of supporting New Zealand universities to strengthen their internal quality assurance mechanisms to facilitate their continuing achievement of standards of excellence. The Unit has its own Board which has responsibility for its governance. The Unit has the responsibility for quality assurance within the university sector in New Zealand. Explaining some of the responsibilities of the Unit, NZVCC (2008, p. 6) explained that:

The Unit is to consider and review New Zealand universities' mechanisms for monitoring and enhancing the academic quality and standards which are necessary for achieving their stated aims and objectives, and to comment on the extent to which procedures in place are applied effectively and reflect good practice in maintaining quality.

The new set of tertiary education reforms which was introduced in 2006 impacted on the operations of the Unit. The reform resulted in the signing of a Memorandum of

Understanding (MOU) between NZVCC and TEC in 2007. The MOU obliges the Unit to contribute to the development of a reliable set of tertiary assessment indicators for self-assessment by higher institutions and for external validation by the external agencies for the entire tertiary education sector.

Terms of reference: The terms of reference for the unit, as approved by NZVCC are to:

- consider and review the universities' mechanisms for monitoring and enhancing the ongoing academic quality of academic programmes, their delivery and their learning outcomes, and the extent to which the universities are achieving their stated aims and objectives in these areas,
- comment on the extent to which procedures in place in individual universities are applied effectively,
- comment on the extent to which procedures in place in individual universities reflect good practice in maintaining quality
- identify and commend to universities national and international good practice in regard to academic quality assurance and quality enhancement
- assist the university sector to improve its educational quality,
- advise the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee on quality assurance matters
- carry out such contract work as is compatible with its audit role. (Constitution of NZUAAU 2010, 2.1)

The Unit is made up of a governing board of eight members appointed by NZVCC and a register of auditors who are appointed by the Board on advice from the Director. Auditors are trained, and panels selected from the register are assigned to conduct audits of each university. The administration of the Unit is undertaken by a secretariat, including the Director, who is appointed by the Board. Each university is subject to audit on a four year cycle based on particular themes that cover matters such as appointment, induction and training of staff, student support services, monitoring of programme and teaching quality, stakeholder consultation, and so on. The Unit began operations in 1994 and has conducted three cycles since its establishments into various aspects of the institutions. (At the time of

writing this thesis, the fourth cycle was near completion). The unit further reviewed or audited the quality assurance processes of CUAP and also provides information and advice in relation to national and international academic standards. The Unit was subjected to an external review in 1997 and 2011 by an independent group composed of members from within and outside of academic as well as from New Zealand and abroad.

The task of NZUAAU is to review the effectiveness of a university's quality assurance systems, processes and procedures in the context of its institution's mission, goal and objectives. NZUAAU thus adopted a fitness for purpose approach to its function. To fulfill its function, the Unit is very much concerned with the continuous improvement of the universities' own programmes (NZUAAU, 2007).

Principles of the Unit: The Unit's approach to academic audits is based on three principles. These principles are discussed briefly below:

Partnership: Jennings (in NZUAAU, 2007), the then Director of the Unit described academic audit as a partnership between the Unit and the university. Audit panels are usually composed of academics as well as non-academics, (many of whom are external to the university sector but their work or interest involves quality systems related to education). The audit panel provides independent advice to the university about the university's own quality assurance system and also the institution's programme of self-improvement. The Director stressed that the audit panels do not consider themselves as experts with the mandate of telling the university what to do; their role is not to impose their views on the institution. Rather, their duty is to consider themselves as colleagues whose sole objective is to work together with the quality management personnel of the university to assist and encourage improvement of internal systems related to teaching and student learning.

Ownership: Jennings noted that the academic audit process, as conducted by the Unit, is owned by the Unit. However, the focus of the Unit is to bring about changes that would be owned by the universities themselves. According to him, the focus of the Unit is to contribute to the improvement or strengthening of the internal quality assurance systems of the institutions. The universities must consider the academic audit process as part of their internal programme of quality improvement rather than an external influence or as an intrusion into their internal processes. In the same vein, academic audit should not ignore the university's own initiatives or inhibit the university's own creativity.

Enhancement: The term 'enhancement' carries with it the notion of improving the internal quality assurance processes that the university has already put in place, rather than just introducing a new process or imposing processes from a different context. Enhancement is therefore about improvement and innovation. In view of this, the major task of the audit team, according to Jennings, is to find innovative ways and methods of building on or improving upon the processes already in place in the university. The team does not visit the institution with the aim of simply finding fault; the Unit is guided by INQAAHE's guidelines of good practice which requires the external quality assurance agencies to respect the autonomy of the institutions and also to recognize that the institutions should be primarily responsible for the quality of education they provide.

The tertiary education sector in New Zealand has since 2000 been subjected to further scrutiny. This has eventually resulted once again in the restructuring or reforms to the sector. In 2000, the government established the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission charged with the responsibility of making proposals for consideration for the reforms in the sector. The Commission submitted its reports which resulted in the creation of the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), responsible for policy development as well as funding of tertiary education. The Commission is also tasked with the implementation of the reforms.

The Commission's role mainly is "to influence and shape the nature, quality and levels of information that should be provided through quality assurance processes" (New Zealand Cabinet 2006, section 48).

In 2006, the government intensified its intervention in higher education by introducing a new set of outcome-focused tertiary education reforms aimed at measuring institutional performance against government priorities and strengthening quality assurance and monitoring requirements (New Zealand Cabinet, 2006). The government further released information in Cabinet papers and minutes describing the new package of the tertiary education reforms. The last paper captioned "Quality Assurance and Monitoring" (New Zealand Cabinet, 2006, section 11) declares that:

A quality assurance and monitoring system must support a high trust and high accountability environment ... quality assurance and monitoring relates to accountability, institutional performance and risk, and high quality teaching and learning, and must also protect public confidence

The reforms have thus offered new challenges and opportunities for the quality assurance agencies. Reforms begun in 2007 directed that the quality of an institution's programmes would inform government investment in the institution. The reform was based on an evaluative approach with a focus on desired government-determined outcomes. This process involves an independent external evaluation of an institution's prior self-assessment of performance. This performance is judged against centrally set criteria (Tertiary Education Commission, 2007).

This approach has drawn criticisms from the sector, particularly the university sector, which perceive it as an attempt by the government to further tighten its control or influence on the sector (Houston, 2007). This move is therefore seen as a threat to the academic freedom of institutions over their operations and promotes compliance to national policy goals and

external requirements. The then director of NZUAAU, Jennings, had the following to say about the reforms:

The inevitable conclusion to be drawn is that the Commission is interested in measuring institutional performance and student outputs/outcomes against government priorities, not the quality of institutional research, teaching, learning, community engagement and the student learning experience. (Jennings, 2007, p. 2)

7.6 Summary

This chapter provided a brief background to the tertiary educational reforms that was embarked on by the New Zealand government in the 1990s. This reform was aimed at increasing efficiency and making the tertiary sector more accountable. The reform culminated in the establishment of a number of external quality assurance agencies with the responsibility of undertaking the external component of the programme approval and monitoring process. The principal agencies for undertaking the external component of this work were the newly established New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA), and the existing New Zealand Vice Chancellors Committee (NZVCC). While the former was mandated to oversee the quality assurance of all publicly funded tertiary education, the Government assigned to the latter the responsibility for quality in the university sector. In the discharge of their mandate, both agencies have created associated bodies to carry out delegated quality assurance functions. This Act defined the relationship that characterises the higher institutions and the external agencies. The reform brought in its wake the monitoring system to make the sector more viable and internationally competitive.

CHAPTER 8

Practices of quality assurance in higher education in New Zealand – Document analysis

8.1 Introduction

A review of the documents of the participating institutions revealed that higher institutions in New Zealand recognise that it is their obligation under the Education Act (1989) to strive to ensure that they provided the highest standard of internationally recognized education. Further, the Act requires them to own the quality assurance process and be responsible for the quality of education provided. Higher institutions and the various external quality assurance agencies established for the purpose of ensuring the quality of higher education provided in New Zealand have developed and implemented several quality management approaches. This chapter presents an analysis of documents that describe the practices and processes of quality assurance in higher education in New Zealand. Specifically it outlines the procedures for programme approval and accreditation for the universities and ITPs and further discusses the monitoring or review processes for these institutions. Its main focus is on the processes and activities of CUAP, NZUAAU and ITPQ. Quality assurance of higher institutions in New Zealand focuses on the quality of qualifications provided and on the quality of the institutions.

The source of data for this chapter begins with a study of the processes concerning academic quality assurance and management in higher institutions in New Zealand. Primarily this is based on the review of available public documents from the external quality assurance bodies and organisational documents available on their websites. Different kinds of documents were gathered from these bodies including the academic audit manual for use in cycle 4 academic audits, handbook for auditors and the constitution of NZUAAU (from NZUAAU), approval and accreditation of courses leading to degrees and related

qualifications, policy and guidelines for the conduct of external evaluation and review (from ITPQ and CUAP).

The legislation made it mandatory for all the programmes taught in tertiary institutions in New Zealand that lead to the award of degrees and other qualifications must be officially approved by the external quality assurance agencies that have been created for that purpose. As noted in the previous chapter, the following bodies have the responsibility for conducting this approval:

- New Zealand Qualifications Authority
- Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQ) (responsible for degrees, diplomas and certificates to level 7 offered by Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics)
- Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) of the Vice Chancellors' Committee (responsible for degrees and diplomas offered by the universities)

In addition to the approval from the bodies above, professional programmes may be subjected to the requirements and processes of a professional body that is in charge of professional registration.

The policies and criteria gazetted under the Education Act 1989, provided for a quality assurance framework established by NZQA which comprises four components:

- Initial entry processes of course approval, accreditation to deliver a course, registration of private training establishments, and accreditation to assess standards on the National Qualifications Framework
- Self-assessment by tertiary education organisations
- External evaluation and review by a quality assurance body

- Responses to determine where a tertiary education organisation may be non-compliant with the Education Act 1989 and the consequential appropriate actions. NZQA (2009, p. 2)

In addition, NZQA has established the requirements and the criteria that institutions have to satisfy before the approval and accreditation of a programme. This has been done in pursuant to section 253 (3) of the Education Act 1989 following consultation as set down by section 253 (2) of the Act. NZQA maintains the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications. This comprises a comprehensive list of all the quality assured qualifications in New Zealand which have been approved either by NZQA or NZVCC (and their associated bodies) to clearly identify all quality assured qualifications in New Zealand.

8.2 Components of quality assurance

Following the enactment of the Education Amendment Act 1990, two major forms of quality assurance procedures came into effect for the enhancement of teaching and learning in the New Zealand tertiary sector. These include internal quality assurance that is undertaken by the higher institutions and the external quality evaluation, also undertaken by the various external bodies established for that purpose. These activities are similar to the international trend of quality assurance system for higher institutions, and are basic requirements of course approval and accreditation under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989 for all tertiary education institutions. This process ensures that the maintenance and improvement of the quality of education provided becomes a shared responsibility of the institution and the external agencies.

8.2.1 Internal processes

The internal component of the quality assurance system is undertaken by the tertiary institutions themselves. However, because of the multiplicity of tertiary institutions in New Zealand, institutions are allowed to tailor their internal review mechanisms to suit their

circumstances (ITPQ, 2010). All the institutions in New Zealand have put in place formal internal quality management structures that facilitate the internal quality management and monitoring processes. These procedures and processes are documented to provide guidelines to the staff involved in the internal quality management processes. They are available to the public and stakeholders to assure them of the institutions' commitment to provide quality education. These systems are subject to reviews and updated regularly as evidence of the institutions' determination to deliver quality education. One of the participating institutions has developed a "business policy manual" to ensure that the academic programmes delivered by that institution maintain a high standard of quality through a process of continuous monitoring. At the time of data collection, one of the participating institutions was reviewing its internal evaluation practices indicating its desire to meet up-to-date requirements.

With regard to programme development and approval, New Zealand institutions have elaborate internal programme development procedures designed to ensure that programmes developed by the departments are of high quality and also are consistent with the mission of the institution. The internal policies are to ensure that the academic programmes are developed to high quality standards. In the course of developing a programme, the inputs of all stakeholders, students, non-academic and professional staff are also required at various levels to ensure that any new programme that would be submitted to the external agency for approval has been scrutinized carefully and meets the desired standards. The procedures adopted by the universities in particular are not greatly different from each other. A typical internal programme approval process of a New Zealand university is rigorous and comprises the following stages:

The programme is first developed at the departmental level where its components are clearly defined. The programme will be scrutinised and when approved it is submitted to the

appropriate academic committee for further scrutiny. When the programme is approved by this committee, it goes to the committee responsible for the provision of resources for the entire university where it is subjected to further scrutiny. Any proposal that has received approval to this stage is sent to the highest decision making body of the institution for further scrutiny and approval. At all these stages, further modifications to the programme are required or rejected either on academic grounds or because of resource issues.

In addition, stakeholders' input and feedback are sought for the update of the programmes. Programme design and approval requires adequate consultation between institutions and their various stakeholders in order to seek relevant information and material to be included in the programme. While the ITPs have instituted programme advisory committees for each programme, the universities have boards of studies or similar provisions. The primary task for these committees/boards is to assist the academic staff in the development of curriculum which will meet the requirements of stakeholders. In addition, institutions are including graduate feedback in programme development and reviews to solicit the views of graduates on the particular focus that new programmes should include.

These processes are put in place to ensure that departments closely follow the established procedures designed for programme development and approval. The focus is to enable the institutions to fulfil their missions, which includes inter alia the provision of education of the highest standard. Any proposal that receives approval from the highest decision making body in the institution is finally submitted to CUAP for external scrutiny and approval.

Higher institutions undertake self-assessments of the programmes and internal processes on a regular basis. These assessments involve a continuous review of the activities and processes which an institution employs to establish or demonstrate evidence of its own effectiveness. The reviews also provide evidence of how the institution is managing its

internal activities to achieve its mission. Usually, the reviews lead to the preparation of a portfolio for submission to the external assessors. One of the institutions has integrated self review with continuous quality improvement for the institution. However, it should be noted that self-assessment is not a one-off evaluative activity that only leads to external review. The outcome of these reviews can inform the management of future planning and thereby contribute towards improvements. Because the individual institutions are to be primarily responsible for the quality of education provided, it is therefore important to embed self-assessment in tertiary providers' operational and business activities (NZQA, 2007). The basic principle of NZQA is that institutional quality is best attained when an institution accepts the task and ownership for the improvement of its own activities, and the quality of education it provides.

Some institutions have also instituted internal audit procedures aimed at auditing departmental compliance with, and effectiveness against, the institution's guidelines and policies. Internal audits are intended to identify good internal practices that could be disseminated within the institution to promote improvement. One participating institution has assigned to its quality assurance unit the responsibility of developing a comprehensive annual quality audit plan for each year to be submitted to the Academic Board for approval within a stipulated time. To ensure effective conduct of the audit process, the unit provides adequate training to selected internal auditors who are subsequently assigned audit tasks in departments other than their own departments. The audit reports are discussed by the highest decision making body of the institution to determine the measures to be taken to rectify the recommendations made with appropriate timelines. Finally, the quality assurance unit makes a follow up to verify the extent to which the recommendations have been addressed.

Closely related to the above is the emphasis placed on the review of qualifications to evaluate the quality and relevance of institutions' academic awards. This is a peer evaluation of the entire academic programme (objectives, structure and management, teaching, learning and assessment processes). In one of the participating institutions, it is the responsibility of the faculty to prepare a comprehensive schedule of reviews that should be conducted every year with oversight responsibility of overseeing the follow-up recommendation. To ensure effective and timely implementation of the recommendations, an implementation group is set up at the completion of each review task charged with overseeing its implementation. This group has to submit its report to the institution six months after the review indicating actions to be taken for the rectification of any deficiency identified in the report.

A higher institution in New Zealand would typically have a range of quality management processes in place. The table below summarises the provisions and key quality management processes that the three institutions that participated in this study for example might operate or have in place. The table addresses systems that are related directly or indirectly to the teaching function of institutions, not the research function (which is outside the scope of this study).

Table 8.1: Provisions and key quality management systems that New Zealand institutions might operate or have in place

Management structure and quality systems: Higher institutions in New Zealand have complex management and organisational structures that are responsible for the management of the quality of education provided. Generally, the structure recognises that the responsibility for quality of the institution lies at all levels of the structure and with every member of staff. Typical management structure will comprise of the following:

- Institution's purpose and goals
- Academic Management structure
- Committee structure
- Annual reporting
- Management of Information

Quality assurance policies, structures and mechanisms: Institutional quality assurance framework is generally developed around the policies and procedures of the institution. Quality in higher institutions is managed within operational mechanisms which covers a number of institutional activities. The quality framework of institutions will be made up of:

- Internal quality management structures
- Designated officers with key quality assurance roles assigned and defined
- Quality management policy documents

Approval and delivery of courses of study: Higher institutions have policies and regulations governing the designed and approval of courses to ensure that programmes programmes meet accepted standards. The following are features common to New Zealand institutions in this regard:

- Programme and course approval procedures
- Review of new programmes and all courses
- Monitoring of course outlines
- Monitoring of assessment policy and roles
- External assessment
- Institution's teaching development centre
- Credit transfer processes
- Recognition of prior learning
- Processes related to engagement with stakeholders

Review and feedback provisions: Higher institutions obtain both formative and summative information on the quality of their activities through a variety of mechanisms which includes the following:

- Academic reviews
- Administrative reviews
- Reviews by professional bodies
- Evaluation of teaching and course: student feedback
- Guidelines for conducting student evaluations of teaching and courses
- Student representatives
- Peer evaluation
- Graduate feedback

- Feedback from professional bodies, employers and community groups
- Staff feedback

Institutions set out their requirements for the administration of evaluation of courses and teaching to ensure that ethical standards are met. Common across institutions are Human Ethics Committee guidelines and AUS (NZ) Code of Practice for Student Summative Evaluations of Teaching (Hall & Fitzgerald, 1995).

Institution-wide, faculty and programme-specific policies on assessment

Systems: Higher institutions have developed and apply institution-wide, faculty and programme specific policies on assessment. Institutions have tailored the faculty and programme specific policies along with institution-wide policies. Major policies cover:

- Provision of information to students
- Quality control and monitoring requirements in relation to: course outlines, moderation of assessment tasks, moderation of marking and accurate recording of student results
- Processes related to the examination of student research theses
- Provisions related to plagiarism and other forms of assessment misconduct

Support for students: *Institutions have international student offices, graduate student offices and student learning support that offer quality student services to support students to facilitate their personal and social growth. Major facilities and services that are offered include*

- International students office
- Graduate students office
- Student advising
- Student services
- Student learning support
- Student grievance procedures
- Student union/associations

Human resources: Institutions have developed quality assurance provisions, policies and procedures that are related to employment, staff development and monitoring. Significant features include:

- Appointment procedures
- Orientation and induction of staff
- Study leave and conference leave
- Staff development provisions
- Performance review

Documentation: All higher institutions have developed documents, online or hard copy that describe the internal quality management systems and provide information on policies, regulations, processes, responsibilities and systems. Examples of these include:

- Calendar
- Online policy information
- Assessment handbook
- Enrolment information

8.2.2 External processes

As discussed in chapter seven, tertiary education in New Zealand is diverse in nature. This has resulted in the establishment of various external quality assurance bodies to undertake the external component of quality assurance of higher education.

8.2.2.1 Course approval processes for the university sector

In fulfilment of the criteria for the approval and accreditation of qualifications and programmes of higher institutions in New Zealand as required by section 258, 259 and 260 of the Education Act 1989, CUAP devised a process for approving all newly developed programmes and major changes to existing programmes within the university sector. CUAP, as explained in the previous chapter, has a delegated authority from NZVCC for course approval for the eight universities in New Zealand. The Committee further has the power to withdraw approval where the programme does not continue to maintain and improve standards after the initial approval is granted. CUAP is the body, therefore, to which universities submit their proposals to mount any new qualifications or major amendments to existing qualifications.

Under section 253 (1) (d) and 253 (2) of the Education Act, NZQA has published the criteria for the approval and accreditation of courses in the New Zealand Gazette and section 260 (3) of the Act directed that NZVCC should apply these criteria in its approval process. With the application of these criteria, both CUAP and the universities have shared responsibilities. For instance, though it is the responsibility of the institution to determine and implement the mode of delivery of a course, CUAP must ensure that appropriate methods are employed for the delivery of the course. In pursuant of its function, CUAP has designed and adopted its own procedures to facilitate approval and accreditation process. The procedures were explained under the following subheadings (see, NZVCC, 2009–2010, pp. 26–39):

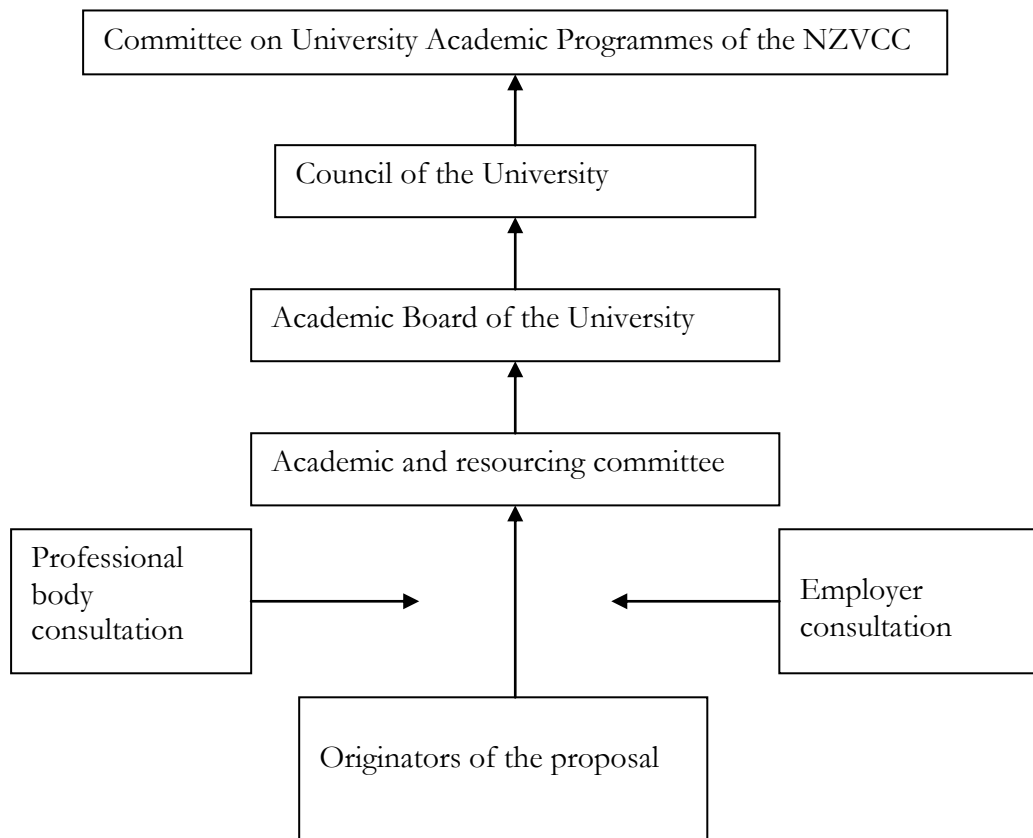
- Proposals which must be submitted to the committee
- Proposals which must be reported to the committee
- Proposals which need not be submitted to the committee
- Preparation of proposals for the committee
- Submission of proposals and reports to the committee

With regard to the approval process any proposal for the introduction of a new programme or any major change to a programme that has been approved internally has to be submitted to CUAP for approval. CUAP then subjects the proposal to peer review across the university system at large. As a result, some are amended or even rejected. If there is no expertise in New Zealand universities on the proposal, it is sent overseas for international review. Following scrutiny in this way, proposals may be approved without alteration, or debated by a meeting of CUAP at which particular concerns are aired and a means of resolution found, or referred back to the university, or rejected (NZVCC, 2009–2010).

Without approval from CUAP no proposal for a new programme or major change will be funded by the Tertiary Education Commission.

Through this course approval process, the universities in New Zealand cooperate and work together to maintain academic standards through peer review (NZVCC, 2009–2010).

Figure 8.1: Process for CUAP's programme approval
 (from NZVCC, 2009–2010, p. 4)



One peculiarity of the CUAP process is to distribute the proposals to all universities to ensure that it is subjected to rigorous scrutiny. The proposal at this stage is submitted to peer review where other universities are required to comment on the programme as well as offering suggestions for improvement thereby providing a forum for objections to be met, improvements to be made, and errors to be rectified (NZVCC, 2009–2010). Under this procedure, the institution presenting the new programme is required to submit a defence against any challenges to their proposal from other universities or to provide modifications.

Graduating year review: CUAP undertakes a graduating year review process as part of its programme approval process. This review is carried out after the first cohort of students has graduated from the programme. This review requires the universities to report on the outcomes of their first graduates to pass through the new qualification. The committee undertake this review as a moderating mechanism to assure itself that the institutions are

operating within agreed policies and also to verify if the programmes are in line with their stated objectives and acceptable standards of delivery. CUAP requires follow-up reviews of all successful proposals leading to the introduction of new qualifications or new subjects (NZVCC, 2009–2010). In evaluating the report, the committee verifies whether appropriate institutional review processes have been employed to an acceptable standard and the targets stated have been satisfied and, if not, what measures have been put in place in that respect. However, in a situation where a university fails to submit its report at the appropriate time, CUAP may suspend approval until the university submits the report. In this case, no new student will be admitted on the programme until the suspension has been lifted. As stated by NZVCC (2008), the committee has several options for dealing with graduating year reviews, “ranging from acceptance of the report, either as submitted or with specified modifications, through requiring further reports, establishing review panels to report on specific issues, or ultimately, to withdrawing approval from programmes” (p. 5). In the last case, funding for the programme would cease after a transition period to allow currently-enrolled students to complete.

8.2.2.2 External monitoring processes of New Zealand universities

As noted in the previous chapter, the New Zealand universities established NZUAAU purposely to maintain and enhance the quality of their academic activities. In view of this, the Unit conducts periodic academic audits on the activities of the eight universities in New Zealand. In carrying out its audit activities, the Unit is concerned with the following features:

- The existence of other agencies monitoring the performance of the universities
- The characteristics of a university, as generally accepted, and as set out in the Education Act 1989
- The obligation that the Council of each university has under the Act to acknowledge the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi)

- The provision the universities have made for inter-institutional co-operation and peer review
- The long-standing relationship which universities have with university systems in other parts of the world (NZUAAU, 2010, p. 1).

Each university is subject to audit on a four year cycle based on particular themes that cover matters such as appointment, induction and training of staff, student support services, monitoring of teaching quality, stakeholder consultation, and so on. The Unit undertakes three types of audit namely: full institutional audits, audits in relation to a specific function, and theme audits. The whole-of-institution academic audit will focus on the ability of institutional processes to support the achievement of outputs and outcomes (NZVCC, 2008). The Unit began operations in 1994 and has conducted four cycles since its establishments into various aspects of the institutions as indicated below: Cycle 1 academic audits were full institutional audits of the then seven universities between 1995 and 1998. Cycle 2 academic audits were conducted during 2000 and 2001; these audits were on the national theme of research policy, management and performance, support for postgraduate research students, and the research-teaching links; and on institutional themes nominated by the universities and agreed to by the Unit. In 2001, a full institutional academic audit was conducted at the eighth New Zealand University – the newly-created Auckland University of Technology. Cycle 3 academic audits were conducted during 2003 and 2007; these audits were on the teaching quality, programme delivery, and the achievement of learning objectives. The most recent cycle of academic audit – cycle 4 are full institutional audits and are being administered over the period 2008 – 2012 (NZVCC, 2008).

A quality audit as explained by Standards New Zealand (1994), “ begins with the objectives of an organization and investigates whether its plans and activities are effective in achieving its objectives” (p. 20). The audit process begins with an institutional self-review which informs an audit portfolio. This review evaluates whether the institution’s internal processes

are effective in achieving its goals and objectives and identifies areas for improvement (NZVCC, 2008). The review must take into account any other institutional reviews undertaken and other relevant results/information for consideration by the Audit Unit. As emphasised by the then Director of the Unit,

In each audit, the process begins and ends with the university's own programme of continuous improvement. External audit begins within the university with a self-assessment which is not just an evaluation but which includes the university's proposed quality improvement plans for moving forward. The audit panel's thinking and recommendations begin from, and move out from, the university's own quality improvement plans. The university's implementation of its own improvement plans, as modified and enhanced by the audit panel, forms the basis of the follow-up interaction between the university and the Unit. (NZUAAU, 2007, p. 1)

NZUAAU recognises that the effectiveness and credibility of the audit process depend largely on the integrity and knowledge of the panel members (auditors). In view of this, the Unit has a Register of Auditors comprised of appointed auditors who are provided with appropriate training for the audit task. Before the commencement of the audit, the Unit prepares an audit manual to guide the process. This manual according to Meade and Woodhouse (2000) describes the mechanisms of audit; reasons for these; and the factors to be considered by institutions and panels. An audit panel is constituted to study the reports followed by a site visit of 4-5 days by the panel to the institution. Panels usually consist of some leading academics, someone from a relevant stakeholder group, and at least one international member (Meade et al., 2000). The audit panel addresses the self-review and makes recommendations that would add value to the university's own programme of quality improvement. The external evaluation in effect is to test the quality of the university's internal quality assurance processes and the report arising from the self-assessment review (NZUAAU 2007).

NZUAAU does not impose sanctions on the institutions; rather, institutions are expected to take action to rectify their shortcomings. Institutions are required to submit a follow-up report on the actions taken to rectify the deficiencies/recommendations. Finally, the Unit makes a follow-up to monitor progress made by the institution against audit recommendations. It becomes evident that the combination of institutional internal quality assurance, CUAP processes for course approval and accreditation, and the role of NZUAAU combined provides a comprehensive quality assurance system for university education in New Zealand.

The following section discusses the quality assurance processes for ITPs. It focuses on the programme approval and accreditation process and discusses the ITPQ's policies, criteria and procedures undertaken for External Evaluation and Review (EER).

8.2.2.3 Course approval processes for ITPs

As discussed in the previous chapter, NZQA delegated to ITPQ the course approval, accreditation, external evaluation and review of ITPs. Both CUAP and ITPQ employed the same criteria that were gazetted by NZQA for their programme approval processes. For a new programme to be approved for ITPs the programme had to go through similar internal deliberations (as outlined earlier for the universities) but the final external approval had to be given by ITPQ. For this, a panel (constituted by ITPQ) discuss the proposed programme with the officials of the institution and then submit a report to ITPQ for consideration.

8.2.2.4 Monitoring processes

All approved and accredited programmes were subject to on-going monitoring by ITPQ. ITPQ undertook the external component of the periodic review process required for approved programmes for ITPs. It should be noted that the ITPQ's monitoring process did not replace the duty of the institutions to continuously monitor the quality of their

programmes. Explaining the rationale for the monitoring activities, ITPQ (2009) noted that monitoring of courses offered by the ITPs is designed to reassure ITPQ and all stakeholders that:

- the course is being implemented and managed as planned and presented at the time of approval;
- appropriate consideration is given to any recommendations made by the evaluation panel;
- the course is developing in ways that are broadly consistent with the intent of the course;
- there is independent, external academic input during reviews and consideration of significant course enhancements;
- ITP Quality is made aware of issues affecting the satisfactory provision of the course (p. 38).

Generally, the ITPQ monitoring process involved the analysis of the annual programme evaluation report submitted by ITP and the returns made to the Ministry of Education. This report was a brief summary of the progress of the programme and the effectiveness of changes (if any) that have been made to the programme. During the early stages of the programme delivery, monitoring also involved an annual visit undertaken by a quality appointed monitor accompanied by an independent evaluator, both of whom were appointees of ITPQ (ITPQ, 2010). The appointed monitors were generally senior experienced academics with expertise in the discipline area of the degree. The first monitoring visit to the institution was normally scheduled for approximately the third quarter of the first year of the programme delivery. The monitor submitted his/her report to ITPQ which, according to ITPQ (2010, p. 1), provided the ITP with “valuable external peer review on the way the degree is being managed, and provides ITPQ with an independent and neutral perspective on the course and its delivery”.

When an institution was of the view that the programme delivery was stable and believed that it had met all the conditions for changing its monitoring status, it could apply to be transferred to the status that involved monitoring by an annual programme evaluation report. When the application became successful, the appointed monitor would cease to conduct the monitoring activity and ITPQ would undertake the monitoring process that would be on the basis of an evaluation of the annual programme evaluation report.

However, for a change to the mode of monitoring to be confirmed, all the parties involved in the process needed to be satisfied that the ITP was capable of managing the programme appropriately and in particular that:

- the degree is being implemented as planned and presented at the time of approval, subject to modifications and enhancements that have been broadly consistent with the intent of the programme and with the natural evolution of a quality control
- recommendations made by the panel have been appropriately attended to
- alternative mechanisms are in place at institutional level to ensure independent, external academic input during reviews and consideration of proposed programme enhancements
- ITP Quality will gain sufficient awareness of issues affecting the satisfactory provision of the degree from an annual report (ITPQ, 2010, p. 6).

ITPQ required institutions to undertake a major assessment of their degree programmes at least once every five years. The assessments were required to include inputs from the professional and academic communities. However, ITPQ had the right to carry out a special review of the approval and/or accreditation of a degree programme. These special reviews were mostly done when there were serious issues or ongoing concerns about the quality of the programme.

ITPQ had undertaken academic audits every five years. The primary aim of carrying out the audit exercise was to examine compliance and effectiveness of each institution's quality assurance systems against ITPNZ Academic Quality Standards (ITPQ, 2006). Audit had focused mainly on the inputs, systems and activities with the assumption that any institution that is doing these well provides an assurance of quality.

External Evaluation and Review (EER): NZQA introduced EER (the biggest change in quality assurance since the early 90s) to replace the audit process; EER was implemented by ITPQ in 2009. The focus of this process was on the outcomes of the ITPs as well as the major processes that led to these outcomes. The introduction of this review model was a very significant shift for the institutions and ITPQ. A key difference from audit is that while evaluative quality assurance also focuses on the processes, this is viewed from the perspective of the impact of these processes on what has been achieved (the valued outcomes of tertiary education).

Evaluative quality assurance is intended to operate in an “environment of high trust and high accountability throughout the sector” (NZQA, 2010, p. 2) implying that the institution is left free to set its own objectives and has the freedom over its own processes with little Crown intervention except when carrying out its regulatory functions. The institution is accountable for its achieved educational outcomes, directly responsible for the quality of its programmes and for the ongoing improvement of educational performance. To reciprocate the trust and greater autonomy that has been afforded the institution, the Crown must have confidence in the institution by undertaking the external review to determine the level of this confidence. With this model, however, if an institution is found to be performing below acceptable level, its operations will be closely monitored by the external agency (NZQA, 2009).

The EER model adopts six evaluation questions which offer the direction and structure for the review. These include:

- How well do learners achieve?
- What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders?
- How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?
- How effective is the teaching?
- How well are learners guided and supported?
- How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement? (NZQA, 2010, p. 7)

The review process involved a panel visit that takes 3–4 days and the submission of a report to ITPQ. The report summarizes the findings and conclusions of the review, giving reasons for the conclusions reached. The institutions are required to use the report to strengthen their internal process. The report would also inform the scope of the next review. At the end of the evaluation, institutions were provided with statements of confidence on educational performance and capability in self-assessment which according to NZQA (2009, p. 5) can be:

- highly confident
- confident
- not yet confident
- not confident

If an institution achieved either a confident or highly confident evaluation, ITPQ would not normally conduct another evaluation for another four years; if the achievement level was

below the confident level, ITPQ would monitor the provider closely and conduct another EER between six months and two years. In this case, ITPQ would work very closely with the institution to make sure it was making improvements. All reports were published and this information goes to the funding body.

It should be noted that ITPQ ceased to exist in New Zealand in 2010. From 2011, the roles which were previously performed by ITPQ reverted to NZQA. This means that the activities of the ITPs are now monitored by NZQA as with other non-university institutions. The lessons for Ghana here are numerous, with one being to avoid the establishment of multiple external quality assurance agencies.

8.3 Professional course approval and accreditation

Some programmes require, in addition to NZQA's processes, registration with a professional body. Most of these professional bodies have developed their own requirements for the registration and qualification of their members. The bodies also have specific requirements relating to the course content and quality.

With regard to the universities, any proposal involving professional approval should be submitted to CUAP together with proof of discussion with the appropriate professional body. In the case of making a change to the professional area of an existing programme, it is the responsibility of the university to seek the consent or agreement from the appropriate professional body and thereby advise CUAP that the proposed changes have been accepted.

In relation to ITPQ process, programme approval related to the needs of a professional body involves the direct participation of the body in the assessment process. In other words, a representative from the professional body joined the accreditation or (audit) panels. In addition, ITPQ might ask for professional advice from representatives of a particular

stakeholder group other than the professional bodies when ITPQ became convinced that the programme might be of particular interest to them.

8.4 The delivering and awarding of overseas degrees in New Zealand

As noted previously, legislation has made it mandatory that all programmes offered in higher institutions in New Zealand leading to the award of degrees and related qualifications must first be approved by NZVCC or NZQA (or a delegated quality assurance body). When an institution intends to mount a programme that will lead to the award of an overseas qualification, the institution is required to provide evidence of the programme approval by the relevant overseas quality assurance agency.

If the criteria applied to the proposal are sufficiently similar to those of the Qualifications Authority and the process applied was adequately rigorous, the Qualifications Authority may be prepared to negotiate an amended approval process. The Qualifications Authority will consider the potential for legal, professional or cultural requirements and concerns to impact on the acceptability of the course for New Zealand (ITPQ, 2009, p. 28).

However, if the programme is to be jointly provided with a New Zealand institution, a memorandum of cooperation between the providers specifying the methods of moderation and monitoring of the course should also be submitted.

8.5 The delivery and award of New Zealand Qualifications overseas

The Qualifications Authority is concerned that the reputation of New Zealand qualifications is maintained, regardless of where they are delivered (ITPQ, 2009). In this regard, provision has been made for programme approval, accreditation and monitoring for any Qualifications Authority's course to be delivered overseas. Accreditation to offer any qualification approved by NZQA overseas is site-specific. It is required that any New Zealand based institution that intends to operate, or is operating overseas, to provide proof to NZQA that its overseas operations:

- Are covered by the provider's quality management system;
- Are consistent with the standards of the provider's New Zealand operations;
- Comply with legal requirements in the particular country; and
- Are acceptable to the relevant educational authorities in the particular country (ITPQ, 2009, p. 28).

In a situation where a New Zealand institution decides to offer an NZQA approved programme overseas as a collaborative, twinning, franchise or joint venture arrangement with an overseas institution, the NZQA requires the following information to be provided:

- A statement on the standing of the overseas provider and evidence that this organisation meets appropriate quality and programme management requirements. The requirements must essentially be equivalent to those expected of a New Zealand provider
- A formal Memorandum of Cooperation between the New Zealand provider and the overseas provider
- Details of the quality assurance processes applying to the overseas provider, where appropriate, with respect to the approval, accreditation and monitoring of the particular qualification under consideration (ITPQ 2009, p. 29)

In other words, because NZQA is very much concerned in safeguarding the reputation of New Zealand qualifications, irrespective of where they are delivered or awarded, international arrangements are subjected to the same monitoring requirements as programmes delivered within New Zealand. In addition, the monitoring process may be extended to satisfying the needs of any relevant overseas quality assurance agency.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined the practices and procedures in the management of quality for the higher education sector in New Zealand at the time of the research. More specifically,

attention was paid to the approaches adopted by the institutions and the external quality assurance agencies for this purpose. The quality management system of higher institutions in New Zealand is made up of internal systems and responses to external systems. Internally, the data revealed that all higher institutions in New Zealand have developed various forms of quality management processes for the purpose of quality enhancement. They have developed programme approval mechanisms to ensure that programmes are designed in accordance with the mission of the institution. The chapter provides a description of how the internal processes of the institutions link with their external agencies.

It is worth noting that though programme approval process for the ITPs and the universities was assigned to two separate bodies and assume different procedures, these bodies employed the same criteria that were developed by NZQA for programme approval. In the same vein, institutions of different kinds relate to several external agencies for different purposes. Tables 8:1 and 8:2 below summarize or show the relationship of ITPs and universities to their external agencies respectively:

Table 8.2: Agencies related to non-university institutions (ITP) for quality assurance (Prior to 2011)

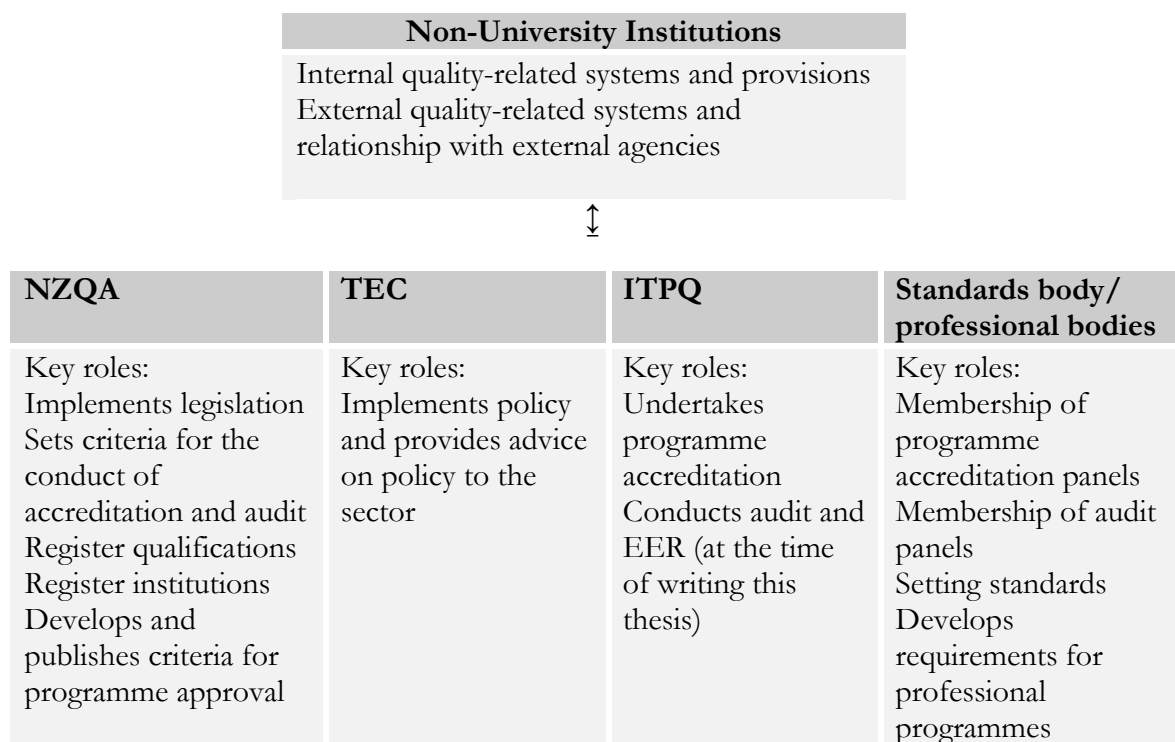
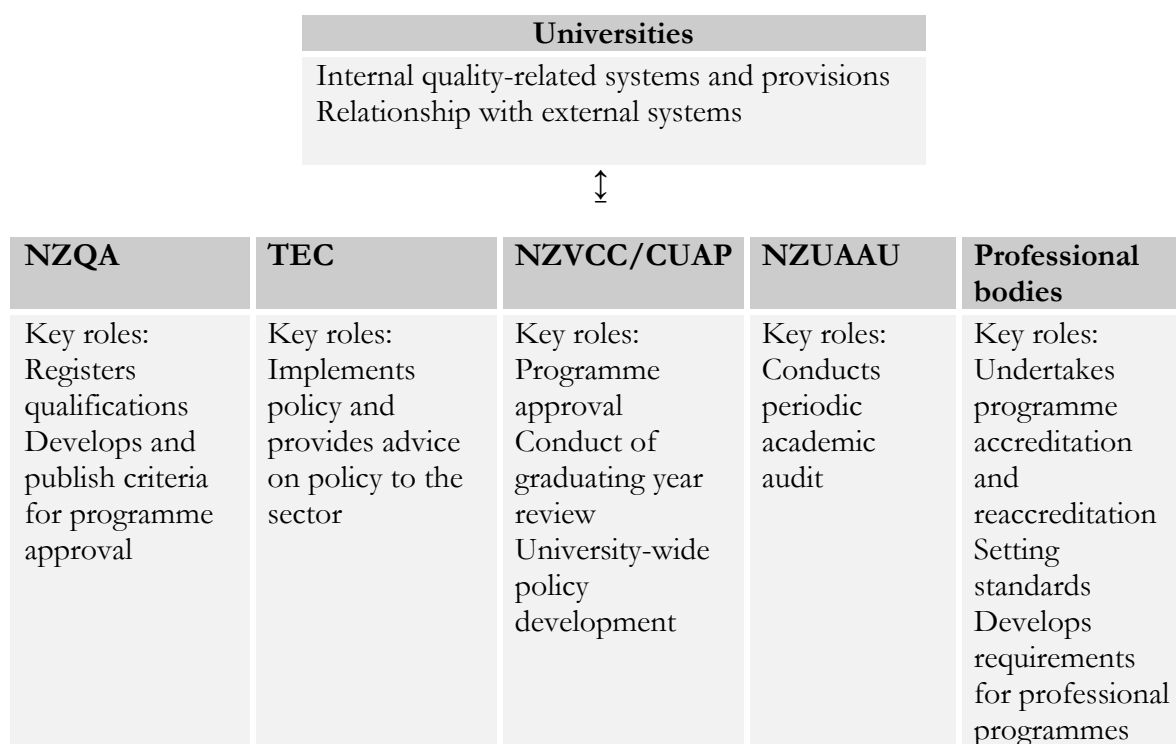


Table 8.3: Agencies related to the university sector for quality assurance



The current processes for academic quality assurance in New Zealand universities were designed purposely to ensure that standards of higher institutions are comparable with those in other university systems around the world. NZVCC (2008, p.10) contends that “the processes for course approval, professional accreditation and institutional academic audit all combine to ensure that standards are maintained and the achievement of standards is enhanced in a culture of continuous improvement”.

CHAPTER 9

Quality Assurance in Higher Education New Zealand: Analysis of Interviews

9.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of New Zealand interviews that examined the responses of seven participants. Data were collected from three selected higher institutions and four external quality assurance agencies. The participants were made up of three respondents from three higher institutions and four respondents from the external quality assurance agencies. The interview questions for the institutional respondents were to elicit their views on the effectiveness of internal quality assurance practices of their institutions and their relationship with the external agencies. The questions for the respondents from the external agencies on the other hand were to confirm or otherwise the processes that are documented in their websites and other publicly available documents and the impact of their work on the quality management of the sector.

Questions were framed differently for the institutions and the external agencies but were both designed to answer the fourth research question, i.e. What are the main practices, processes, and mechanisms employed by external quality assurance agencies and education institutions for assuring the quality of tertiary education in New Zealand?. Data collection from New Zealand was tailored mainly to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the management and practices of quality assurance in higher education in an attempt to identify effective practices that could be recommended for the Ghanaian system. In response to these questions, seven major response themes emerged along with a number of minor response themes. The major themes centred on issues relating to:

- formal relationship between the institutions and the external quality assurance agencies
- internal quality assurance structures
- processes of quality assurance
- systems of external monitoring
- impact of the external quality assurance agencies
- institutions' perceptions of external quality requirements
- compatibility of internal quality assurance with external requirements

As seen already, analysis of data from Ghana was undertaken before interview schedules were finalised for New Zealand participants. The researcher used a similar, but not identical, set of survey questions for New Zealand. Modifications were made to the questions in order to get a comprehensive picture of quality assurance practices in New Zealand to enable the researcher to make informed recommendations for policy transfer to Ghana in line with the aim of the study. This approach was also to allow for the inclusion of questions that arise from the Ghanaian data (which included perceived gaps in the Ghanaian system) to identify in a more targeted way practices or beliefs from the New Zealand context that might be helpful to Ghana.

All the respondents were in senior management positions in their institutions and they were thus able to address issues or respond to the questions from their institutions perspective. The three institutions involved in this study consist of two polytechnics (to be code named poly 1 and poly 2) and one university (uni). For the purpose of this analysis, the respondents from the institutions have been code named p1, p2 and u1 respectively.

9.2 Theme 1: Formal relationship between the institutions and the external quality assurance agencies

As explained in chapter seven, various agencies were mandated to undertake the external component of quality assurance for the tertiary sector in New Zealand. Each type of higher education institution has the external agency it relates to that is either established by the government or by the institutions themselves. This meant that the scope of their work differs. This is particularly evident in the use of academic (quality) audit. The audits undertaken by NZUAAU for the universities are clearly more comprehensive and provide a deeper analysis than that undertaken for the polytechnic sector. This point is elaborated later. For the moment, the main point to note is that all interviewees confirmed that the processes they used to provide external quality assurance were consistent with documentation reviewed in chapter 8.

9.3 Theme 2: Internal quality assurance structures

This theme emerged from the interviews with the respondents from the institutions. The institutions recognized that their obligation for quality emanates from the Education Act (1989) which requires that the tertiary education institutions in New Zealand should strive to attain highest standards of excellence in education provided. All the higher institutions in New Zealand have established internal quality management systems that are responsible for the institutional wide quality management. In the 1990s, higher institutions established quality assurance units and structures manned by various senior staff: for example, Quality Manager; Academic Manager; Quality Co-ordinator. These people were tasked with the responsibility of managing and co-ordinating both the internal and external quality assurance activities. Most of these units operate under the leadership of Deputy Vice Chancellors (Academic) or Deputy Chief Executive (Academic). The institutions have documented policies and procedures that are constantly reviewed to assure their customers that their

programmes would be of high quality. These documents provide a framework for the stakeholders about the quality assurance system within the institutions.

The data indicated that one out of the three institutions, a polytechnic has a quality assurance unit with well defined duties for the entire institution. P1 described the composition and the functions of the unit as follows:

We have a Quality Development Centre with three staff members who report to the Deputy Chief Executive, Academic. They perform the following functions: manage the quality assurance system throughout the polytechnic; organise the Academic Board and its Sub-committees; provide a good deal of academic advice to the faculty and staff.

He stated further that each faculty has a Board of Studies that reports to the Academic Board. All the senior staff of the faculty are members of the Board. The Board is actively involved in the approval of new programmes or changes to any major teaching programme, discusses all academic matters, and approves assessment results.

The two other institutions do not have internal quality assurance units per se. In practice however, the two institutions have many officers at different places and in different capacities throughout the institution whose work is in connection to the assurance of quality of the education provided. This system was well illustrated by U1 who is the Quality Manager of his institution:

Across the whole university there are a range of people who do all sort of work in relation to quality assurance and collectively they contribute to the quality assurance of the whole university.

Internally, all the institutions have working groups or programme advisory groups whose duty is to examine any project the institution intends to introduce and provide input for improvement. P2 who is the Academic Manager of his institution responsible for the institution wide view of quality assurance noted that though the institution does not have an

internal quality assurance unit per se, there are designated staff that are responsible for the quality assurance process throughout the institution. He explained that:

We have an academic directorate, academic development unit and academic audit which all work for the quality of education provided...The institution has two faculties and each faculty has an Academic Manager who is responsible for quality assurance within the faculty...There is an Institution Academic Manager who is responsible for the institutional wider view of quality assurance. He reports to the Academic Director who is responsible for the quality assurance of the institution. All these officers meet once a week with the Academic Director to discuss common matters in relationship to quality assurance.

This study observed from external audit reports that all the institutions have effective and well established internal structures in place which ensure that the same quality assurance system covers all departments and programmes regardless of where the students happen to be. U1 noted that the quality assurance systems are based on:

The institution's philosophy that everyone in the University has a responsibility for maintaining and enhancing the quality of the product (students). It requires commitment, time, effort, and willingness of everyone in the University, from top level administration to the lower level of hierarchy

Research has shown that in addition to external quality assurance systems, many nations are also requesting higher education institutions to establish internal structures for quality assurance. The literature noted that an internal unit or effective internal quality assurance structures is essential for effective internal quality management. Internal structures will indicate the institutions' commitment to the delivery of quality educational programmes to enable it compete with other institutions internationally.

9.4 Theme 3: Processes of quality assurance

Literature on the development in quality assurance has shown that several years of experience in the application of quality assurance procedures in higher education has not led

to agreement on the methods to be adopted. The literature rather points to a variety of methodologies in practice. Wiklund et al. (2003) argued that different approaches have been adopted for the introduction of quality management in higher institutions. Several quality assurance policies have been established and implemented worldwide through various international, regional and national agencies.

In line with the general international trend, the external quality assurance agencies in New Zealand have adopted different approaches for the different types of higher institutions under their jurisdiction. The respondents confirmed information in the documents that quality assurance practices in higher institutions in New Zealand comprise two processes, namely, the internal process which is undertaken by the institutions and the external process conducted by whichever agency the institution relates to. This is to ensure that the maintenance and improvement of the quality of education provided becomes a shared responsibility of the institution and the external quality assurance agencies.

In practice, the institutional respondents agreed that both the universities and the ITPs follow similar internal processes in their quest for programme approval and major changes to an existing programme (the process has been discussed in Chapter 8). They confirmed that in applying for a programme approval or a major change to an existing programme, the programme has to be first considered internally. According to U1 “the programme has to be scrutinised internally before it is submitted to the external agency for approval”. However, the external processes that the programmes are subjected to by the external agencies for approval for the universities and the ITPs vary considerably. The former submits its programmes to CUAP which has responsibility for course approval for the universities while the latter’s programmes are sent to ITPQ. The ITPQ programme approval process is similar to the accreditation approach of NAB which involves the constitution of a programme

assessment panel, a panel visit to the institution for the assessment of the programme, and the submission of a report by the panel to the ITPQ for consideration.

On the other hand, CUAP adopts a different approach for its programme approval process.

U1 described the process in the following quote:

Programme approval is done by initially email. If a university develops a new programme, the information about the programme is set up on CUAP's data base. The institution has to send the information to CUAP and CUAP also has to send it to the other universities for their comments. The other universities will comment on the programme and ask questions about the programme. If CUAP realized that NZ does not have enough or sufficient expertise in New Zealand to comment on the programme, it will find experts in overseas universities to seek comments on the programme. If universities cannot agree on a proposed programme it will be discussed at a CUAP meeting and a decision made.

Thus the process adopted by CUAP makes room for input from experts from other universities. This process encourages the universities in New Zealand to cooperate to make sure that whatever programme is offered in a New Zealand university it is of good quality even though there may be competition. The convenor of CUAP stressed that “the beauty of this process is that the universities always get their best staff to look at any proposed programme to come out with the best recommendations and suggestions for the improvement of the programme”. Universities also consider this process as a forum to debate topical and quality related issues for the improvement of the sector. This process can be very challenging to the university therefore the institution has to do a thorough job on the programme before submitting it for approval. It appears this practice is unique to the New Zealand context and has operated well because New Zealand universities are required to work closely with each other. The following quote from U1 suggests that the universities in New Zealand tend to operate within specific areas:

Each university has certain areas that they are good at so they have to concentrate on those areas and improve upon that. We do not have to tread on the territory of our colleagues

This programme approval process is less expensive for the universities because it does not involve panel visitation. The programme accreditation process that is adopted by ITPQ on the other hand is quite expensive for the institutions because the institutions have to bear the expenses of the panel visits. In addition, this process does not make room for input from wider sources since decision on the programme is based solely on the report of the panel of assessors. Most of the respondents agreed that the internal and external processes of programme approval bring about consistency and they combine to ensure that qualifications are comparable within the sector.

CUAP's approval processes go beyond the discussion stage among the universities. Initially, CUAP approves the programme to enable the university to commence business but the approval will not be confirmed until the first cohort of students complete the programme and CUAP conduct a graduate year review to satisfy itself about the quality of the graduates. Uni contended that "the conduct of the graduate year review enables the university to take stock and critically evaluate the programme". From this review, the university is in the position to make an informed and critical decision about the progress of the programme. The Convenor of CUAP stated that "there are instances where some programmes have been stopped after the graduating year review to enable the university to maximise its resources".

Beside programme approval and accreditation processes undertaken by CUAP and ITPQ, all the professional programmes offered by the universities and ITPs have to undergo accreditation by the professional associations. The legislation stipulates that professional associations are legally responsible for ensuring that professionals are trained adequately. Accordingly, U1 explained that all the "professional programmes have to go through external accreditation with the professional bodies after approval from CUAP. The

programmes undergo reaccreditation every three years”. The following quote from P1 suggest that ITPs rely on the professional bodies for the updates of their professional programmes:

The professional assessments are really important because we rely on them quite a lot to make sure that things are done properly and that our programmes meet their requirements...technologies are changing very fast, the institutions rely on them to make sure that the programmes meet their requirements.

P2 pointed out that without accreditation from these bodies the programmes will not be allowed to run. This implies that graduating from an accredited professional programme is a prerequisite to practice that profession in New Zealand. The professional accreditation ensures that the syllabus is updated, relevant and meets the requirements of the associations.

Approved programmes are subjected to ongoing internal review and re-accreditation externally. CUAP does not conduct a re-accreditation of university programmes but the programmes undergo internal review every five years. For these reviews, U1 noted that the panel is composed of academics, employers, external agencies and consultants. In some cases foreign experts are invited to serve on a review panel.

On the other hand, ITP programmes are re-accredited by ITPQ. In addition, all professional programmes are subjected to re-accreditation by the professional associations every three years. Such reviews and re-accreditation processes enable the institutions to ascertain whether they are in order and whether they can move to where they intend to go. This enables the institutions to update their programmes to meet the needs of the stakeholders. However, one cannot forget the cost element of such assignments to the institutions and the staff time committed to the entire process. An institution that offers many such professional programmes will have to make provision to accommodate the different kinds of professional associations and their attendant financial costs.

The various course approval processes that a programme is subjected to are intended to ensure that institutions focus on developing educational programmes for better quality. The process aims at ensuring that higher education institutes in New Zealand are responsible for their own quality assurance and this system is evaluated by the external agencies. The evaluation is a serious event for all higher institutions in New Zealand. Every tertiary programme in New Zealand must be approved by the external agency established for that purpose for it to be funded by TEC. In a way, this can be considered as a check on the institutions to prevent them from starting programmes before seeking approval from the external agencies.

The data show that the institutions have all adopted various internal approaches for the purpose of continuous improvement. The respondents unanimously agreed that the institutions undertake effective periodic internal assessment of their activities for the assurance of the quality of education provided. The issue of self-assessment has been a topical one over many years, but it is also at the heart of the debate over the need to have systems that ensure that the self-assessment is both occurring and is adequate to assure the public that its tertiary institutions are delivering a quality education. P2 explained that self assessment which is conducted annually “encourages the teachers and managers of the programme to look at the quality of what they have been doing, the outcomes and then come out with possible ways of improving upon what they have been doing”. According to P1, the assessment reports are discussed at a workshop which is interactive in nature because many staff take part in its discussion”. He stated further that:

This process is always about continuous improvement because if the institution identifies the weaknesses and find appropriate means of resolving them that is seen as a positive way.

This suggests that internal evaluation is a promising instrument in helping faculty members become more effective in achieving departmental goals and in upholding both relevance and quality. U1 accepted that “departments which have undertaken these assessments through active involvement of faculty members have indicated continues enhancement and staff motivation to contribute better to the development of the department”.

In demonstrating how effective the internal structures and self-assessment are working in poly 2, P2 indicated that the institution has put in place its own internal processes for self-assessment. The following quotation sums up the effectiveness of the process from the perspective of P2.

This is about the institution looking about its own processes and looking at providing outcomes to students which comes with continuous improvement...Each programme has to do a self-assessment report and that becomes part of the school's self-assessment report which eventually constitutes the faculty's assessment... with this system, the schools and the teaching team look at what they do and come out with suggestions for improvement on what they might do better...the reports are sent to the Academic Board where two days workshops are held to discuss the reports and come out with recommendations for improvement...the workshop is interactive in nature because other staff attend and take part in the discussions...

With this process, the institution owns the quality assurance process and becomes responsible for the quality of education it provides.

Generally, all the respondents expressed the view that it is the responsibility of the institutions to ensure that their educational programmes meet the needs of students and other stakeholders. In view of this, they explained that the institutions have put different mechanisms in place to constantly ascertain or verify how these objectives are met. These procedures are aimed at helping the institutions to fulfil their stated missions. There are a number of surveys carried out for the purpose of ensuring the quality of education provided which included students, graduates and employers. U1 pointed out that:

There is course evaluation for every programme to enable management know how the programme is doing and what are the students saying about the programme. .. we also survey students on a range of topics, some of which are standard survey others are adhoc one-off research project

The institutions usually conduct graduate surveys to find out what happens after the students have completed their programmes. According to P2, this survey is to address issues such as whether “The graduates got jobs? Gone for further studies? How are they faring at the world of work”. The institution further conducts a survey that looks at the students that have withdrawn and to find out the reasons for their withdrawal.

In relation to stakeholders, different systems are instituted by the institutions to ensure that their educational programmes meet their needs. These systems are considered very important because technologies are changing very fast and the institutions have to keep their programmes up to date. The two polytechnics have Programme Advisory Committees for each programme while the university has Boards of Studies; these committees/boards are made up of representatives from industries, employers and external people, professional organizations, and people who are interested in that subject area. They meet three or four times a year. The institution gives these committees more status because according to P2 “we consider them very important in advising us on how to meet the needs of the industries”. The task for these committees primarily is to assess the programmes and to provide their industrial and professional input.

Also all the institutions surveyed conduct employer surveys. Primarily these surveys according to P1 are to find out if:

The employers are employing our graduates, whether the graduates are well skilled? Are the graduates able to do their jobs properly? Have the qualifications we deliver been useful?

The Academic Board and Boards of Studies periodically review the audit reviews and student feedback as part of the institutional monitoring process in Uni 1.

The external accreditation conducted by the programme panels and the professional associations is mainly to ensure that the programmes match the needs of the stakeholders. Programme reviews that are regularly conducted and stakeholders that serve on the committees are required to provide input for the improvement of the programmes and practices. The quote below captured the views of U1:

Because of the accreditation exercise conducted by the professional associations, our programmes match the needs of the stakeholders and they are updated regularly. These associations review our programmes and provide us with the updates and requirements for the programmes...Our programmes are internally reviewed every five years. During the reviews, employers, external agencies and consultants and in some cases foreign experts are invited to serve on the review panel...the university is externally audited by the academic audit unit every five years whilst the programmes undergo a reaccreditation by the professional associations every three years.

9.5 Theme 4: Systems of external monitoring

Regarding external monitoring, higher institutions in New Zealand are periodically monitored by the external agencies to ascertain the extent to which the institutions are meeting their objectives. The creation of these processes was a response to pressure from the government for a greater accountability on academic quality in higher education system. As growing numbers of countries adopt market-oriented policies for steering higher education, there is increasing interest in accountability mechanisms that improve the capacity of higher institutions to independently assure the quality of their academic degrees and student learning. Quality/ academic audit offers one such approach. The external agencies in New Zealand employ different processes in their monitoring role.

Academic audit with a focus on the institutional level was the dominant theme in New Zealand. Many studies have indicated a related set of effects in higher education institutions as a consequence of academic audit. Dill (2000), for instance, after reviewing the outcomes of academic audit procedures in New Zealand and the UK concluded that the benefits of these procedures are: increased institutional attention towards teaching and learning; more active discussions and co-operation within academic units; a more clarified responsibility for improving teaching and student learning and provision of better information on best practice. According to the Director of NZUAAU:

Academic audits are being conducted on an on-going basis in the New Zealand universities. The audit approach has in common an institutional focus, an orientation to quality process; a self assessment by the institution; a site visit by the audit panel and a published report.

In conducting the audit process, NZUAAU makes no attempt to comprehensively review an institution or programme's resources and activities, or to directly assess the quality of teaching or learning. Rather the Unit focuses on those processes implemented by higher education providers in order to assure and improve the quality of teaching and learning. This process tends to make quality audit a very flexible system because it operates mainly in terms of an institution's own purposes. In their academic audit process, the external agencies in New Zealand do not set any external standards against which to judge the institutions. Their outcome does not involve a pass or fail decision, but rather assessing an institution in its own terms and against its own objectives. All the respondents commented that external monitoring and reports have tended to influence the institutions' quality assurance improvements and future directions. According to the Director of NZUAAU, the major strength of the audit process is the fact that the:

Audit process does not focus on the individual programmes or people, rather it assesses the wider institutional internal processes and makes recommendations on how to improve upon the system ... audit reports do not carry summary judgment about the institution ... the

primary focus of the panel's recommendations is continuous institutional improvement.

Similarly, ITPQ conducted audit for ITPs but its approach differs from that of NZUAAU. Before 2000 ITPQ role was limited to the programmes approval and accreditation of the polytechnic, but its functions were extended in 2000 to include audit of the sector. The respondents from ITPs noted that previously ITPQ conducted audit of their activities which was more compliance based. In the past, ITPQ adopted a compliance approach to audit ITPs every four years. This process focused mainly on finding out for evidence of compliance. According to P2:

Auditing system is much more compliance based. It is very much a document based audit process where we were audited on hard policies...this is a weak process because the staff considers the entire process as a compliance issue without actually thinking of what they are doing or why they have to do that...this does not promote improvement

In view of these problems, NZQA introduced EER in 2009 to replace the audit process in an attempt to correct those deficiencies identified. This process places more emphasis on internal self assessment and on the outcomes for students and employers. The EER has put the responsibility of quality assurance much more onto the institutions. The EER process looks at the medium and long term effects of the work of the institution and also verifies how well the institution can ensure the learning outcomes of its students. P1 argued that:

Because the audit process is a compliance approach, it tended to put the responsibility of quality assurance on the external bodies but EER on the other hand puts the responsibility on the institution.

Supporting this view, P2 noted that EER is more about finding out if the institution has been conducting self-assessment and how the institution has been doing the review and not so much compliance to a set requirement. This process according to him is always about

“continuous improvement because, if the institution identifies the weaknesses and finds appropriate means of resolving them, that is seen as a positive way”.

External monitoring (in the form of academic audit) of the higher institutions in New Zealand is a mandatory and rigorous process. It is also a much regularised practice where the time frame is allocated for the exercise. Thus, beside the accreditation and programme approval processes, all institutions are periodically audited and their reports made public. The institutions are actively involved in the monitoring process by undertaken a self evaluation of their processes. The Director of NZUAAU noted that:

The Unit publishes an audit manual for each audit process to educate and guide both the institutions and the panel members regarding their respective roles in the audit exercise... panel members are adequately trained for the exercise.

The audit processes adopted by both agencies place emphasis on the internal self-assessment conducted by the institutions that constitutes the starting point of the audit process. All the respondents agreed that self-assessment is the most valuable aspect of the audit process simply because it encourages the staff to identify the strengths and areas that need improvement. They are of the view that the self-assessment process has positive effects on the culture of quality within an institution.

Arguably, the polytechnic sector is still grappling with EER monitoring process which is a new approach. P1 maintained that “additional resources are required for its effective implementation”. The views of P2 on the question of the value of the self-assessment are captured in the following quote:

Because the objective of the audit process is not fault finding but rather to assist the institutions to improve on their weaknesses and also to strengthen their internal structures, the process becomes less threatening to the institutions, therefore the institutions might be honest enough to report on their weaknesses.

Similarly, U1 expressed the view that the self-review conducted by the universities prior to the academic audit process is effectively done.

Closely related to the audit process is the practice in the Polytechnic sector where quality assured status is granted to institutions that have good internal quality assurance processes. In operating the high trust and high accountability model, ITPQ often grants quality assured status to any institution that has proven itself to have effective and reliable internal quality assurance system. With this status, the institution has the opportunity to monitor some of its programmes and report to the external agency. It also has the advantage of having its programmes fast tracked for accreditation. However, the ITPQ respondent explained that:

If the external evaluation and review reveal some weaknesses or that the organization is starting to fall off and things are not working well, such status will be withdrawn and the institution will have to be vigorously monitored.

This explanation suggests that because institutions would like to continue to enjoy all the benefits of this status, they would feel motivated to maintain and improve the quality of their programmes.

International literature on the trends or methodologies for quality assurance in many developed countries involves the publication of reports by the external agencies of the institutions under their jurisdiction. Van Vught et al. (1994), for instance identified the publication of reports as one of the elements for their general model. In New Zealand the audit reports of the external agencies are public documents which enable the public to be informed about the quality of the institutions and thereby make decisions accordingly. Stensaker et al. (2008) contend that private actors, such as newspapers and more commercially based ranking systems use this information and this has resulted in the growth of information about the performance, effectiveness and quality of higher education. With the institutions aware of these developments and mindful that the reports are in the public

domain, they are constantly working to maintain and to improve upon the quality of their programmes. The Director of NZUAAU argued that:

Though there are no formal sanctions from the Unit, the fact that these reports are public documents is probably the biggest tool that the Unit has got to make sure that the universities take them seriously... If a recommendation is made in an audit report and the university ignores it, the next time the university is audited the audit report will simply say that the university chose not to act according to the previous recommendations. Given that this is a public document that will be a serious statement to make about the university.

There is a reputational risk if the university does not pay attention to the recommendations made in the audit report.

In sum, the self-review component is considered as the most effective part of the audit process given that it enables the institution to internally review its systems against its objectives and also to devise measures to rectify any deficiencies identified. The institutions also feel less threatened with the audit process since they are not judged against any external requirements. The audit process operates to validate the internal processes of the institutions.

The EER for the ITPs is a new process and yet to be evaluated for its impact, however, this research has observed that the respondents have expressed satisfaction with the process because of its focus on the outcomes of higher education; verification of how well the institution can ensure the learning outcomes of its students and putting the responsibility of quality assurance on the institution.

9.6 Theme 5: Impact of the external quality assurance agencies

The established external quality assurance agencies in New Zealand are required to contribute towards the improvement of quality in the higher education sector. These agencies have in diverse ways assisted the tertiary institutions to improve the quality of their

programmes. Accordingly, the ITP Quality respondent pointed out that “the ITP Quality assists the institutions to improve their operations by adopting and following good practices of quality assurance”. Given a brief background to the introduction of external quality assurance practices in New Zealand, he argued that before NZQA was introduced under the Education Act in 1990, external quality assurance was virtually non-existent. However,

With the establishment of these external agencies, the setting up of the quality management systems and the audit process that went along with that makes the institutions to pay much more attention to their internal quality assurance processes... that help them to follow the good quality assurance practices.

The respondents agreed that the external quality assurance agencies have had a significant impact on the quality of the higher education sector in New Zealand. They attributed some of the quality improvements made by the institutions and the higher education sector in New Zealand to the influence of the external agencies. Generally, the periodic monitoring undertaken by these agencies encourages the institutions to conduct a comprehensive self-assessment that enables the institutions to identify their own strengths and areas in need for improvement. As a result of preparation for the external review, the institutions actively involve their staff in their self-review processes. This provides the institutions with a basis for future planning and also encourages the staff to act on their own findings.

Typical comments from across the respondents were:

The EER process that is periodically conducted by the ITPQ makes the institution focus or think about what it has been doing and get ready to explain that to an outside agency. This acts as a check and the institution is always ready to maintain standards (P1).

The periodic external review conducted by the external agencies has assisted the institutions greatly in improving upon their programmes. The external agencies, particularly the NZUAAU, assist in strengthening the institution’s own quality assurance systems by making their panel members see themselves as colleagues and discussing issues frankly with the officials of the institutions. These

reviews make recommendations for the improvement of the programmes (Director of NZUAAU).

Outlining some of the impacts of the audit process and external review on the sector, the current Director noted that “the audit process has made a vast difference in the university sector. The audit processes have made far reaching recommendations towards the improvement of quality in the sector”. She attributed that to the state of academic work in the universities that have been subjected to audit. According to her, the following are the two things that audit does: it requires the university to make its quality assurance processes clear to itself; it makes universities much more aware of good quality practices across the sector.

The institutional respondents agreed that the external quality assurance agencies have had a significant impact on the quality of their programmes. There are well established and clear cut guidelines for the processes of approval for new programmes in all institutions. P1 points out that:

The processes of programme approval and accreditation for new programmes and major changes to a teaching programme grants the professional associations the opportunity to offer lot of expertise and also to make inputs for the improvement of our programmes.

The programme assessment panel members are experts in the related field and they bring experience to bear on the programmes. Supporting this view, U1 pointed out that “the process of programme approval at the university level is very rigorous and CUAP’s contribution in this process is very valuable”. New Zealand universities are required to work closely with each other even though they are in competition. He explained further that

Universities have areas that they are good at so they have to concentrate on those areas and improve upon that to maximise resources. We do not need to tread on the territory of our colleges. The programme approval process requires the university to go outside the university to make a case or to argue with other peers about the

new programme. The inputs from other peers to the programme are geared towards making sure that the programme is relevant and sustainable.

9.7 Theme 6: Institutions perceptions of external quality requirements

It was unanimously agreed by institutional respondents that the quality assurance process is time consuming, quite bureaucratic with much paper work, and quite expensive for the institutions. The respondents all noted that institutions have to spend much time in gathering documentation for the process and generally have to bear the cost of the process. This problem is expressed by P2 in the following quote:

The external requirements imposed on the institutions are burdensome which means that the institutions have to take steps to resource the requirements from these agencies while there are no additional funds for that purpose. The agencies make recommendations without taking into account their financial implications for the institution.

The reaction of the respondents regarding the requirements and impact of the external review and audit on the institutions has been mixed. The two respondents from the ITP agreed that the audit conducted by the ITPQ at the polytechnic sector is more routine and compliance based. They described the audit process as being ineffective and compliance based. The staff, according to P2, tend to “consider the audit process as a compliance issue rather than a developmental issue”. Supporting this view, the quote below illustrates the comments of P1:

The process does not allow staff to really reflect on what they have been doing and then think of developing ways for improvement to the benefit of students rather teaching staff simply have to perform some of their duties just because they have to comply. The institutions were audited on hard policies.

However, they agreed that the EER is a much better process than audit. They saw the process as shifting the responsibility of quality assurance from the external agency to the

institution and thereby enabling the staff to identify for themselves what they are doing well and what needs to be addressed. This is well expressed by the following quote from P2:

This is different from a situation where people think clearly about what they are doing. We are therefore encouraging our staff not to see quality assurance as a compliance issue but to consider it as a developmental issue to find out how they can really improve upon the teaching to the benefit of students and how they can improve the programme.

U1 expressed concern about the composition of panels, reports, audit fatigue, and the impact of NZUAAU on the universities. He was of the view that the impact of the Audit Unit on the institution is not particularly valuable. His concerns are illustrated by the following quote:

The institution has done four cycles of institutional audit so it is beginning to lose its value... audit process is too big, rather than being smaller thematic audits to look at specific issues and come out with better and practicable recommendations...the audit unit is made up of only one person – the Director, the unit does not have the capacity to evaluate or contribute to the research process... furthermore, the unit does not have any authority to ensure/enforce that universities implement their recommendations.

On the audit reports and process, he commented that “we haven’t always been in agreement with NZUAAU and the audit reports we receive...we have had conflicts with the audit reports when we are not comfortable with some aspects of it”. However, the institutions can only make appeal on the draft report.

Similarly the polytechnics usually encounter difficulties with the audit process. Beside the process being expensive and time consuming, the attitude of some panels and some of the reports becomes controversial and not acceptable to the institutions. Most of the institutions have had conflicts, especially with the audit reports when they are not satisfied or comfortable with some aspects of the report. According to P1, “sometimes we do have issues with accreditation. The ITOs need to be represented on the accreditation panels for

some of their programmes and they do create barriers sometimes”. He further explained that:

The boundaries are not clearly defined. The essence of accreditation is to find out the capacity of the institution to resource and run a quality programme...the accreditation panel should be looking at if the institution has got the right systems in place that assures that it will be able to resource the programme. However, the panel sometimes will like to be involved in the internal operations of the institutions e.g. in the appointment of the staff which we strongly resist.

Commenting on the financial implications of the audit process on the institutions, the respondents were unanimous in their views that the process is quite expensive. U1 remarked that:

The academic audit is time consuming and quite expensive for the institution. We pay the expenses of all the panel members and some of them could be international experts... we have to spend a lot of time gathering data for the process.

9.8 Theme 7: Compatibility of internal quality assurance with external requirements

This theme emerged from the interviews with the institutional respondents. It was unanimously agreed that external requirements of the external agencies have greatly influenced the way the higher institutions in New Zealand assure the quality of their programmes. This has also influenced the internal quality assurance mechanisms of the higher institutions. Every institution is related to a number of external quality assurance agencies for the improvement of its standards. These agencies and their associated bodies have developed or established the requirements that institutions under their jurisdictions must satisfy in order to be granted accreditation and the institutions have to comply. P1 explained that there are well established and clear cut guidelines for the processes of the approval of new programmes and the conduct of the EER for the sector. “If a polytechnic wants to introduce a new qualification, there is quite a substantial process to be followed and

this is determined by the external agency... the polytechnic has to comply with these requirements”.

P2 further explained that the institutions have to comply with what the external agencies say.

He stressed that:

Our self assessment process has been impacted directly by the ITP Quality requirements. For the ITP Quality approval of new programmes and accreditation there are criteria that the institution has to meet and so the institution’s programme documentation is very much designed to meeting the requirements of programme approval and accreditation.

Following any accreditation exercise, a report is submitted with its inputs and recommendations from the panel of experts to the institution. According to this respondent, when the institution receives accreditation reports from the ITP Quality with its recommendations and requirements, “the institution has to comply and work around them. This procedure has a very direct influence on how the institution assures the quality of its programmes”.

9.9 Strengths and weaknesses of the system

The establishment of the various external quality assurance agencies for the entire tertiary sector for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of education provided is very positive. There are a lot of agencies and people working together in diverse ways to improve the quality of education provided. This implies that the work does not rest on the shoulders of only one agency that will eventually be overwhelmed with work. It therefore becomes easy for each agency to have time and adequate facilities to handle the institutions under its jurisdiction effectively. The mere fact that the external agencies themselves underwent external review by an independent body sent a positive signal to the institutions under their domain. Meade et al. (2000) observed that “the universities were impressed and pleased to

learn that the NZUAAU had decided to undergo a process similar to the audits that they had undergone” (p. 20). This review was seen as a forum to comment on the activities of the Unit. Furthermore, this is a manifestation that the external agencies are adhering to the principles of good quality management practices.

One other strength about the current practice is that all institutions have established effective internal quality management systems aimed at continuous improvement of teaching and learning. The focus of this internal dimension relates to the objectives of achieving the organizational goals. The institutions have documented and reviewed their quality assurance policies and procedures to inform all staff concerned. These policies are available to other stakeholders. These policies are subject to constant review to meet the need of stakeholders. This has resulted in the institutions establishing institution wide quality assurance policies. External audit reports provide support for these conclusions.

There is much emphasis on the internal self-evaluation and review of the activities and programmes of institutions. Higher institutions in New Zealand undertake ongoing self-review of their activities for continuous improvement. There is always a considerable staff involvement and discussion in this process. In view of this, there is a high awareness of quality as an essential dimension at the institutional level. Such quality commitments and cultures are often evident in staff commitment to teaching and learning and the attention of the student support services towards the needs of students. There is little doubt that the introduction and implementation of these internal mechanisms in all New Zealand institutions has resulted in the recognition that institutions own the quality assurance process, become accountable, and take the responsibility of the quality of education they provide. In effect, staff become committed and motivated to work towards continuous improvement. It is therefore not surprising that the respondents consider the self-assessment as the most valuable part of the quality assurance process.

The programme approval process particularly for the universities in New Zealand is very unique and less expensive to the institutions. This process requires inputs across the entire university sector to ensure the programme is of high standard. Stakeholders' input are also sought during the process through the Board of Studies for Uni. The legislation has mandated professional bodies to assess and accredit all professional programmes. This evaluation ensures the professional programmes are updated to meet the need of the profession. To provide standardization across the different types of institutions, all the external agencies involved in non-university education are required to use the official criteria developed by NZQA for course approval and accreditation.

External monitoring is an important process which is undertaken by external quality assurance agencies in New Zealand. The focus is to help improve and strengthen the internal quality management structures of the institutions. The monitoring process is mandatory for all higher institutions and there are policies and documentation to guide the institutions accordingly.

Despite the establishment of the various external quality assurance agencies for the tertiary education sector with their respective assigned responsibilities, the system and the practice particularly at the institutional level is not without flaws. It should be noted that the mere existence of policies and procedures do not, in themselves, guarantee the delivery of a particular set of desirable outcomes rather, their effectiveness is influenced by the extent to which they are consistently implemented with legal backing for their enforcement.

Arguably the establishment of the various external agencies for one sector can be very expensive considering the administrative cost involve in maintaining all these bodies. The external quality assurance structure is very complex. New Zealand is a small country so possibly there are too many external agencies. This was a major concern of the OECD

(2004) report after reviewing the quality assurance practices in New Zealand. This report indicated that higher institutions in New Zealand have too many external agencies to respond to or satisfy. This eventually becomes quite complex for an institution to harmonize all the different requirements.

Administratively, one will query if it is necessary to have several bodies for one sector for the same purpose. Westerheijden et al. (2007) argued that the development of several quality assurance processes has amongst other things, triggered questions about information overload in higher education and the heavy burden the many different systems generate for those working in higher education. Similarly, other studies (Stensaker et al., 2006) have pointed out that from an efficiency point of view, one could question the relevance of many co-existing systems and whether the different evaluations systems have characteristics and the necessary links resulting in a well-integrated and effective national system.

It can however be argued that bringing all higher institutions in New Zealand under the umbrella of NZQA would be too burdensome for one organization to operate effectively. One has to recognize the historical and cultural context that led to the current arrangement in New Zealand. The social and cultural context of higher education in New Zealand recognizes the independence and academic freedom of universities. Thus on the grounds of academic freedom, universities in New Zealand were granted their own external agencies. This is recognized in legislation; NZQA – its purposes and functions – were not deemed to be suitable for ensuring the independence of universities. Hence, having two systems per se is not problematic. However, this complex structure where institutions have to satisfy too many external agencies would not be the kind of structure that would fit in the Ghanaian system.

There are differences in the course approval and monitoring of the degree programmes offered in the universities and those at the ITPs. Though both institutional types offer degree programmes, the programmes are subjected to different agencies and different processes of course approval and monitoring. Whilst the programmes of ITPs are subjected to an external body which is independent of the sector for approval and evaluation (ITPQ) previously, now NZQA, those at the universities are not. CUAP which is responsible for university programme approval is an associate body of NZVCC which is not external to the university sector. The body is established by the universities which make the evaluation process of the universities less threatening than what ITPs experiences.

In general, external monitoring was considered to be too time consuming, involving too much paper work, in the views of the respondents from institutions. These reviews usually require substantial effort in addition to internal evaluations. It is therefore not surprising to note that Jennings, the former Director of NZUAAU, in assessing the impacts of academic audits observed that:

The universities are now showing signs of ‘audit fatigue’, and believe that there has been diminishing value from the successive cycles of audit. They are questioning the continuing application of significant funding, resources and time into self-assessment and other requirements associated specifically with external audit processes (Jennings, 2007, p. 5).

Similarly, the demand put on providers is very expensive where they have to pay directly for the services of the external agencies. Specifically, institutions have to bear the cost of panel visitation for both programme approval and for external audits. It was established by the institutional respondents that the reports or recommendations that involve financial implication for the institution are made without any additional funds for the institutions towards their implementation. This makes the entire monitoring process very costly to the

institutions since they have to find funds to implement the external agency's processes and recommendations.

The institutional respondents raised concerns about the impact, composition of panels, and audit reports. NZUAAU for instance only acts in an advisory capacity and does not have the power to enforce its decisions/recommendations. In view of this, it may take an institution several years to implement or take action fully on an audit report. There is an argument here for providing NZUAAU with more teeth to enable it to enforce its recommendations. However, it should be noted that most universities respond to most of the Unit's recommendations in a timely manner. Slippage is usually on one or two recommendations.

Though it is the policy of the monitoring agencies particularly NZUAAU to assist in strengthening the institution's own quality assurance systems by making their panel members see themselves as colleagues to discuss issues frankly with the officials of the institutions, in practice, this requires a high degree of collegiality from all involved. One of the cycle 3 audits, for example, reported that a panel member was perceived as being unduly aggressive and as having a closed mind to options. (NZUAAU audit report)

9.10 Summary

This chapter presented the analysis of the views of respondents from New Zealand in relation to both institutional and external quality assurance processes/mechanisms. Within New Zealand it was established that both higher institutions and the external agencies have adopted various approaches for the purpose of assuring the quality of education provided. The data indicate that for institutions in New Zealand to assume the responsibility of assuring the quality of the education they provide, they have instituted internal structures manned by qualified staff to oversee the implementation of the related policies and systems.

Institutions have developed and documented quality assurance policies and procedures with well defined staff roles and responsibilities to provide information and direction to all involved. To ensure complete ownership of the quality process as indicated above, institutions have placed emphasis on, and given priority to, the conduct of self-assessment and internal reviews. Further, institutions provide a strong focus on the need of students and relationships with external stakeholders. In view of this, they have developed various approaches for obtaining feedback from all groups to ensuring the active involvement of stakeholders in the design of programmes and the monitoring of quality.

All the respondents agreed that external agencies have had an impact on the internal quality management structures of institutions. It became evident from documents and interviews that the effectiveness with which internal quality management has been implemented by higher institutions in New Zealand has been greatly influenced by these external bodies. The institutional respondents, however, expressed varied views about the effectiveness of some aspects of the monitoring system.

Practices that are considered effective in promoting quality education in New Zealand from this analysis will provide the basis for recommendations for transfer of ideas from New Zealand to Ghana in Chapter 10. These may be summarized as:

- the existence of robust internal quality assurance structures
- the formulation of internal quality assurance policies
- the conduct of academic quality audit by recognised EQAA for all institutions
- the conduct of effective institutional self reviews
- the design of a suitable external quality assurance system

- the placement of all external assessments reports in the public domain
- an appropriate balance between compliance and institutional autonomy in the monitoring by external agencies

CHAPTER 10

Integration, Recommendations and Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

The choice of conducting research into the practices of quality assurance in higher education arose from personal interest. This study set out to scrutinise the processes and practices of quality assurance in higher education in Ghana and New Zealand in order to identify those practices in New Zealand which are potentially applicable to the Ghanaian higher education context or which, at least, may suggest a direction for the Ghanaian government to consider for development. The literature on policy transfer was also explored as a means to help develop a conceptual framework that will aid the transfer of lessons learnt from New Zealand. This, the concluding chapter presents the findings of the study.

The previous chapters examined the management and practices of quality assurance in higher education in Ghana and New Zealand to draw out the similarities and the differences between the two countries. The results will now be discussed in a broader context where experiences from New Zealand and the general trends in the literature are included and the weaknesses or gaps in the current practices in Ghana are identified. The discussion in this chapter is presented under the following section headings:

- 10.2 Overview of findings in relation to research questions 1–5
- 10.3 Comparative analysis of quality assurance provisions and practices between Ghana and New Zealand
- 10.4 Weaknesses and gaps associated with quality assurance in higher education in Ghana
- 10.5 Recommendations for changes in the quality assurance of higher education in Ghana
- 10.6 Transfer and implementation of recommendations in the Ghana context
- 10.7 Implications for further research

10.8 Concluding remarks.

The first of these sections (10.2) simply provides a short overview of findings in relation to research questions 1–5. The later sections (10.3 to 10.5) give more of the details that underpin the brief overview. The later sections also link the findings to the framework of key considerations for guiding the analysis of data from Ghana and New Zealand as outlined in Table 2.5. For example, Section 10.3 draws upon the classifications of quality assurance processes given in part 3 of Table 2.5.

10.2 Overview of findings in relations to research questions 1–5

The findings from several years of experience of external quality assurance practices in Ghana and New Zealand were examined to address five research questions. This section gives a summary of findings in relation to each question. As mentioned above, the description of findings is simply an overview; later sections give more of the details.

10.2.1 Research question 1: What are the major provisions for quality assurance in higher education in Ghana?

The first question sought to identify the major provisions for quality assurance in higher education in Ghana. This study observed that over the last three or four decades, the higher education landscape worldwide experienced significant changes and Ghana was no exception. Ghana witnessed unprecedented changes in her higher education sector in the 1980s and 1990s. It was found that, during the 1980s, higher education in Ghana was in crisis. Of the problems encountered by the institutions, the lack of qualified teaching staff was the major factor that led to poor quality education. These conditions made it difficult for higher institutions in Ghana to operate, particularly in maintaining and improving the quality of education provided. It became obvious that unless the government took action to redress these conditions, the international recognition of the higher education sector would diminish. In view of this, the government of Ghana initiated a reform in the early 1990s to

address educational quality. The government recognised the need to develop the structures that would make quality possible for higher education in Ghana comparable to international standards. Thus, like other nations in the world, Ghana began to address the question of quality in higher education by adopting concepts and methodologies of quality assurance similar to those in Western countries.

Consequently the government of Ghana set up the NAB in 1993 as a government agency with the mandate to manage quality for the higher education sector in Ghana, to develop appropriate methods and practices for improving quality, and to guide institutions in their development of quality management. These changes culminated in the establishment of a single external national quality assurance agency for the tertiary sector and a Ghana-wide system of quality assurance. It became clear that the government of Ghana was influential and played an active role in the establishment of the quality assurance regime within the higher education sector. The government established an external regulatory body for state control over the sector and to maintain quality in the sector as well as making higher education accountable.

10.2.2 Research question 2: What are the practices, processes and experiences of assuring quality in higher/tertiary education in Ghana?

The second question in the study sought to explore the practices, processes and experiences of quality management in higher education in Ghana. The study observed that different practices and processes were adopted by the institutions and NAB for assuring the quality of higher education provided in Ghana. The institutions have adopted various forms of practices; most commonly adopted are the external examiner system and students' evaluation of course and teaching effectiveness. As part of their preparation for accreditation, institutions are required to complete NAB's questionnaire. The institutions have their internal programme approval and moderation processes and criteria which they

adhere to. The quality enhancement process includes programme identification or development at the departmental level, discussions at various faculty boards (or their equivalent) and considerations at the council. Each stage presents issues and expectations which a programme must satisfy.

Apart from the role of NABPTEX in moderating the examinations of the polytechnics, NAB is the only body that is responsible for higher education performance and quality assurance at the national level. The responsibility for overseeing quality assurance in the sector is vested in NAB irrespective of institutional type. In pursuance of its mandate, NAB established registration and accreditation procedures for institutions. The end result is that the external agency has established a single mode of practices and processes for all categories of institutions for the purpose of quality assurance irrespective of differences in the traditions, missions, and the culture of the institutions. It became evident from the study that accreditation is the major approach adopted by NAB. NAB conducts both institutional and programme accreditation.

NAB has adopted a compliance approach to its operations. To achieve this end, NAB has established requirements that institutions have to satisfy before they can be granted the permit to operate.

10.2.3 Research question 3: What are the major provisions for quality assurance of tertiary education in New Zealand?

The third question sought to identify the major provisions for quality assurance in higher education in New Zealand. Similar to Ghana, New Zealand undertook reform to her higher education sector in the 1990s but the factors that led to this reform were different from those that accounted for the reform in Ghana. Most Western countries reviewed their higher educational sector from the 1980s onwards. During this time, education was being perceived by many Western countries as being the cornerstone of economic development. It was clear

that the educational reforms of the 1980s and 1990s in New Zealand were driven largely by political and economic aims. The changing workforce requirements and high unemployment, as well as a desire to enhance New Zealand's capacity to compete in international markets were paramount in the government's thinking. There was also growing dissatisfaction with the structures associated with qualifications.

These concerns motivated the Labour government to start with the implementation of "New Public Management" policies that sought to change the relationship between the state, the economy and civic society. As a result, education in New Zealand was subjected to intense debate in the late 1980s culminating in the passage of the 1989 Education Act. This Act marked the beginning of a more market-driven approach to education in New Zealand. The Act also brought in its wake the demand for higher levels of accountability from institutions.

This study observed that the market-driven approach to education also brought about monitoring systems. This led to the establishment of external quality assurance agencies with responsibilities for ensuring the quality for the sector. These changes have enabled the government to tighten her monitoring role over the sector to make it more accountable. Unlike Ghana, the external component of quality assurance was assigned to multiple agencies while the government decentralised significant responsibility to tertiary providers for their own governance and quality management. Specifically, the legislation made it mandatory that the maintenance and improvement of the quality of higher education provided in New Zealand would be a shared responsibility of the institution and the external quality assurance agencies. Accordingly, the quality assurance system for higher institutions in New Zealand made provisions for two main components comprising internal review and periodic external assessment and review conducted by external quality assurance bodies.

10.2.4 Research question 4: What are the main practices, processes, and mechanisms employed by the external quality assurance agencies and higher institutions for assuring the quality of tertiary education in New Zealand?

The study found that a number of approaches to quality assurance have been adopted in New Zealand with most of them subjected to constant review for improvement. The higher education sector in New Zealand has benefited extensively from rigorous quality assurance measures both internally and externally, through the involvement of stakeholders within and outside the sector. The special relationship with stakeholders, particularly professional associations and standards bodies, has been a special feature. The exposure of students through orientation programmes has been beneficial.

Various approaches have been adopted by institutions and external quality assurance agencies. Institutions have internal quality management structures that are responsible for the institution-wide quality management. Internally, there is flexibility which allows institutions to adopt approaches that best suit their circumstance. Ongoing internal evaluation is a feature of academic life in higher institutions in New Zealand. Institutions undertake effective self-evaluation of their internal processes which also contribute, to different kinds of external evaluation and audit. External agencies were established with different mandates and responsibilities. In sum, the sector has multiple external agencies for the purpose of ensuring the quality of education provided.

Judgements about the quality of higher education and their programmes are also made by different associations and stakeholders. Professional course approval is a prerequisite for offering any professional programme that produces students for specific professions. The professional bodies therefore define and spell out requirements that should be satisfied.

10.2.5 Research question 5: What are the synergies and significant differences between the New Zealand and Ghanaian tertiary education contexts in respect of approaches to quality assurance?

This question sought to identify the similarities and differences between Ghana and New Zealand contexts with regards to approaches to quality assurance in higher education. This study observed that at the institutional level, there tend to be some similarities in approaches. All institutions have put in place internal programme approval procedures that are followed for the development of new programmes. Other approaches such as the external examiner system and the use of student feedback for improvement are employed in both countries. However, there are significant differences in the final processing and use of the data generated from student questionnaires. Input from other stakeholders, employers and professional bodies, is adequately catered for during programme approval processes by New Zealand institutions to ensure programmes meet their requirements. While higher institutions in New Zealand conduct surveys of various kinds to provide feedback for continuous programme improvement, institutions in Ghana are not adequately resourced for these surveys. In addition, higher institutions in New Zealand have sufficient staffing to undertake periodic self-evaluation and review of their activities and programmes.

In comparing the two systems, fewer similarities and more differences have emerged at the national level. There are significant differences as far as the structures and the implementation of policies and programmes are concerned. There tends to be similarities in the external programme approval processes adopted by NAB and ITPQ (for the polytechnic sector in New Zealand) that focuses on a panel visit, submission of reports by the panel to the accrediting body, and the final decision by the agency. This is quite different from the CUAP programme approval process for the universities in New Zealand. The approaches adopted by the agencies in the two countries in relation to reviews and assessments also vary in many respects. Unlike NAB, the external agencies in New Zealand undertake periodic external audit of all higher institutions.

10.3 Comparative analysis of quality assurance provisions and practices between Ghana and New Zealand

As noted earlier, this section draws upon part 3 of Table 2.5 relating to the classifications of quality assurance process. It presents a comparative analysis of the provisions, developments and approaches of quality assurance for the higher education sector in Ghana and New Zealand. Billing (2004), explains that:

The general model of external quality assurance is a starting point to map out deviations, and the variations in systems are determined by practicalities, the size of the higher education sector, the rigidity/flexibility of the legal expression of quality assurance (or the absence of enshrinement in law), and the stage of development from state control of the sector. (p. 113)

The data revealed that both countries undertook major reforms to their tertiary education sector in the 1980s and 1990s to make the sector more accountable. The reforms also introduced the external component of quality assurance to the sector. However, the context or factors that accounted for the reforms and the introduction of external quality assurance systems in the two countries differ significantly. Similarly, the question of how effective quality assurance measures are designed and implemented differs.

Some aspects of Van Vught et al.'s (1993) general model or description of quality assessment and INQAAHE's guidelines of good practice provide direction, or a basis, for this comparison. In addition, broad approaches to quality assurance and specific strategies as identified in part 3 of Table 2.5 will be woven into the discussion.

10.3.1 External quality assurance

Turning to the first element of the model (meta-level co-ordinating body), both countries have set up external quality assurance agencies as co-ordinating bodies within the tertiary sector. In both countries, the external quality assurance agencies were products of reforms to higher education in the 1990s. However, this study found that while the task of external

evaluation and monitoring was assigned to a single external agency in Ghana, New Zealand established multiple agencies for this purpose. NAB is the only external agency that has the responsibility for the management of quality at the national level in Ghana, but the responsibility for different aspects of quality management at the national level in New Zealand is under the control of an agency established by the government (NZQA) and an agency set up by universities themselves (NZVCC) and their associate bodies. In effect, there is only one prevailing quality assurance system in operation in Ghana which implies that there is only one set of methodologies and criteria at work for all the different kinds of institutions

In practice, the roles assigned to NAB and the New Zealand agencies vary considerably. Similarly, the approaches adopted by the agencies in the two countries with regard to reviews and assessments also vary in many respects. Concerning programme accreditation and approval, NAB's approach which involves a site visit is more similar to the approach employed by ITPQ for the polytechnic sector in New Zealand than the approach taken by CUAP.

At the national level, more differences have emerged from the study as far as structures, and the implementation of policies and both broad and specific strategies (as identified in part 3 of Table 2.5) are concerned. External peer review as noted by Brennan (1997) has long been a central part of the decision-making process in higher education, whether it has been used by self-governing academic communities or to inform the decision-making of central authorities. Peer review is part of the quality assurance processes adopted by almost all the external quality assurance agencies in both countries but the form it takes differs significantly between the agencies in the two countries. In both countries the process follows the traditional format that involves a site visit by a panel of well regarded academics in a particular field to undertake the assessment (except in the case of CUAP approval of

programmes). In assessing professional programmes, other experts such as people from the industry and business are included in the panels, but the length of the review varies partly due to the complexity of what is being reviewed.

One of the major differences at the national level relates to the conduct of external monitoring of institutions. Periodic monitoring (in the form of quality audits for the universities and EER for ITPs) was regular and mandatory for all higher institutions in New Zealand. NZUAAU undertake periodic audits of universities to help strengthen their internal procedures in support of both accountability and quality enhancement. Until the end of 2011, ITPQ performed the same role for polytechnics. Institutions in New Zealand consider quality audit important for various reasons: It provides an external stamp of approval for the organization; the self-evaluation part of the process is a valuable contribution to the institution's effectiveness; and the process enables institutions to retain their special characteristics by engaging with the stated objectives of each institution. Unlike external agencies in New Zealand, the role of NAB in monitoring quality systems is minimal. NAB's approach to this is limited in scope and does not require all institutions to engage with the system. Institutional monitoring is undertaken on a random basis, visits are occasional, and only private higher institutions have been included to date.

One other area of difference is in relation to the provision of training for external reviewers. It is observed that NAB does not provide any formal training for members of the programme assessment panel. In contrast, agencies in New Zealand, particularly NZUAAU, provide training for their reviewers in the belief that the success and credibility of the evaluation process depends largely on the calibre of panel members. NZUAAU, for example, has a Register of Auditors. Auditors are appointed to the Register by the Board and given appropriate training. Furthermore, NZUAAU publishes an academic audit manual for each audit cycle that clearly spells out for institutions all the main details about the focus

of the audit, the sequence of steps to be followed, and the expectations of institutions in the way of documentation to supply and arrangements to be undertaken.

The last two elements of Van Vught et al.'s (1993) model relates to the outcome of the evaluation process. There are different processes in reporting the outcome of evaluation undertaken by the external agencies in the two countries. Reports are generated at the end of every assessment undertaken in both countries, but while the reports are publically available in New Zealand, NAB's reports are not in the public domain. NAB submits only a summary of its reports to the institutions concerned. With regard to linking the assessment reports to funding, there is no link between quality assurance results and funding allocations to institutions in Ghana. That is, NAB's reports are not directly or explicitly linked to state funding for the public institutions. In relation to the private institutions, NAB's approval is only needed for the commencement of the programme. In New Zealand, any programme that wishes to seek government funding administered by TEC must provide evidence of formal programme approval and supply annual statistics related to matters such as student completion rates and student retention.

10.3.2 Internal quality assurance

A number of common features are observable in the specific strategies noted in part 3 of Table 2.5 that are employed by the institutions in the two countries involve in this study. There is convergence in the development and approval of new programmes. All institutions have instituted formal programme approval procedures through deliberations by various committees prior to submission to the external agencies for approval. The use of an external examiner system is a common practice among the institutions. All institutions have systems in place to elicit students' feedback about teaching and learning to identify areas for further improvement.

However, significant differences also exist between the two countries regarding internal structures and procedures. All institutions in New Zealand have, relatively to Ghana, robust internal quality assurance structures and procedures in place (as illustrated in Table 8.1). The implementation of the internal procedures has been relatively efficient in all higher institutions in New Zealand because there are adequate quality assurance staff with the responsibility to oversee and co-ordinate the processes. Unlike New Zealand institutions, most institutions in Ghana do not have the internal structures or provisions that are identified in Table 8.1 and that are needed for effective self-regulation.

Higher institutions in New Zealand have formulated policies regarding quality assurance management. These policies are broad and cover all aspects of their systems. The policies are documented in some institutions as an institutional quality assurance manual; this manual is subject to constant review as policies and procedures are modified or introduced. By contrast, policies on quality assurance procedures and the documentation of these in manuals are rarely in evidence in the Ghanaian institutions. One of the participating institutions had nothing documented while the other two had pieces of information which are not properly codified at the time of data collection.

Self-evaluation, which is considered by many researchers as the most effective component of quality assurance and a major feature of, for example, audit processes, is central to various processes in New Zealand. For example, self-assessment is conducted internally to help institutions to identify their strengths and weaknesses for improvement; it also constitutes an essential component of EER and academic audit by NZUAAU. Self evaluation is not as effective in the Ghanaian context. For instance, institutions are required to complete a NAB questionnaire for programme assessment. The use of a questionnaire is not a particularly effective way of encouraging genuine (and deep) inquiry into one's own practices.

Higher institutions in New Zealand are in touch with stakeholders during and after programme development and approval to ensure programmes are updated to meet the needs of employers and other stakeholders. In view of this, different systems are implemented by the institutions to ensure that their educational programmes meet their needs. As the data revealed, the universities and ITPs have bodies such as a board of studies or a programme advisory committee for each programme or group of programmes with the primary responsibility of evaluating their success and to provide the needed expertise for continuous improvement. To augment this effort by the institutions, the legislation stipulates that institutions should satisfy professional associations that the content and quality of their professional programmes are appropriate for ensuring that professionals are trained adequately. To fulfil this requirement, all professional programmes offered by the universities and ITPs have to undergo accreditation by the professional associations. Institutions seek external advice from employers, industry and professional bodies in their subject areas. Furthermore, all institutions conduct various kinds of surveys of students, graduates, employers for feedback to help improve the programme and to meet the needs of the various groups. In the case of Ghana, these institutions and consultations are non-existent and the role of the professional association in managing the quality of professional programmes in higher institutions is minimal and not well defined by legislation.

10.4 Weaknesses and gaps associated with quality assurance in higher education in Ghana

The principles of good practice developed by INQAAHE (see part 4 of Table 2.5) are referred to in this section to help identify what external agencies in New Zealand are doing effectively but which appears to be missing from NAB operations. As noted earlier, NAB is a registered member of INQAAHE so should be seen to abide by the tenets of the agency and also to demonstrate that its procedures follow the stated guidelines. These guidelines are

intended to promote good practices and to assist agencies to improve their quality by building on existing experience.

10.4.1 Gaps associated with institutions

Resulting from the analysis of the interviews and documents, four gaps were evident at the institutional level in Ghana. These are:

- Weak internal structures
- Ineffective self-assessment
- Inadequate external involvement
- Financial constraints for institutions

Each of these is discussed briefly in turn.

Weak internal structures: This study observed that the current institutional structures and approaches of assuring the quality of higher education provided in Ghana are not robust compared to practices in New Zealand and other Western countries. Unlike New Zealand where the institutions have established quality assurance units and structures manned by senior staff tasked with the responsibility of managing and co-ordinating each institution's quality assurance activities, the same cannot be said about the institutions in Ghana. In general, there are no well defined and designated officers responsible for institution-wide quality management in Ghana institutions. Most institutions do not have the robust internal quality management systems that are needed for effective self-regulation. It was observed that the institutions are at different stages in their development of internal structures. For instance, one of the institutions in the study (which is one of the oldest universities in Ghana) recently established an internal quality assurance unit but has the office housed in a temporary structure without adequate staffing.

Ineffective self-assessment: These weak internal structures have resulted in the inability of institutions to undertake any effective self-assessment and periodic audit of their operations, the processes which are seen as helping institutions to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and devise appropriate means for continuous enhancement. Though, as already explained, the institutions complete a NAB questionnaire prior to programme accreditation panel visits, this process mainly serves as preparation for the external site visits rather than an indepth self-assessment of an institution's ability to ensure quality across its activities. The questionnaire tends to provide a passive response to NAB's requirement. This finding supports what Stensaker (1999) observed in his study of such processes in Sweden: "the institutions regarded the self-evaluations only as preparatory processes, and not as a process of importance independent of the external audit" (p. 359). The resultant effect of this is that the institutions do not generate or start self-assessment procedures on their own initiative and they do not own the self-assessment reviews. In Ghana, it is only done as compliance to NAB's procedures. According to Barrow (1999), "the ownership of the system, let alone its intended outcomes, is unlikely to be achieved when the development of the system is carried out at a distance from the academics to whom, and by whom, the system is applied" (p. 33). Thus, relating self-reviews to external requirements only is likely to waste both resources and energy (Stensaker, 1999).

Inadequate external involvement: Within Ghana, there is also no adequate external involvement in programme development and approval processes. Professional associations, for instance, are not actively involved in the management of quality of the professional programmes offered by higher institutions in Ghana. The associations do not take the responsibility for assessing and accrediting such programmes although they are represented in some of NAB's accreditation panels. Similarly, there are no appropriate mechanisms in place to obtain useful feedback from graduates, industrialists and employers.

Financial constraints: Financial constraints have also impacted on institutions, particularly private institutions, in relation to their ability to monitor standards, to implement most of the recommendations made by NAB, and to rectify deficiencies identified by accreditation panels.

10.4.2 Gaps associated with NAB

In relation to NAB, the data highlights structural problems that require more resources to support the growing demands being placed on the agency. NAB is handicapped in many respects in terms of the support and guidance it is expected to offer to the institutions under its jurisdiction. The staffing strength of the NAB Secretariat at the time of conducting this research comprised 25 officers (including both professionals and support staff). As noted earlier, this is inadequate to cope with the volume of work involved. NAB has insufficient qualified staff to help institutions that will require long-term and close guidance and monitoring to sustain quality programmes. This finding agreed with Materu's (2007, p. xviii) observation that there are "insufficient numbers of adequately trained and credible professional staff at the agencies (in Africa) to manage quality processes with integrity and consistency across institutions/programmes and over time". This situation is further aggravated with the large number of institutions that NAB has to deal with.

The higher education sector in Ghana has undergone considerable challenges since the 1990s and problems have confronted the sector during this period. These changes have included: the involvement of the private sector in higher education; an increase in the number of higher institutions; the expansion of student numbers creating a mass system of higher education; and, an increase in the demands for quality assurance to support the rapid expansion that has taken place in tertiary education. In addition, the expectations of students, employers and other stakeholders continue to change in the light of modernization.

However, despite these changes and developments to the higher education sector in Ghana, NAB has not reviewed its approaches since its inception in 1993. Though the NAB Law 2007 introduced some changes to its structures and powers, its mode of operation or approaches remain the same with the main focus on accreditation. In addition, NAB has not submitted itself to external review to test its instruments and methods and also to ascertain how its activities are in conformity with international trends. One of INQAAHE's principles of good practice requires an external agency to periodically subject its operations to both internal and external review. It is required that an external agency should have a system of continuous quality assurance of its activities that emphasises flexibility in response to the changing nature of higher education. It is in line with this provision that the agencies in New Zealand have been subjected to external review. In order to ensure the effectiveness of quality assurance mechanisms, there is the need for constant reflection and periodic change in the practices and modes of operations in external quality assurance.

As noted in the preceding section, because there is only one set of methodologies and criteria at work in Ghana, there is the risk of encouraging compliance to that particular set of criteria. The compliance approach employed by NAB raises the question of how the implementation of the PNDCL 317 has impacted on the practices of quality assurance in Ghana. Furthermore, it has also influenced the relationship that characterises NAB and the higher education sector as evidenced in the views expressed by the respondents. This approach seems to impose ideas on the academics and the institutions as pointed out by poly:

The approach adopted by NAB shows that its work undermines institutional autonomy. ...this happens mostly when the officials of the institutions come under intense pressure to pursue the agenda of NAB rather than developing their own strategies. NAB seems to be exercising too much influence over the institutions

One of the side-effects of this approach according to Van Damme (2000) could be that the “traditional objective of excellence in academic education, often strongly supported in the academic community itself, no longer is seen as valid, since it could imply standards and criteria which depart from the norm” (p. 12). With this approach, NAB does not seem to recognise the idea that both institutional and programme quality assurance are the primary responsibility of higher institutions themselves.

There is therefore, the risk that the entire quality assurance system in Ghana rests on compliance to NAB requirements with inadequate attention to quality enhancement within institutions. Thus, institutions are not likely to own the quality assurance processes that are adopted and take responsibility for the quality of education provided as required of them. Middlehurst and Woodhouse (1995, p. 263) warned that “compliance may pass for improvement in the short term, but as soon as the need to display improvement has passed, old habits are likely to re-emerge”. If NAB is to continue with its current approaches (mainly compliance), it risks failing to gain institutional commitment to achieving desired quality outcomes.

A further problem is that NAB does not undertake any effective periodic monitoring. Arguably, monitoring and evaluation of institutions remains NAB’s weakest area. As found in this study and reinforced by the literature, external monitoring is an important process which is undertaken by most external quality assurance agencies with the intention of improving and strengthening the internal quality management structures of the institutions. Periodic monitoring is important and designed to reassure the external body and all stakeholders that the education provided is being implemented and managed as planned and that minimum standards are being met. Generally, external monitoring does not replace the actions taken by the institution in monitoring, reviewing and improving the quality of the education provided. The most common practice of NAB is institutional accreditation and

monitoring visits which are occasionally undertaken for private institutions. There is no record of subjecting any public institution to the full range of quality assurance processes. NAB seems to be focussing its monitoring operations only on private institutions.

Quality assurance of distance education and new modes of delivery is a challenge to NAB. The development of quality standards and monitoring of distance education requires skills and personnel that NAB currently lacks.

While it was clear that NAB since its inception has made a very significant impact on the quality regime of the higher education sector in Ghana, it can still be said that the demands of quality management remain a challenge to both the institutions and NAB and much remains to be done for improvement. As the evidence in this research indicates, the quality of provision at the institutional level (internal structures, documented policies, external involvement, conduct of self assessment) and at the national level (regular monitoring, change in compliance approach, adequately qualified staff, etc.) requires urgent policy attention if Ghana is to achieve the objectives of its tertiary educational reforms.

10.5 Recommendations for changes in the quality assurance of higher education in Ghana

Against the backdrop of the challenges and gaps identified in the Ghanaian systems, the following lessons were drawn and recommendations made for the enhancement of quality assurance practices. These are based on the comparative analysis of New Zealand systems; evidence from the international literature relating to quality assurance in tertiary education, and drawing on some aspects of the principles jointly identified by Hall and Woodhouse. Ghanaian higher education institutions have fared poorly on global rankings, hence there is the need to consider seriously what quality means and how it can be assessed and measured. Whatever evaluation individual institutions undertake to guide their review of systems, some specific developments particularly those identified in part 4 of Table 2.5 would be worth

considering and building into the current Ghanaian context. It should be noted that the recommendations and suggestions provided here, while including discussions about contextualisation to Ghana, will still need more to be done should the recommendations be taken up by the relevant authorities in Ghana.

Recommendation 1: All Ghanaian tertiary institutions should undertake a full review of their systems, drawing on and adapting policies and practices from New Zealand and other countries

Table 8.1 earlier provides a description of typical provisions and systems in place in New Zealand institutions. It becomes important for higher institutions in Ghana to consider a similar range of systems and practices as a guide to their own deliberations. Ghanaian institutions should also research institutions in other countries to enable them to evaluate how to improve their systems. It is recommended that each institution in Ghana should progressively self-review its quality systems over the next two or three years using Table 8.1 as a guide or prompt but also selecting institutions that are comparable in their purposes, educational focus, and scale of operation to act as formal or informal benchmarking partners. The process should be selective – systems that clearly have merit and could be adapted to the Ghanaian context – would be chosen. This would avoid transferring systems wholesale or from different socio-cultural contexts that will not fit into the Ghanaian context.

Recommendation 2: All Ghanaian institutions should document and periodically review their quality management systems

Following on from recommendation 1, once a major review has been undertaken all higher education institutions should document fully – and review periodically – their quality systems. For example, it is recommended that internal quality management structures should

be guided by an institutional quality assurance policy that would reflect the institution's mission and values. Institutions should have documented institution-wide quality assurance policies, guidelines and should set out clear definitions of roles and responsibilities that will be widely understood by staff (both academic and general staff) involved in the quality assurance process to ensure consistent practice. Institutions should review these policies periodically. Institutions in Ghana should consider setting up quality assurance structures at the department, faculty and central institutional level to address quality issues. The responsibility of assuring quality of education provided should ultimately rest with the institutions in partnership with NAB.

Recommendation 3: Academic quality audit should be introduced at the national level

Given the relative infancy of quality assurance in Ghana, it would be advisable to introduce an academic quality audit system at the national level which would include in its functions the monitoring of the progress of institutions in reviewing their systems. It is recommended that NAB should undertake regular quality monitoring and evaluation of the activities and internal processes of all higher institutions in Ghana. External quality audit is important because it should not be assumed that the mere existence of formal internal systems (with in institutions) will per se assure the needed quality. Some systems may be ineffective hence one major reason for audit is for NAB to monitor and verify the effectiveness and the extent to which these internal systems contribute to the maintenance and improvement of institutional quality and standards. The focus of NAB's audit therefore, would be to identify strengths and weaknesses of the internal processes of all institutions so that necessary action can be taken to help improve and strengthen the internal structures.

However, in conducting the audit, it is recommended that NAB should consider the needs of the individual institutions and there should be no national model for how improvement work and procedures should be implemented. This approach would take care of the diverse nature of higher institutions and their objectives. In principle, each institution in Ghana has its mission and objectives and would adopt systems that are considered relevant to its own objectives. Hence it is expected that the actual quality assurance procedures adopted and implemented would vary among institutions. Therefore, NAB's conclusions on the quality of an institution should be focused on the institution's own objectives, mission, and the effectiveness of the institution's own systems in achieving those stated objectives.

There is also a need for NAB to extend the close monitoring of private institutions to state institutions as well. NAB has to make sure that both public and private institutions are closely monitored and undergo periodic monitoring.

Recommendation 4: All Ghanaian higher institutions should undertake effective self-review of their activities

It is recommended that institutions in Ghana should consider undertaking effective self-assessment at the departmental, faculty, and institution-wide levels as a regular step in their preparation for major reviews. For example, a formal self assessment should be a preliminary step for external quality audits and internal major reviews of existing programmes and their supporting structures. Self-assessment is a key element in most quality assurance procedures. Thune (1998) noted that self-review helps institutions check how far they are achieving their strategic mission and goals. It also allows them to prepare an action plan for further development. Irrespective of NAB's requirements, self-assessment should be an integral part of an institution's planning, implementation, analyses and reporting cycle. It is recommended that institutions should initiate the quality assurance process, own it and

work towards achieving their own stated objectives. Institutions should consider adopting approaches that will enable them achieve their own objectives.

The self-assessment should not be seen as an exercise in meeting NAB's requirements; as explained by Brennan (1997, p. 15) "if self-review is considered as a stage preliminary to a process of some form of external judgements, it is likely to be carried out primarily in order to attempt to influence these external judgements rather than to inform self". It is recommended that ongoing internal evaluation should become a feature of academic life in higher institutions in Ghana. According to Matery (2007) when self-assessment is conducted within a collegial atmosphere without any pressure from an external body, it would foster social cohesion and teamwork among staff and also enhance staff accountability of the results of the process. It is argued that the more self-review is given priority in the monitoring process, the more it will function as preparation of the higher institution (or the department) for taking responsibility for its own quality improvement and the less as merely a source of information for the expert committee (Thune, 1996).

At whatever level self-assessment is undertaken, it is suggested that staff of appropriate experience or seniority be considered to co-ordinate the process and gather genuine support from all involved. Leadership that fosters staff engagement is important. It is recommended that there should be broad staff involvement to ensure that the process is widely understood and owned by all staff to make the implementation of practices and results easier. This will be in line with the advice as indicated by the principles identified in part 4 of Table 2.5 that quality is best guaranteed when those responsibility for it is located as close as possible to the teaching and learning processes. A necessary pre-requisite would be training of staff in the conduct of self-evaluation and peer-review. Closely related to this is the introduction of internal audit processes to enable institutions to periodically monitor their activities.

Recommendation 5: The use of student evaluation of teaching and courses

One other area that requires improvement for purposes of assuring the quality of teaching in higher education in Ghana is the use of student feedback. There is an extensive literature on the use of student evaluations of teaching and courses that suggests that student feedback is far more valid and reliable than is indicated by some of the respondents in chapter six. Many colleges and universities use student ratings of teaching effectiveness as part of a bigger analysis of course quality. These surveys are undertaken to ascertain students' needs and to identify areas for attention that affect students. There are codes of practices which specify the way institutions might use student evaluations to improve teaching. The table below presents a summary of one such code which was developed by Hall and Fitzgerald (1995). This code might be adopted, with contextual modifications if necessary, by institutions in Ghana.

Table 10.1: Student summative evaluation of teaching: code of practice

1. Student evaluations of teaching should be used, but not in isolation, for summative decision making	9. Those entrusted with the task of making tenure, promotion and similar decisions should be skilled in interpreting and drawing together the different sources of information
2. Evaluations on teaching should be based on a representative range of a person's teaching	10. Evaluation instruments should be soundly based in teaching/learning theory, i.e. the items in a questionnaire should sample teaching behaviours that are appropriate for fostering student learning
3. Evaluation instruments should clearly state the purpose of the evaluation and indicate whether the forms will be returned to the lecturer(s)	11. Items in a student questionnaire should be appropriate to the teaching context, i.e. students should be able to provide a valid judgement in respect of each item
4. The results of an evaluation of a teacher's performance should be based, as far as possible, on his/her own merits: that is, the instrument should not incorporate items which reflect the performance of others teaching in the course	12. The administration of a summative evaluation questionnaire should follow standardised procedures which safeguard the validity and reliability of the information obtained
5. Guidelines should be provided for ensuring that evaluations are administered at a time that will maximise the validity of the information obtained	13. Evaluation procedures should protect the identity of individual students

6. Clear guidelines must be given as to who may initiate an evaluation and for what purpose. If someone other than the staff member concerned initiates an evaluation, the staff member concerned must be fully consulted	14. Clear rules governing the confidentiality of evaluation information and reports should be specified
7. Guidelines should be provided to assist teachers to interpret the results of an evaluation report; appropriate training and resources should be available in the event of an unfavourable evaluation	15. Provisions should exist for allowing a teacher to set aside an evaluation where there is evidence that the results are invalid
8. Provision should exist for regularly reviewing an institution's evaluation procedures: that is, the evaluation system itself should be regularly evaluated	16. Clear guidelines should be provided by a university in respect of the use of student evaluations for disciplinary purposes. Evaluations collected for reasons such as promotion, probation and formative development should not be used in disciplinary contexts

It is recommended that the design, administration and evaluation of questionnaires should be handled professionally and those involved in the interpretation of data should be skilled in drawing together the different sources of information. There should be appropriate external involvement in programme design and approval process for adequate external inputs. Institutions should also institute appropriate feedback procedures to obtain information from graduates, employers and professional bodies to enable them to identify changes that would keep the programme up-to-date and relevant to its purpose. This would ensure that programmes would consider the views of stakeholders.

Recommendation 6: The design of a suitable external quality assurance system

The analysis of the data has identified some of the key features of the New Zealand external quality assurance system. The major external functions include:

- A funding system for the tertiary sector
- Programme approval and accreditation
- Periodic external monitoring (in the form of academic audit and EER)

- Professional input
- Stakeholder involvement
- Publication of evaluation reports
- Links between funding and programme approval

As argued in chapter 8 and illustrated in Tables 8.2 and 8.3, New Zealand's external system of quality assurance at the tertiary level is relatively complex. It comprises two systems – one for universities and one for all other tertiary institutions – and each system involves interaction with several agencies or bodies. It is not recommended that Ghana should adopt this complexity, rather that it focuses on the functions that are undertaken within the New Zealand system and devise a structure that is less complex but achieves these functions (or the particular functions that are desirable).

It is suggested here that there are four sets of considerations that in particular require consideration in designing a suitable system. These focus on:

- the desired goals (e.g., high quality educational programmes)
- the desired functions (e.g., accreditation, quality audit)
- operational efficiency (e.g., a system that is comprehensive, applied consistently, and manageable)
- contextual relevance (e.g., a system that is suited to the economic, social and cultural context of Ghana)

These sets of considerations are by no means the only elements that underpin a fit-for-purpose external quality assurance system. Communication strategies within the sector and to the public are important for supporting the system, as are professional development provisions and the associated needs analyses that inform the context and delivery of professional development both at the centre (e.g., within NAB) and within institutions. It is

beyond the scope of this research to elaborate further on the detailed design of the system. However, it is important that the people ultimately assigned with the task in question work through these various considerations so that good decisions are made.

Recommendation 7: Publication of NAB's accreditation and quality audit reports

Based on empirical evidence from New Zealand practices, it is suggested that NAB should publish all assessment reports. These reports represent the visible products of the assessment and audit process. It should also be noted that one principle of INQAAHE's guidelines of good practice in quality assurance focuses on the need for the external quality assurance agency to report its decisions about higher education institutions and programmes. According to Woodhouse (2007), "if the external evaluation leads to a decision about the higher education institution or programme, the procedures applied and the criteria for decision-making are public" (p. 7). Thus for the purpose of public accountability and public information about higher institutions in Ghana and their quality status, NAB has to publish its reports on institutions. By putting such reports in the public domain, NAB can influence decisions in the institutions because, according to the Director of NZUAAU, "there is a reputational risk if the institution does not pay attention to the recommendations made in the audit report".

10.6 Transfer and implementation of recommendations in the Ghanaian context

In the previous section, seven recommendations were made. The recommendations should be prioritised and tackled progressively over a stated period of time. For each of these recommendations, particular attention needs to be paid to the principles that were identified in Table 2.4 in Chapter Two and Rose's approaches to policy transfer. Policy makers in Ghana should consider the fact that, although the structures and practices that might be transferred are likely to be based on New Zealand systems and institutions from other

countries, they should be tailored (as advised in part 5 of Table 2.5) to suit the social and cultural context of Ghana and to support what may be working well already. Practically, appropriate means such as workshops, enabling the active engagement and participation of Ghana educators in this change process need to be organized. This will enable the local educators to initiate, implement, carry out, and evaluate their own policies thereby increasing their interest, accountability, and leadership in fostering educational relationships. Ghana should undertake research on effective practices and technological developments, involve key stakeholders, and consider carefully the nature of her own context, environment and globalisation challenges.

The first area of priority will require that the government of Ghana addresses and engages fully in consultative processes with stakeholders. During this time, they might consider some of the options available in designing a suitable external quality assurance system for the sector and also to select policies and systems that are most likely to have a strong positive impact for Ghana.

This should be followed by engaging in a paradigm shift from emphasis on compliance to NAB's requirements to strengthening of institutional structures and processes. Institutions should develop their own internal systems to take account of the central requirements so that they can respond appropriately to them as well as their local needs. Institutions should be allowed to develop their own internal systems that will enable them to achieve their missions. Further, institutions should be empowered to take up the responsibility of safeguarding and assuring the quality of the education they provide. Institutions should self-review their own systems to identify system weaknesses and strengths, and to identify what needs to be done to improve their systems. This will require a willingness to modify existing practices and a willingness to innovate. Higher institutions should be adequately resourced to enable them establish and operate efficient internal quality assurance systems. Such

changes will be costly, hence an incremental approach to developments based on priorities and using multiple types of resources will need to be employed. NAB should be seen as complementing the efforts of institutions in the continuous improvement of their programmes.

Principles four and five of Table 2.4 (which cover professional development and resources) will require a thorough needs assessment of the human, financial and material resources to support NAB and higher institutions in implementing the systems. Such an assessment will have to be accompanied by a well developed professional development strategy for the sector. Those who will implement the policies should be knowledgeable. All local staff that are responsible for implementing the policies should be educated and have on-site training. This should be complemented by an upgraded infrastructure and new resources and materials. It should be noted that despite the appropriateness of the policies, circumstances in the host country, such as non-recognition of expertise, few qualified practitioners, and ill-equipped sites, may affect the sustainability of well formulated educational policy that is transferred from New Zealand and elsewhere.

It is likely that the new changes may encounter resistance from academics as has been experienced elsewhere in higher education globally. To overcome this, management and academics should consider quality and its assurance as indicated by the principles in Table 2.2 relating to professionalism and ownership of quality assurance process primarily as a professional issue and not as a management function. They should be mindful that quality is not enhanced through controls but through the professional and/or educational commitment by all. Institutions should develop and put in place systems that will actively involve and empower the academics in decision making process and to make them take the responsibility of the quality of their programmes. Both an education as well as

communication strategies are needed to lessen academic and institutional resistance to such changes.

10.7 Implications for further research relating to improvement in quality assurance within higher education in Ghana

The final section of this research identifies areas for further research and policy development in Ghana. The suggestions are made to further understand quality assurance in higher education in Ghana and also to obtain additional information to inform future change or policy directions in Ghana.

In line with the conceptual framework adopted for this study, it is suggested that this study be replicated by other Ghanaian scholars in other developed countries, specifically in Europe and America to synthesize good practices of quality management in higher education to help formulate effective policy for the improvement of practices in Ghana. Studying the practices and experiences from these countries can expand understandings and offer ideas of what to do in Ghana.

Moreover, a suggestion is made for further research that explores the management of internal quality assurance systems of higher institutions in Europe or other developed nations that have a relatively long history of quality assurance systems. This may assist in the identification and hybridization of a better model or structure of internal quality assurance management systems for higher institutions in Ghana. In fact, institutions in Ghana could gain a great deal by learning from the concrete experiences and practices of the institutions and countries with more experiences.

In addition, there should be ongoing research into, and evaluation of, the systems that are implemented by NAB and higher education institutions both for the purposes of monitoring their effectiveness and for sharing good practices within the sector.

10.8 Concluding remarks

This study has produced insights into the practices and management of quality of higher education in Ghana and New Zealand. Ghana's policy to internationalize her higher education institutions has brought about a strong need to improve the quality of higher education. The contributions of higher institutions towards Ghana's social and economic development in today's world are more significant now than ever. This is because higher institutions as noted by the World Bank (2002, pp. xvii-xix) "are expected to play a key role in the creation, dissemination and application of knowledge, all of which are key determining factors for a country or region to survive in this knowledge-based society". Higher institutions in Ghana, as in other parts of the globe, are in competition to ensure their national and international viability. To survive this competition, it is important that institutions in Ghana strive to improve the quality of the education they provide.

There is no doubt that the 1991 educational reform of higher education in Ghana has been the driving force behind establishing the external component of quality assurance thereby aligning Ghana to international educational trends. Further, there is no doubt that Ghana has made significant inroads into improving the quality of the higher education it provides. However, as with every policy, there will always be the need for a review for further improvement, a process that NAB has not undertaken of its operations since their inception. At a time when student numbers are growing and higher institutions are increasing, there is a need for NAB and institutions to provide support and adequate quality assurance mechanisms to ensure educational quality. The interactions between internal and external processes are important for contributing to lasting improvements.

If Ghanaians wish to achieve the objectives of the reforms by improving the quality of the higher education provided, then institutions and NAB should ensure that robust structures and methods are employed in the execution of the various evaluations. Furthermore, if

Ghana is to achieve sustainable improvement in quality management of higher education, there is the need to generate new knowledge as well as acquire global knowledge for adaptation it to local use. This is because quality in higher education will not just happen. It requires effective leadership, well-designed processes, diligent follow-up, and continuous improvement. In the words of Ruskin, as cited in Woodhouse (1998, p. 5), “quality is never an accident: it is always the result of intelligent effort”.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Information sheet for research participants

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

RESEARCH TOPIC:

Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Comparative Analysis of Practices in Ghana and New Zealand.

Thank you for showing interest in this project. Please, read the information below to familiarise yourself with the details of this research. Please note that participation is voluntary but if you decide to participate, you will be interviewed at a place, date and time of your convenience after I have returned to Ghana. The interview will last about 60 minutes.

Aims of the research

The research aims at examining government policies and resulting practices in Ghana and New Zealand relating to quality assurance of the education provided by tertiary institutions. The research also aims to identify whether there are provisions and practices in New Zealand that might be adapted to the Ghanaian context, or which might at least provide some direction to the further development of quality assurance practices in Ghana. The results of the research may also identify issues in the New Zealand context and therefore should be of interest to officials and practitioners at the tertiary level in New Zealand.

Research approach

The research will involve the analysis of publicly available documents such as: (i) legislation, policy statements and related papers from each government; (ii) annual reports, quality assurance manuals, and quality assurance reports from external quality assurance agencies in both countries; and (iii) documents and reports that describe the quality assurance provisions and processes in three tertiary institutions within each country.

The document analyses will be supported by interviews with one or two key personnel in the main external quality assurance agencies and the participating tertiary institutions in both countries. The interviews will seek clarification of each country's quality assurance provisions at the tertiary level, and will identify the perceptions of participants about the strengths, weaknesses, gaps and issues relating to the main forms of quality assurance in place.

The research will also involve a critical review of the international literature relating to quality assurance in tertiary education, as well as an analysis of the comparative education literature in relation to principles and guidelines relevant to the transfer of educational practices from one country to another.

Your participation in the research

You are invited to take part in this research due to your expertise and experience in the practices and processes of quality assurance in higher education in Ghana. Prior to the interview, it may be useful for you to reflect on the policies, structures and practices of assuring the quality of tertiary education in Ghana. You may also reflect on the functions of NAB and its monitoring role within tertiary education in Ghana.

Confidentiality and anonymity

The researcher will take notes during the interview; the interview will also be audio recorded. Transcripts will be returned to you for checking; you are free to add, delete or change any comments or information that you provide. Transcripts and interview notes will be retained for two years to enable the researcher to produce academic articles and conference papers. All data will be stored in a locked facility, accessible to the researcher only.

Data collected from interviews will be accessible only to the researcher and his supervisors. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw, without giving any reason, at any stage before the data are analysed. All participants who are interviewed will remain confidential to the researcher and his supervisors. The participating tertiary institutions will also not be named and data will be presented in such a way that they will not be recognisable. All data collected will be stored with care to protect the confidentiality of participants and institutions and will be destroyed five years after the end of the project.

Publications and summary of the findings

The final work will be published as my PhD thesis while some aspects will be published as articles and working papers in academic journals and quality assurance conferences. I will also prepare a 1-2 page summary of my research findings after my thesis has been accepted and send all participants a copy of this summary.

Further information

Please, if you require further information or clarification on any of the issues above, do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisors (see below) at Victoria University of Wellington.

Ethical approval

This research has been assessed and approved by Victoria University College of Education Ethics Committee.

Contact details of the researcher and supervisors:

Researcher:

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APPENDIX B: Invitation letter to the Vice Chancellors/Principals/CEOs

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Godwin Utuka
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Date:

Dear Vice Chancellor/Principal/CEO,

Title of Research: Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Comparative Analysis of Practices in Ghana and New Zealand.

Researcher: Godwin Utuka, College of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

I am a Doctoral student in Education (Administration) at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree, I am undertaking research work for my thesis. The research is on quality assurance in higher education and involves a comparative analysis of practices in Ghana and New Zealand. I am under the supervision of Associate Professor Kabini Sanga and Professor Cedric Hall both within the College of Education, Victoria University of Wellington. The university requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants.

I would like to invite your institution as one of three selected higher institutions in Ghana (or in New Zealand) to participate in this research. As Victoria University requires that ethics approval be obtained for any research involving human participants, I would like to seek your consent for the research to be conducted in your institution.

I would like to interview two key people (one key person in the case of New Zealand) in your institution with experience and knowledge of both external quality assurance agencies processes and your institution's own quality assurance provisions. I would welcome your nomination of these people. The selected participants would be interviewed at a time, date and place of their convenience. It is envisaged that the interview would last approximately 60 minutes.

Participants will be informed about the nature and requirements of the research. Participation is voluntary, and should any participant feel the need to withdraw from the research for whatever reason, he/she may do so without question at any stage before the data are analysed. Your institution and names of all participants in the research will remain

confidential to the researcher (and his supervisors). All data collected will be stored with care to protect the confidentiality of participants and institutions and will be destroyed five years after the end of the project.

The final work will be published as my PhD thesis while some aspects will be published as articles and working papers in academic journals and quality assurance conferences. I will also prepare a 1-2 page summary of my research findings after my thesis has been accepted and send you a copy of this summary.

If you require further information or clarification on any of the issues above, please do not hesitate to contact me (details above) or my supervisors (see details below) at Victoria University of Wellington. In the meantime, I attach an information sheet about my research.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards

Godwin Utuka
PhD Research Student

Contact details for supervisors:

Kabini Sanga, PhD.
Associate Professor & Co-Director of He Parekereke
College of Education
Victoria University of Wellington
Karori Campus
PO Box 17-310
Wellington
New Zealand
Kabini.sanga@vuw.ac.nz
Ph: NZ-4-4636894

Professor Cedric Hall
School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy
Victoria University of Wellington
Karori Campus
PO Box 17-310
Wellington
New Zealand
Cedric.Hall@vuw.ac.nz
Ph: NZ-4-4636892

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Consent to participation in research:

Vice Chancellor(s)

Principal(s)

CEO(s)

Title of research: Quality assurance in higher education: Comparative analysis of practices in Ghana and New Zealand.

Researcher: Godwin Utuka, School of Education Studies, Victoria University of Wellington.

I give consent for Godwin Utuka, Doctoral student at Victoria University of Wellington, School of Education Studies, to invite the Manager and any other senior officer of the internal quality assurance unit to participate in his research work.

Name of Vice Chancellor/Principal/CEO

Signed

OR (✓) I have emailed my consent to utuka2001@yahoo.com

The officer(s) nominated are:

1)

2)

APPENDIX C: Invitation letter to nominated officers
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Godwin Utuka
PhD candidate
C/O Postgraduate Office
College of Education
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 17-310
Karori, Wellington
New Zealand
Cell Ph. 0211053318
Email: utuka2001@yahoo.com

Date:

Dear Nominated Officer,

Title of Research: Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Comparative Analysis of Practices in Ghana and New Zealand.

Researcher: Godwin Utuka, College of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

I am a Doctoral student in Education (Administration) at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree, I am undertaking research work for my thesis. The research is on quality assurance in higher education and involves a comparative analysis of practices in Ghana and New Zealand. I am under the supervision of Associate Professor Kabini Sanga and Professor Cedric Hall both within the College of Education, Victoria University of Wellington. The university requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants.

I am inviting you as one of the nominated respondents in your institution to participate in this research. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw, without giving reason, at any stage before the data are analysed. You will be interviewed at a time, date and place of convenience to you. It is anticipated that the interview session will last about 60 minutes. The interview will be audiotaped so that it can be transcribed later. The transcription will be returned to you so that you can check what you said; you will be free to add, delete or change anything in order to more accurately represent your views.

Victoria University requires that ethics approval be sought prior to the conduct of a research involving human participants. In view of this, if you are willing to take part in this research, could you please email your consent to me via the email address above? Alternatively, you could sign the attached form and return it to me.

All participants who are interviewed will remain confidential to the researcher and his supervisors; the data will be reported in a way that will ensure that you are not recognisable.

The data collected will also be stored securely to protect the confidentiality of participants and will be destroyed five years after the end of the project.

The final work will be published as my PhD thesis while some aspects will be published as articles and working papers in academic journals and quality assurance conferences. I will also prepare a 1-2 page summary of my research findings after my thesis has been accepted and send you a copy of this summary.

If you require further information or clarification on any of the issues above, please do not hesitate to contact me (details above) or my supervisors (see details below) at Victoria University of Wellington. In the meantime, I attach an information sheet giving further details of the research.

Regards

Godwin Utuka
PhD Research Student

Contact details for supervisors:

Kabini Sanga, PhD.
Associate Professor & Co-Director of He Parekereke
College of Education
Victoria University of Wellington
Karori Campus
PO Box 17-310
Wellington
New Zealand
Kabini.sanga@vuw.ac.nz
Ph: NZ-4-4636894

Professor Cedric Hall
School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy
Victoria University of Wellington
Karori Campus
P O Box 17-310
Wellington
New Zealand
Cedric.Hall@vuw.ac.nz
Ph: NZ-4-4636892

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Consent to participate in this research:

Senior officer nominated by the Vice Chancellor/CEO/Principal/ Executive Secretary/Executive Director

Title of research: Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Comparative Analysis of Practices in Ghana and New Zealand.

Researcher: Godwin Utuka, Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

Please read each of the following statements and tick the box if you agree.

- I have been given information about this research project and I have understood the explanation. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this research before data collection and analysis are completed. I may do so without giving reasons or without penalty of any kind.
- I understand that I will receive a transcript of my own interview so that I can approve or modify details in the interview before data analysis.
- I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and his supervisors. The published results will not use my name, and that no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me.
- I understand that the tape recording of the interview and any notes taken during the interview will be destroyed 5 years after the end of the research.
- I understand that I will receive a 1-2 page summary of the research findings when the thesis is accepted.

Name of Officer.

Signed

Date

APPENDIX D: Invitation letter to the Executive Secretary of NAB
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Godwin Utuka
PhD candidate
C/O Postgraduate Office
College of Education
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 17-310
Karori, Wellington
New Zealand
Cell Ph. 0211053318
Email: utuka2001@yahoo.com

Date:

Dear Executive Secretary, NAB

Title of Research: Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Comparative Analysis of Practices in Ghana and New Zealand.

Researcher: Godwin Utuka, College of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

I am a Doctoral student in Education (Administration) at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree, I am undertaking research work for my thesis. The research is on quality assurance in higher education and involves a comparative analysis of practices in Ghana and New Zealand. I am under the supervision of Associate Professor Kabini Sanga and Professor Cedric Hall both within the College of Education, Victoria University of Wellington. The University requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants.

I would like to invite your organization as the external quality assurance agency for higher education institutions in Ghana to participate in this research. As Victoria University requires that ethics approval be obtained for any research involving human participants, I would like to seek your consent for this research to include two interviews within your organization.

Specifically, I would like to interview yourself, the Executive Secretary of NAB, and one Senior Assistant Secretary who has responsibility for the oversight within your organization of enhancing quality in higher education. You and the nominated Senior Assistant Secretary will be interviewed at a time, date and place of your convenience. It is envisaged that each interview would last approximately 60 minutes. Questions will clarify for me the processes used by NAB for quality assurance and seek your impressions on possible future developments in quality assurance that would enhance higher education in Ghana.

Participation is voluntary and should you, or the Senior Assistant Secretary feel the need to withdraw from the research for whatever reason, you are free to do so without question at

any stage before the data are analysed. All data will be securely stored to prevent access from unauthorised persons and will be destroyed five years after the end of the project.

You will receive from me a transcript of your own interview so that you can approve or modify details in the interview before I analyse data for my write-up. Any quotes from your interview will be taken from your approved transcript; such quotes will be brief and acknowledge your position as Executive Secretary of NAB.

As part of the ethical approval procedures, I attach a consent form for you to complete in relation to your own interview; the form also covers your permission for me to invite the Senior Assistant Secretary to be interviewed. I would be grateful if you could return the completed form to me or e-mail your consent.

The final work will be published as my PhD thesis while some aspects will be published as articles and working papers in academic journals and quality assurance conferences. I will also prepare a 1-2 page summary of my research findings after my thesis has been accepted and send you a copy of this summary.

If you require further information or clarification on any of the issues above, please do not hesitate to contact me (details above) or my supervisors (see details below) at Victoria University of Wellington. In the meantime, I attach an information sheet about my research.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards

Godwin Utuka
PhD Research Student

Contact details for supervisors:

Kabini Sanga, PhD.
Associate Professor & Co-Director of He Parekereke
College of Education
Victoria University of Wellington
Karori Campus
PO Box 17-310
Wellington
New Zealand
Kabini.sanga@vuw.ac.nz
Ph: NZ-4-4636894

Professor Cedric Hall
School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy
Victoria University of Wellington
Karori Campus
PO Box 17-310
Wellington
New Zealand
Cedric.Hall@vuw.ac.nz
Ph: NZ-4-4636892

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Consent to participate in this research: Executive Secretary of NAB, Ghana

Title of research: Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Comparative Analysis of Practices in Ghana and New Zealand.

Researcher: Godwin Utuka, College of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

Please read each of the following statements and tick the box if you agree.

- I give consent for Godwin Utuka, Doctoral student at the College of Education, Victoria University of Wellington, to invite the Senior Assistant Secretary (NAB) of the quality assurance unit to participate in his research work. The name of the Senior Assistant Secretary is:

Senior Assistant Secretary

In relation to my own participation in the research:

- I have been given information about this research project and I have understood the explanation. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this research before data collection and analysis are completed. I may do so without giving reasons or without penalty of any kind.
- I understand that I will receive a transcript of my own interview so that I can approve or modify details in the interview before data analysis.
- I understand that the tape recording of the interview will be electronically wiped at the end of the research. Similarly, any notes taken during the interview will be destroyed at the end of the research.
- I understand that I will receive a 1-2 page summary of the research findings when the thesis is accepted.
- I understand that I will be recognised in the thesis and that my contribution will be acknowledged as such.

Name of Executive Secretary

Signed Date

APPENDIX E: Invitation letter to the Director of NZUAAU
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Godwin Utuka
PhD candidate
C/O Postgraduate Office
Faculty of Education
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 17-310
Karori, Wellington
New Zealand
Cell Ph. 02102574945
Email: godwin.utuka@vuw.ac.nz

Dear Director, NZUAAU

Title of Research: Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Comparative Analysis of Practices in Ghana and New Zealand.

Researcher: Godwin Utuka, Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

I am a Doctoral student in Education (Administration) at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree, I am undertaking research work for my thesis. The research is on quality assurance in higher education and involves a comparative analysis of practices in Ghana and New Zealand. I am under the supervision of Associate Professor Kabini Sanga and Emeritus Professor Cedric Hall both within the Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington. The University requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants.

I would like to invite your organization as one of the external quality assurance agencies for higher education institutions in New Zealand to participate in this research. Specifically, I would like to seek your consent to be interviewed as part of my research. You will be interviewed at a time, date and place of your convenience. It is envisaged that the interview would last approximately 60 minutes. Questions will clarify for me the processes used by NZUAAU for quality assurance and seek your impressions on possible future developments in quality assurance that would enhance higher education in New Zealand.

Participation is voluntary and should you feel the need to withdraw from the research for whatever reason, you are free to do so without question at any stage before the data are analysed. All data will be securely stored to prevent access from unauthorised persons and will be destroyed five years after the end of the project.

You will receive from me a transcript of your own interview so that you can approve or modify details in the interview before I analyse data for my write-up. Any quotes from your

interview will be taken from your approved transcript; such quotes will be brief and acknowledge your position as the Director of NZUAAU.

As part of the ethical approval procedures, I attach a consent form for you to complete in relation to your interview. I would be grateful if you could return the completed form to me or e-mail your consent.

The final work will be published as my PhD thesis while some aspects will be published as articles and working papers in academic journals and quality assurance conferences. I will also prepare a 1-2 page summary of my research findings after my thesis has been accepted and send you a copy of this summary.

If you require further information or clarification on any of the issues above, please do not hesitate to contact me (details above) or my supervisors (see details below) at Victoria University of Wellington. In the meantime, I attach an information sheet about my research.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards

Godwin Utuka
PhD Research Student

Contact details for supervisors:

Kabini Sanga, PhD
Associate Professor & Co-Director of He Parekerekere
Faculty of Education
Victoria University of Wellington
Karori Campus
PO Box 17-310
Wellington
New Zealand
Kabini.sanga@vuw.ac.nz
Ph: NZ-4-4636894

Emeritus Professor Cedric Hall
School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy
Victoria University of Wellington
Karori Campus
PO Box 17-310
Wellington
New Zealand
Cedric.Hall@vuw.ac.nz
Ph: NZ-4-4636892

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Consent to participate in this research: Director of NZUAAU

Title of research: Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Comparative Analysis of Practices in Ghana and New Zealand.

Researcher: Godwin Utuka, Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

Please read each of the following statements and tick the box if you agree.

- I have been given information about this research project and I have understood the explanation. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this research before data collection and analysis are completed. I may do so without giving reasons or without penalty of any kind.
- I understand that I will receive a transcript of my own interview so that I can approve or modify details in the interview before data analysis.
- I understand that the tape recording of the interview and any notes taken during the interview will be destroyed 5 years after the end of the research.
- I understand that I will receive a 1–2 page summary of the research findings when the thesis is accepted.
- I understand that I will be identified in the thesis and that my contribution will be acknowledged as such.

Name of Director.....

Signed

Date

APPENDIX F: Invitation letter to the Convenor of CUAP
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Godwin Utuka
PhD candidate
C/O Postgraduate Office
Faculty of Education
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 17-310
Karori, Wellington
New Zealand
Cell Ph. 02102574945
Email: godwin.utuka@vuw.ac.nz

Dear Convenor, CUAP

Title of Research: Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Comparative Analysis of Practices in Ghana and New Zealand.

Researcher: Godwin Utuka, Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

I am a Doctoral student in Education (Administration) at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree, I am undertaking research work for my thesis. The research is on quality assurance in higher education and involves a comparative analysis of practices in Ghana and New Zealand. I am under the supervision of Associate Professor Kabini Sanga and Emeritus Professor Cedric Hall both within the Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington. The University requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants.

I would like to invite your organization as one of the external quality assurance agencies for higher education institutions in New Zealand to participate in this research. Specifically, I would like to seek your consent to be interviewed as part of my research. You will be interviewed at a time, date and place of your convenience. It is envisaged that the interview would last approximately 60 minutes. Questions will clarify for me the processes used by CUAP for quality assurance and seek your impressions on possible future developments in quality assurance that would enhance higher education in New Zealand.

Participation is voluntary and should you feel the need to withdraw from the research for whatever reason, you are free to do so without question at any stage before the data are analysed. All data will be securely stored to prevent access from unauthorised persons and will be destroyed five years after the end of the project.

You will receive from me a transcript of your own interview so that you can approve or modify details in the interview before I analyse data for my write-up. Any quotes from your

interview will be taken from your approved transcript; such quotes will be brief and acknowledge your position as the Convenor of CUAP.

As part of the ethical approval procedures, I attach a consent form for you to complete in relation to your interview. I would be grateful if you could return the completed form to me or e-mail your consent.

The final work will be published as my PhD thesis while some aspects will be published as articles and working papers in academic journals and quality assurance conferences. I will also prepare a 1–2 page summary of my research findings after my thesis has been accepted and send you a copy of this summary.

If you require further information or clarification on any of the issues above, please do not hesitate to contact me (details above) or my supervisors (see details below) at Victoria University of Wellington. In the meantime, I attach an information sheet about my research.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards

Godwin Utuka
PhD Research Student

Contact details for supervisors:

Kabini Sanga, PhD.
Associate Professor & Co-Director of He Parekereke
Faculty of Education
Victoria University of Wellington
Karori Campus
PO Box 17-310
Wellington
New Zealand
Kabini.sanga@vuw.ac.nz
Ph: NZ-4-4636894

Emeritus Professor Cedric Hall
School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy
Victoria University of Wellington
Karori Campus
PO Box 17-310
Wellington
New Zealand
Cedric.Hall@vuw.ac.nz
Ph: NZ-4-4636892

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Consent to participate in this research: Convenor of CUAP

Title of research: Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Comparative Analysis of Practices in Ghana and New Zealand.

Researcher: Godwin Utuka, Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

Please read each of the following statements and tick the box if you agree.

- I have been given information about this research project and I have understood the explanation. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this research before data collection and analysis are completed. I may do so without giving reasons or without penalty of any kind.
- I understand that I will receive a transcript of my own interview so that I can approve or modify details in the interview before data analysis.
- I understand that the tape recording of the interview and any notes taken during the interview will be destroyed 5 years after the end of the research.
- I understand that I will receive a 1-2 page summary of the research findings when the thesis is accepted.
- I understand that I will be identified in the thesis and that my contribution will be acknowledged as such.

Name of the Convenor.....

Signed

Date

APPENDIX G: Invitation letter to the CEO of NZQA
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Godwin Utuka
PhD candidate
C/O Postgraduate Office
College of Education
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 17-310
Karori, Wellington
Cell Ph. 02102574945
Email:godwin.utuka@vuw.ac.nz

Dear Chief Executive, NZQA

Title of Research: Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Comparative Analysis of Practices in Ghana and New Zealand.

Researcher: Godwin Utuka, College of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

I am a Doctoral student in Education (Administration) at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree, I am undertaking research work for my thesis. The research is on quality assurance in higher education and involves a comparative analysis of practices in Ghana and New Zealand. I am under the supervision of Associate Professor Kabini Sanga and Emeritus Professor Cedric Hall both within the Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington. The University requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants.

I would like to invite a member of your organization to participate in this research. Specifically, I would like to interview Dr Walbran regarding your organizations processes in quality assurance; I particularly wish to speak to Dr Walbran because she completed a PhD at VUW a few years ago which involved an analysis of a range of tertiary level programmes. I understand she has a sound knowledge of quality assurance at the tertiary level in New Zealand.

Dr Walbran will be interviewed at a time, date and place of her convenience. It is envisaged that the interview would last approximately 60 minutes. Questions will clarify for me the processes used by NZQA for quality assurance and seek information on developments in quality assurance currently underway or intended in the future.

Participation is voluntary and should Dr Walbran feel the need to withdraw from the research for whatever reason, he/she is free to do so without question at any stage before the data are analysed. All data will be securely stored to prevent access from unauthorised persons and will be destroyed five years after the end of the project.

As part of the ethical approval procedures, I attach a consent form for you to complete for your permission to enable me to invite Dr Walbran to be interviewed. I would be grateful if you could return the completed form to me or e-mail your consent.

The final work will be published as my PhD thesis while some aspects will be published as articles and working papers in academic journals and quality assurance conferences. I will also prepare a 1–2 page summary of my research findings after my thesis has been accepted and send you a copy of this summary.

If you require further information or clarification on any of the issues above, please do not hesitate to contact me (details above) or my supervisors (see details below) at Victoria University of Wellington. In the meantime, I attach an information sheet about my research.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards

Godwin Utuka

Contact details for supervisors:

Kabini Sanga, PhD.
Associate Professor & Co-Director of He Parekereke
Faculty of Education
Victoria University of Wellington
Karori Campus
P .O. Box 17-310
Wellington
New Zealand
Kabini.sanga@vuw.ac.nz
Ph: NZ-4-4636894

Emeritus Professor Cedric Hall
School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy
Victoria University of Wellington
Karori Campus
PO Box 17-310
Wellington
New Zealand
Cedric.Hall@vuw.ac.nz
Ph: NZ-4-4636892

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Consent to nominate Dr Walbran to participate in this research: Chief Executive Officer of NZQA,

Title of research: Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Comparative Analysis of Practices in Ghana and New Zealand.

Researcher: Godwin Utuka, Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

Please read each of the following statements and tick the box if you agree.

I give consent for Godwin Utuka, Doctoral student at the Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington, to invite Dr Walbran to participate in his research work.

Name of Chief Executive Officer.....

Signed

Date

APPENDIX H: Invitation letter to the Executive Director of ITPQ
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Godwin Utuka
PhD candidate
C/O Postgraduate Office
Faculty of Education
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 17-310
Karori, Wellington
Cell Ph. 02102574945
Email:godwin.utuka@vuw.ac.nz

Dear Executive Director of ITPQ

Title of Research: Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Comparative Analysis of Practices in Ghana and New Zealand.

Researcher: Godwin Utuka, Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

I am a Doctoral student in Education (Administration) at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree, I am undertaking research work for my thesis. The research is on quality assurance in higher education and involves a comparative analysis of practices in Ghana and New Zealand. I am under the supervision of Associate Professor Kabini Sanga and Emeritus Professor Cedric Hall both within the Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington. The University requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants.

I would like to invite your organization as one of the external quality assurance agencies for higher education institutions in New Zealand to participate in this research. Specifically, I would like to seek your consent to be interviewed, or your nomination of a representative to be interviewed as part of my research. The interview will be at a time, date and place of your convenience. It is envisaged that the interview would last approximately 60 minutes. Questions will clarify for me the processes used by your organization for quality assurance and seek your impressions on possible future developments in quality assurance that would enhance higher education in New Zealand.

Participation is voluntary and should you or the nominated officer feel the need to withdraw from the research for whatever reason, you are free to do so without question at any stage before the data are analysed. All data will be securely stored to prevent access from unauthorised persons and will be destroyed five years after the end of the project.

You will receive from me a transcript of your own interview so that you can approve or modify details in the interview before I analyse data for my write-up.

As part of the ethical approval procedures, I attach a consent form for you to complete in relation to your own interview; the form also covers your permission for me to invite the nominated Senior Officer to be interviewed. I would be grateful if you could return the completed form to me or e-mail your consent.

The final work will be published as my PhD thesis while some aspects will be published as articles and working papers in academic journals and quality assurance conferences. I will also prepare a 1-2 page summary of my research findings after my thesis has been accepted and send you a copy of this summary.

If you require further information or clarification on any of the issues above, please do not hesitate to contact me (details above) or my supervisors (see details below) at Victoria University of Wellington. In the meantime, I attach an information sheet about my research.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards

Godwin Utuka

Contact details for supervisors:

Kabini Sanga, PhD.
Associate Professor & Co-Director of He Parekerekere
Faculty of Education
Victoria University of Wellington
Karori Campus
PO Box 17-310
Wellington
New Zealand
Kabini.sanga@vuw.ac.nz
Ph: NZ-4-4636894

Emeritus Professor Cedric Hall
School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy
Victoria University of Wellington
Karori Campus
P. O. Box 17-310
Wellington
New Zealand
Cedric.Hall@vuw.ac.nz
Ph: NZ-4-4636892



Consent to participate in this research or nominate ONE senior officer to participate:

The Executive Director of ITPQ

Title of research: Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Comparative Analysis of Practices in Ghana and New Zealand.

Researcher: Godwin Utuka, Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

Please read each of the following statements and tick the box if you agree.

I give consent for Godwin Utuka, Doctoral student at the Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington, to invite the nominated Senior Officer of the quality assurance unit to participate in his research work. The name of the Senior Officer is:

.....

In relation to my own participation in the research:

I have been given information about this research project and I have understood the explanation. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this research before data collection and analysis are completed. I may do so without giving reasons or without penalty of any kind.

I understand that I will receive a transcript of my own interview so that I can approve or modify details in the interview before data analysis.

I understand that the tape recording of the interview and any notes taken during the interview will be destroyed 5 years after the end of the research.

I understand that I will receive a 1–2 page summary of the research findings when the thesis is accepted.

I understand that I will be identified in the thesis and that my contribution will be acknowledged as such.

Name of Executive Director.....

Signed Date

APPENDIX I: Invitation letter to Dr Walbran of NZQA
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Godwin Utuka
PhD candidate
C/O Postgraduate Office
Faculty of Education
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 17-310
Karori, Wellington
Cell Ph. 02102574945
Email: godwin.utuka@vuw.ac.nz

Dear Dr Walbran, NZQA

Title of Research: Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Comparative Analysis of Practices in Ghana and New Zealand.

Researcher: Godwin Utuka, College of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

I am a Doctoral student in Education (Administration) at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree, I am undertaking research work for my thesis. The research is on quality assurance in higher education and involves a comparative analysis of practices in Ghana and New Zealand. I am under the supervision of Associate Professor Kabini Sanga and Emeritus Professor Cedric Hall both within the College of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

I am inviting you, with the approval of the Chief Executive Officer (NZQA), to be interviewed as part of the data collection for this research. As Victoria University requires that ethics approval be obtained for any research involving human participants, I would like to seek your consent to be interviewed. A consent form for you to complete is attached to this letter. I would be grateful if you could return the completed form to me or e-mail your consent.

If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed at a time, date and place of your convenience. It is envisaged that the interview will take approximately 60 minutes. Questions will clarify for me the processes used by NZQA for quality assurance and seek your impressions on possible future developments in quality assurance that would enhance higher education in New Zealand.

You will receive from me a transcript of your interview so that you can approve or modify details in the interview before I analyse data for my write-up. In any write-up of the data, your name and position within NZQA will remain confidential to myself and my supervisors.

As noted, participation is voluntary; should you wish to withdraw from the research for whatever reason, you are free to do so, without question, at any stage before the data are analysed. All data will be securely stored to prevent access from unauthorised persons and will be destroyed five years after the end of the project.

The final work will be published as my PhD thesis while some aspects will be published as articles and working papers in academic journals and quality assurance conferences. I will also prepare a 1-2 page summary of my research findings after my thesis has been accepted and send you a copy of this summary.

If you require further information or clarification on any of the issues above, please do not hesitate to contact me (details above) or my supervisors (see details below) at Victoria University of Wellington. In the meantime, I attach an information sheet about my research.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards

Godwin Utuka

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APPENDIX J: Interview guide for the Executive Secretary and Senior Assistant Secretary of NAB

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



**Interview Guide:
Executive Secretary and Senior Assistant Secretary of NAB**

The purpose of this interview is to elicit the views of the Executive Secretary and Senior Assistant Secretary of NAB on practices and processes related to quality assurance in higher education in Ghana. In particular, the questionnaire looks at the supervisory/monitoring relationship of NAB with the tertiary sector in Ghana and the perceptions of the interviewees of NAB's impact on the quality assurance practices of tertiary institutions.

Scope of NAB's work:

1. How many higher education institutions are in Ghana, and how many have received accreditation?
 - (i) No. of public universities? _____ No. accredited? _____
 - (ii) No. of private university colleges? _____ No. accredited? _____
 - (iii) No. of polytechnics? _____ No. accredited? _____
 - (iv) Others: Specify number: _____ No. accredited: _____

Relationship of NAB to the tertiary sector:

2.
 - (i) Can you describe the formal relationship that NAB has with the tertiary sector in Ghana in relation to accreditation? (At this point, do not describe the accreditation process in detail.)
 - (ii) In addition to accreditation, do you have any other quality assurance functions in relation to the tertiary sector? If so, please describe these functions.
 - (iii) What documents are available that describe NAB's relationships to the tertiary sector covering accreditation and any other quality assurance functions?
3.
 - (i) In what way(s) does NAB have powers or control over tertiary institutions?
 - (ii) Does NAB exercise these powers and controls?
 - (iii) Are your decisions binding on institutions?
 - (iv) What sanctions exist if institutions do not comply with the decisions of NAB?
 - (v) What have been the reactions of institutions to NAB in relation to the powers, controls and sanctions that NAB are able to exercise? (Probe: Without naming institutions, are you able to give a few examples of the reactions or responses?)
 - (vi) Are there avenues for institutions to appeal against NAB decisions? If so, please describe the process(es) that exist.

- (vii) In what ways do you resolve, or try to resolve, conflict between NAB and a tertiary institution should disagreements arise?

Accreditation process

4. (i) Please describe (in outline form) the processes or procedures that are used to assess/accredit institutions and their programmes?
(ii) Please can you provide a copy of any documentation that describes the accreditation procedures, and any documentation (such as a questionnaire) which is used during the accreditation process to record information about an institution and any of its programmes being assessed.
(iii) Please describe any additional procedures that are used for accrediting distance programmes that are both designed and taught within Ghana (that is, they do not involve an institution outside of Ghana).

Other quality assurance processes (if applicable):

5. (i) Please describe (in outline form) any other quality assurance processes or procedures (not accreditation) that NAB conducts in relation to the tertiary sector in Ghana.
(ii) Please can you provide a copy of any documentation that describes these procedures, and any documentation (such as a questionnaire) which is used during the procedure to record information.

Distance programmes involving foreign institutions

6. (i) Does NAB have any role in the accreditation or approval of programmes developed by universities in other countries that are offered within tertiary institutions in Ghana? If so, please describe this role and the processes that are used for this role.
(ii) What powers, controls or sanctions does NAB have in relation to such programmes?

Reporting

7. (i) To whom, or what body, does NAB report?
(ii) What are the requirements of this reporting? For example, what does a report typically cover in its contents?
(iii) Does the authority to whom NAB reports have the power to overrule the decisions of NAB in relation to its quality assurance role with tertiary institutions? If so, what is this power and has it been exercised?

Impact and further developments

8. (i) Overall, do you think the work of NAB has had a significant impact on the attention being paid to quality assurance within tertiary institutions in Ghana? If so, what changes have you noticed in the practices of institutions?
(ii) Do you think that the work of NAB has acted in any way as a controlling influence on the proliferation of private higher institutions in Ghana? If so, in what way(s)?

- (iii) Do you think there is anything lacking, or in need of improvement, in relation to the present system of quality assurance in the tertiary sector? If so, what needs to be introduced or changed?

Adapting quality assurance systems used in other countries to Ghana's context

- 9. (i) In what ways do you think that the accreditation procedures used by NAB model those used in other countries? Please provide a few examples.
- (ii) To what extent has NAB's membership of INQAAHE influenced the development of quality assurance provisions and practices in the tertiary sector in Ghana? Please provide a few examples.
- (iii) To what extent do you think the developments in quality assurance within the tertiary sector in Ghana have been as a result of international pressures? Are you in any way critical of the international pressure that has been exerted? If so, please explain.
- (iv) What is unique in Ghana's tertiary education system, and more generally in Ghanaian society, that needs to be considered if quality assurance systems from other countries are to be successfully adopted/adapted by Ghana?

APPENDIX K: Interview guide for selected staff from institutions in Ghana
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Interview Guide:

Selected staff from the participating higher institutions in Ghana

The main aim for conducting this interview is to elicit the views of respondents on practices and processes related to quality assurance in higher education in Ghana. In particular, the questionnaire looks at how the supervisory/monitoring role of NAB has impacted on the way institutions assure the quality of the education they provide.

Scope and processes of internal quality assurance unit

1. i) Do you have an internal quality assurance unit? If so, can you please describe its composition, structure and functions?

(If there is no unit)
- ii) Can you please describe the main processes and structures that you have in place for assuring the quality of education provided?
2. How compatible are your institutions internal quality assurance processes for meeting the external requirements of NAB?
3. In some countries, a process known as “quality audit” is undertaken in relation to each institutions systems for quality assurance. Are you familiar with this process? If so has there been any quality audit conducted in your institution and how was the process?

Relationship with NAB

4. Can you describe the formal relationship that your institution has with NAB in relation to assuring quality of education you provide?
5. Do you think the monitoring role of NAB has impacted significantly on the way your institution assures the quality of its education? If so can you please explain how?
6. Has there been any conflict between your internal quality assurance processes and the requirements of NAB? Can you elaborate further and how do you resolve/handle such conflicts?
7. Are there avenues for appealing against decisions made by NAB?

Strengths and weaknesses of external quality assurance process

8. i) What in your view are the major benefits that have arisen from the role of the internal quality assurance unit?
- ii) What in your view are the major benefits that have arisen from the work of NAB in relation to assuring quality of education you provide
- 9 What do you consider as the disadvantages of the work of NAB to your institution?
- 10 Do you think there is anything lacking in the present system of quality assurance in your institution? If so, what needs to be changed?

General

I want to follow up on the very first question I asked. I specifically would like you to tell me:

11. How does your university demonstrate or know that programmes match the needs of learners and stakeholders?
12. How does your university know that the standards of research, teaching and student learning have benefited from institutional quality assurance?
13. How does your university know that its management and administrative support contributes to assuring the quality of education for students?
- 14 What are the main roles that administrators have in relation to assuring educational quality in your institution?
- 15 I am now going to identify some specific provisions that may relate directly or indirectly to assurance of quality at the institutional level. I would like you briefly to rate each of the following in terms of their importance for quality assurance:

	Very important	Of some importance	Of minor importance
Appointment procedures			
Qualifications of applicants (staff)			
Experience of applicants (staff)			
Induction procedures			
Class size for teaching and learning			
Monitoring role of NAB			

Teaching and learning facilities			
Ongoing professional development for your teachers			
Ongoing professional development for administrators			

16. Do you think there is anything lacking, or in need of improvement, in relation to the present system of quality assurance in the tertiary sector? If so, what needs to be introduced or changed?
17. In what ways do you think that the accreditation procedures used by NAB model those used in other countries? Please provide a few examples.
18. To what extent do you think the developments in quality assurance within the tertiary sector in Ghana have been as a result of international pressures? Are you in any way critical of the international pressure that has been exerted? If so, please explain.
19. What is unique in Ghana's tertiary education system, and more generally in Ghanaian society, that needs to be considered if quality assurance systems from other countries are to be successfully adopted/adapted by Ghana?

**APPENDIX L: Interview guide for Convenor of CUAP, Director of NZUAAU,
Director of ITPQ and Dr Walbran of NZQA**

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Interview Guide:

**Convenor of CUAP, Director of NZUAAU, Director of ITPQ, CEO of NZQA or
his/her representative**

The purpose of this interview is to elicit the views of the respondents on practices and processes related to quality assurance in higher education in New Zealand. In particular, the questionnaire looks at the supervisory/monitoring relationship of the external quality assurance agencies with the tertiary sector in New Zealand and the perceptions of the interviewees of the external quality assurance agencies impact on the quality assurance practices of tertiary institutions.

1) Scope of work: ITPQ & NZQA only.

How many higher education institutions are under your control?

Can you identify the different types of institutions that are under your control? And their numbers?

2) Relationship of the agencies to the tertiary sector:

- (i) In my research so far, I have consulted the following:
- CUAP (Website)
 - NZUAAU (Website)
 - NZQA (Website)
 - ITPQ (Website)

Are there any other main sources of information about your processes that I should contact?

(ii) In general, are the processes as documented those that are followed? If not are there any other procedures which you use? Clarify.

Distance programmes involving foreign institutions

3. (i) Does your organization have any role in the accreditation/ approval/assessment or auditing of programmes developed by universities in other countries that are offered within tertiary institutions in New Zealand? If so, please describe this role and the processes that are used.

- (ii) What powers, controls or sanctions does your organization have in relation to such programmes?
4. (i) In what way(s) does your organization have powers or control over tertiary institutions?
- (ii) Does your organization exercise these powers and controls?
 - (iii) Are your decisions binding on institutions?
 - (iv) What sanctions exist if institutions do not comply with the decisions of your organization?
 - (v) What have been the reactions of institutions to your organization in relation to the powers, controls and sanctions that you are able to exercise? (Probe: Without naming institutions, are you able to give a few examples of the reactions or responses?)
 - (vi) Are there avenues for institutions to appeal against your decisions? If so, please describe the process(es) that exist.
 - (vii) In what ways do you resolve, or try to resolve, conflict between your organization and a tertiary institution should disagreements arise?

Reporting

5. (i) To whom, or what body, does your organization report?
- (ii) What are the requirements of this reporting? For example, what does a report typically cover in its contents?
 - (iii) Does the authority to whom your organization reports have the power to overrule the decisions of your organization in relation to its quality assurance role with tertiary institutions? If so, what is this power and has it been exercised?

Impact and further developments

6. (i) Overall, do you think the work of your organization has had a significant impact on the attention being paid to quality assurance within the sector you serve? If so, what changes have you noticed in the practices of institutions?
- (ii) How does your organization relate to the other EQAA in NZ for the maintenance of the quality of higher education.
 - (iii) Are there any changes or deletions or additions you would like to make to quality assurance activities your organization undertakes? If so, what are they?
 - (iv) Do you think there is anything lacking, or in need of improvement, in relation to the present system of quality assurance in the tertiary sector in NZ? If so, what needs to be introduced or changed?

Adapting quality assurance systems used in other countries to New Zealand's context

7. (i) Which aspects of your work/practices do you consider very effective in the maintenance and improvement of quality of higher education in NZ?
- (ii) This study wishes to make recommendations for the future development of practices of quality assurance in Ghana. What aspects of your practices would you recommend as most worthy of external consideration (I realise that you cannot specifically comment on Ghana's situation).

For NZQA only

8. (i) Please provide documentation, or guide me to documentation, about the process of “evaluation” being undertaken in relation to tertiary institutions.

- (ii) What does the “evaluation” strategy provide that is better than, or missing from previous monitoring processes?

**APPENDIX M: Interview guide for the selected staff from the institutions in
New Zealand**

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



**Interview Guide:
Selected staff from the participating higher institutions in New Zealand**

The main aim for conducting this interview is to obtain the views of respondents on practices and processes related to quality assurance in higher education in NZ. The questionnaire covers the role of external quality assurance agencies responsible for maintenance and improvement of quality in higher education in New Zealand, your own institution's quality assurance processes, and your perceptions of what might be the strengths and weaknesses with current approaches to quality assurance.

1. Provisions and processes relating to internal quality assurance:

- (i) Composition, structure and functions of internal quality assurance units.

Does your institution have an internal quality assurance unit? If so, can you please describe its composition, structure and main functions?

If there is a unit, ask the next sub-question:

- (ii) Other major quality assurance processes

Excluding the work of the unit, are there any other major quality assurance processes within your institution that focus in some way on the quality of your educational programmes?

If there is no unit, ask the next sub-question:

- (iii) Structures and processes for assuring the quality of programmes in the absence of internal unit

Can you please describe the main structures and processes which your institution has in place for assuring the quality of education that it provides?

- (iv) What documents do you recommend that I consult for obtaining information about your institutions processes?

2. Strengths of quality assurance mechanisms provided by the institutions:
- (i) What do you think are the main strengths of the quality assurance provisions that your institution has in place? Give one or two examples if you can.
 - (ii) What do you think are the main weaknesses or limitations in relation to the quality assurance provisions that your institution has in place? Explain further (if necessary).

3. Impact of the EQAA's work on the institution

What external quality assurance agencies does your institution interact with?

Do you think the work of the EQAA's has impacted significantly on the way your institution assures the quality of its education? If so, can you give a few examples or explain how?

What in your view are the major

- (a) benefits and
- (b) problems

that have arisen from the work of these agencies in relation to assuring the quality of the education that your institution provides?

4. Compatibility of processes

How well do you think your institution's internal quality assurance processes meet the external requirements of the various agencies? (Probe, if necessary.)

5. Conflict between internal and external processes

Has there been any conflict between your internal quality assurance processes and the requirements of the external agencies? Can you give one or two examples, but do not name people? How do you resolve/handle such conflicts?

6. Avenue for appealing for redress

Are there avenues for appealing against decisions made by these agencies? If so, please describe.

7. Areas in need of improvement in the current quality assurance process

More generally, do you think there is anything lacking, or in need of improvement, in relation to the present system of quality assurance in the NZ tertiary sector? If so, what needs to be introduced or changed?

Particular aspects of your institution's internal quality assurance processes

I want to follow up on the earlier questions I asked about your own institution's internal quality assurance processes. I specifically would like you to tell me:

8. Ways of tracking the needs of learners and stakeholders

In what main way(s) does your institution demonstrate or know that its educational programmes match the needs of learners and stakeholders?

9. Ways of verifying the benefits of teaching/learning derived from quality assurance

In what main way(s) does your institution demonstrate or know that *teaching quality* and *student learning* have benefited from the attention being paid to quality assurance in your institution?

10. Roles of support staff in assuring educational quality

- (i) What are the main roles that support staff have in relation to assuring educational quality in your institution? Please give a few examples.
- (ii) Does your institution monitor in any way the performance of its management and support staff in relation to the contribution they make to the quality assurance of your educational programmes? If so, explain how or give an example or two.

11. Internal pressures

- (i) Which aspects of your practices do you consider very effective in the maintenance and improvement of the quality of your institution?
- (ii) This study wishes to make recommendations for the future development of practices of quality assurance in Ghana. What aspects of your practices would you recommend as most worthy of external consideration. (I realise that you cannot specifically comment on Ghana's situation.)