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# **A voyage to Treat the Threats of Quality: Institutional Factors that are Associated with the Provision of Quality Education in the University of Gondar: Implications for its Future Decision**

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## **Abstract**

*Education is the best mechanism considered to be the key to give solution to personal, social and global problems. This is, realized when there is quality education. Quality education is at the heart of any educational system since it influences what students learn and what benefit they draw from their education for themselves as well as the services they discharge to their country. Quality education has untold importance for a country like Ethiopia to ensure sustainable development and to reduce poverty. It will help the country to achieve the millennium development goals set by the international community. Accordingly, issues of quality education at all levels need to be addressed for accelerated socio-economic development of Ethiopia. In light of this, the main objective of this research was to delve in to institutional factors that are associated with the provision of quality education in the University of Gondar. Questionnaires, interview, and focus group discussion were the instruments used to collect the data in this study . A report from HERQA was also scrutinized. In total , 120 Students, 70 teachers and 4 officials in the University were participants of the study. Samples were selected using stratified and purposive sampling method. This research was cross-sectional in terms of time, descriptive in terms of design, and field research in terms of setting. Quantitative (such as percentage and regression analysis) as well as qualitative (like thematic analysis) methods of analyses were employed to analyze the data. The study found out that infrastructures (learning resources) ( $\beta=.30$ ,  $P< .005$ ), and teaching- learning and assessment methods ( $\beta=.62$ ,  $P< .005$ ) in the University found to be the significant predictors for the provision of quality education (the criterion variable). Consequently, infrastructures (learning resources) and teaching-learning and assessment methods need to be ameliorated in the University so as to provide quality education; thereby enabling the University to attain its vision and mission set out in the strategic plan document*

## **BACKGROUND**

Education is an instrument for human advancement. Education helps the human race to wisely make use of and manage our world, and to be ahead of other species.

New innovations and inventions in the world are due to education. In general, it is the crux for accelerated socio-economic development (Abraha, 2005). Particularly the function of higher education is very immense (World Bank, 2003). In line with this, Feyera(2007), Shimelis (2005) and Zelalem (2007) stated that the development of any country or nation depends much on its higher education .

Education in broad-spectrum and higher education in particular plays pivotal roles, especially in developing countries like Ethiopia, to facilitate sustainable development and to extricate the public from poverty (Mulu, 2005). However, education cannot play this role unless it is of the highest quality. The quality of education in an institution can be affected by multifaceted factors as quality is multi-dimensional concept. Thus, conducting researches on institution-specific factors is a wise decision to find remedies for such issues. In view of this, the purpose of this study is, therefore, to

assess institutional factors that are associated with the provision of quality education in University of Gondar.

## **OBJECTIVES**

This study is designed to:

- examine institutional factors that are associated with the provision of quality education in the aforementioned University
- assess existing practice and policies designed by the University so as to maintain quality education.
- generate strategies to improve quality education in the University.

## **OPERATIONAL DEFINITION**

**Quality education:** implies educational process that involves adequate infrastructures, good governance and management system, and apt teaching learning process so as to produce competent, concerned, and skilled experts, who can contribute their share to vibrant socio-economic development of the country.

**Institutional factors:** are those factors that revolve within the University of Gondar such as infrastructures/learning resources, governance and management system, and teaching-learning and assessment strategies.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The issue of quality in education**

Quality in education is relative, and not easy to measure and define. Researchers define quality of education from different angles and perspective. Quality education has different meaning for different people. Issues related to quality of educations is also debatable.

In this regard, scholars like Vreoijenstijin (1995), Cheng and Tem (1997), and Ponder (1999) stated that quality in education is very elusive, vague, controversial, notoriously ambiguous, multifaceted, complicated and complex concept.

In a very comprehensive spectrum, educational quality can be seen as a set of elements that comprise the input category (e.g. textbooks, learning material, classroom, libraries, facilities ...etc), process category (e.g. delivery of contents of courses, teaching-learning, assessment techniques ...etc) and output category (e.g. employability, academic standing, and other performance indicators) of the education system(Cheng and Tem ,1997).

## **Determinants of quality education in higher education institutions**

As quality education is multidimensional concept, a number of factors to list influence it. Factors that can influence quality in higher institutions are grouped in to two as the push factors (that emanate from stakeholders outside the institution such as the society at large) and pull factors/institutional factors (that revolve within the institutions such as the teaching-learning strategies, infrastructures, management system with in the institution) as indicated by Scheerens et al (2003) and Reichet and Tauch (2005). Lack of dedication, lack of knowledge on methodological concept of teaching, low qualification of teachers, deficiency in managerial and analytical capacities of managers, inadequate teaching learning materials, and inadequate facilities are major problems for quality education as depicted by Tros (1967), Shann (1992). Higher Education Relevance and Quality Assurance Agency (HERQA) also identified 10 focus areas of institutional quality audit. From the HERQA report it is learned that in adequacy of the infrastructures and teaching-learning and assessment strategies in the University are considered as factors for the provision of quality education.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This part consists of sub-sections such as study area, study design, sampling technique, data sources and data analysis techniques. Brief description of each section is presented hereunder:

### **STUDY AREA**

This study was conducted at the University of Gondar.

### **STUDY DESIGN**

This study was cross-sectional in terms of time, applied in terms of purpose, descriptive in terms of design/strategies, qualitative as well as quantities in terms of approach and field in terms of setting of the research. In short, cross-sectional, applied, descriptive, qualitative as well as quantitative and field researches employed in this study.

### **Participants, sampling techniques and sample size**

The participants of this study were students, instructors and officials in the University of Gondar. At present the University consists of one college, four schools and four faculties. The target area of this study was one college, one school and four faculties that were giving training for regular students at the time of data collection. Sample from the student population were those who were graduates of the academic year 2010. The study aimed at graduating class because the researcher believed that senior students/graduating class were in a better position to provide information about the University and the quality of education, since, in relative terms, they spent longer duration in the University. 120 students and 70 teachers were selected from 1750 graduating class students and 573 teachers or instructors respectively through stratified sampling. In addition, 4 officials were purposefully selected.

## STUDY VARIABLES

**Quality education:** dependent variable

**Institutional factors:** such as infrastructures, governance and management system, and teaching-learning and assessment taken as independent variables

## DATA SOURCES/INSTRUMENTS

Questionnaires were used to collect data from student and teacher respondents. The questionnaires were pre-tested before the actual data collection.

The questionnaires had more of closed ended items, but four open-ended items were also included so as to enrich the data and give freedom for respondents to spell out what is in their mind. The response categories for the close ended items were arranged in four themes i.e. in teaching –learning, management system, infrastructures and quality education.

Accordingly four items pertinent to quality, nine items on teaching-learning, twelve items on infrastructures, and six items on management system were in the questionnaires. Apart from the questionnaires, semi-structured interview was used as the tool of research in order to get data from the University officials. In addition document analysis was employed. FGDs were also conducted with teachers. The content validity of the questionnaires, the interview items and the FGDs guide were checked by professionals in the area. The reliability of items in the questionnaires were checked through inter-raters estimate of reliability.

## DATA ANALYSIS

In the end, the collected data were analyzed and interpreted both qualitatively and quantitatively. Thematic/content analysis was used for the qualitative part of the study whereas regression analysis was used to assess those factors associated with the provision of quality education.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The section presented results obtained from this study vis-à-vis with other previous data.

### Bio-data of respondents

**Table 1:** Gender distribution of participants

	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Students	Male	77	64.2
	Female	43	35.8
	Total	120	100
Instructors	Male	67	95.7
	Female	3	4.3%
	Total	70	100

From table 1, it can be seen that 77(64.2%) and 43(35.8%) of the student respondents were male and female respectively. While 67(95.7%) teachers/ instructors were male. Majority of the instructors who participated in this study were male.

### Associated factors for the provision of quality education

Table 2: Correlates of Quality Education for Students

Model	Variables	B	SE B	$\beta$
Quality education	Infrastructures	.378	.040	.627
	Teaching- learning	.129	.028	.302 P< .005

Regression was performed to see the association between the predictor variables and the criterion variable. The model emerged was significant: F (3, 116), 20.7, P<.005. The model explains 75.7% (Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> =.755) of the variance.

As it is shown in table 2, teaching-learning and assessment strategies and infrastructures/learning resources/were significant predictors of the provision of quality education.

Briefly, when there are appropriate infrastructures ( $\beta$ =.62, P<.005) and teaching-learning and assessment strategies ( $\beta$ =.30, P<.005) the provision of quality education tend to be improved. Governance and management system was not a significant predictor of the provision of quality education for student respondents.

Table 3, Correlates of Quality Education for Teachers

Model	Variables	B	SE B	$\beta$
Quality education	Infrastructures	.194	.070	.344*
Governance and management system		.189	.069	.330**

\* P=.007

\*\*P=.009

As it was the case for student respondents, significant regression model was observed: F (3, 66), 12.56, P<.05. The model explains 35.8% (R<sup>2</sup> =.385) of the variance.

Governance and management system ( $\beta$ =.330, P=.009), contrary to student respondents, found to be significant predictor of the provision of quality education for teacher-respondents. Whereas in harmony with the student respondents infrastructures/learning resources/ ( $\beta$ =.344, P=.007) were found to be significant predictor of the criterion variable for teacher respondents as well.

In simple words, appropriate infrastructures/learning resources/and governance and management system found to be correlates for the provision of quality education for teacher respondents i.e. the better the infrastructure facilities and the quality of the administration system in the university the better the provision of quality education tend to be as it is espoused by instructors.

In general, infrastructures were found to be the predictor for the provision of quality education for both teachers and students. Whereas, teaching-learning, assessment strategies, and governance and management system found to be predictor for the provision of quality education for students and teachers/instructors respectively.

This may be attributed to infrequent exposure of students with the administrative routines of the University and more exposure of students to the academy, while high exposure of instructors to the management system. The result of this study is in line with findings of Shun (1992), Scheerens et al (2003) and Reichet and Tauch (2005). These authors explained that, limited facilities, poor managerial system, as factors that can contribute to quality problems in education.

Interview with the officials also depicted similar facts. The officials stressed that to a large extent, poor infrastructures like internet connection, lack of model class .etc are institutional factors for the provision of quality education. In this regard, one of the interviewee stated that, “the university has to work on modern technological facilities in order to provide quality education and to produce graduates who are responsible to discharge their duties effectively to the development of a nation.” The FGD participants demonstrated matching opinion with the findings of the interview and the questionnaires. They identified lack of equipment like audiovisual technologies and other essential resources as institutional factors for the provision of quality education. In this regard, the findings of the study are in line with the HERQA reports (HERQA, 2008).

### **Existing practice and policies designed by the university so as to maintain quality education**

Nearly all students reported that they knew nothing about the policies and practices designed by the University in order to maintain the quality of education. While officials reported that, though it is not yet ratified by the University, quality assurance office of the University is developing draft policy for maintaining quality education in the university. Additionally, as it is reported by officials, the University has also established ADRC for the purpose of maintaining quality education. Moreover, pedagogical training for teachers is also given in collaboration with the JEPIGO and Quality assurance office of the University as it is explained by officials. Currently, the University also implementing the BPR by which it sought to improve quality education in the University as espoused by officials.

### **Strategies to improve the provision of quality of education in the university as mentioned by participants**

Augmenting communication and discussion with concerned parties, designing proper staff development strategies, establishing model class rooms, making quality assurance office functional, improving infrastructures like classroom, library, and laboratory etc. Developing reward scheme, providing transport and housing facilities for instructors, providing suitable working condition,

improving the management system, proper handling of staff, creating partnership with domestic and international universities, allocating sufficient budget to research activities, consolidating the ADRC, limiting the number of students in a class, developing experience sharing scheme within the university and out of the university, making the teaching learning task-based minimizing, interference of the management with instructors' routine duties, making periodical curriculum revision, improving systems of instruction, improving quality of food (for students) and involving students in decision making process were some of the issues forwarded to improve the provision of quality education as mentioned by students, teachers, officials and FGDs participants. These strategies are also in line with the HERQA recommendations (HERQA, 2008). Damtew (2005) also stressed modest living and working opportunity as a factor which significantly contributes to quality education.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Infrastructures, teaching-learning, assessment strategies, and governance and management system in the University were found to be significant predictors for the provision of quality education. It is indispensable, therefore to formulate and introduce robust strategies focusing on these institutional factors for ameliorating/improving educational quality in the University so that the University and graduates of the University can more effectively and positively respond to the socio-economic transformation of the country.

The university efforts will also be seriously affected unless it addresses the salient issues toward attaining its objectives.

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