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African Quality Rating Mechanism: Pilot Results and Challenges in Future Implementation*

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*Based on the following report:
African Union Commission. *"African Quality Rating Mechanism: 2010 Pilot Self Rating of Higher Education Institutions, Summarised Report"*, April 2012

AQRM: Pilot Results & Challenges in Future Implementation

Outline of Presentation

1. Background
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4. Responses & Results
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1. Background

- HE is a major area of focus in African Union's Plan of Action for the 2nd Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015)

- African Union Commission (AUC) developed a strategy for harmonisation and revitalisation of African HE, of which Quality is an important element

- AQRM was developed by AUC for contributing towards Quality Assurance and improving quality of HE in Africa

- AQRM was adopted by the Conference of Ministers of Education of Africa (COMEDAF) in 2007

2. Objectives of AQRM

- To revitalise & strengthen African HEIs so as to be globally competitive & locally relevant
- To be used as tool for benchmarking quality in HE
- To encourage HEIs to undertake self-evaluation & develop an institutional culture of quality
- To help in selecting institutions to benefit from Mwalimu Nyerere Scholarships & in establishment of Pan-African University (PAU) network institutions

3. Questionnaire *(1)*

- Questionnaire used for information gathering & self-rating: 37 pages, 15 parts, 80 items
- Parts 1-13 (69 items, 22 pp): information on institution, staff ,students, funding, facilities, programmes, etc.
- Parts 14-15 (11 items, 14 pp): self-rating of 11 clusters of criteria:

Institutional governance	Infrastructure	Finance
T& L policies	Research & Publications	Community engagement
Programme planning	Curriculum development	Learning materials
Teaching assessment	Programme assessment	

Note: 6 of the 11 clusters relate directly to teaching & learning

3. Questionnaire *(2)*

- Under each cluster, criteria to be self-rated with scores as follows: excellent (3); satisfactory (2); unsatisfactory (1)

- Last part of questionnaire asked institution to rank its 3 best programmes using 15 specified criteria

- Questionnaire despatched in 2010, in English only, to about 400 African HEIs, to be returned in 15 days' time

- Specific HEIs not targeted, no mention made of a pilot study

- HEIs informed questionnaire was to provide an indication of status of programmes & facilities, among other related issues

4. Responses & Results *(1)*

- 32 respondents from 11 countries (none from Central Africa)

West Africa (11)	East Africa (10)	Southern Africa (10)	North Africa (1)
Nigeria (9)	Kenya (6)	South Africa (6)	Egypt (1)
Ghana (2)	Tanzania (2)	Zimbabwe (2)	
	Ethiopia (1)	Mozambique (1)	
	Mauritius (1)	Swaziland (1)	

- Respondents ranged from large, well-established public unis e.g. UCT & Alexandria, to small, relatively recent unis e.g. Achievers (Nigeria, private) & Laikipia (Kenya, public)

- No response from any of 4 unis hosting PAU Institutes in Algeria, Cameroon, Kenya & Nigeria

4. Responses & Results *(2)*

- 11 respondents from SADC Region:

Stellenbosch Univ **Univ of Cape Town** **Univ of KwaZulu-Natal** **Univ of Pretoria** **Univ of Western Cape** **Univ of Venda**	**Bindura Univ of Sc Education** (Zimbabwe) **National Univ of S&T** (Zimbabwe) **Catholic Univ of Mozambique** **Univ of Mauritius** **Univ of Swaziland**

4. Responses & Results *(3)*

- The AUC report makes no mention of institutional data collected from 1st part of the questionnaires

- Only self-assessment results from 2nd part of questionnaires given, grouped by the 11 clusters

- 10 of the 32 institutions did not respond to all clusters; 1 institution did not answer 7 clusters, another one 6 clusters and other 8 between 1-3 clusters. Why? Not clear

- Many of non-answered clusters are vital: infrastructure, finance, T&L policies, & community engagement

- Hence not possible to have a single average rating for all institutions for comparative purposes

4. Responses & Results *(4)*

- Clusters which largest no. of respondents assessed as 'Excellent' were: programme planning (22); curriculum development (20); institutional governance (17)

- Clusters which least no. of respondents assessed as 'Excellent' were: programme assessment(4); teaching assessment (6); finance (6)

- 5 institutions assessed at least one cluster as 'Unsatisfactory': infrastructure (2); finance (3); research (1); community engagement (1)

- Only 8 institutions (out of 32) ranked their 3 best programmes

- No external validation of any of the questionnaires was undertaken

7. Analysis *(1)*

- Very difficult to analyse results & draw meaningful conclusions
- One major constraint is that all criteria under clusters were qualitative
- Examples:
  - Under Finance cluster (among other criteria):
    - Having access to sufficient financial resources
    - Having established procedures for attracting funding from industry
    - Having clearly specified budgetary procedures in place
  - Under Research & Publications cluster (among other criteria):
    - Having a policy/strategy for research & publications
    - Having a policy/strategy for innovation, IPR & technology foresight
    - Having succeeded in attracting research grants

7. Analysis *(2)*

- Institutions may have replied according to their understanding of the criteria; some arbitrariness in responses possible

- Results do not help in deciding on competitiveness or attractiveness of institutions, could even mislead

- Example: Under Research cluster ,UCT, U of Swaziland & Michael Okpara Uni of Agric (Nigeria) all rated as 'Excellent', yet UCT consistently rated best African uni under global rankings using research as main criterion, other universities never ranked.

- Effective rating should result in some degree of comparability; use of institutional data or some quantitative criteria could have helped

7. Analysis *(3)*

- Same uni often has different ratings under the 11 different clusters (6 in T&L) – difficult & confusing for students to select the uni for its attractiveness

- No indication whether consultative approach used in filling questionnaire in institution – this could help in bringing about improvement

- But AQRM not as strong as Quality Assurance (external review or accreditation) in causing institutional quality improvement

8. Challenges in Future Implementation *(1)*

- AUC proposes to extend pilot phase with another launch of questionnaire
- AUC report proposes that scoring scale be increased from 3 to 5 (Poor, Insufficient, Satisfactory, Good, Excellent)
- There may be need to revise the questionnaire, its structure and the scoring of criteria to make the exercise more effective and to avoid ambiguity arisen in the first launch
- How can the institutional data be used in evaluating the rating?
- For rating to be effective, a far greater number of institutions must participate – how can this be achieved?

8. Challenges in Future Implementation *(2)*

- How can completion of all sections of the questionnaire be enforced?

- Questionnaire should be translated into French & Arabic and even Portuguese for greater participation

- For the exercise to be credible, the responses need to be validated - also recommended in AUC report. How can this be done?

- It would require significant human & financial resources, especially if greater number of institutions respond

8. Challenges in Future Implementation *(3)*

- Ranking usually done globally using limited specific quantitative criteria

- Rating using multitude criteria more appropriate for individual countries – participation can be enforced, institutional data accessible, common higher education system

- In Africa, Nigeria rates its institutions, Kenya is planning to do same

- Meaningful rating of HEIs across a space as complex as Africa, with diverse HE systems & scarce data, can be very challenging

9. Discussion

- Did your university participate in AQRM? If yes, how was the questionnaire filled? If no, why not?

- Is AQRM important for African universities? Why?

- If Rating is accepted, should it be done at country or continental level?

- What is more effective for improving Quality: Rating or Quality Assurance (e.g. institutional review)?

- Would AQRM help in getting more African universities globally ranked?

THANK YOU