

Full Length Research Paper

Demonstrating quality: Evaluation of institutional and programme accreditation in Ghana

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In response to the challenges of enhancing quality higher education, the government of Ghana established the National Accreditation Board (NAB), charged with the responsibility of ensuring the quality of higher education in Ghana. In pursuit of its mandate, the Board evolved a system of institutional and programme accreditation to ensure conformity with minimum standards and to enhance quality. This paper evaluates the accreditation process and how it has influenced the quality of the sector.

Key words: Accreditation, National Accreditation Board, higher education, Ghana.

INTRODUCTION

Like other developing nations in the world, Ghana has adopted various methodologies to address the question of quality in higher education similar to those in Western countries (Jonathan, 2000). The government of Ghana established a national quality assurance agency, the National Accreditation Board (NAB), to be responsible for quality assurance in higher education within Ghana. In pursuit of its mandate, NAB evolved a system of institutional and programme accreditation to ensure conformity with minimum standards and to enhance quality. Higher educational institutions have also adopted various processes and practices (such as external examiner system, programme and course approval procedures, evaluation of teaching and course, student feedback etc) for the assurance of quality of education provided.

The establishment of a national accreditation system in Ghana arose from a mandate of PNDCL (Provisional National Defense Council Law) 317, 1993 which culminated in the establishment of NAB in 1993. This Law established NAB as the national external quality assurance agency responsible for assuring and monitoring the quality of the tertiary sector in Ghana. However, this law has since been amended into an Act of Parliament, the NAB Act 744, 2007. The NAB Law outlines the functions of 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.

This paper aims to discuss the institutional and programme accreditation undertaken by NAB and to evaluate its impact on the quality of the higher education sector in Ghana. The purpose of the paper is to identify what benefits could arise from NAB's accreditation process, and what obstacles existed to its successful implementation.

METHODOLOGY

This paper reports on the accreditation process undertaken by NAB for higher institutions in Ghana. A range of methods were employed to collect information on the operation of NAB. A qualitative methodology was used to gain the perceptions of key personnel of NAB and selected higher institutions. The methods of data collection included interviews, group discussions and workshops. The main sources of data included:

1. Documents relating to NAB's accreditation process; and
2. Interviews with key personnel of NAB and three tertiary education institutions.

In relation to the first bullet point, the aim is to identify materials that will give an accurate description of the accreditation process, 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 NAB are

used as sources.

In relation to the second bullet point, interviews with people in key positions in three selected higher institutions and NAB seeks 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 accreditation process, and include their suggestions for improving quality assurance practices in Ghana. There were three categories of tertiary institutions that were relevant to this study: 1) state funded universities, 2) polytechnics, and 3) private university colleges. Purposive sampling was used to select three institutions. Because of accessibility, time and cost constraints, the selection of institutions was based on those located in Accra, the capital city of Ghana. Institutions also needed to teach a wide range of programmes to ensure that their nominated participants in this research 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.

For each of the selected institutions, a letter was sent to the Chief Executive Officer (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 for interview two people in their institution who have good knowledge of NAB's procedures and quality assurance processes in the institution. In relation to the interviews conducted with two staff of NAB, the researcher choose the Executive Secretary (equivalent to the Chief Executive) and one Senior Assistant Secretary. Both have 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, 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.

Interviews of the kind being conducted in this research have ethical considerations. Three main areas for ethical consideration were identified – 1) informed consent, 2) confidentiality, and 3) the consequences of the interview. These issues were addressed by first writing formally to the 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 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. The CEOs and participants from the tertiary institutions were assured that the institutions and names of participants would remain confidential to the researcher.

However, it was not possible, or indeed sensible, to withhold the name of NAB. The name of the Senior Assistant Secretary interviewed was treated in confidence but this was difficult in the case of the Executive Secretary because of his position as the head of NAB. However, he had the opportunity to read his transcript and amend or delete any passages that he was concerned about. He was also informed in the invitation letter that any quotes from his interview would be taken from his approved transcript and such quotes would be brief and acknowledge his position.

All interview participants had an opportunity to read their transcripts and made alterations before data were analysed. Validity (trustworthiness) and reliability (dependability) were addressed through the following processes:

1) 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;

2) The use of triangulation through, i) Considering data from different sources; ii) Using multiple methods of enquiry (techniques) such as interviewing and reviewing of documents; iii) Subjecting transcripts of the interviews to independent checks, 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 Ghana in their own words.

RESULTS

The advantage of this research is its potential to assist policy makers, quality assurance practitioners and higher educational administrators in Ghana to review the accreditation processes to help improve the current practices. It is hoped other African countries that are grappling with their quality assurance practices will find this study useful to review and to improve the management of quality assurance of their higher education sector. This research, does not only give the possibility of recognising the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the accreditation practices employed by NAB, but also clarifies and made recommendations in line with current international trends to enable policy makers in Ghana to develop the desired strategies.

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 assigned the task of accreditation of higher 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:

- i) Accredite both public and private (tertiary) institutions as regards the contents and standards of their programmes;
- ii) 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;
- iii) Publish as it considers appropriate, the list of accredited public and private institutions and programmes at the beginning of each year;
- iv) Advise the President on the grant of a Charter to a private tertiary institution;
- v) Determine the equivalences of diplomas, certificates and other qualifications awarded by institutions in Ghana or elsewhere;
- vi) Perform any other functions determined by the Minister.

The main quality assurance function of NAB is the

accreditation of both public and private tertiary institutions with regard to the contents and standards of their programmes. 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 institution’s to develop new programmes and to maintain the credibility of existing qualifications but requires that these programmes satisfy various criteria related to educational quality. Accreditation was explained as the confirmation by an external body (formal status of which can be that of a governmental agency, buffer organization, or professional/academic body), that certain (usually minimum) quality standards are met by the given institutions or/and study programme (UNESCO, 2003). This is one of the major mechanisms that has been employed by several countries for judging the quality of higher education.

According to Elkhawas (2003), accreditation in the United States of America involves a two-stage quality assurance process that first develops standards for assessing quality and then monitors the programmes or institutions to ensure that accreditation standards are met. This is exactly the same practice in Ghana. NAB’s purpose for adopting accreditation approach for her operation is similar to that of the USA by establishing criteria and standards to be satisfied by an institution with a continues monitoring for sustaining those conditions.

Through this process, an institution has the opportunity to improve its programmes whenever it does not meet the required criteria. Another objective of the accreditation process is to protect students from poor quality programmes.

In this sense, it is intended to increase the confidence of the public in the higher education programmes and qualifications offered by an institution. This is also to assure the public that the institution has adequate infrastructure both physical and financial resources to sustain and provide quality education. A further goal is to foster the notion of continuous quality improvement across the entire tertiary sector. Accreditation also assures the international community that the education provided by Ghanaian institutions is of a high standard and that graduates are adequate for further studies and for employment. Further accreditation is to assure employers and other members of the community that Ghanaian graduates of all academic programmes have attained an acceptable level of competence in their areas of specialization.

NAB accreditation processes

NAB has developed a roadmap to accreditation, simplifying the steps an applicant institution should take

towards accreditation and charter. The roadmap to accreditation spells out the requirements and processes of accreditation as undertaken by NAB. It 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.

With regards to institutional and programme accreditation in Ghana, both the institutions and NAB have specific roles to perform. In relation to the internal process, the higher institutions in Ghana are required to complete NAB questionnaire that will form the basis for external assessment on each of the accreditation type. The higher education institutions are required to satisfy criteria established by NAB, in order to be granted accreditation. The roadmap outlined the following processes:

1) 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. The Senior Assistant Secretary of NAB explained that:

“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 assess some resources beyond its capability to help it set up. NAB will grant the institution an interim authorization which allows the institution to continue the process of mobilizing resources for the purpose of establishing or to get established”.

The interim authorization according to the Executive Secretary of NAB 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”. The only prohibition at this stage is that the institution can neither admit students nor advertise for students. When the institution has finished assembling its human and financial resources, it can then apply for institutional accreditation. However, in a situation where the proprietors already have their facilities available, they can apply for institutional accreditation straight away. Where the Board refuses to issue an interim authorization or decided to suspend an interim authorization for whatever reason, the Executive Secretary pointed out that the Board was required to “inform the applicant on the steps to be taken before the interim authorization may be restored and thereby publish it in the Gazette”.

2) Institutional accreditation: The holder of a valid interim authorization may within three years from the date of the grant of the interim authorization apply to NAB for accreditation. In practice, higher institutions in Ghana

have to initially respond to NAB questionnaire as part of their internal evaluation and also in preparation for accreditation. At the institutional accreditation stage, an applicant institution then submits a completed NAB 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, the Executive Secretary stressed that NAB in particular considered:

“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 has to assess 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 of the Board members to visit the institution, to meet with the principal officers of the institution to discuss what the vision and operations of the institution are going to be like. The major task of the visits is to ascertain the general preparedness and the ambiance of the institution. The Senior Assistant Secretary noted that:

“this visit takes a global view of the whole institutional set up to give the committee a view or picture of what the institution will look like when granted accreditation”.

The committee submits its report to the Board for consideration. Institutions that possess adequate physical facilities and meet the minimum standards are granted Institutional Accreditation to commence operation. It was observed that NAB applies the two processes aforementioned to only the private higher institutions in Ghana. Arguably, most of the public institutions predated NAB. However, the University of Development Studies (a public university) that was established recently did not go through these processes.

3) Programme accreditation: NAB has established criteria and standards to be satisfied by an institution for programme accreditation. These include:

- i) The vision and mission of the institution;
- ii) The governance structure of the institution;
- iii) Funding available to the institution and how the financial resources will be managed to ensure transparency and accountability;
- iv) The state and adequacy of both the physical and library facilities available for the staff and students

- v) Health, safety and the environmental sanitation of the institution;
- vi) 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
- vii) Content of the programme;
- viii) Mode of assessment, and the student course assessment (Roadmap to accreditation, 2010).

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 – from other Africa countries, Europe and USA - were 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, the staff 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 qualified enough to provide both academic and administrative leadership for the programme. The panel presents its written report to NAB where deficiencies have been identified and includes suggested remedies 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 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. 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.

According to the Executive Secretary, 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 that it can be taught to an adequate standard. These programmes are suspended 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 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, the programme is granted a full accreditation for five years after which they are re-examined to determine their current standing.

Periodic programme review is a fact of life for accredited institutions and programmes in Ghana. In the case where an existing programme is denied reaccreditation, the institution according to the Executive Secretary is "asked to stop intake of students for the ensuing year until the deficiencies have been rectified". The accreditation exercise may be initiated by NAB, the governing body of an institution or the institution itself. However, Section 8 (2) of the NAB Law mandates NAB to carry out an accreditation exercise in respect of every institution at least once every five years. This is intended to ensure the conformity of an institution to set standards and improvement.

Strengths and weaknesses of NAB's accreditation process

The accreditation process has contributed significantly to the way higher institutions in Ghana manage the quality of their academic programmes, especially private higher institutions which must comply with the requirements of NAB for their continued survival. Supporting this view, one institutional informant 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, most higher institutions now have internal quality assurance units to carry out internal quality audits long before the arrival of NAB panel".

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 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. 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 private university colleges valued the recognition of the institutions and their programmes by NAB as the first and most important benefit. One informant from the Private University College stated that:

"the most important benefit of NAB's process 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 in 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 on the other hand maintained that through NAB's regular reports to the Minister of Education, government is immediately made aware of problems institutions are 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. It can therefore be said that some of the major quality improvements made by the public higher institutions in Ghana are attributable to the work of NAB.

The accreditation panel members contribute significantly to the improvement of programmes. This is because panel members are experts who offer professional advice to the providers, as regard the stand and requirements of the programmes and professional bodies. This facilitates

the exchange of ideas; the spread of good practice and enhances institutional learning between institutions. An informant from one of the institutions noted 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". 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 concern. With regards to staffing, NAB has insufficient qualified staff to help the institutions that will require long-term and close guidance and monitoring to sustain quality programmes. In relation to institutions particularly private colleges, financial constraints have limited them capability to maintain expected standards.

They have also experienced difficulties implementing recommendations and rectifying deficiencies that have been identified by accreditation panels. The processes of accreditation and the requirements of NAB are too stringent, bureaucratic, expensive, time consuming, and demands too much paper work. The end result has meant that the institutions have had to adjust their 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 requirements they have to budget to meet the affiliation fee and other requirements from their mentor institutions. Control, rather than quality enhancement is the dominant concern of NAB. The main purpose of external quality considered by most commentators polarise accountability versus improvement, accreditation verses evaluation. In the case of NAB, the stated purpose is mainly accreditation; one institutional informant contended that:

"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...it is important that NAB should adopt more flexible notions of quality related to institutional goals".

However, the Senior Assistant Secretary of NAB expressed a different view:

"the Board holds 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 and go through all the stringent assessment processes".

The composition and attitudes of some programme accreditation panels have raised doubts about the credibility of the accreditation process. Some panel members visit the institutions with preconceived minds about the institutions and their programmes and will therefore wish to impose their ideas on the institution. In effect, when taken to its limit, this issue raises the question of academic freedom. NAB adopts a single method of practice for all the different types of higher institutions in Ghana. The questionnaires used are the same for all institutional type which does not make room for the diversity in the institutions and their objectives. Given that NAB wants to establish the same standards across the tertiary sector in Ghana; it should device a quality assurance system that will take care of the quality needs of the country's higher education in relation to the global context and also institute an approach that will allow for flexibility among the institutions in so far as they differ in their organizational set up, internal structures and missions.

Furthermore, the accreditation process does not allow for inputs from several sources for programme accreditation. The fate of an institution's programme is in the hands of the two or three panel members who assess the programme. In practice, some panel chairmen take full control of the discussion thereby reducing other members of the panel to mere listeners. Given that some of the panel members can be influenced financially by the officials of the institution, the decision of the panel can be compromised. Research has shown that some of the external quality assurance agencies adopt compliance approach in their operations. This paper has confirmed that NAB is one such agency which requires the institutions in Ghana to comply with its decisions. NAB has the mandate to issue a compliance notice to an institution. This compliance approach as shown in the literature does not encourage the staff to become committed to the quality process where they will see the process as developmental issues that will help them genuinely find out how they can improve their programmes. They rather consider the process as a compliance issue where they have to perform such task quickly because they have to. This approach seems to have placed the responsibility of quality assurance of higher education sector in Ghana on NAB where the institutions saw their role as complying with NAB directives. This process does not strengthen the internal structures for quality improvement.

There is therefore, the risk that the entire quality assurance system in Ghana will result in compliance to NAB requirements instead of quality improvement of the

institutions. Thus, institutions are likely not to take full responsibility of the quality of education provided as required of them. Middlehurst and Woodhouse (1995) 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. Similarly, Goffman as cited in Barrow (1999) further 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. 56). If NAB is to continue with its current approaches (mainly compliance approach), it risks failing to gain institutional commitment to achieving desired quality outcomes. This is not likely to achieve the desired results of assuring the quality of education provided.

This has resulted in the inability of institutions to undertake any effective self-assessment of their operations, the processes which is seen as helping the 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 in-depth 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. 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. 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 NAB’s needs is likely to waste both resources and energy. There is no adequate professional involvement in the programme accreditation process. Professional accreditation is not given any priority in the Ghanaian context. Apart from the Ghana Nurses and Midwives Council that licenses the Nurses Training Colleges in Ghana for the professional examinations, other professional associations do not undertake accreditation exercise.

Many studies have reported that professional accreditation ensures that specialised programmes and schools meet the requirements for satisfactory professional or occupational preparation. Thus, professional accreditation is seen as providing a basic assurance of the scope and quality of professional or occupational practice. In practice however, NAB makes provision for a member of these associations to serve on a programme

panel for any such professional programmes. This cannot be considered to be adequate, since it is the responsibility of the associations to ensure that professionals are trained adequately.

Limitation and strength of this study

While the study examined NAB’s accreditation process, the study involved only a very limited sample of tertiary institutions. This would prevent any generalization of the findings from this study in relation to institutional practices. Similarly, while the use of purposive sampling to identify interviewees within NAB 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 accreditation processes cannot be generalized to other staff in these institutions.

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 would help improve on the accreditation process. 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 relationship 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.

Conclusion

Accreditation process is one major form of quality assurance for higher institutions in Ghana. This process has made a significant impact on the quality programmes of higher education in Ghana. This is due to the fact that institutions are working to remedy the deficiencies identified in the previous accreditation before reaccreditation is undertaken to avoid losing their accreditation status. This is evident in most reaccreditation results where the status of the programmes improves. However, this paper advises that given that NAB wants to establish the same standards across the tertiary sector in Ghana; it should device a quality assurance system that will take care of the quality needs of the country’s higher education in relation to the global context and also institute an approach that will allow for flexibility among the institutions insofar as they differ in their organizational set up; internal structures and missions. NAB should also

encourage institutions to undertake effective self-assessment of their operations, to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and devise appropriate means for continuous enhancement. In this way, institutions would generate or start self-assessment procedures on their own initiative and thereby own the process.

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