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Research Article

Enhancing student giftedness in open distance e-learning through quality assurance using Donabedian steps

Vimbi Petrus Mahlangu[1]

Department of Educational Leadership and Leadership, University of South Africa, South Africa

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Abstract

Students must have faith in open distance e-learning institutions' quality assurance methods if they are to have faith in them. The article looks into quality assurance and uses a qualitative approach to grasp the concept. To acquire information, a literature review was used. The discourse and practices about systematic quality assurance in open distance e-learning institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic had institutions panic throughout the world, resulting in market-based models associated with neoliberalism's ideology and policy and expressed in economic rationalities such as new public management, total quality management, public choice, and human capital to a large extent. Quality assurance in open distance e-learning aims to preserve and improve educational quality. In order to evaluate open distance e-learning, quality expectations and criteria must be made clear and public. Quality assurance is critical when it comes to open distance e-learning. The process of analysing, assessing, monitoring, ensuring, maintaining, and improving the quality of higher education systems and programs should be ongoing. As a result, relevant technologies can be utilized as pointers in undertaking quality assurance in open distance e-learning settings by relying on Donabedian processes.

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Introduction[2]

Tortop (2021) found that the main problem in training activities, especially in training focused on talent development, is to meet the talent need. This situation can push institutions to take some important decisions. These decisions are the group that is the driving force that should not be lost in education. After the pandemic, the main focus should be on the sustainability of education. It is clear that more practice and research will be needed in areas such as young scientists' training and talent training, new learning software, and individual mentoring. In support of Tortop (2021); Rahiminia, Yazdani, and Rahiminia (2021) believe that programs related to the talented in universities must identify all the talented and abilities of individuals and try empowering them, which requires comprehensive planning. In this paper quality assurance is one of the programs that can be used to enhance the talent and the abilities of students in their learning.

For stakeholders to have faith in quality assurances systems in open distance e-learning, the emphases must be on "Enhancing student giftedness in open distance e-learning through quality assurance using Donabedian steps". According to Buenestado, Fernández, lvarez-Castillo, González-González, and Espino-Daz (2019, p. 4), the notion of quality can be traced back to industry and business in the twentieth century, when issues of quality inspection, control, and assurance became significant in mechanisation. Edward Deming, Joseph Juran, and Phillip Crosby were quality pioneers in their areas, and many of their efforts have ramifications for higher education's Open Distance E-

[1] Prof.Dr., Department of Educational Leadership and Leadership, University of South Africa, South Africa. E–mail: mahlavp@unisa.ac.za ORCID: 0000-0002-8251-750X
[2] In this paper the words steps, phases and process will be used interchangeably.

Learning environment. In the 1980s and 1990s, the United States and Europe were the first to formally incorporate quality assurance (QA) into higher education, with momentum growing exponentially and many other developed and developing countries following suit. The World Bank, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), regional organizations, and professional associations all played a key role in the introduction and spread of formal quality assurance in higher education (Moopen distance e-learningey, 2019, p. 1).

Quality assurance is widely acknowledged as essential for higher education institution to become more efficient, effective, and need-oriented. This has been exacerbated by a growing public and political desire for open distance e-learning institutions to be held answerable for their expected contributions to local, national, and global development. Some people gain power as a result of quality methods, while others lose it. Through the creation of minimum-quality standards, their monitoring, and the resulting centralization of information, these methods assist quality assurers in developing clearer lines of responsibility (according to a top-down logic) through the definition of minimum-quality standards and their monitoring and the consequent centralization of information. In this approach, Quality assurance can function as an internal government instrument, directing higher education in terms of resource allocation and organizational effort. As a result, the implementation of quality assurance regimes necessitates the development of new management abilities and expertise, which are critical for managing distance education e-learning in quality assurance procedures. By entrusting quality assurance process management only to academics, who have long viewed them as a series of operations that "distract from the main activity of teaching and research," the risk is that QA processes become purely administrative (Agasisti, Barbato, Dal Molin & Turri, 2019, p. 962).

Figure 1.
Donabedian Phases/Steps [Structure-Process-Outcome]

These are the phases or steps that quality assurance must follow to enhance student giftedness in Open Distance E-Learning through Quality Assurance. Ameh et al. (2017) found that the model is most often represented by a chain of three boxes containing structure, process, and outcome connected by unidirectional arrows in that order. These boxes represent three types of information that may be collected in order to draw inferences about quality of assurance in a given system.

It is critical to rely on Donabedian steps when performing quality assurance. In the open distance e-learning setting, structure refers to variables that influence the context, such as fiscal resources, academic content, and human resources (Botma & Labuschagne, 2019, pp. 364-365). Examples of structure**:** Human resources, physical resources, organizational characteristics staff training. The term "process" relates to what is being done, specifically the execution of open distance e-learning education programs. Our criterion should be whether or not the teaching and learning activities allow for the realization of all of the underlying theories (Ibid, 2019, p. 367). Examples of process: The sum of all actions that make up the institution; Donabedian process is nearly equivalent to the measurement of quality assurance because process contains all acts of education delivery. Similarly, an outcome must represent the expected positive or negative change because of QA program implementation (Ibid, 2019, p. 368). Examples of outcome: Behavior, or knowledge as well as student satisfaction related to quality of programs of education. Outcomes are the most important indicators of quality because improving student performance.

As a result, quality assurors in open distance e-learning as assessors are expected to participate in scheduled teaching and learning activities, assemble evidence that satisfies the outcomes, and judge whether students have met the program's purpose. To understand quality assurance using Donabedian procedures, we must first understand the structure, technique, and expected outputs.

Problem of Research

Despite the fact that quality assurance, and enhancement are typically complex and difficult, students want reliable information on educational quality in order to make informed decisions about which courses to pursue. Furthermore, academics and university administrators require data to monitor and enhance their courses and programs.

In the paper the following question is asked: How can we enhance student giftedness in Open Distance e-Learning through quality assurance using Donabedian Steps?

Sub-problem 1. *How is accountability in open distance e-learning done?*

Sub-problem 2. How is quality assurance as a principle used in open distance e-learning?
Sub-problem 3. What are quality pointers in quality assurance?

Method

Research Model

This research used a qualitative approach to reconsider the concept of quality assurance in the context of open distance e-learning. Literature reviews were used to gather data. The interpretivist paradigm and contingency theory were used to examine the concept of quality assurance in open distance e-learning contexts. According to McAdam, Miller, and McSorley (2019, pp.195-198), Contingency theory proposes that organizational efficiency is achieved through matching organizational traits to contingencies that reflect the organization's situation. The discourse and practices of systematic quality assurance and quality control have spread throughout the world, resulting in market-based models associated with neoliberalism's ideology and policy and expressed in economic rationalities such as new public management, total quality management, public choice, and human capital to a large extent.

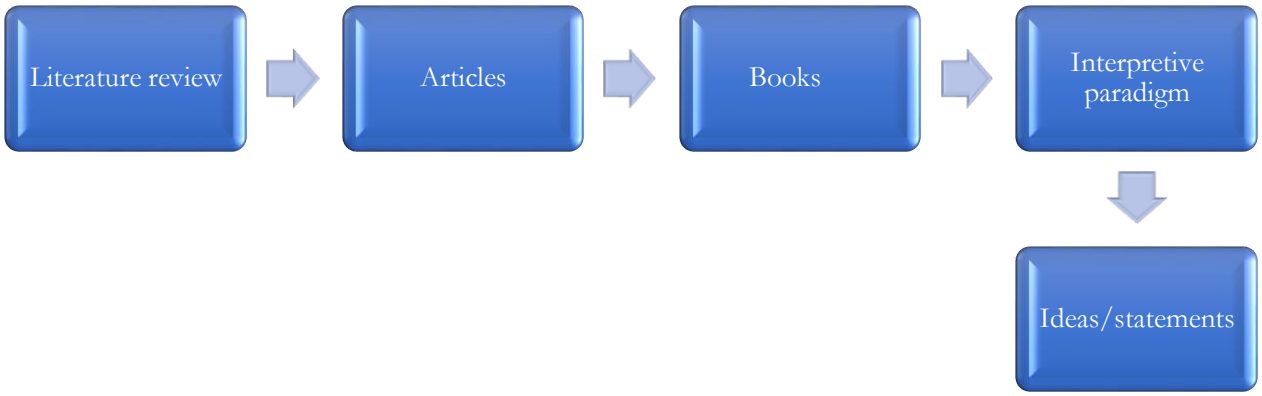

Figure 2.
Research Design

Data Collection Tools-Documents

From 1999 to 2021, articles and books were chosen and reviewed. From 1999 through 2021, the author prefers to use a variety of sources. Literature reviews were used as data gathering approaches by analyzing items such as articles and books that were relevant to the issue. A comprehensive literature review considers a variety of sources, such as academic journals and scholarly books. The following criteria were used to identify literature.

Data Analysis

To make sense of what this work was exploring, the interpretive paradigm was employed to analyze the findings of other writers of articles and books.

Procedure

The research began in 2018. At the University of South Africa, the paper was compiled. This is a conceptual paper that was compiled from materials from 1992 to 2021. The paper used a qualitative technique and an interpretive paradigm. The topic was investigated via a literature review.

Results

Accountability in Open Distance e-Learning

Over the last decade or so, there has been a significant increase in interest in the quality of open distance e-learning university education. Despite the fact that quality specification, assurance, and enhancement are typically complex and difficult, a variety of variables have sparked and maintained a great interest in the phenomena. As a result, students want reliable information on educational quality in order to make informed decisions about which courses to pursue. Furthermore, academics and university administrators require data to monitor and enhance their courses and programs. As a result, open distance e-learning institutions require excellent data in order to benchmark and advertise their performance (Coates, 2005, p.25). The quality of open distance e-learning education can be measured in a variety of ways at the national level. One possibility may be an evaluation of academic staff's teaching credentials (Ibid., 2005, p. 28). As a result, data on student activities can supply schools with useful marketing and recruitment data, as well as assist them become more attentive to students' learning needs. Therefore, only accurate and trustworthy information on what students are doing in the open distance e-learning environment will allow open distance e-learning institutions

to progress beyond taking student actions for granted. Furthermore, data on student participation can be used to determine the university's productivity in an open distance e-learning setting (Coates, 2005, p.32). As a result, the way quality is defined affects how quality assurance is used to check the quality of processes or outputs (Cardoso, Rosa, Videira, & Amaral, 2019, p. 249). As a result, quality in higher education does not appear to be a singular and absolute concept, leading to the formation of several quality standards and quality assurance systems over time. Quality, on the other hand, will be treated as a multidimensional notion in this study, with many and associated meanings to quality assurance that can be identified but not totally separated. Similarly, quality's multidimensional nature must be linked to it encompassing various higher education dimensions, such as "the quality of inputs, outputs, and processes, which must be combined with the demands put forth by students, universities, and society each time one intends to assess quality." Although quality is a relative concept, it is influenced by how different stakeholders view it: 'providers (e.g., funding bodies and the community, taxpayers); users of goods (e.g., students); users of outputs (e.g., employers); and sector personnel (academics and administrators).' It will be used interchangeably with the term quality assurance (Ibid., 2019, p. 249).

Contingency Theory

This study looked at the concept of quality assurance in open distance e-learning systems via the lens of contingency theory. Contingency theory posits that organizational efficiency can be reached by matching organizational features to contingencies that reflect the organization's condition, according to McAdam, Miller, and McSorley (2019, pp.195-198). They argue that common contingencies (also known as contingency variables) such as strategy and culture can be used to ensure quality in an open distance e-learning scenario. From this standpoint, open distance e-learning institutions can improve their performance by better fitting and aligning their defined set of contingency variables, and therefore the changing external environment, to their defined set of contingency variables. This fit procedure is regarded a dynamic and continuous process in fast-paced open distance e-learning circumstances. Contingency theory comes in helpful when there isn't a clear overall Quality Assurance Framework (focusing on contextually grounded ways based on contingency fit rather than a single best strategy to quality assure an open distance e-learning institution). In this paper, I argue that quality assurance as a strategy can enable quality assurance professionals in the open distance e-learning setting have a strategic orientation, and that it is a contingent variable that can impact the use of quality management processes. Institutional culture, according to McAdam, Miller, and McSorley (2019), is a situational characteristic that influences the implementation of quality management systems.

Quality Assurance as a Principle in Open Distance e-Learning

The Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) in South Africa confirms its commitment to developing and implementing a quality assurance system that is tailored to the demands and realities of South African higher education. In more precise terms, the HEQC aims to use quality assuarnce as a mechanism to assist institutions in achieving the goals of higher education as outlined in the White Paper on Higher Education from 1997, namely: (1) to meet the learning needs and aspirations of individuals throughout their lives through the development of their intellectual abilities and aptitudes. Higher education should prepare people to make the most of their abilities and the chances for self-fulfilment provided by society. It is thus a crucial instrument for attaining equity in the distribution of opportunity and accomplishment among South African residents as a significant allocator of life chances. (2) To meet society's development needs and offer the labour market with the ever-changing high-level capabilities and expertise required for a modern economy's growth and success in a knowledge-driven and knowledge-dependent society. Higher education prepares students to fill specialized social roles, enter learned professions, or pursue careers in administration, trade, industry, science and technology, and the arts. (3) Assist in the socialization of informed, responsible, and constructively critical citizens. Higher education promotes the development of a reflective capacity as well as a readiness to analyze and update existing ideas, policies, and practices in the sake of the greater good. (4) To contribute to knowledge production, dissemination, and assessment. Through research, learning, and teaching, higher education pursues academic knowledge and intellectual inquiry in all realms of human understanding (Council on Higher Education, 2011, p. 12). Pitsoe and Letseka (2016, p. 96) agree that evaluation in open distance e-learning contexts necessitates making quality expectations and standards transparent and public. Quality assurance is not a new concept to them because it is on the agenda of many educational institutions throughout the world. Quality assurance can be used as a tool for rankings in higher education within the academic world and in higher education policies. Although some may reject it, they contend that: (1) Quality assurance is not free of cultural hegemony as a power relations construct, and (2) Quality assurance in Virtual Learning Environments should be directed and informed by Paulo Freire's humanizing pedagogy. As a result of Covid-19, open distance e-learning institutions are under increasing pressure to ensure that their virtual learning activities are supported by reliable quality assurance processes. So, quality

assessment is a quality evaluation procedure that entails assessing open distance e-learning institutions' actual performance to a set of benchmarks developed either from the institutions' mission statements or from international standards (Tsiligiris & Hill, 2019, p. 2). Internal or exterior bodies can carry out this process. Improving quality is what quality enhancement is all about (Ibid, 2019, p. 2). This is mostly manifested in HEIs' efforts to improve teaching quality through staff development programs. The problem with this strategy is that it frequently produces qualitative and non-measurable results. Quality management is the process by which an institution maintains and improves the quality of the education it provides to its students and the research it conducts. It is supported by policies and systems (Ibid, 2019, p. 2). Similarly, Stracke (2019, p. 187) believes that quality management extends beyond quality assurance to include manufacturing processes in order to attain higher quality. That is, quality management use the expectations-perceptions strategy to ensure and improve quality. This means that quality management must strive to close the gap between the expectations of various stakeholders, such as students and external quality certification agencies, and their views of the provision's outcomes and product.

This first viewpoint considers quality in terms of both a cultural/psychological and a structural/managerial component. The first corresponds to the academic community's engagement with quality as well as the values, expectations, and dedication of higher education institutions. Although values and expectations differ by discipline or scientific field, it is reasonable to believe that when all institutional players share the same values, beliefs, expectations, and dedication to quality, a "organizational culture of quality" can develop. The dedication of teaching and non-teaching employees to quality improvement processes is critical to the quality of open distance e-learning educational services. The structural or managerial component also refers to a more formal aspect of quality, such as institutional structures, processes, and procedures targeted at improving quality. Internal structures supporting the institution's staff in their everyday work, particularly activities connected to quality promotion, are among these structural aspects. According to this viewpoint, quality is everyone's duty, which means that everyone must participate to ensuring that "the right things are done right." Furthermore, quality should be determined by the open distance e-learning institution's ability to meet the needs of the academic community first and foremost. This is in line with the concept of quality as perfection, yet it could also be seen as change and improvement. Rather than focusing on how to attain specified objectives as efficiently as possible, the focus should be on whether transformation and qualitative change can be realized (Cardoso, Rosa, Videira & Amaral, 2019, p.251). Because of technical advancements, the author assumes that open distance e-learning environments are unpredictable and unreliable in terms of program quality. Similarly, Donaldson (2015, p. 609) considers uncertainty to be the inability to foresee which course of action will result in the intended consequences due to unpredictability or a lack of knowledge. As a result, while the environment is a primary source of uncertainty, it is also possible for uncertainty to originate from the work within the open distance e-learning institutions. Donaldson (2015) believes that seeking to innovate in product or service, or to supply them in new ways, creates a lot of uncertainty (e.g., online). Furthermore, when uncertainty is low, operations become normal and can be captured by top-down rules, while organizational functions become specialized and well-defined; this form of structure is referred to as mechanistic. Where uncertainty is high, however, operations must rely on the quality assurance of quality assurors working in open distance e-learning environments.

To appreciate the concept of quality assurance in open distance e-learning environments, an understanding of effective leadership vs. efficient management as a conceptual framework for successful leadership and efficient management practices as crucial requirements in distant e-learning is required. As a result, management in open distance e-learning must be both a function and a social position, commonly referred to as leadership, that demonstrates the authority of the individuals participating. Leadership in the field of quality assurance must be defined as a combination of zeal, integrity, warmth, and encouragement. There should be a functional relationship between management and leadership in terms of quality assurance efficiency and leadership effectiveness. It implies that academic employees in leadership positions with responsibility for quality improvement in open distance e-learning environments have a dual role: (1) Quality assurors must be successful leaders in determining appropriate teaching and research quality improvement targets, and (2) Efficient managers must effectively allocate available resources to meet established goals. Managerial leadership abilities and techniques in open distance e-learning contexts must be context-specific due to the varied open distance e-learning characteristics (e.g., public, private, profit, non-profit).

Quality assurance management should be a more flexible activity in open distance e-learning environments, focusing on context-responsive approaches/methods and associated managerial understandings, traits, and abilities in a variety of situations. According to Parvin (2019, p.741), intellectual, technical, interpersonal, and political qualities are essential for management in general and quality assurance in particular. For QA supervisors in open distance e-learning, personal orientation, dependability, open-mindedness, emotional management, and self- and others'

development (such as continuing professional development, performance assessment, peer observation, self-improvement, and providing developmental feedback) are all important skills. As a result, open distance e-learning institutions should be assessed for their learning culture based on seven distinct but interrelated action imperatives: creating continuous learning opportunities; promoting inquiry and dialogue; encouraging collaboration and team learning; empowering people toward a collective vision; connecting the organization to its environment; and establishing systems to support the organization's learning culture. As a system that resembles conventional systems, quality control is essential for quality assurance. It assesses if the higher education services provided via open distance e-learning have satisfied the required standards. This control must take place at the very end of the manufacturing process and is usually performed by a third-party person or organization. The goal of quality assurance should be to reassure stakeholders that the product or service satisfies defined criteria. Standards might range from meeting minimum criteria to exceeding internal and external quality inspectors' expectations. External stakeholders, notably quality assurance authorities like the UK's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and South Africa's Council of Higher Education (CHE), have primarily pursued this as a means of assuring minimum necessary standards, rather than quality development (Tsiligiris & Hill, 2019, p. 1). Furthermore, quality audit is required in quality assurance to ensure that strategic objectives drawn from the mission statements of open distance e-learning institutions in terms of teaching and learning are met. Quality audits should be carried out by third parties (Ibid, 2019, p. 1). Given what has been discussed so far, quality assurance standards are likely to range from meeting minimum criteria to exceeding the expectations of internal and external quality inspectors.

Aspects Promoting and Constraining Quality Assurance in Distance e-Learning

Organizational context aspects influence the quality culture of open distance e-learning institutions (Parvin, 2019, p. 742). Managerial elements that can be considered promoting factors include (a) a continuous improvement strategy; (b) clear policies, procedures, and system responsibilities; (c) quality management systems; (d) staff and student involvement in organizational decision making; and (e) taking into account evolving student demands. (1) Hierarchical structure/structural division; (2) a lack of policies, processes, systems, and responsibilities; and (3) a lack of resources are all stumbling blocks. (3) A lack of staff and student participation in organizational decision-making; and (4) a lack of resources. There are also promoting leadership elements, such as I leadership dedication and talents; (ii) ability to perform various tasks; (iii) build a climate of trust and shared understanding; (vi) distribute resources; set and communicate policies; and (v) form partnerships and manage people. Top-down (managerial) approaches to quality management implementation, as well as a lack of leadership commitment and abilities, may be limiting factors. Furthermore, in the open distance e-learning scenario, managers acting as communication gatekeepers' focus on inspection and control might be perceived as a barrier to quality assurance (Parvin, 2019, p. 742).

To remain sustainable in a changing and competitive market, open distance e-learning institutions should choose those activities that are based on innovation. Leaders and quality assurance managers should steer the innovation processes, since they are to generate innovative recommendations for increasing open distance e-learning institutions' performance and developing innovations that adhere to quality requirements. However, there are some obstacles that may stymie creativity in open distance e-learning environments. The institution's culture may not promote innovation; institutional leadership and management may be unable to reveal the main directions of the innovation activity supported by available knowledge and skills of instructors; adjustment to the institution's changed objectives may be lacking; and widespread participation of instructors in the innovation activity may be lacking (Jamal & Tilchin, 2019, p.68). Leadership in open distance e-learning should be a dynamic process with a complex mix of human abilities, personal traits, attitudes, and behaviours that consistently promote ethical and effective communication. Quality assurance should consider that open distance e-learning is a dynamic process with abilities, traits, beliefs, and actions that change over time. The obvious conclusion that can be made is that quality assurance method should prioritize change management capabilities, followed by boosting quality assurance auditors' listening skills and improving their conflict resolution abilities (Ewing, Remund, & Dargay, 2019, p.34).

What are Quality Pointers in Quality Assurance?

According to the fundamental structural contingency theory, a greater fit between structure and contingency leads to better performance. It will provide better results if it adopts the degree of (say) specialization that corresponds to that size rather than the level of specialization that corresponds to the lower level of size. Specialization aids success, but so does increasing the size of the organization. As a result, executives are lured to grow their institutions from unfit for a lesser size to unfit for a greater size. The organization can expand from modest to huge over time by advancing from one fit to the next. This could explain why the size and scope of distance education e-learning institutions varies so much (Donaldson, 2015, p. 612). According to Woodhouse (1999, p. 39), quality assurance features, as well as the

criteria by which the pointers will be scored, and maybe performance pointers for the criterion, must be established unambiguously in advance. Performance markers are used in a variety of ways, depending on the institution. Performance pointers must be specified by distance education e-learning institutions, including why and how they are used. As a result, quality assurance personnel must report on a system-wide set of performance indicators, which are subsequently made public and accessible to students.

Lopez, Yanes, Salgado, and Vergara (2016, p. 128), on the other hand, believe that e-learning institutions should prioritize the following quality assurance indicators:

Academic pointers: A profile of academics who assist with the school's academic operations, with a focus on learning and research.

Institutions in terms of developing a relevant mission and vision, establishing institutional legitimacy, achieving internal and external standards and goals, and procuring resources for optimal institutional functioning; indicators relating to support services for the institutional community (students, faculty, alumni, and so on); indicators relating to administrative pedigrimage (students, faculty, alumni).

Student Assistance Suggestions: A set of quality indicators relating to the availability and responsiveness of student support services—for example, how well student complaints are handled; indicators relating to the profile and characteristics of the student population, from prospective students to alumni; and indicators relating to the profile and characteristics of the student population, from prospective students to alumni; and indicators relating to the profile and characteristics of the student population, from prospective students to alumni.

Indicators of instructor competency, such as programs and courses that prepare students for work; indicators related to the institution's academic offerings, such as academic programs and degrees, as well as their organization, review, and evaluation; indicators related to the institution's academic offerings, such as academic programs and degrees, as well as their organization, review, and evaluation; indicators related to the institution's academic offerings, such as academic programs and degrees, as well as their organization, review, and evaluation; indicators related to the institution's academic offerings

Student Performance Indicators: A set of quality indicators for student participation in the curriculum, faculty, and staff, as well as increases in knowledge, skills, and abilities that lead to gainful employment, such as improved critical thinking skills (Njiro, 2016, p. 85). (7) Physical Resources: These are indicators of the school's physical resources, including academic offerings and instructional model, research, cultural and sporting facilities, and other resources used to accomplish its mission (Njiro, 2016, p. 85).

Why is Quality Assurance Important in Distance Education e-Learning Institutions?

Internal mechanisms, as well as peer assessment by representatives from other schools and external accreditation through professional organizations) have always ensured quality in distance education e-learning institutions (Anderson, 2006, p. 162). Today's open distance e-learning higher education institutions must adapt to produce graduates, conduct research, and transfer technologies to the public. To improve the community's and nation's competitiveness, higher education must also produce innovation. Higher education institutions have three responsibilities: teaching, research, and community service (HEIs). Distance education e-learning institutions must utilize quality assurance with high-level knowledge to be competitive, and every supporting activity must be submitted to quality control at distance education e-learning institutions. Academic administration, finance and accounting, human resources, student service, industrial partnerships, and campus infrastructure are just a few of the six supporting activities that must be quality certified to meet three university obligations (main process) (Jamaluddin, Ramdhani, Priatna, & Darmalaksana, 2019, p. 1269). The lack of reporting requirements, as well as the importance of reputation for both the quality assuror and the Open Distance e-Learning institution as a customer, suggest that the mutual benefits of disclosing findings in relation to sustainability quality assurance reporting will need to be explored (Michelon, Patten & Romi, 2019, p. 401). In open distance e-learning situations, the adoption of quality assurance vs. continuing quality assurance activities is crucial. We expect open distance e-learning institutions to be encouraged to disclose their flaws for both initial and ongoing interactions with quality assurors if quality assurance can help them establish legitimacy for their reporting and services, given the difficulty of finding problems prior to reporting (Ibid, 2019, p.412). To provide quality assurance, leaders of remote education e-learning institutions should collaborate with a number of players. The course coordinator and teaching staff, course administration, and program board are all important stakeholders, but keep in mind that the course coordinator is usually a member of the teaching staff with additional quality assurance responsibilities for a course (Stensaker, Hovdhaugen & Maassen, 2018, p. 704). The importance of managerial–collegial components in Quality Management procedures for study programs must be understood by these important participants in the quality assurance of study programs. Because students are direct

consumers of the services that universities give to students as key clients of distance education e-learning services, students are one of the most important participants in gauging university quality among the distance education e-learning stakeholders. As a result, universities must make a compelling academic offer to them. It's worth noting in this regard that university rankings are increasingly dependent on criteria that consider reputational issues. The teaching component (a measure of a university's learning experience and quality) contributes for 30% of the total score in the Times Higher Education Ranking of Universities, for example. Similarly, accreditation authorities consider student happiness while evaluating university academic programs.

To recruit and retain students, higher education institutions must understand their students' perceptions of quality (Marimon, Mas-Machuca, Berbegal-Mirabent & Llach, 2019, p. 185). Quality assurance should be a continuous process that evolves over time, with the opportunity for continuous improvement in service for the same consumers (students) in the hands of distance education e-learning institutions, allowing service providers ample time to improve their service quality. E-learning institutions that provide distance education have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and go above and beyond for their students (Latif, Latif, Sahibzada & Ullah, 2019, p. 771). Data quality in quality assurance should comprise attributes like accuracy, timeliness, precision, reliability, currency, completeness, relevancy, accessibility, and interpretability, according to Azeroual and Schöpfel (2019, p. 2). The consumer's (students') point of view should be prioritized, and data should be easily available, interpretable, and helpful to them. This finding has major implications for developing a quality assurance framework that is both user-friendly for students and accessible to potential distance education e-learning students. Academic administrations, finance and accounting, human resources, student services, industry contacts, and campus infrastructure are all supporting activities that require quality certification in order to support remote education e-learning institutions.

Donabedian Phases of Quality Assurance

Individual institutions, according to Woodhouse (1999, pp. 36-37), are responsible for quality assurance and should be held accountable to the public. Reviews can be used for a variety of purposes, including the following:
Assessment: To be able to answer the question, "Where are you now?"
Improvement: to be able to choose where you want to go?
Accountability: Being able to look back and see what you did with the resources you were given.
Professional certification/accreditation: To determine the capabilities of your graduates.
Determining the problem: Can you figure out what's wrong?
Issue-solving: determining what actions you can take in response to a problem.
Funding: How do you figure out how much money you'll need?

It is critical to rely on Donabedian steps when performing quality assurance. In the open distance e-learning setting, structure refers to variables that influence the context, such as fiscal resources, academic content, and human resources (Botma & Labuschagne, 2019, pp. 364-365). The term "process" relates to what is being done, specifically the execution of open distance e-learning education programs. Our criterion should be whether or not the teaching and learning activities allow for the realization of all of the underlying theories (Ibid, 2019, p. 367). Similarly, an outcome must represent the expected positive or negative change because of QA program implementation (Ibid, 2019, p. 368). As a result, quality assurors in open distance e-learning as assessors are expected to participate in scheduled teaching and learning activities, assemble evidence that satisfies the outcomes, and judge whether students have met the program's purpose. To understand quality assurance using Donabedian procedures, we must first understand the structure, technique, and expected outputs.

Structure: How do we fund the quality assurance programs of distance education e-learning institutions? How do we connect with people, and what concepts, ideologies, and frameworks promote the construction of quality assurance programs?

Process: Do students grasp the substance of the underlying ideas employed in the remote education e-learning situation because of teaching and learning activities? What principles/theories/frameworks support the program evaluation processes? According to this study, the Donabedian phases (structure, process, and outcome) are crucial in redefining quality assurance in open distance e-learning situations.

Discussion

Sub-problem 1. How is accountability in open distance e-learning done?

Data must be used by academics and university administrators to monitor and improve university programs. As a result, data is required for open distance e-learning institutions to benchmark and advertise their performance (Coates, 2005, p.25). The teaching credentials of academic professionals should be evaluated to determine the quality of open

distance e-learning education (Ibid., 2005, p. 28). As a result, student activity data may provide schools with valuable marketing and recruitment information, as well as help them become more responsive to gifted students' learning needs.

Sub-problem 2. How is quality assurance as a principle used in open distance e-learning?

Institutions must employ quality assurance to help them achieve their higher education goals. It can be used to meet the learning needs and aspirations of gifted students all their lives as their intellectual abilities and aptitudes develop. Higher education should prepare gifted students to maximize their abilities and societal opportunities for self-fulfilment. As a result, it is a critical tool for achieving equity in the distribution of opportunity and the realization of life goals. It can be used to provide the labour market with a highly skilled workforce with the skills and knowledge required in today's knowledge-based economy. Gifted students must be prepared for specialized social roles in administration, trade, industry, science and technology, and the arts through higher education.

Sub-problem 3. What are quality pointers in quality assurance?

The teaching credentials of academic personnel can be used to assess the quality of open distance e-learning education. Student activity data can provide schools with useful marketing and recruitment information, as well as help them become more responsive to students' learning needs. To generate graduates, conduct research, and impart technology to gifted students, today's open distance e-learning higher education institutions must adapt. Higher education must be able to assist gifted students in being inventive in order to improve the community's and nation's competitiveness.

Conclusion

To improve the community's and nation's competitiveness, higher education should produce innovative practices. One of the outcomes of this paper is the possibility that remote education e-learning institutions should move away from the audit culture and toward a quality culture. The motivating reason behind quality assurance should not be bureaucracy. Distance education e-learning institutions at the national, regional, and global levels should collaborate to establish globally agreed quality assurance norms, according to the author. Quality assurance using Donabedian procedures, we must first understand the structure, the technique, and the expected outputs. Structure informs us the way institutions are going to fund the quality assurance programs to enhance student giftedness in their learning. Again, structure will inform us how e-learning institutions will connect with students, and what concepts, ideologies, and frameworks that will promote the construction of quality assurance programs and the enhancement of giftedness in students.

Process will guide students to grasp the substance of the underlying ideas employed in the remote education e-learning situation because of teaching and learning activities. Also, the process will guide students about the principles, theories, and frameworks that will be used in support the program evaluation processes to enhance student giftedness. Outcomes will inform students what they must do to achieve and enhance their giftedness.

This paper focused on the enhancement of student giftedness in Open Distance e-learning through quality assurance using Donabedian steps. Distance education and e-learning institutions should work to create a culture that produces competent and socially relevant graduates. In quality assurance, the Donabedian steps of structure, process, and outcome are critical to enhance student giftedness. Therefore, quality assurance using Donabedian steps of curricula and the environment of universities should be such that they do not hinder the growth and flourishing of students' giftedness of their talents and creativity. Rahiminia et al. (2021) agree that in identifying the talented in the education system based on correct and scientific criteria can be the first step in developing an appropriate policy plan. On the other hand, the needs, interests and problems of students must be carefully identified. Thus, that can happen if institutions can have a plan for quality assuring their programs relying on the scientific Donabedian steps to improve the giftedness of students.

Recommendations

Identification of giftedness in students should be founded on a scientific criterion with a structure, procedure, and outcome. The topic of 'Enhancing Student Giftedness in Open Distance E-Learning via Quality Assurance Using Donabedian Steps' should be explored at contact learning institutions such as schools and universities.

Limitations of Study

This is a qualitative paper that incorporates a literature review. No interviews were undertaken because this is a conceptual article. In analyzing the findings of other authors, it used an interpretive paradigm.

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Biodata of the Author

Prof. Dr. Vimbi Petrus Mahlangu, BA. Ed; B.Ed.; M. Ed; PhD] is a Full Professor at the University of South Africa, Department of Educational Leadership and Leadership. He had extensive writing, supervision, and publication experience in education. He had published books, book chapters, articles and supervised M and D students to completion. He presented papers at national and international conferences. Affiliation: University of South Africa E-mail: mahlavp@unisa.ac.za Orcid number: 0000-0002-8251-750X Phone: (+27)124298550

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