



Standardising Curriculum Development in the Higher Education Institutions using Higher Education Commission

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ABSTRACT

Because of the lack of a body which can control higher education or make standards that can be shared, the majority of higher education institutions in the Somali Federal Republic fail to have structured and clearly defined curriculum plans. Moreover, some do not even realise the importance of curriculum for their institutions, let alone having clearly defined objectives or goals for educational institutions to achieve in educating society. A curriculum is a map which guides the institution regarding its educational objectives. It is an assessment of how an educational institution defines those objectives. It is also the methods and means through which an educational institution maps out a way for students to find their way to success as defined by those objectives. An institution that plays the role to create a standardised curriculum in higher education is the national higher education commission (HEC). An HEC can stand as a body which regulates higher education, post-secondary education institutions, universities and other public and private higher education institutions. This paper will focus on the importance of curriculum development using examples where HEC can control and set standards which higher education institutions must follow. The paper will particularly try to answer the following questions: (i) How HECs can prescribe guidelines and conditions under which educational institutions set quality curricula, (ii) How HECs can monitor and evaluate the performance of educational institutions, and (iii) How HECs can advise institutions to develop appropriate curricula which balance teaching and learning.

Keywords: Curriculum development, educational standards, higher education commission (HEC).

INTRODUCTION

Since the collapse of the Somali state in the early 1990s, there has been a significant revival of the education system in the Somali regions. Change has occurred in higher education generally, but in the undergraduate curriculum in particular. Several developments have driven these changes.

These changes have enabled higher education to take extraordinary steps. Educational scholars debate whether these changes are limited to the institutions' needs or by the influence of local or unintentional causes. Nonetheless, there is general agreement that higher education, particularly the undergraduate curriculum, has evolved in significant ways.

Despite the noteworthy changes within higher education in Somalia, the lack of a body, particularly at the federal level to help and control higher education, or to create standards that can be shared, the majority of higher education institutions fail to have structured and clearly defined curriculum plans. Moreover, some do not even realise the importance of curriculum for their institutions, let alone having clearly defined objectives or goals for educational institutions to achieve in educating society.

Somaliland has a higher education commission, which was established in the early 2000, whilst Puntland's parliament only approved a higher education commission in 2018.

Nevertheless, the lack a higher education commission at the federal level is an obstacle to the Somali higher education institutions benefiting from a high quality education.

DEFINING CURRICULUM INTENTION

An undergraduate curriculum is a formal academic degree which is set for students to follow. As quoted by [1], the curriculum is intended to have the following content and direction:

- a. Goals: Skills, knowledge and attitudes
- b. Content: Here the learning experiences are embedded
- c. Sequence: It is the order in which concepts are provided
- d. Learners: The order of instructional methods and the subsequent activities
- e. Instructional resources: These are the materials and settings
- f. Evaluation: The methods used to assess student learning as due to these experiences
- g. Adjustments to teaching and learning processes: Programs based on experience, evaluation and development.

SETTING THE STANDARDS

Today we live in a world of standards. [2] Setting academic quality assurance and professional standards is essential in establishing a system that controls and contributes to the higher education quality of any nation. This process leads international recognition for the quality of teaching, learning facilities and educational experience.

A Higher Education Commission is intended to place students at the centre of learning by engaging them in collaborative learning in a supportive and well-resourced academic environment. The intention of HECs is to enhance the quality of student learning through investment in the learning environment and its members.

One main technique is to apply the process of improving the quality of education by using a framework of quality management structure, which supports the continuous improvement of the student experience. This process is intended to enhance the core of quality assurance and enhancement activity.

Therefore, the system is set to create a rigorous and practical approach to evaluating learning programs.

According to [2], standards are meant to obtain specific quality criteria which dictate a common goal by creating efficiency in interaction. In this way, standards are intended to create a means to enhance coordination. [2].

Focus on standards as a way to increase the quality and efficiency of education has also intensified in recent decades, emphasised by international organisations. [2, 1]
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RAISING INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS AND CHANGING

Raising institutional standards also aims to enhance quality by monitoring educational institutions and by evaluating both external and internal conditions. For example, an understanding of environmental scanning within the strategic assessment is critical. This might include the broader context-setting environment, as well as topic-specific that are most relevant to the institution. For instance, this may involve emerging innovations.

In the strategic assessment, applied systems thinking can be applied in order to understand a complicated system by learning how the different parts of the institutional system connect to one another. This approach is meant to analyse how to change the behaviour of the institutional system to improve the efficiency of its different parts. All activities of the many parts of the institution should be coordinated to optimise the whole system.

The systems approach is the idea of looking at the institution as a collection of systems that create a whole and examining the relationships between them to determine how they affect the whole. How a subsystem (i.e, registration department) fits the needs of the larger system.[2, 7]
This systems approach can in obtaining a more “holistic” view of the university by understanding how the university relates to the larger system in which it exists and operates, and then how the university’s internal systems contribute or detract from that larger relationship can provide relevant analysis to provide relevant analysis.

Standardising higher education involves seeking to enhance the experience of learning. To assure to maintain the provision in terms of academic quality and the standards it inspires, institutions have to maintain their academic standards and the quality of education. Some of the common standards involve the following:

Table 1: Sample - East Africa University Quality Assurance Standards (www.eau.edu.so) [5]

Standard 1:	University's Vision, Mission, Goals
Standard 2:	Organisational Structures
Standard 3:	Academic Programs, Learning, Teaching Methods and Assessment
Standard 4:	Continuous Development
Standard 5:	University Ethics and Responsibilities
Standard 6:	Faculty Members Development
Standard 7:	Student Affairs
Standard 8:	Research and Innovation
Standard 9:	Learning Resources and Facilities
Standard 10:	Admission and Registration
Standard 11:	Physical, Human, Technological
Standard 12:	Financial Resources
Standard 13:	Community Service

According to East Africa University standards, “HE learning comprises complex mixtures of knowledge, understanding, skills and broader capabilities that can be demonstrated and assessed. It also embodies values, attitudes and behaviour that are part of the student’s academic performance”. (EAU (2017))

In order to assure itself to maintain the provision in terms of academic quality and the standards it inspires, the standards will maintain their academic standards and the quality of education.

Institutions should encourage a HE approach that is explicit about the nature of the learning programmes to intend to promote. In addition, they should implement a learning outcomes approach to promote a positive learning environment.

STANDARDISATION AND INNOVATION

Standards have become the focus of educational scholars. The case of standardisation also involves introducing change and innovation to education institutions. In the case of the curriculum, according to Andrade [1,7], “the instructions have primary responsibility due to their disciplinary expertise. Nevertheless, curricular changes can be a considerable investment to an institution, which suggests the need for a deliberate approach to decision-making related to curricular change. Thus, collaboration and effective processes are required”.

As standardising the curriculum involves a change in many areas, an important issue is the impact of change. As the case of improving and enhancing the educational systems is the main aim, “change can become too much to manage and end in frustration, or in compromise and incremental tweaking rather than true innovation”. [1, 3]

Andrade [1] argues that finding how to pinpoint where to change and how to handle them. An utmost step is to identify and determine how it will impact other initiatives, set priorities, and anticipate stakeholder reactions. [4]

CONCLUSION

As mentioned above, because of the lack of institutional setting of higher education, the majority of higher education institutions in the Somali Federal Republic fail to have structured and clearly defined curriculum plans.

An institution which can play the role of creating a standardised curriculum in higher education is the national higher education commission (HEC). An HEC can stand as a body which regulates higher education, post-secondary education institutions, universities and other public and private higher education institutions.

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