Original Article

A Review of TVET Quality Assurance Practice in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

The movement towards internationalisation of education and training practices to facilitate the global flow of labour, technology, trade, and industry; has brought to the forefront the discussions of national TVET strategies, the issues of credibility of qualifications in regard to national economic growth and graduates' mobility nationally and internationally in search of employment opportunities. This pressure to internationalise TVET systems and qualifications has mainstreamed the development and implementation of national and regional frameworks for quality assurance through which the comparability of standards and qualifications can be achieved. Document analysis research methodology has been used to review and analyse existing regulatory frameworks on quality assurance of education and training in Uganda so as to establish: 1) Existing quality TVET assurance governance entities, 2) Regulatory frameworks that guide TVET quality assurance, and 3) Progress on future opportunities for quality assurance. The findings showed that: numerous loopholes exist in the quality assurance processes of the education sector as a whole; the TVET sub-sector in Uganda is still being guided by the BTVET Act of 2008 lacks a regulatory structure to oversee quality assurance throughout the entire TVET sub-sector in the country; lack of a policy implementation action plan for the TVET Policy; governance of TVET quality assurance in the country is scattered among many government departments and agencies; and existing quality assurance guiding frameworks never encompassed investment and financing of TVET. The paper recommends that the Government of Uganda prioritises the: establishment of the TVET council as envisaged in the TVET Policy, the development and operationalisation of the TVET qualifications framework and TVET qualifications registry system, and the development of a TVET policy implementation Action Plan.

INTRODUCTION

As the world is reshaped by technology, demographic changes and globalisation, various countries are reimagining their workforce development systems to align them towards producing a 21st century workforce that is capable of adapting, working, learning, and thriving at the regional and international stage. In his article entitled '*Reimagining Globalization in a 21st-Century World'*, Offenheiser (2023) noted that we are entering what some commentators call Globalization 2.0 in which globalisation as we have known it, is being reconfigured with more emphasis on the importance of proximity. A study showed that globalisation has amplified the spread of technology across borders in two ways. First, globalisation allows countries to gain easier access to foreign knowledge. Second, it enhances international competition—including as a result of the rise of emerging market firms—and this strengthens firms' incentives to innovate and adopt foreign technologies (Aslam et al., 2018). With the world steadily becoming more connected through decades of technological advancements, the need for internationalisation of education and training practices to facilitate the global flow of labour, technology, trade, and industry has become more pronounced than ever.

The movement towards internationalisation has brought to the forefront the discussions of national TVET strategies, the issues of credibility of qualifications in regard to national economic growth and graduates' mobility in such job opportunities. In today's age of global knowledge and technology, an interconnected network and global awareness are increasingly viewed as major and sought-after assets. With the current labour market requiring graduates to have international and intercultural skills to be able to interact in a global setting, institutions are placing more importance on internationalisation so as to give students an opportunity for "real world, real-time" experiential learning in areas that cannot simply be taught (Hénard et al., 2012). This pressure to internationalise TVET systems and qualifications has mainstreamed the development and implementation of national and regional frameworks for quality assurance through which the comparability of standards and qualifications can be achieved.

In aspiration (d) of Vision 2040, Ugandans desired to have access to affordable quality education services (National Planning Authority, 2013). The country has for the last decade grappled with interventions to support the creation of needed employable skills and competencies relevant to the national transformational labour market as opposed to just the acquisition of educational certificates. Such skills can only be achieved through a quality-assured TVET system. The purpose of this paper therefore is to review the current quality assurance practice in the country by answering three questions: 1) What are the existing quality TVET assurance governance entities in the country? 2) what regulatory frameworks guide TVET Quality assurance in Uganda? and 3) What progress has been made on future opportunities for quality assurance in Uganda?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The TVETipedia Glossary defines TVET as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the

educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (UNEVOC-UNESCO, 2023). The term is also referred to as "education, training and skills development relating to a wide range of occupational fields, production, services and livelihoods which includes work-based learning and continuing training and professional development which may lead to qualifications" (ILO - UNESCO, 2018) The term encompasses skills delivered right from primary through secondary and post-primary; as well as formal, non-formal and informal pathways. Thus, from this definition, TVET can be looked at as the value-adding part of general education that interfaces and thus brings together technologies and their related sciences with practical skills, attitudes and knowledge relating to jobs and society's livelihoods.

Quality assurance (QA) is defined by UNESCO (2017, pg xiii) as a component of quality management that is 'focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled. The term is used in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) to describe all activities within the continuous improvement cycle, such as assurance and enhancement activities (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2015). TVETA (2018, pg 8) outlines both the procedural and transformational concepts of quality. The former lays focus on defining systems and procedures that can produce standardised quality based on predetermined specifications, whereas the latter emphasises transformation and improvement of the organisation based on the changing requirements of the environment with a focus towards the production of sustainable quality fit for purpose. In the context of Uganda, quality assurance is the mechanism put in place to guarantee that education is "fit for purpose"

(National Council for Higher Education, 2014). The Ministry of Education and Sports (2019, Pg 74) in the TVET Policy, refers to TVET quality assurance as the deliberate and methodical procedures aimed at guaranteeing stakeholder's confidence in the products and services offered by TVET institutions in the country. Considering that TVET is a diversified and complex subsystem of education and training that includes different types of providers (private and public, formal, non-formal and informal), then Quality Assurance in TVET needs to first be clearly defined at the national level and then secondly be implemented at institutional level through mandatory external and internal mechanisms (TVETA, 2018).

The twenty-nine countries that expressed their willingness to commit to enhancing the competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area at the Bologna declaration of June 1999 put emphasis on the achievement of greater compatibility and comparability of the systems of higher education. They agreed to the promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies through continual support of concrete measures to achieve tangible forward steps (The European Higher Education Area, 1999). According to Blanco-Ramrez and Berger (2014), quality practices are an overarching notion that includes all initiatives made to assess and prove the excellence of higher education institutions. They add that rankings, certification of programs and institutions, and other forms of recognition all comprise instances of quality practices in the higher education sector (Blanco-Ramı́rez & Berger, 2014). This indicates that the nature of quality processes is becoming more global.

Previously, research on quality in higher education has been conducted independently of access, relevance, and investment, and thus, today's leaders in higher education must make judgments regarding quality based on the local needs for investment, relevance, and access (Blanco-Ramı́rez & Berger,

2014). The research found that the political environment in North Cyprus, the lack of staff engagement, the restricted infrastructure and financial support, and the limited strategic planning activities are the main issues with the planning and execution of quality assurance in higher education. These issues coupled with the ambiguity of policies of higher education, impede efforts of quality assurance (Silman et al., 2012). Considering that TVET quality can be affected by meagre resources, then for quality assurance practices to meet the needs of both the trainees and the labour market, there is a need for governments to effectively support and finance the process. (Gebremeskel, 2019).

Whereas an increase in the number and importance of accrediting agencies and other quality assurance bodies indicate a trend toward more highly organised efforts to manage the delivery and administration of quality in higher education (Blanco-Ramı´rez & Berger, 2014), The existence of multiple accrediting bodies for TVET programmes creates confusion and raises concerns about the differing quality of the programmes, as well as limiting the mobility of TVET graduates who wish to continue their education at institutions accredited by various agencies(Amin, 2016). The use of several quality assurance mechanisms results in an increase in the amount of work that must be done, but there is no guarantee that this will improve quality in any significant manner (Anderson, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

Document analysis research methodology has been used to review and analyse existing legal and policy frameworks on Quality Assurance of Education and Training in Uganda so as to assess and contextualise the country's TVET Quality Assurance practice. Bowen (2009) defines document analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Whereas a wide array of documents is better, the question for this paper was more about the quality of the document rather than the quantity of documents analysed (Bowen, 2009). As such, the paper explored and compared existing quality assurance laws, policies, and guidelines with the existing practice to identify loopholes within the Quality Assurance practice. The paper then analyses the future direction of TVET Quality Assurance in the country to identify gaps and makes recommendations that should address those gaps.

FINDINGS

TVET Quality Assurance Governance in Uganda

Currently, TVET Quality Assurance in Uganda is fragmented as it is offered by different Government ministries and agencies. The ministries and agencies are summarised in *Table 1* below.

TVET Quality Assurance Regulatory Framework in Uganda

A number of legal policies, regulations and guidelines geared towards ensuring that education and training in Uganda are of good quality have been enacted. These are summarised in *Table 2* and briefly described below.

Table 1: TVET Quality Assurance entities and their functions

Entity	TVET Quality Assurance functions
Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES)	Responsible for Policy, Financing, Licensing of Private Institutions, Regulation & accreditation of TVET training & education.
National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)	Responsible for the establishment of institutions of higher learning, ensuring the delivery of quality and relevant education to all qualified persons, as well as recognition and equation of qualifications.
Directorate of Education Standards (DES)	As the quality assurance arm of the Ministry of Education and Sports, DES is mandated to ensure continual improvement in the quality of education and training in schools and institutions.
Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT)	Responsible for: developing occupational standards; conducting inspection and accrediting registered training institutions/enterprises and instructors/technical teachers/ skilled practitioners in the world of work for Uganda Vocational Qualification Framework (UVQF) assessment; and development, expansion, and improvement of the UVQF.
Uganda Business and Technical Examinations Board (UBTEB)	Mandated to streamline, regulate and coordinate examinations and awards in the Business and Technical profession.
Uganda Nurses and Midwives Examinations Board (UNMEB)	Responsible for streamlining, regulating, and coordinating examinations and awards for the nurses and midwives profession.
Uganda Allied Health Examinations Board (UAHEB)	Responsible for streamlining, regulating, and coordinating examinations and awards for Allied Health Profession.
The Uganda Nurses and Midwives Council	Responsible for setting and regulating standards of training and practice, registered nurses and midwives and providing professional guidelines for public safety and provision of quality nursing and midwifery services.

Table 2: Quality Assurance regulatory frameworks

Regulatory Framework	Year of commencement	Quality Assurance Purpose
The Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act.	2001(Amended in, 2003 and 2006)	To streamline the establishment, administration, and standards of universities and other higher education institutions in the country.
The Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions (institutional standards) Regulations.	2005	To provide for standards of Institutional Libraries, Curricula and Physical Facilities.
The Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions (Quality Assurance) Regulations.	2008	To provide a mechanism to ensure that institutions of higher learning are offering relevant, apt, and suitable programmes, employing qualified faculty and getting students with the necessary requirements.
The Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) Act.	2008	To separate training and delivery of BTVET from quality assurance functions, establish organs responsible for the regulation of qualifications.
The Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards Indicators for Education Institutions.	2009	To provide a fundamental set of measures or benchmarks of expected performance and achievement for successful teaching, learning, and institutional management.

Regulatory Framework	Year of commencement	Quality Assurance Purpose
The Establishment, Licensing, Registration and Classification Guidelines for private schools/institutions in Uganda.	2013	To provide procedures, requirements, standards, classification, and regulations for establishing and operating private schools/institutions.
The Uganda Vision 2040 and subsequent National Development Plans I, 2015 and II, 2021.	2015, 2021	To provide for development routes and strategies to operationalise the aspirations of Ugandans to turn from a largely rural, low-income nation into a dynamic upper-middle-income one.
BTVET Strategic Plan (Skilling Uganda).	2011-2021	To address the major challenges regarding relevance, quality, access, equity, management, and financial sustainability of BTVET.
Quality Assurance Framework for Universities and the Licensing Process for Higher Education Institutions.	2014	Aims to ensure that the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) and higher education institutions work together to achieve and enhance the quality of higher education
The TVET Policy.	2019	To provide for a: structure to coordinate, regulate and harmonise TVET at all levels; framework for resource mobilisation, utilisation, and sustainability for quality TVET provision and delivery with a strategic direction towards an employer-led system.; and establishment of the TVET Council that shall be the regulatory body for TVET in the country.
Performance management guidelines for Tertiary Institutions and Schools.	2020	To promote the delivery of quality education to learners in Tertiary Institutions and Schools.

The Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, 2001 (As Amended in 2003 and as Amended in 2006)

The coming into force of this Act established the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) and streamlined the establishment, administration, and standards of universities and other higher education institutions in the country, which included some TVET institutions at the time (Government of Uganda, 2001). The functions assigned to the National Council for Higher Education by the Act include, among others: Accreditations of Private Tertiary and degree awarding Institutions and Private Universities; monitoring, evaluating, and regulating institutions of Higher Education; and enforcing compliance with the minimum admission criteria for under-graduate and higher degree programmes. Other functions include the determination of foreign qualifications (both academic and professional) with those awarded in Uganda; certifying that institutions of Higher Education have adequate and accessible physical structures and staff; ensuring compliance to minimum standards for courses of study and the equating of qualifications; and ensuring that adequate opportunities for carrier guidance and counselling are provided by the institutions.

The Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions (Institutional Standards) Regulations, 2005

These regulations provide for standards of Institutional Libraries, Curricula and Physical Facilities (Government of Uganda, 2005). To this effect, the instrument details regulations on the standards for 1) Libraries - information resources, library buildings, staffing, and library services; 2)

Curricula - general requirements, curriculum and programmes, and assessment requirements; 3) Physical Facilities - application of standards for physical facilities, compliance with building code, safety of physical facilities, fire safety, teaching laboratories, hospitals, workshops and studios, catering and accommodation, utility services, and a master plan.

The Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions (Quality Assurance) Regulations, 2008

These regulations provide for a mechanism to ensure that institutions of higher learning in Uganda are: offering relevant, apt, and suitable programmes and courses; employing faculty that possess the essential qualifications and skills; and getting students with the necessary academic and skills requirement (Government of Uganda, 2008). To this effect, the instrument provides regulations on the approval/ clearance/ validation of programs and courses, minimum program duration and contact hours; instruction (teaching and learning) resources, examination guidelines and graduation requirements; standards for student's admission to higher learning institutions and universities; and academic faculty standards. The regulations also include provisions on academic staff assessment, accreditations standards for programmes of study, provisions on staff review committees, and provisions on interim authority, provisional license, charter, and affiliation.

The Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) Act, 2008

The Act provides for, among other objectives, the separation of training and delivery of BTVET from quality assurance functions; and mechanisms and the establishment of organs responsible for the regulation of qualifications (standards, assessment, and certification) and training delivery in the formal and non-formal institution (Government of Uganda, 2008 (b)). The Act also defines the scope and levels of BTVET programmes and the roles of the different stakeholders in the provision of BTVET;

establishes an institutional framework for the promotion and coordination of BTVET; and specifies the provider of BTVET.

Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards (BRMS) Indicators for Education Institutions, 2009

These indicators were issued by the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) of the Ministry of Education and Sports to schools and institutions as a guide on the administration and organisation of all schools and institutions (Pre-primary, Primary, Secondary, BTVET, and Teacher Education) so as to achieve the Ministry of Education's vision of "providing quality and appropriate Education and Sports Services for All" (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2009). With the Minimum Standards Indicators serving as the fundamental set of measures or benchmarks of expected performance and achievement for successful teaching, learning, and institutional management, the BRMS describes the bare minimum requirements for the provision of high-quality education and training in educational institutions. The indicators for measuring or benchmarking against to determine the success or failure of educational institutions include overall management; provision and management of structures and facilities; staff organisation and development; organisation and management of teaching and learning processes; and organisation and development of co-curricular activities. Other indicators include learners' organisation and development; finance generation and management; organisation and development of institution parents/community; organisation and development of health, sanitation, and environment; and discipline management and development.

Licensing, Registering and Classification Guidelines for Private Schools/Institutions in Uganda, 2013

The Education sector, as mandated by the Education Act of 2008, the Education Sector developed and implemented a set of standards for the professional and ethical behaviour of school/institution

personnel, as well as a plan for providing a high-quality education service that is affordable with the aim of steering and guiding the provision of education in accordance with Government regulations and standards (Ministry of Education, 2013). The guidelines outline the licensing and registration process for private schools; provide procedures, requirements, standards, classification, and regulation for establishing and operating private schools/institutions; and encourage private sector participation in assisting the Government's efforts to effectively implement existing laws, particularly the 2008 Education Act regulations and policies.

The Uganda Vision 2040 and the National Development Plans

"A transformed Ugandan society from a peasant to a modern and prosperous country within 30 years" is the vision statement of Uganda Vision 2040, which was adopted by the Cabinet in 2007. The Vision offers development routes and strategies to operationalise this vision and aspires to turn Uganda from a largely rural, low-income nation into a dynamic upper-middle-income one. To improve value addition and access to markets, Government pledged, in Vision 2040, to improve regulation and enforcement capacity in safety standards and quality assurance; change the entire educational system to emphasise practical skills, aptitude, and moral values; revise the educational curriculum, assessment system, and teaching/ training methods to respond to the demands of the market; and redirect tertiary education and training towards development of identified gaps in talent and skills. One of the objectives and interventions for national skills development in the Government's Second National Development Plan (for the period 2015 - 2020) was to improve the quality and relevance of skills development through reviewing and strengthening quality assurance mechanisms at all levels, strengthening the development of skills through a system of international standardisation and certification of the qualifications framework; enhancing the ability of examination boards to assess and provide skills that are pertinent, applicable and of high quality; developing a mechanism for standardisation, flexibility and uniformity among universities and other higher education institutions for better knowledge transfer and skill development (National Planning Authority, 2015; Pg 201).

BTVET Strategic Plan (Skilling Uganda), 2011-2021

The BTVET strategic plan, titled 'Skilling Uganda', was designed to address the major challenges identified regarding the relevance, quality, access, equity, management, and financial sustainability of BTVET (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2011). Among the Plan's five objectives to reach the sub-sector's higher-level objective was increasing the quality of skills provision. One of the strategies for achieving this objective was the establishment of better-quality assurance systems for public and private BTVET providers through the introduction of an accreditation system for BTVET providers and an internal quality management system in BTVET institutions.

Quality Assurance Framework for Universities and the Licensing Process for Higher Education Institutions, 2014

Developed in an institutional, national, regional, and international but rapidly changing context, this framework aims to ensure that the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) and higher education institutions work together to achieve and enhance the quality of higher education. The Quality Assurance Framework comprises two major components: (a) The regulatory component at the level of the NCHE and (b) The institutional component at each individual university level (National Council for Higher Education, 2014).

Performance Management Guidelines for Tertiary Institutions and Schools, 2020

These Performance Management Guidelines are designed to address the unique context of the Teaching Service and to promote the delivery of

quality education to learners in Tertiary Institutions and Schools. The purpose of the Performance Management Guidelines is to support Tertiary Institutions and Schools in the development and implementation of Performance Agreements/Plans. Specifically, performance management in the Teaching Service is intended to: (a) cultivate a performance culture; (b) promote accountability among teaching staff; (c) link the performance of Heads and Deputy Heads of tertiary institutions and schools, and teaching staff to learning outcomes; and (d) enhance the quality of education at all levels (Ministry of Education, 2020).

Current Quality Assurance and Inspection Process in Uganda

To help education professionals improve the experiences and achievements of learners in schools and business, technical and vocational institutions (BTVET), the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) developed, circulated and implemented guides that explain how schools/training institutions, sub-counties and districts can: assess the standard of the education they offer; identify important areas of strength upon which to build; identify discrepancies between their goals and actual practice; and decide which objectives, goals, and performance benchmarks to include in their improvement plans (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2012).

The aim of this wider circulation was to increase transparency in inspection, improve partnerships among education professionals and, by so doing, support national efforts to raise the standard of education nationwide. Part 6 of the guide sets out to: explain the distinctive role and purpose of external and internal evaluations; outline methodologies and approaches to inspection; and present approaches to improving the consistency, validity, and reliability of approaches to inspection, monitoring, and evaluation among all education professionals. The inspection serves two aims and these are: to provide public assurance about the quality of education across the country; and to contribute to improvements in education at the level of individual schools, within sub-counties and districts and across the country as a whole. The inspection involves both external and internal inspection.

External evaluation/Inspection takes place at the national level through the work of inspectors in the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) and at the local level through the work of inspectors working within districts, sub-counties, and municipalities. Inspection is planned according to a set cycle of activities. All schools are expected to be inspected regularly by evaluators external to the school. *Internal evaluation, a*lso known as *self-evaluation/inspection,* involves the schools and institutions conducting self-evaluations of the quality of the education they offer as part of the process of reviewing school performance and planning for school development. Reporting on self-evaluation is an important part of a school's accountability to its stakeholders in addition to its function in the process of improvement. Internal evaluation involves the entire community of the school: headteachers and staff, governing bodies, Foundation bodies, parent representatives and young people themselves.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Uganda are autonomous institutions that run their affairs with a lot of freedom, yet they deal in a business that produces graduates that must fit in today's competitive environment. The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) is mandated to establish standards as a framework to regulate HEIs, monitor for compliance levels and periodically conduct audits in the institutions. Thus, NCHE periodically (four audits are planned for each quarter) conducts compliance audits in HEIs and engages in the continuous collection, analysis, and interpretation of data from HEIs to form a basis for evidence-based decision-making.

The Assessment and Certification Department (ACD) of The Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) conducts inspection and accrediting registered training institutions/ enterprises as UVQF

assessment centres in the country. On-site inspection visits are conducted by the DIT inspection team, comprising technical experts of the relevant occupation applied for, to verify/ analyse the assessment environment. The department is responsible for the development and circulation of the parameters and guidelines that are requisite for a centre to qualify for inspection and subsequent accreditation as an assessment centre. After concluding the inspection, DIT communicates feedback to applicant centres within a reasonable time frame specifying whether they have been accredited or not. In the event that the centre has not been accredited, DIT makes a recommendation of possible improvements/remedial requirements for unsatisfactory findings.

Progress on Future Opportunities for Quality Assurance - The TVET Policy, 2019

The TVET Policy offers Uganda the opportunity to improve the current TVET quality assurance process. Cognizant of the numerous challenges within the TVET system, key among which was Quality Assurance of the sub-sector, a Policy for the TVET sub-sector was adopted by the Government of Uganda Cabinet on January 14 2019. The policy approval kick-started the process of forming a solid foundation for efficient TVET policy implementation with a strategic direction towards an employer-led system. One of the institutional arrangements provided for by the policy is the establishment of the TVET Council, which shall be the regulatory body for TVET in the country. Once established, the TVET Council shall provide the quality assurance oversight so needed in the TVET Sub-sector. To ensure a well-represented labour market (world of work), the planned TVET Council's membership will consist of two-thirds (2/3) or sixty-six percent (66%) being employers from the world of work. Therefore, regulating TVET through the implementation of accreditation, registration, qualifications, and training standards for TVET providers and institutions, trainers, trainees, and programs shall be the institutional duty of the employers through the TVET Council (Ministry of Eduction and Sports, 2019). To achieve this mandate, the TVET Council is envisaged, among other roles and functions, to focus on: working with employers through their respective Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to develop national occupational standards, TVET qualifications and Competence Based Curriculum, as well as maintaining databases and ensuring the quality of standards, providers, qualifications, instructors, and trainees at the various levels of TVET in the country. The policy has been in existence for four years now, and *Table 3* shows a summary of progress on the implementation process of the TVET Policy quality assurance actions.

Table 3: Implementation progress of the TVET Policy (2019) Quality Assurance Actions

TVET Policy Quality Assurance Actions	Implementation Status
The Ministry of Education and Sports and other Ministries involved in TVET delivery to devolve their regulatory and quality assurance roles to the TVET Council so as to eliminate redundancies and duplicate activities within the quality control processes and provide a uniform measure for standards and quality within the TVET system.	Not yet Implemented
The regulatory function under the DIT standards and qualifications arm will be managed by the regulatory body the TVET Council.	Not yet Implemented
To ensure the efficiency of TVET Assessment quality assurance operations, the four existing assessment institutions are to be merged into one for health and the other for Technical.	Process commenced and then was stayed
A transitional period not exceeding 14 months is required to put in place the institutional framework like the TVET Council.	Not yet implemented

TVET Policy Quality Assurance Actions	Implementation Status
Transitional arrangements to manage the TVET changes require the establishment of an Implementation Working Group (IWG) comprising relevant government ministries and social partners (employers and employees) with authority to oversee and guide the process and make decisions on the reforms.	Established but largely not engaged in the implementation process
A multi-ministerial committee at the Permanent Secretary level to give policy direction and guidance to the IWP.	Not implemented
A secretariat of not more than four (4) TVET experts to coordinate and provide support to the activities of all ministries and stakeholders in TVET until a permanent structure is in place.	Established and then disbanded after two years
Institutionalise the inspection of the TVET sub-sector by developing, disseminating, and implementing the required processes, frameworks, and tools for inspection; and the TVET inspectors' code of conduct.	Not yet implemented
Develop the Uganda TVET Qualifications Framework to ensure quality assurance of the assessment and qualification processes.	Draft Framework developed
Establishing a TVET Directorate in the Ministry of Education and Sports, which will be responsible for the coordination and successful implementation of TVET delivery/training.	Implemented

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Despite all legal policy frameworks, regulations and guidelines presented earlier being geared towards assuring the quality of the country's Education and Training delivery, the entire Education system has notably addressed the prevailing shortage of skills needed by industry and the economy as a whole. In the TVET Policy, it is noted TVET delivery currently does not address the shortage of practical skills required in the economy for income generation because the current training emphasises the acquisition of academic certificates instead of emphasising the acquisition of the requisite skills and competencies needed in the world of work (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2019).

This situation has been exacerbated by, among various other factors, the numerous loopholes in the quality assurance processes of the Education sector as a whole that have largely focused on the general education sub-sector, thereby leaving the TVET sub-sector with a minimal focus in terms of quality assurance. As a result of this loophole, current training in TVET institutions has skewed towards the acquisition of academic certificates and pays little attention towards the acquisition of the requisite skills and competencies needed in the world of work. The delivery methods have also largely remained theoretical and academic as opposed to the flexible, work-oriented, and practical delivery approaches they are envisioned to be. As a direct consequence of this state of affairs, there has been a significant decline in economic productivity and competitiveness, which has resulted in high rates of either unemployment or underemployment for TVET graduates (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2019). From a Quality Assurance standpoint, these loopholes in the country's TVET system need to be bridged through the establishment of TVET-dedicated quality control mechanisms.

The findings showed that the TVET sub-sector in Uganda is currently being guided by the BTVET Act of 2008, whose key elements to a large extent have not been operationalised. This is partly due to a number of challenges that include, among others: lapping management and regulatory mandates; the absence of guiding institutional structures/frameworks; and the nonexistence of TVET sub-sector specific procedures and guidelines that establish and regulate TVET Institutions (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2019). Also, key among the notable omissions in the

Act was the establishment of a regulatory structure to oversee Quality Assurance throughout the entire TVET sub-sector in the country. This omission in the Act was critical because then the sub-sector had to rely on the already over-stretched structures of general education that, to a large extent, lacked TVET expertise. As a result, the subsector has lagged behind in terms of TVET-specific curriculum, delivery and assessment standards and guidelines, as well as well-defined procedures for licensing registration, approval, and accreditation of TVET programmes, providers, assessors, trainers and centres for assessment.

Placing employers and industry who are the consumers of the output of the country's TVET system, as envisaged in the TVET Policy, at the helm of the TVET quality assurance structure is both a tactical and strategic feat for the country if wholesomely achieved going forward. This strategy has the potential to enable the country to achieve the short-term steps and actions as well as the long-term broad TVET goals. However, the TVET policy was a decision of the Cabinet from that time onwards became the executive practice of the Government aimed at guiding all stakeholders on the mandatory practices and approaches which henceforth formed the bedrock on which the country's TVET system was to be based, implementation progress has been so slow and bogged by numerous issues four years down the road. Many of the proposed actions in the policy have remained on paper as the technical people responsible for their implementation have preferred cherry-picking and implementing only those actions and structures that most benefit their selfish agenda.

Whereas the country had meticulously, through the TVET Policy and accompanying standards and guidelines, laid out a clearly defined path towards ensuring quality assurance of the entire TVET system, the findings showed that there was no policy implementation action plan. This omission creates a significant gap in terms of providing for a gradual rollout of all of the quality assurance

measures included in the policy. Having such a costed Action Plan in existence would have addressed major challenges that are currently hindering the implementation of policy provisions, such as conflicting and often intersecting mandates of TVET implementing stakeholders, uncertainties and anxieties about the future job security of staff in the Ministry Departments, and Agencies that are to undergo mergers and restructuring; and implementation financial constraints. The absence of a Policy Implementation Action Plan has created grey areas within the Policy implementation process that have been exploited by the technical people supposed to inclement actions to only prioritise those actions and structures that do not affect their jobs and livelihoods.

Considering that, as noted by Blanco-Ramı´rez & Berger (2014), rankings, certification of programs and institutions, and other forms of recognition all comprise instances of quality practices in the higher education sector, the findings show that governance of TVET Quality Assurance in the country is scattered among many government departments and agencies. Since TVET is a diversified and complex subsystem of education and training that includes private and public, formal, non-formal and informal providers of TVET, then this uncoordinated governance of TVET is bound to cause confusion and concerns about the varying quality of TVET programs and qualifications in the country (Amin, 2016). The scattering of quality assurance functions and ambiguity of guiding policies and frameworks impedes efforts of quality assurance (Silman, Gökçekuş, & İşman, 2012), and also hinders tangible forward steps towards comparable criteria and methodologies as put forward by The European Higher Education Area (1999), that would enable the country to gradually harmonise and integrate with regional and international quality assurance mechanisms.

The findings show that the quality assurance guiding frameworks only focused on the quality of education and training, relevance and infrastructure

but never encompassed investment and financing of TVET. This is contrary to the observations of Gebremeskel (2019) that since TVET quality can be affected by meagre resources, then for quality assurance practices to meet the needs of both the trainees and the labour market, there is need for governments to effectively support and finance the process; and those of Blanco-Ramı́rez and Berger (2014) that today's leaders in higher education must make judgments regarding quality based on the local needs for investment, relevance, and access.

CONCLUSION

Given the rising expectations for high-quality TVET from both the workplace and society, it follows that TVET providers now have to deal with the same quality concerns that businesses have been dealing with for decades. These implications have become even more pronounced and serious for the TVET sub-sector, which has, among other shortcomings, continued to struggle with society's negative perceptions and issues of recognition; and competition from the general Education pathway, Universities, and distance education. To cope with the 21st century skills requirement, the TVET Sub-sector in Uganda needs to benchmark how the private sector and industry have relied on Quality Assurance of their processes and products to remain competitive in a volatile market. The paper has analysed the governance of quality assurance in the country, the frameworks for quality assurance in Uganda and how the Quality Assurance Inspection process is undertaken. The paper has then discussed the findings to establish loopholes within the TVET Quality Assurance practice of Uganda that may have to be addressed based on the recommendations made hereafter.

Recommendations

The findings of this paper have found that quality assurance governance in the country is scattered among various and often competing government departments and agencies, guiding frameworks are numerous and ambiguous, and the TVET quality assurance opportunities envisaged by the TVET policy are selectively being implemented. Therefore, it recommended that the Government of Uganda:

- Prioritises the development and operationalisation of the TVET Qualifications framework that should become the basis for quality assurance of TVET programmes and the entire qualifications system.

- Expediates the establishment of the TVET Council as envisaged in the TVET Policy to regulate TVET through the establishment of standards, qualifications, registration, and accreditation systems for institutions/providers, programmes, and trainers.

- Establishes and continuously updates a TVET qualifications registry system into which accredited TVET qualifications shall be registered and made available for reference to all stakeholders in and outside the country.

- Expediates the development of a comprehensive TVET Policy Implementation Action Plan that will, among other things, include:

- The Implementation Action Plan Matrix will spell out in great detail the sequence of tasks that must be completed in order to accomplish the policy goals and objectives. This will ensure that the actions to be taken are directly linked to specific sections or provisions of the policy and thus form the basis for measuring the progress and completeness of planned tasks and actions.

- Use the information provided by the Action Matrix to create a program of reforms to be carried out over a certain time frame or phases that comprise implementation areas and the respective full range of fully costed actions for implementation during the period or phase in question;

- A criterion for prioritising implementation activities during a particular period or phase of

implementation that is to be used in supporting the development of detailed annual or periodic work plans; and

- A Costing and financing plan in which budgeting and costing methods, a cost summary, and a justification for public funding of activities in the policy area are all included.

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